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
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].
### Picture support canvas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard format</strong></td>
<td>close to M30 horizontal (92.0 x 60.0 cm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weave</strong></td>
<td>tabby weave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canvas characteristics</strong></td>
<td>vertical and horizontal 30 threads per cm; very fine, dense and even weave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stretching</strong></td>
<td>authentic, nail intervals between 1.5 and 6.5 centimetres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stretcher/strainer</strong></td>
<td>stretcher with vertical centre-bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stretcher/strainer depth</strong></td>
<td>2.6 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traces left by manufacture/processing</strong></td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manufacturer’s/dealer’s marks</strong></td>
<td>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 &amp; L’HOTE/ENCADREMENTS/31 rue Fontaine 31/PARIS/TOILES COULEURS FINES”, h 8.0 x b 12.0 cm (fig. 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Ground

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sizing</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binding medium</td>
<td>presumably oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
<td>stereo-microscopic inspection reveals a slight graininess of the ground, apparently caused by the addition of very coarse lead-white pigments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium/technique</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent/character</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentimenti</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 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(?), vermilion, 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]
### 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

### 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).
**Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais**

**Brief Report on Technology and Condition**

---

**Literature**

- Bourgeois Ainé 1888: Bourgeois Ainé, Catalogue général illustré, Paris 1888
- Rosenberg 1908: “Retrospective d’œuvres de Guillaumin”, Galerie Rosenberg, Paris 1908

---

**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
- ✔ Raking light
- ✔ Reflective light
- ✔ Transmitted light
- ✔ Ultraviolet fluorescence
- ✔ Infrared reflectography
  - False-colour infrared reflectography
  - X-ray
- ✔ Stereomicroscopy
- ✔ VIS spectrometry
  - Wood identification
  - FTIR (Fourier transform spectroscopy)
  - EDX (Energy Dispersive X-ray analysis)
  - Microchemical analysis

---

**Author of examination:** Annegret Volk  
**Date:** 04/2007

**Author of brief report:** Caroline von Saint-George  
**Date:** 05/2008

---

Caroline von Saint-George, Annegret Volk: 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
Caroline von Saint-George, Annegret Volk: Armand Guillaumin – The Sea at Saint-Palais
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 3
Raking light

Fig. 4
Transmitted light
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"
Fig. 9
Detail of lower foldover, two-layer ground application, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

Fig. 10
Detail, raking light, spray, dynamic brushwork
Fig. 11
Horizon with grains of sand embedded in the paint-layer, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

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

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