



Léo Gausson

(1860-1944)

**The Rue des Étuves
à Lagny-sur-Marne**

(La rue des Étuves
à Lagny-sur-Marne)

c. 1885 (?)

*inscribed verso and also dated there
twice, top and bottom right:
„Leo Gausson 1883“*

Oil on poplar

h 28.4 cm x b 20.5 cm

WRM Dep. FC 745





Brief Report

This small painting is part of a group of several works by Gausson on this theme; alongside the picture in Cologne there exist a drawing and two more studies in oils [Hanotelle 2000, cat. no. 12]. There are problems regarding the dating: two inscriptions verso (fig. 9), whose authenticity is however uncertain, say 1883. But this would place the work right at the beginning of Gausson's career. However it was only in the mid 1880s that Gausson began to work in the Pointillist style à la Signac. In addition, a drawing that corresponds in detail to the graphic lay-in of this painting, is dated 1885 (fig. 5). The painting is executed on an unprimed poplar panel, which today looks reddish-brown, but was originally much paler (fig. 6).

As the paint was not applied to the whole surface by any means, the colour of the picture support plays a major role for the total effect (fig. 7). As a result, the appearance of the panel is now very different, owing to the darkening of the wood. The motif was planned exactly, with perspective lines and a vanishing point. Within this framework, the underdrawing of the various elements of the picture was freely executed (figs. 3, 4). Following the contour lines in colour and the background painting of various areas, the individual paint layers were applied by dabbing wet-in-wet. The frame, with an inner frame painted in the Pointillist manner, is not original.



Léo Gausson – The Rue des Étuves à Lagny-sur-Marne
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Picture support panel

Standard format	not a standard format
Thickness	1.1 cm
Type of wood	poplar (<i>Populus sp.</i>)
Panel structure	consists of one board
Grain direction	vertical
Cut of panel	tangential
Traces left by production/treatment	right half of panel smoothed and chamfered, left half shows traces of splitting; some fraying at the top and bottom edges; recto, fraying and scrub-plane traces; panel probably cut by Gausson himself on three sides from a larger panel (fig. 8)
Producer's/dealer's marks	none present

Ground

Sizing	present
Colour	none
Application	–
Binding medium	–
Texture	–



Léo Gausson – The Rue des Étuves à Lagny-sur-Marne
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	lay-in of the perspective lines with pencil and ruler, further freehand extensions with pencil and brush; deep-black, very fine and opaque paint
Extent/character	all the pictorial elements are present in detail in the multiphase underdrawing; perspective construction with perspective lines and a vanishing point (figs. 3, 4), bunches of lines in the search for a contour, partial use of shading in the form of drawn-out wavy lines; use of the brush primarily around the windows
Pentimenti	possibly the parapet of the bridge was a little lower on the left and the lower window of the house on the left may have been open



Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

at first, the paints were applied with a brush in a creamy consistency to individual (relatively) large areas, e.g. the street in pale greenish-grey, the roof of the second house on the left or the shaded section of the house in front in dark blue; then the painter copied the contours of the underdrawing in colour; only then did he fill out the areas with coloured dots; between adjacent pictorial elements he often left strips of the picture support visible (fig. 7); the final stage consisted of further dabbing and linear accentuation of the contours

Painting tools

various small bristle and soft-hair brushes; some surface structures of the paint application are however characterized by a somewhat unusual texture which it may be possible to explain, but not exclusively, by the use of brushes and paint of different consistencies: applications of already firmer paint were pressed on to the surface, while still wet paint was drawn laterally upwards into sharp edges (fig. 10); in other places the tool leaves clear, semicircular impressions (fig. 11); hitherto it has proved impossible to reconstruct the origin of either phenomenon

Surface structure

in spite of the dabbing application in large parts of the picture, the surface is strongly textured on the mm scale with very few impasto areas standing proud of the rest (fig. 8)

Palette

hues revealed by visual microscopic inspection: reddish-brown, reddish orange, transparent pale red, pale yellow, greenish and reddish dark blue, light brown, dark brown
VIS spectrometry: iron oxide red, red lead; rose madder, chrome and/or cadmium yellow, copper green, viridian, iron-oxide red and yellow, ultramarine

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/condition

non-fluorescent coating is even over the whole surface with no yellowing; below are the greyed and brittle remains of an old coating mixed with dirt, especially in the crevices



Signature/Mark

When?	possibly added at a later date, as it is in lead or graphite pencil verso (fig. 9)
Autograph signature	not determined, but unlikely, as various parts of it have been gone over with the same writing implement and thus made clearer; furthermore, the addition of the dating is, on stylistic and technical grounds, probably incorrect
Serial	–

Frame

Authenticity	not authentic; it is questionable whether the inner frame, which has Pointillist decoration, is in imitation of a similarly decorated original frame
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State of preservation

Altered colour effect due to the darkening of the picture support; various coarse luting applications with strongly structured surfaces, and retouchings; a few areas of losses in the sky region; minor in impasto applications.

Additional remarks

The underdrawing corresponds in detail to a pencil drawing on grey paper mentioned above and dated 1885; it is in the Musée Gatién-Bonnet, Lagny-sur-Marne (fig. 5). It seems unlikely that Gausson repeated the same motif in the same manner and in the same style at an interval of two years, first as a painting and then as a drawing. It has not yet been possible to explain the discrepancy in the dating. A catalogue raisonné is currently being prepared by Micheline Hanotelle. We suggest a date for the picture in the mid 1880s.



Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (exhibit. cat. Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, 8. September - 9. December 2001), Cologne 2001, Cat.no. 46, p. 124, with ill.
- Hanotelle 2000: Micheline Hanotelle, *Leo Gausson (1860–1944). Un peintre méconnu du Post-Impressionisme*, Paris 2000, no. 12, p. 2 (with colour illustration)

Source of illustrations

Fig. 5: *Miracle de la Couleur*, eds Rainer Budde and Barbara Schaefer, Cologne 2001, p. 126
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 | |

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Fig. 1
Recto

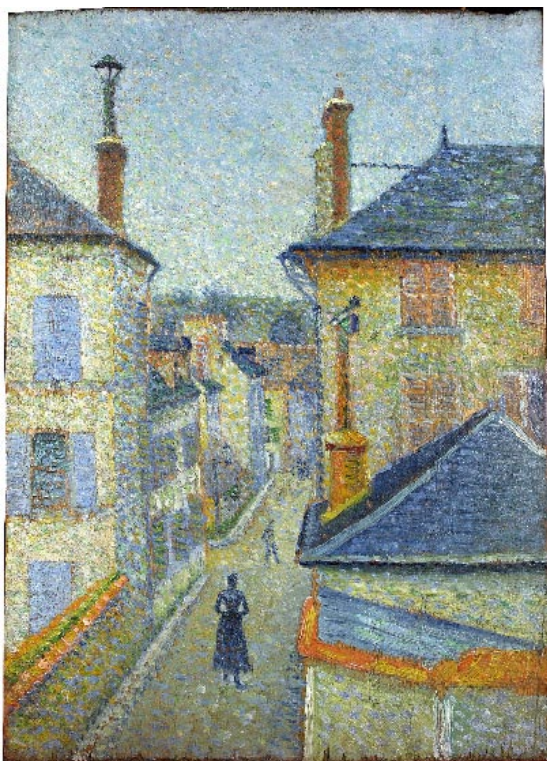


Fig. 2
Verso





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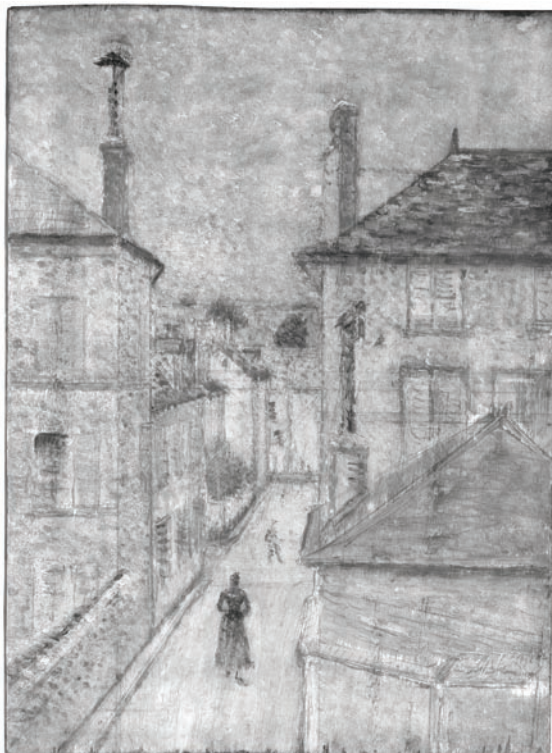


Fig. 3
Infra-red reflectogram



Fig. 4
Mapping of the
perspective lines
and some other
underdrawing elements
in the IR reflectogram



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Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 5
Pencil drawing by
Gausson on paper in the
Musée Gatien-Bonnet,
Lagny-sur-Marne, dated
1885



Fig. 6
Areas of missing paint
reveal the original pale
tone of the poplar,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



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Brief Report on Technology and Condition

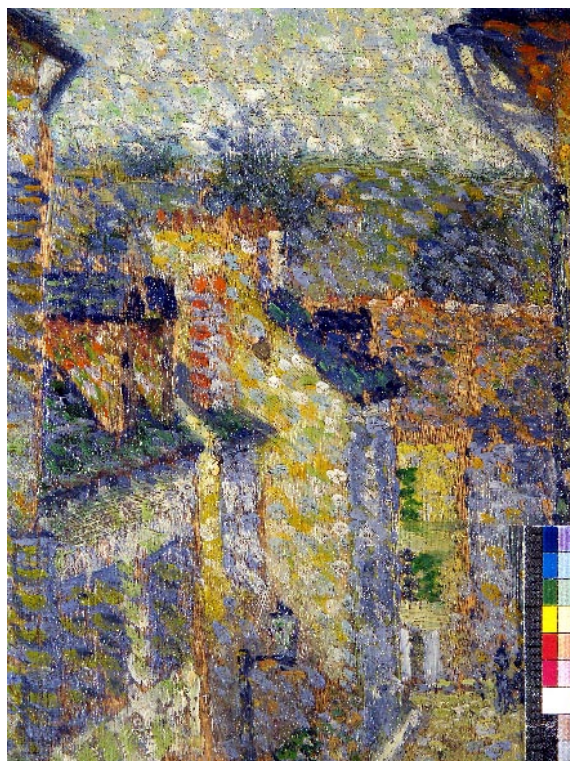


Fig. 7
Detail of the paint-layer applications; where no paint was applied, the red-brown of the wood, due to aging, is evident



Fig. 8
Detail in raking light; alongside the brushstrokes, what it reveals above all is the fraying of the panel, with scrub-plane traces



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Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 9
Pencil inscriptions of
doubtful authorship
verso



Fig. 10
The surface structure of
the paint application,
microscopic photograph
(M = 1 mm)



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Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 11
Semicircular structures,
microscopic photograph
in raking light
(M = 1 mm)