



Armand Guillaumin
(1841-1927)

The Sea at Saint-Palais
(La mer à Saint-Palais)

1892

signed bottom left: "Guillaumin"

dated verso: "4 h Aout 92"

Oil on canvas

h 60,0 cm x b 93,0 cm

WRM Dep. FC 749





Brief Report

Guillaumin painted the high tide on the French Atlantic coast on a densely woven standard M30-size canvas pre-primed in white. The verso bears the company logo of the Paris dealers Tasset & l'Hôte, while the stretcher is identified by a stamped mark as the product of Bourgeois Ainé (fig. 2). It was not infrequent for dealers to process items that they had bought in from a larger manufacturer [cf. Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2006, pp.106, 166] (fig. 6). The Bourgeois Ainé company was among the largest producers of painting requisites in France, and had their stretcher pattern patented with the trademark *modèle déposé B*, which was regarded as the quality-seal of the age [Bourgeois Ainé 1888, p. 86]. On this canvas, prepared by the dealer, Guillaumin used charcoal or a black chalk or pencil to hastily draw a few outlines of horizon and rocks. The subsequent painting in dynamic brush-strokes was predominantly wet-in-wet, presumably in just two or three sessions. The artist added his signature while the paint-layer was still wet. A few last corrective revisions, highlights and supplements then followed when the paint was dry.

Not only the motif and the painting technique suggest that the picture was painted en plein air, but also various further discoveries. Thus in a number of places we find grains that under the microscope can with certainty be identified as sand, which got embedded into the paint while it was still wet (fig. 11). In addition, we see circular impressions in three of the corners, which could have been made by spacers [cf. Caillebotte, WRM Dep. FC 602; Bomford 1990, p. 178] (fig. 12), in other words small round wooden discs with metal points projecting from the centre of either side, which could be placed in the corners of two freshly painted canvases (the painted sides facing) and thus keep them safely apart for transport [see Winsor & Newton 1896, p. 117]. A third clue to the out-of-doors origin of the picture is a pencil note by Guillaumin himself on the stretcher verso, which indicates the place and time it was painted: “marée montante 4 h Aout (18)92” [Engl. ‘incoming tide, 4 o’clock, August 1892] (fig. 8). Inscriptions of this kind are known from several of Guillaumin’s works [cf. Serret/Fabiani 1971, No. 336; Guillaumin, WRM Dep. FC 559].



Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Picture support canvas

Standard format	close to M30 horizontal (92.0 x 60.0 cm)
Weave	tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	vertical and horizontal 30 threads per cm; very fine, dense and even weave
Stretching	authentic, nail intervals between 1.5 and 6.5 centimetres
Stretcher/strainer	stretcher with vertical centre-bar
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.6 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	–
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	burnt-in trademark on the stretcher centre-bar: "modèle déposée" and beneath a lozenge with a recumbent "B" (Bourgeois Ainé), h 1.0 x b 2.0 cm; stencilling verso on right "TASSET & L'HOTE/ENCADREMENTS/31 rue Fontaine 31/PARIS/TOILES COULEURS FINES", h 8.0 x b 12.0 cm (fig. 2)



Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Ground

Sizing	present
Colour	white
Application	ground applied before the canvas was cut to size and stretched, smooth and even application, two layers spread and smoothed with a knife to the extent that the high points of the canvas are exposed in places; on the bottom foldover edge, the edge of the priming on the industrially primed length of canvas is visible: here the two-layer structure can be seen particularly clearly, the first layer being very thin, almost transparent (high binder content), the second layer having a much higher proportion of pigment or filler (fig. 9)
Binding medium	presumably oil
Texture	stereo-microscopic inspection reveals a slight graininess of the ground, apparently caused by the addition of very coarse lead-white pigments

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	anthracite-to-black drawing, lines c. 1 mm broad (charcoal, chalk or pencil); very fine black powder, no particles apparent at up to 90x magnific
Extent/character	the Infrared-reflectogram and stereo-microscope reveal individual fine lines and dynamic short arcs of an underdrawing along the horizon and the rocks; it is not impossible that other areas were underdrawn too, but the paint layer and texture make a complete documentation impossible
Pentimenti	–



Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

brisk painting in presumably two or three sessions; dynamic brushstrokes (fig. 10); the sequence of painting was first the rocks, then the background (sky and sea) and then the foam and spray; predominantly wet-in-wet, but also wet on dry; finally minor corrections and colour highlights and supplements were applied (e.g. the smoke from the steamer and areas of spray); the paint was applied from dark to light and not in accordance with the painting rule "fat on lean"; there are semi-transparent and thin dry coats over other much thicker layers, above all in the area of the rocks a number of thick paint layers were applied one over the other in rapid succession, which promoted the appearance of shrinkage cracks at an early date; the paint layer is relatively complete, the ground being visible only in a few places

Painting tools

flat-ferrule brushes of various widths

Surface structure

varies between smooth and impasto applications, albeit with the brushwork visible throughout (fig. 10)

Palette

visible microscopic inspection reveals: white, medium green, medium yellow, orange, light red, light and dark red lakes (orange fluorescence under UV, fig. 5), violet, medium blue, two dark blue hues, dark blue, light green, dark green; the colours were often applied unmixed, but also mixed;
VIS-spectrometry: chrome yellow(?) or cadmium yellow(?), cadmium orange(?), vermillion, carmine lake, cobalt violet, cobalt blue, ultramarine, Prussian blue(?), copper green, viridian

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/Condition

varnished, presumably not authentic as other pictures by the artist at this period have been preserved unvarnished [cf. Guillaumin, WRM Dep. FC 559]



Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Signature/Mark

When?	autograph signature “Guillaumin” was written with a thin pointed brush in dark-red paint (red lake mixed with violet) in a single flourish wet-in-wet in the main paint layer (fig. 7)
Autograph signature	autograph signature, as it shows unambiguous points of agreement with other signatures by Guillaumin
Serial	–

Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

The paint is flaking in a few minor areas; minor re-touches and overpainting: varnish slightly yellowed.

Additional remarks

The picture contains circumstantial evidence of having been painted completely in the open air (see Brief Report above).



Literature

- Bomford 1990: David Bomford, Jo Kirby, John Leighton (et al.), Art in the Making. Impressionism, London 1990
- Bourgeois Ainé 1888: Bourgeois Ainé, Catalogue général illustré, Paris 1888
- Winsor & Newton 1896: Winsor & Newton, Catalogue pour le commerce en gros seulement, London 1898 (limited edition in French)
- Rosenberg 1908: "Retrospective d'œuvres de Guillaumin", Galerie Rosenberg, Paris 1908
- Serret/Fabiani 1971: Georges Serret, Dominique Fabiani, Armand Guillaumin 1841-1927. Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint, Paris 1971, no. 291 (with ill.)
- Van Tilborgh/Hendriks 2006: Ella Hendriks, Louis van Tilborgh, "New views on Van Gogh's development in Antwerp and Paris. An integrated art historical and technical study on his paintings in the Van Gogh Museum = Nieuwe visies op Van Goghs ontwikkeling in Antwerpen en Parijs. Een geïntegreerde technische en kunsthistorische studie van zijn schilderijen in het Van Gogh Museum", 2 Vols, Diss., Amsterdam 2006

Source of illustrations

Fig. 12: Winsor & Newton 1896, p. 117

All further illustrations and figures Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud

Examination methods used

- | | |
|--|--|
| ✓ Incident light | ✓ VIS spectrometry |
| ✓ Raking light | – Wood identification |
| ✓ Reflected light | – FTIR (Fourier transform spectroscopy) |
| ✓ Transmitted light | – EDX (Energy Dispersive X-ray analysis) |
| ✓ Ultraviolet fluorescence | – Microchemical analysis |
| ✓ Infrared reflectography | |
| – False-colour infrared reflectography | |
| – X-ray | |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy | |

Author of examination: Annegret Volk

Date: 04/2007

Author of brief report: Caroline von Saint-George

Date: 05/2008



Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 1
Recto



Fig. 2
Verso with
manufacturer's and
dealer's marks



Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 3
Raking light

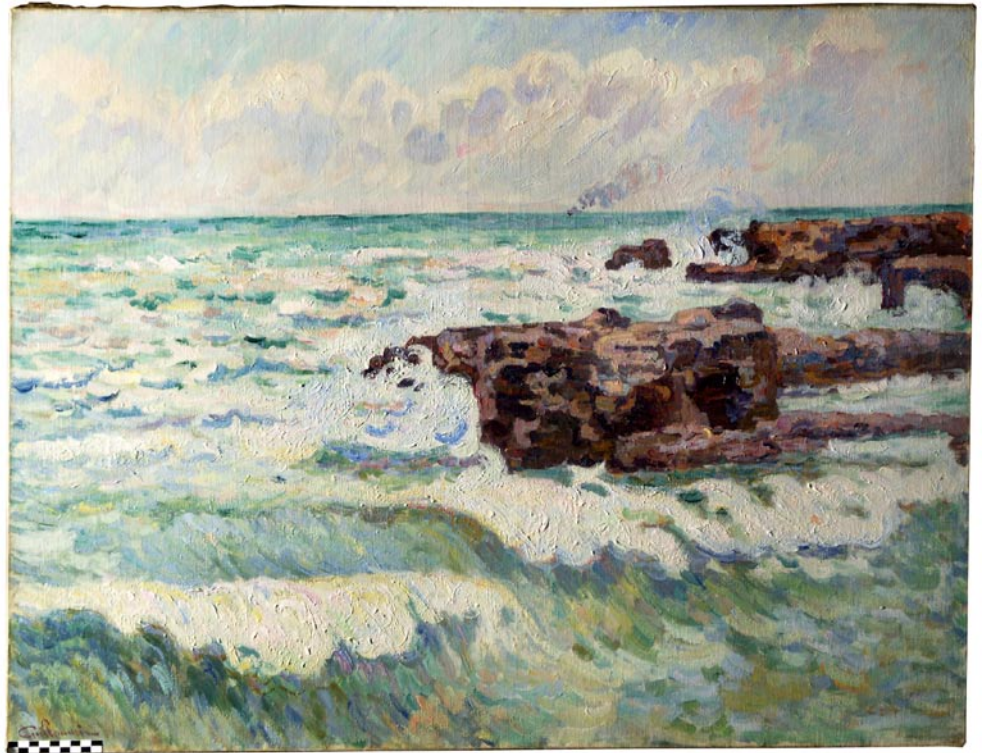
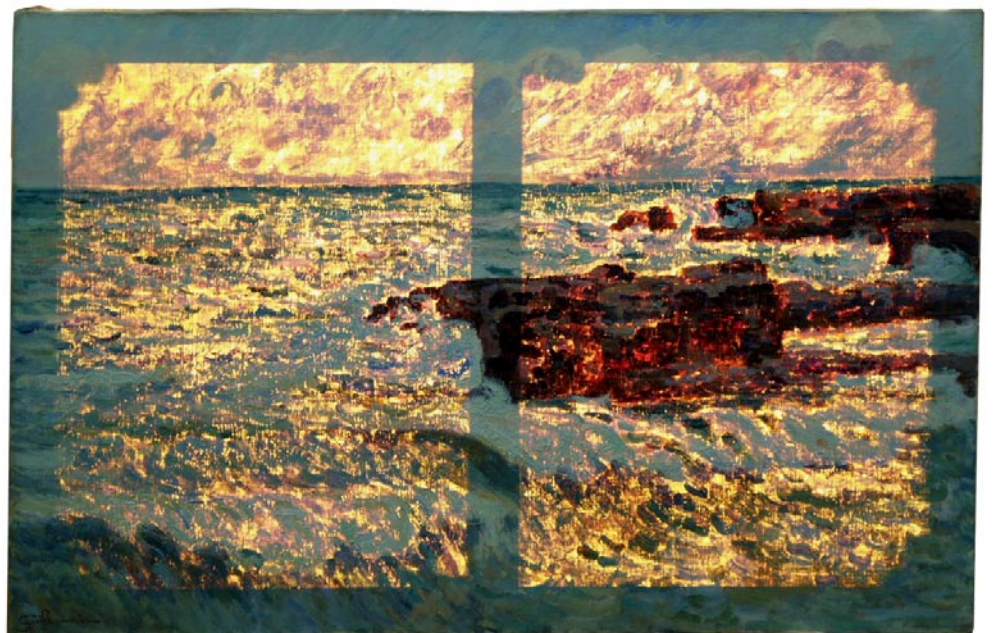


Fig. 4
Transmitted light



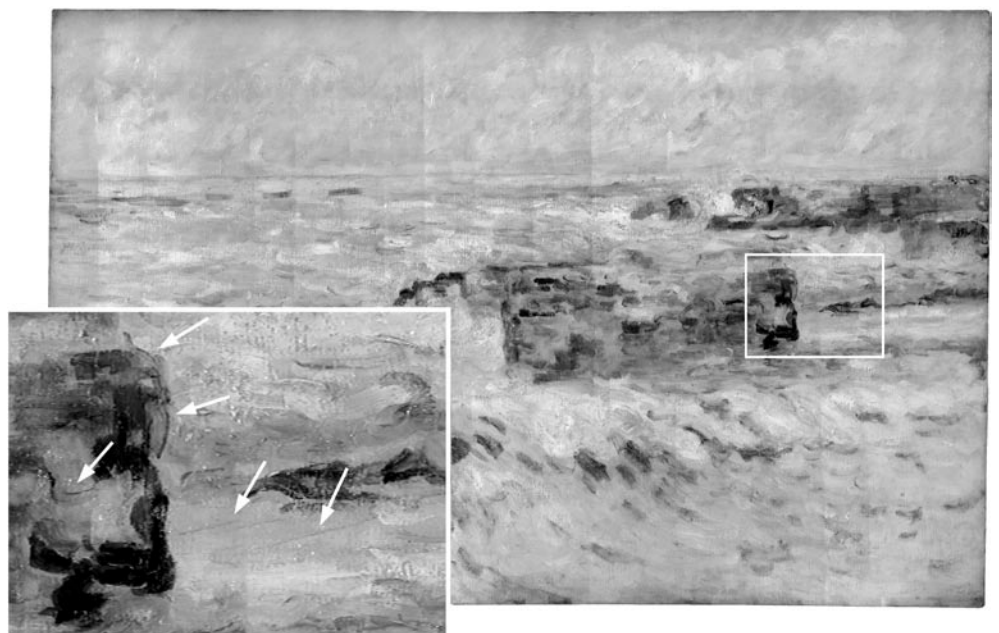


Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 5
UV fluorescence



Fig. 6
Infra-red reflectogram





Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 7
Detail, signature

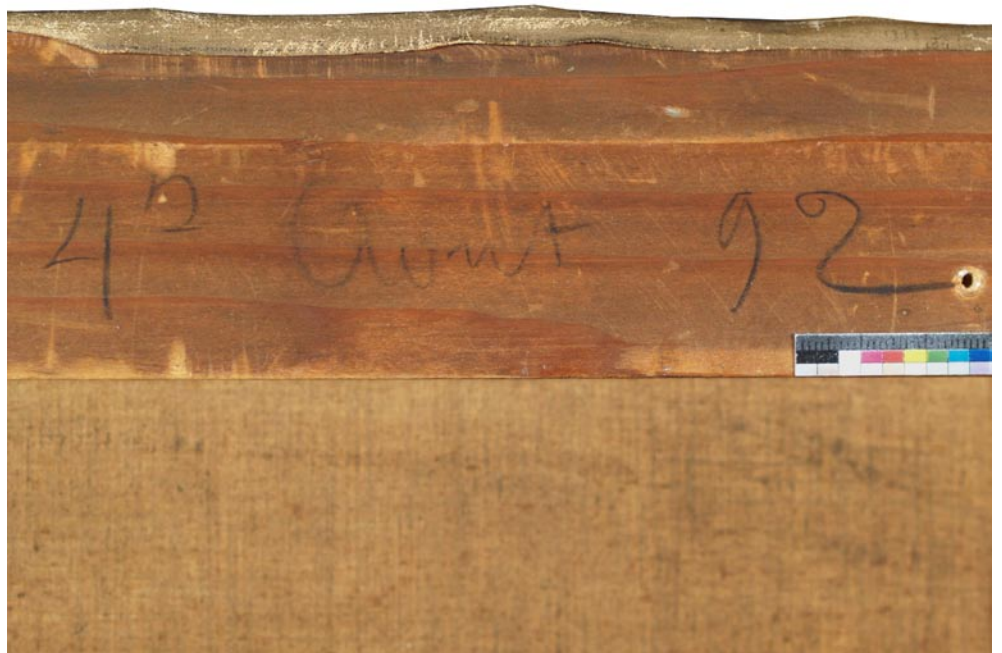


Fig. 8
Detail, top bar
of stretcher, with
inscription regarding
month, year, and time
of day when picture was
painted: "4h Aout 92"



Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 9
Detail of lower
foldover, two-layer
ground application,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 10
Detail, raking light, spray,
dynamic brushwork



Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

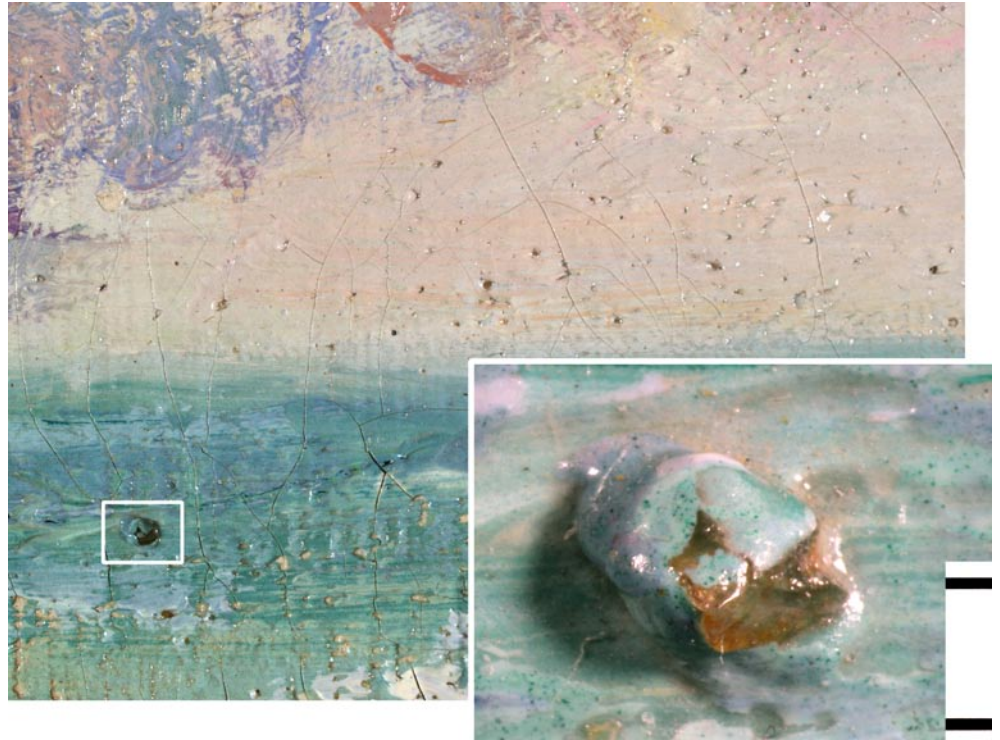


Fig. 11
Horizon with grains of sand embedded in the paint-layer, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)



TAQUETS BOIS. *Pour porter deux tableaux
frais face contre face.*



Fig. 12
Left-hand corner, circular impressions in the fresh paint-layer presumably resulting from commercial spacers (see above), microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)