



Théo van Rysselberghe
(1862-1926)

Saint-Tropez

1895

monogrammed bottom left: „VR“

no date

oil on cedrowood

h 19.0 cm x b 26.8 cm

WRM Dep. FC 793





Brief Report

Rysselberghe chose as his picture support a thin wooden panel which originally served as the lid of a cigar-box, as is proved by a stamp verso (fig. 5, 6). A central nail-hole at the top edge of the picture, a film of glue from a paper(?) hinge stuck along the bottom edge and signs of impact beneath the paint layer also testify to this previous utilization (fig. 7). The use of slats from cigar-boxes at the time of the Impressionists is often casually mentioned in the literature, but this idea has had to be revised in the light of research results; this example is the first concrete proof of such a practice. The lid used here comes from a box used by the cigar maker J. S. Murias of Havana (fig. 6, 12).

The fact that this support matches the standard commercial P3 format is striking, and is due to the lid's having been cut to size along the left-hand edge. The panel was painted on without being primed. The artist first established all the elements of the composition in a pencil underdrawing (fig. 3). The painting is executed in short impasto brush-strokes and follows the black, detailed underdrawing, from which Rysselberghe deviated only in the region of the tree-trunk. The loosely applied paint integrates the colour of the wooden panel, especially in the region of the crown of the tree (fig. 9).



Picture support panel

Standard format	cigar-box lid; cut to standard size P3, horizontally (19.0 x 27.0 cm)
Thickness	4.8 mm
Type of wood	cedro (<i>Cedrela odorata</i> or <i>C. Cedro ssp.</i>)
Panel structure	consists of one board
Grain direction	horizontal
Cut of panel	unclear
Traces left by production/treatment	evidence of the original utilization of this panel is provided by a nail hole in the centre of the top edge of the picture and a film of adhesive used to stick the original paper hinge of the lid; the left-hand edge of the panel was coarsely cut back before use; the company stamp of the cigar-maker "J.S. Murias y C[ompani] A HABANA" was printed on the surface of the panel in a black medium; the pressure applied in the stamping process has left a negative impression of the stamp in the wood (figs. 5, 6, 7, 12)
Producer's/dealer's marks	none

Ground

Sizing	uncertain
Colour	no ground present
Application	—
Binding medium	—
Character and appearance	—



Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	black, soft pencil (fig. 8)
Extent/character	brisk, energetic and sketchy; the underdrawing definitively established the division of the surface and all the elements of the composition (figs. 3, 8)
Pentimenti	the tree-trunk in the finished picture is further to the right than in the underdrawing

Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision	as in the underdrawing, to which he generally oriented himself, Rysselberghe worked briskly and sketchily; at first he laid in the colour fields, before modelling and accentuating the details; the paint was applied impasto and wet-in-wet alla prima, predominantly in horizontal or slightly diagonal brush-strokes; the paints were placed largely unmixed next to each other, being lightened with an admixture of white; the unprimed panel was left visible in part by the artist, conspicuously so in the region of the tree (fig. 9)
Painting tools	bristle brushes of various sizes (about 3 and 7 mm)
Surface structure	stippled, heavily impasto; white and yellow areas were modelled in particularly thick layers (fig. 9)
Palette	hues revealed by microscopic inspection: violet (fig. 8), green, blue, yellow, red lake, red, orange (?); white VIS-spectrometry: ultramarine violet(?), viridian, cobalt blue, ultramarine, chrome yellow(?), cadmium yellow (?), rose madder, cobalt violet(?), vermilion(?), iron-oxide red,
Binding mediums	evidently exclusively oil; according to Feltkamp, Rysselberghe used only tube-colours made by the firm of Blockx [Feltkamp 2003, p. 244]



Surface finish

Authenticity/condition	coating applied at a later date
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Signature/Mark

When?	the monogram was impressed into the paint layer while it was still soft with a lead or graphite pencil (fig. 4)
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Autograph signature	yes
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Serial	–
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Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

The panel is slightly warped and the whole of the verso has paper stuck to it (fig. 2); one older retouching is discernible, and one more extensive one of more recent date: the top right hand corner, which came across as unfinished, was reworked to improve its appearance (fig. 11); abrasion marks on the paint layer bear witness to the surface having been cleaned and/or varnish removed on one or more occasions.



Additional remarks

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Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (exhib. cat. Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud Cologne, 8. September - 9. December 2001), Cologne 2001, cat. no. 145, p. 326 f., with ill.
- Feltkamp 2003: Ronald Feltkamp, *Theo van Rysselberghe 1862- 1926, Bruxelles 2003* [note: a new three-volume catalogue raisonné by Olivier Bertrand et al. is in preparation]

Source of illustrations

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

Examination methods used

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|--|--|
| ✓ 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 | – Cross-section |
| – False-colour infrared reflectography | |
| – X-ray | |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy | |

Author of examination: Anne Heckenbücker
Author of brief report: Hans Portsteffen

Date: 05/2005
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Théo van Rysselberghe – Saint-Tropez
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

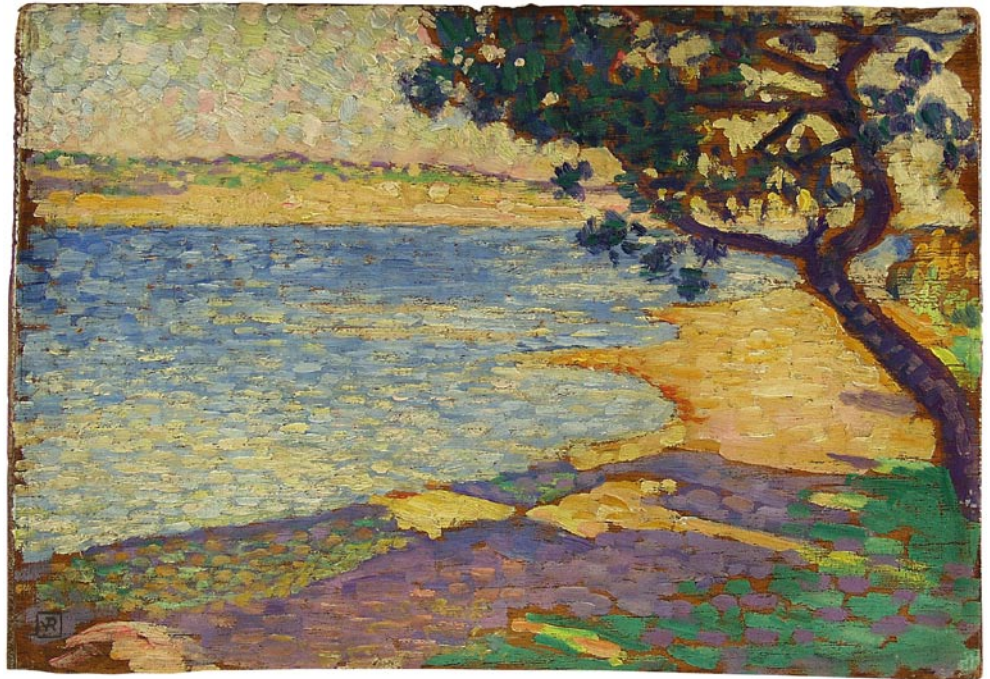


Fig. 1
Recto



Fig. 2
Verso



Fig. 3
Infrared reflectogram
reveals the drawn lay-in



Fig. 4
Detail in raking light of
the monogram formed
from the letters "VR",
black pencil in soft paint,
microscopic photograph
in raking light
(M = 1 mm)



Fig. 5
Detail of verso in raking
light, stamp of the cigar-
maker J. S. Murias of
Havana covered by paper
stuck over it



Fig. 6
Rubbing of the
cigar-maker's mark
(turned in 180°)



Fig. 7
Detail of the top edge,
notches in the wood
beneath the paint layer
point to the panel's
previous use as part
of a cigar-box

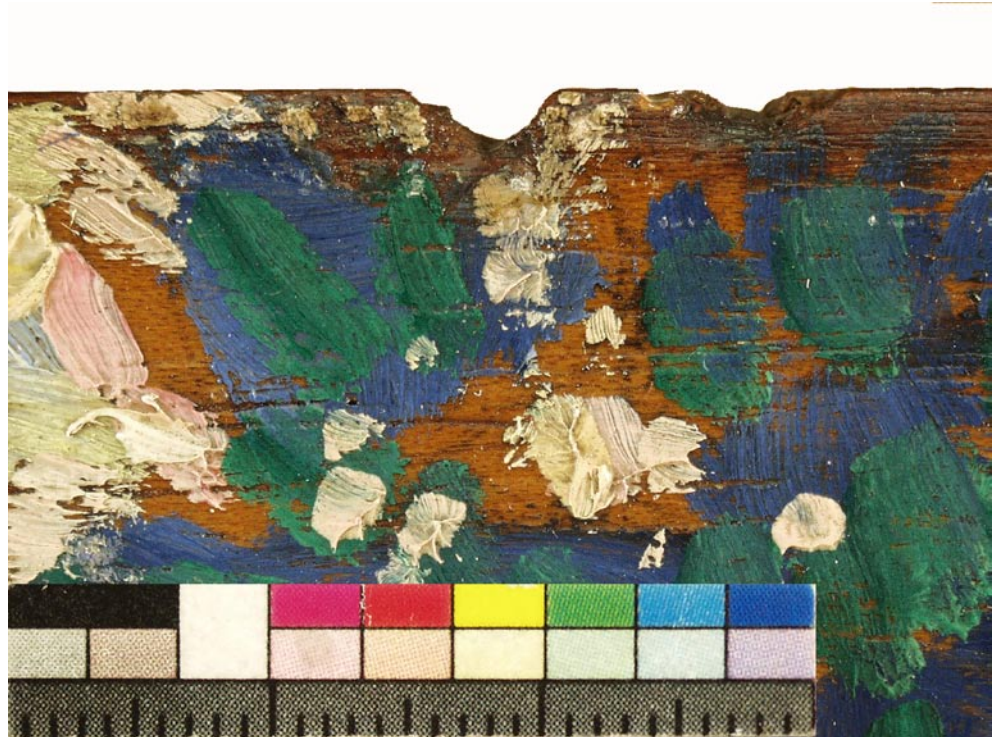


Fig. 8
Pencil signature in the
region of the tree on one
of the many areas of the
wood left unpainted,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)

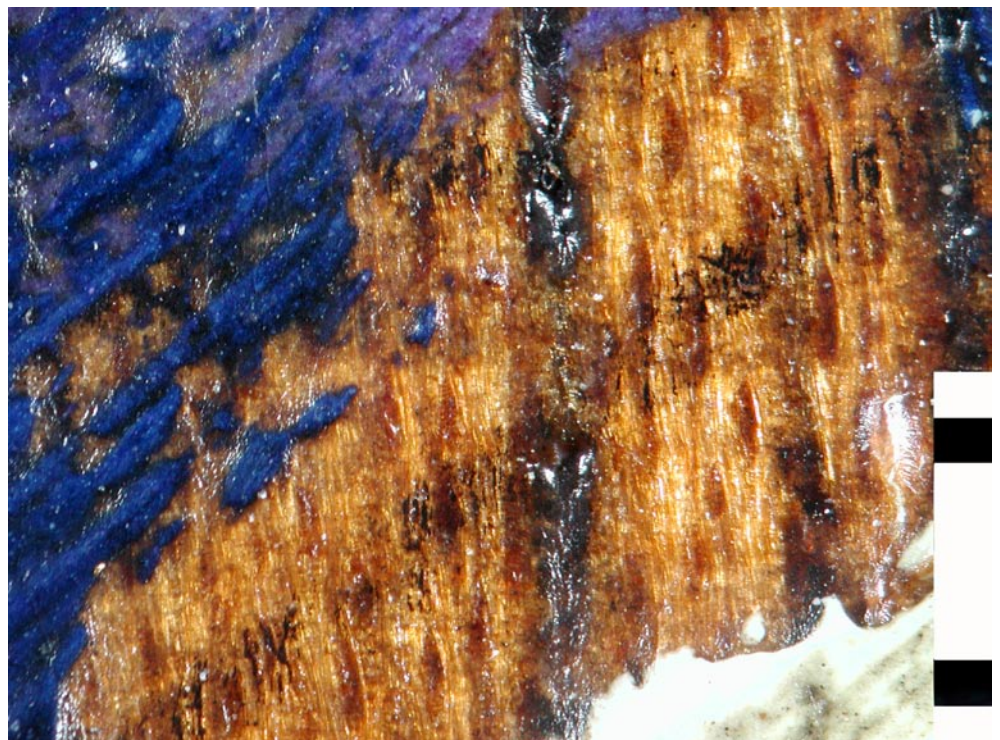




Fig. 9
Detail in raking light,
blue and impasto yellow
and white applications
of paint in the region of
the tree with unpainted
areas of the panel clearly
visible



Fig. 10
Area painted in unmixed
violet, presumably cobalt
violet,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)





Fig. 11
Detail in raking light,
impasto stippled
applications of paint
in the top left corner; a
retouching to improve
the appearance of the
painting above the
horizon is evident as
a result of absence of
impasto



Fig. 12
For comparison, a cigar-
box from J. S. Murias
(Havana) (private
collection, Finland)

