

ANDRÉ DERAÏN'S 'TREES BY A LAKE: LE PARC DE CARRIÈRES-SAINT-DENIS

THE COURTAULD COLLECTIONS: CONSERVATION
AND ART HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

WORKS FROM THE COURTAULD GALLERY PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

Although The Courtauld Institute of Art is renowned for both its art historical and conservation departments, these two strands of its academic activity are not always particularly integrated. Indeed, the layout of the Institute within Somerset House speaks volumes about this distinction: housed in separate wings, on either side of William Chambers' arched entrance vestibule, the departments seem to typify the all-too-common separation between art historical and technical inquiry. In January 2012, a collaboration between The Courtauld Gallery and The Courtauld Institute of Art sought to bridge this divide. Bringing together a PhD art history student and a postgraduate in the conservation of easel paintings, it sought both to encourage collaboration between the Institute's two halves and to shed light on one of its paintings: André Derain's *Trees by a Lake: Le Parc de Carrières-Saint-Denis*. Dark in appearance and difficult to read, the painting had previously been subject to little technical or art historical analysis. Dating from 1909, it falls between the two most studied periods of Derain's career, namely his early Fauvist period (ca. 1905–1907) and his later classical production (ca. 1919 onwards). This project sought to rectify these lacunae, combining technical study with an investigation into the social, historical and economic circumstances of the painting's production. This report documents the project's findings.

The report begins, as did the study, with formal analysis: as much as collaboration has been an imperative, the project begins, ends and revolves around the painting itself. Rehearsing first a brief biography of Derain, it begins with formal analysis of the composition of *Trees by a Lake*, the scene it depicts and the moment in which it was painted. Moving then to technical findings, the report discusses the materials and techniques used by the artist, acknowledging the paucity of published technical study on Derain's working practice. To the authors' knowledge, this is the only published technical study of a fully-provenanced Derain painting in English and as such it is hoped that this report may encourage increased information-sharing on the subject in future. Recounting this technical examination, the report also explores the presence of a second painting on the same canvas beneath *Trees by a Lake*. It has long been thought that Derain destroyed a number of his Fauvist paintings in 1908; his dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, wrote that he had burned them. Here, however, technical and documentary evidence are employed to suggest that this hidden painting is a Fauvist-style work from 1907 or earlier. Having consulted other paintings by Derain from the 1908–1909 period, the authors posit that a number of them cover earlier Fauvist-style paintings and that painting over previous works formed part of Derain's practice at this time. Extrapolating out from *Trees by a Lake*, the report then situates these findings within the context of Derain's wider production, within that of his contemporaries (including Matisse and Picasso) and within that of his personal collection: a pioneering collector of African art, texture and dimension in this painting are considered through the prisms of both Derain's sculptures and his collection of African art. Finally, the report acknowledges the role of the painting's first and only collector, Roger Fry, on its later history. In

emphasizing the painting's place in Fry's seminal *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* exhibition and by privileging Fry's own views on Derain as an artist, the report seeks, in conclusion, to raise the status of this historically and aesthetically important painting. It suggests that such a study, alongside a thorough conservation treatment, allows us to see this painting, and its maker, in a new light. Ultimately the report champions such collaborative methodologies.

'TREES BY A LAKE': FORMAL AND TECHNICAL EXAMINATION

André Derain was born on 17 June 1880 in Chatou, a small town on the banks of the Seine about ten miles outside Paris and just a mile and a half downriver of Carrières-Saint-Denis, where this work was painted.¹ Like the towns of Argenteuil and Bougival between which it sits, Chatou had been an important locus for the Impressionists in the 1870s and 1880s. Perched on a hillside at the edge of the Seine, Carrières-Saint-Denis was a small, predominantly agricultural village; it didn't have the same draw for either tourists or artists as neighbouring Argenteuil or Chatou, but Monet had painted here in 1872 and it was to here that Derain repaired in October 1909. 1909 had been a typically chaotic year for Derain. In late January he sent six paintings to Moscow for La Toison d'Or's second exhibition; between 25 March and 2 May he sent works to the 25th Salon des Indépendants at the Tuilleries in Paris. At the beginning of the year Kahnweiler had asked him to provide the illustrations for Guillaume Apollinaire's book *The Rotting Magician*, which he worked on that summer in Neuville in the Somme. He also spent time painting landscapes in Montreuil-sur-Mer, in the Pas-de-Calais. By August he was painting in Étaples, also on the northeastern coast, and his wife's letters mention that Derain, Apollinaire and Kahnweiler met almost daily during October in the Parisian printing studio to follow every stage of their book's production.² It was presumably once the book was printed that Derain went to Carrières.

On first viewing, *Trees by a Lake: Le Parc de Carrières-Saint-Denis*' most pronounced qualities were darkness and shine (Fig 1). The main reason for its lacquered appearance was a thick layer of degraded, darkened and yellowed natural resin varnish. The degraded varnish was judged to be non-original, inappropriate and hindered full appreciation of the painting. Fortunately, the research project was accompanied by a conservation treatment and, while this is not the forum for an involved discussion of that treatment, the varnish was removed. The conservation treatment greatly enhanced the possibilities for understanding the work of art. In fact, as they progressed simultaneously, the art historical/technical study and the

¹ The name of the village was changed from Carrières-Saint-Denis to Carrières-sur-Seine around the beginning of the twentieth century.

² For a full timeline of Derain's movements in 1909, see Isabelle Monod-Fontaine, ed., *André Derain: An Outsider in French Art*, exh. cat. Copenhagen, Staatens Museum für Kunst (Copenhagen, 2007), p. 245.

conservation treatment functioned symbiotically to inform and supplement one another. Prior to the conservation treatment, very strong lighting was necessary to appreciate that the work depicted a rectangular pool surrounded by trees, with a chink of sky visible in the upper right portion of the image. Although the image is named for and was painted in a real location, the shapes of the trees and pool are broad in their suggestion; Derain has avoided minute description, opting instead for bold areas of colour.

Derain was joined in Carrières-Saint-Denis that October by Braque, who had just completed his military service, and they painted many of the same motifs together. Braque produced four paintings during his time at Carrières; Derain nine, but something that seems often to be omitted from discussion of this trip is that this was Braque's first visit to Carrières, while Derain was returning to a place that he had painted before and that would continue to play a substantial part in his oeuvre.³ Between 1899 and 1913, Derain made twenty-one paintings of Carrières-Saint-Denis. If, when viewed together, these paintings do not posit one linear development or chronology, they do acknowledge the ways in which Derain wrestled with certain motifs throughout the first decade of his career. The 1909 works form the major part of this corpus – nine paintings in total from that October with Braque – and, having visited Carrières, the depicted landscapes, including *Trees by a Lake*, are instantly recognisable. Derain's pool is found in Carrière's Parc de la Mairie; there is a definite correspondence in line and perspective (Fig 2). The park and pool were designed by a student of André Le Nôtre, the seventeenth-century garden designer famously responsible for the design of the gardens and park of Versailles, whose work marks the apotheosis of the *jardin à la française*, the formal French garden style. Constructed over three levels, with a pond and two pools, the park at Carrières conforms to those ideals. The view Derain presents of this pool is one surrounded by dense foliage. The canvas is structured and subdivided by large trees, with thick trunks, a far cry from the neat hedges that, in reality, surround the pool. The park is now a listed site in France; while it is impossible to say for certain, it is highly likely that it has been kept in this manicured form throughout its history. If this is the case, what we see in this canvas is a kind of play between real and imaginary, description and invention. This ties in with Derain's own views on landscape. Around 1906 he had written to his friend Maurice Vlaminck:

There is only one kind of painting: *landscape*. It is the most difficult. It has also, I believe, the most simple kind of composition. Because no one can stop us from imagining the world in the way that pleases us most.⁴

³ See Christopher Green, 'A Denationalized Landscape? Braque's Early Cubist Landscapes and Nationalist Geography', in *Nationalism and French Visual Culture*, edited by June Hargrove and Neil McWilliam (New Haven and London, 2005), pp. 243–67.

⁴ André Derain, undated letter to Maurice Vlaminck, in *Lettres à Vlaminck* (Paris, 1955), pp. 167–68.

Trees by a Lake is painted in oil on a moderately close weave (17cm x 17cm) canvas. The painting remains on its original strainer, with a number of early labels still attached. At 54cm x 65cm it corresponds to standard support sizes commercially available in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from artists suppliers, in the 'portrait' (*figure*) format (Fig 3). Derain used a range of different size supports across the 1909 Carrières-Saint-Denis series. During the course of this research project, the opportunity arose to examine the verso of one other work from this series (*Church at Carrières-Saint-Denis*) and his *Italian Woman* of 1913. Both were found to be on strainer supports. The choice of strainers in preference to stretchers was not consistent over the course of Derain's career, since for the fauvist series known as the 'London paintings' produced between 1906 and 1907 he used stretcher supports. Within the scope of this study it was not possible to examine any works later than 1913 to ascertain whether the shift to more economical strainers over stretchers continued later into his career as he gained increasing wealth. In the case of *Trees by a Lake*, the canvas is haphazardly stretched onto the strainer and appears to have been stretched by the artist himself; it was certainly not carried out by a professional colourman. The priming layer to *Trees by a Lake* was also artist-applied. It extends across the canvas beneath the entire composition of *Trees by a Lake*. Cross-sections taken from appropriate sample sites have been analysed through normal light and ultra-violet microscopy and SEM-EDX and indicate that the priming layer is lead-white (Fig 4). The use of this bright white priming layer makes a crucial visual impact on the viewer. In numerous places it shows through in the final work (Figs 5 and 6). In places Derain has used paint almost as a thin scumble over the priming, allowing it to flicker beneath the coloured paint like dappled light (Fig 7). These features of Derain's technique were initially totally hidden by the varnish and they are important technical means through which Derain allowed some breathing space into an otherwise claustrophobic painting.

The paint layer of *Trees by a Lake* is quite thin, which is evident in cross-sections (Fig 4). Examination of the cross-sections has shown that the pigments used were finely ground, almost certainly by machine. The palette as seen in cross-section includes earth pigments, viridian (hydrated chromium oxide, first synthesised circa 1859), and probably Prussian blue (although it was not possible to confirm this with SEM-EDX). Although not sampled in cross-section, a red lake pigment was also used in this work. Lithopone, a combination of zinc sulphide and barium sulphate, which was added to tube-paints in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as an inexpensive extender, is present in cross-sections. Derain evidently used a combination of traditional pigments and the inventions of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in the form of tube-paints to create this work. The manner in which he applied the paint was quite direct and predominant wet-in-wet. He used both patches of colour applied with a flat, bristled brush, and thin dark fluid lines to indicate contours around the pool and foliage of the trees. This linear demarcation ensured that although there is little in the way of painted detail, and despite the predominance of wet-in-wet technique the edges of shapes are evident and they do not elide into one another.

Although the palette of this painting is somewhat restricted, colour is essential to the work. Derain has used cool blue tones to create a sense of recession and depth along the pool as we gaze into the distance. Many of the dark lines that seem almost black actually contain red lake; these show Derain using the complementarity of red and green to create contrast (Fig 8). These lines are contouring lines that in particular follow the tree shapes, which are themselves mainly green. As red light hits the retina before green, this has the impact of bringing the dark red contouring line forward of the shapes that it surrounds. In traditional painting practice one would expect a cool shadow or contouring line, which would have the effect of receding behind the object and making it appear more three dimensional. The use of a red contouring line arguably has the opposite effect, of flattening the shape it surrounds, and allowing the 'contouring' line to act almost freely of the tree it surrounds, in quite an abstract fashion. It appears that Derain is making deliberate play out of his colour choices in this painting. As demonstrated in his fauvist period, Derain had a keen awareness of the visual impact of complimentary colour and was interested in the possibility of constructing images using colour as the primary tool. As he was to demonstrate in his later Classicist paintings, he was more than capable of making traditional paintings with colour and tonal choices that worked in harmony to build a representational image. In this painting he appears to be at a transitional stage, employing a more restricted palette but retaining interest in the active contrasts of complimentary colours.

WHAT LIES BENEATH: A PAINTING BELOW 'LE PARC DE CARRIÈRES'

In fact, this object contains within itself a testimony of Derain's transition from fauvism towards another mode of picture-making. Extensive drying cracks across the surface of the painting lead to the suspicion that there might be another work beneath *Trees by a Lake* (Fig 9). X-radiography confirmed that there was indeed another painting beneath *Trees by a Lake* that extended across the surface of the canvas and did not bear compositional relationship to the top painting (Fig 10). X-radiography did not show the composition with any clarity, a situation explained when cross-sections were taken from select sample-sites. Cross-sections demonstrated that before painting *Trees by a Lake* Derain had painted over the entire surface of the previous painting with a lead white priming layer. Furthermore, in some places he had also put down a thicker, lead-based, second layer below this lead white priming layer but above the first painting on the canvas (Fig 11). This second lead-based layer, which is present only intermittently and not co-extensively with the canvas, has been termed the 'filler' layer. Therefore across the canvas there are at least one and in places two lead-based paint layers between the first painting and *Trees by a Lake* preventing the full penetration of the X-rays.

Cross-section sampling revealed that, as was intimated by the drying cracks, the painting beneath *Trees by a Lake* has a much brighter palette than *Trees by a*

Lake itself (Fig 12). Where *Trees by a Lake* is dominated by Prussian blues, dark earth pigments and viridian, the painting beneath includes French ultramarine and a bright red/pink colour that is predominantly iron oxide red. Cross-sections showed that whereas lead white dominates *Trees by a Lake*, zinc white predominates in the painting beneath. The use of zinc white in the first painting on this canvas was likely a contributory factor to the extensive drying cracks seen on the surface today. Zinc white was a slow drying pigment and for this reason the Impressionist painters avoided it.⁵ Slowing the drying time of the first painting contributed to the drying cracks: the first painting was insufficiently dry when the upper layers were painted over it, leading to separation of the upper layers as the lower layers expanded on full drying. The cross-sections also showed that while *Trees by a Lake* is painted in thin layers of colour painted wet-on-wet into one another over a white priming layer, the painting beneath is painted in thick single layers of colour. There appears to be no ground or priming layer on the first painting on this canvas. The absence of a ground layer and the use of thick impasto is typical of Derain's fauvist painting practice, for example that seen in *The Boats at Collioure* of 1905.⁶

In attempting to visualise the first painting on this canvas the most useful tool has been raking light (Figs 13 and 14). The first painting was executed in very high impasto, so raised that despite the priming over of the work by the artist, the texture of that first work is still clearly visible. This texture is even more pronounced now that the glossy varnish has been removed. Due to this high impasto, raking light imaging gives a strong impression of certain shapes that could indicate the composition of the painting beneath *Trees by a Lake*. Examination of the painting in infra-red light showed no evidence of a carbon-based underdrawing. This is not surprising, as Derain often used a thin blue painted line as a way of marking out an initial composition before starting to paint, which can be seen particularly well in the unfinished *Italian Woman* of 1913. Such a blue line would not be expected to contain carbon and would thus be invisible in infra-red. Infra-red reflectography did however show some lines which are not visible on the surface of *Trees by a Lake* and therefore likely pertain instead to the painting beneath. When an infra-red reflectograph is contrast-enhanced on Photoshop, these lines can be faintly deciphered. For illustrative purposes they have been highlighted here in orange (Fig 15). These lines conform closely to the shapes suggested by raking light examination. Taken together, all this evidence suggests strongly that the painting beneath *Trees by a Lake* is a brightly coloured, highly impastoed work, probably with no ground layer. Such a technique corresponds to Derain's fauvist painting practice, which he began to transition away from in 1907. It has been widely recorded that in 1908 Derain destroyed a number of his own paintings. In particular, his dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, testified in his 1920 monograph on

⁵ See Ella Hendriks, and Louis van Tilborgh, 'New Views on Van Gogh's Development in Antwerp and Paris; An Integrated Art Historical and Technical Study of His Paintings in the Van Gogh Museum', *Academisch Proefischrift Ella Hendriks, geboren te Carshalton, Verenigde Koninkrijk, and Academisch Proefischrift Louis van Tilborgh geboren te Breukelen (Nederland, 2006)*.

⁶ *Boats at Collioure*, Museum of Modern Art, New York,
http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=78773.

the artist that Derain had burned many of his paintings in 1908.⁷ This study has found that, in this case, Derain did not burn or destroy at least one painting, but instead used it as the basis for a new artistic creation.

In order to contextualise this finding several other paintings from the 1908–1909 period were consulted. These included *Landscape with Church Tower* (1909), *The Church at Carrières-Saint-Denis* (1909), *Trees Near Martinique* (1908) and *View of Martigues* (1908). It seems highly likely that all of these are painted over earlier works. It was possible to examine two of these paintings closely, with surface light microscopy and raking light in the context of the conservation studio. The paintings examined through surface microscopy were *The Church at Carrières-Saint-Denis* and *Trees at Martinique*. In both cases, microscopic examination of cracking revealed pink, orange and red paint beneath the surface of the top paintings that bore close comparison with the colours seen in the painting beneath *Trees by a Lake* and that was evidently distinct from the dominant compositions seen today on those canvases (Figs 16 and 17). It was also possible to view an X-radiograph taken previously of *Trees at Martinique* that clearly showed the presence of a different composition underneath the upper painting (Figs 18 and 19). The texture of *The Church at Carrières-Saint-Denis* was pronounced in raking and noticeable in normal light. Again, this was not due primarily to the paint application of the upper composition, but rather to the painting beneath. Some texture was visible from the painting beneath *Trees Near Martinique*, although this had been flattened by a wax-resin lining that occurred in 1967. What texture was visible corresponded to clues present in the X-radiograph. The suspicion that *Landscape with Church Tower* and *View of Martigues* are also painted over earlier compositions stems from the visible surface texture that does not relate to the primary composition on their respective canvases. Even though these works were viewed hanging on gallery walls, the texture that can be seen is pronounced. Further work is needed to establish how many paintings by Derain from the 1908–1909 period are painted over past works. From the paintings consulted, however, it seems likely that the use of past works as supports formed part of his painting practice during this period.

⁷ 'In the years that followed [i.e. 1905 onwards], Derain made a great series of compositions with lifesize figures. Some of them he exhibited in the Indépendants – a bullfight, a painting with bathers. The bathers were luckily bought and remain preserved for us. Derain **burnt** [*verbrennt*] all the others in 1908, you see. Not even photographs of them are in existence. Thus the most important original material for the investigation of his development in 1907 is missing [...] [During the 1905–1907 period] he pursued an entirely different path.' Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *André Derain* (Leipzig, 1920), p. 5. Isabelle Monod-Fontaine also notes that Derain 'destroyed a whole collection of works, whose loss makes it impossible today to gain a full overview of the different experiments he made in that period.' *André Derain*, p. 245.

TEXTURE, SCULPTURE AND DRAIN'S COLLECTION

This evidence prompts a discussion of Derain's motives for using a past painting as the support for *Trees by a Lake* and, by extension, for other works produced in the 1908–9 period. Any such discussion is, by necessity, supposition, as it has not been possible to find any written record in which Derain refers to this practice. The decision may have centred in part on the cost-effective use of materials. He is known to have been short of money in 1909: on 23 August he wrote to Vlaminck, lamenting his finances.⁸ Another motive may have been dissatisfaction with his earlier artistic output. The story of Derain's 1908 destruction of his artwork as told by Kahnweiler in 1920 illustrates Derain's desire to eliminate his own work due to his feeling that he had been pursuing the wrong path. Derain was an artist who changed his style many times during his career and the 1907–8 period was a crucial turning point after which he never returned to the vibrant palette of fauvism. Scholars have argued that the most significant catalyst for this shift was Derain's deepening engagement with the work of Paul Cézanne after the Cézanne retrospective at the 1907 Salon d'Automne in Paris.⁹ It seems plausible that admiration for Cézanne was a significant factor in Derain's rejection of his fauvist style and perhaps indirectly a motivation for his decision to paint over his past works as a means of hiding them from view.

The materials and techniques evidence from *Trees by a Lake* does, to some degree, support this argument. Some of the techniques used in *Trees by a Lake* are redolent of Cézanne's working practices. For instance, the partial exposure of a white ground layer and the use of a relatively restricted palette that utilises both nineteenth-century innovations and traditional pigments have been noted as particular characteristics of The National Gallery's *Hillside in Provence*, which was given thorough technical analysis in 1991.¹⁰ On the other hand, there are aspects of Derain's practice that diverges from Cézanne's. Where Cézanne 'often left a gap of a millimetre or so between heavily worked contours, allowing ground colour to show

⁸ 'I have found a boat, small with two sails, that would make me happy. Unfortunately, I need one hundred francs... and I haven't got it! If you want, I could give you two canvases which you could sell, just to make you some money and you could give me the hundred francs [...] Kahnweiler is the only one who gives me money, and just what we need to live on.' André Derain, *Lettres à Vlaminck*, p. 205.

⁹ John House writes: 'If the study of Gauguin had helped liberate his picture-making in 1906, Cézanne's impact in 1907 took him in the opposite direction, to an ever-increasing anxiety about the relationship between mark-making and pictorial composition. Derain would have been well aware of Cézanne's work before this, indeed, Cézanne's influence can already be felt in the brushwork and dominant blue tonality of *The Thames at Westminster Bridge*. However, after the great display of that autumn, Cézanne's impact became overwhelming. This has widely been seen as marking the end of the short-lived Fauve 'moment' – movement seems too strong a word. For Derain, the Fauve moment was the one point in his career when he was able to transcend the lessons of his many self-imposed mentors, and his London paintings are the most vivid testimony to the excitement of that moment.' In Ernst Van Claerbergen and Barnaby Wright, eds, *André Derain: The London Paintings*, exh. cat. London, The Courtauld Gallery (London, 2005), p. 49.

¹⁰ See *Art in the Making: Impressionism*, eds David Bomford, Jo Kirby, John Leighton, and Ashok Roy (New Haven and London, 1990), p. 198.

through' (for instance along the tree trunk of *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire*) in a practice that has been described as painting the contours of objects 'in reserve', this is not how Derain used the exposure of the white priming layer in *Trees by a Lake*.¹¹ He firmly delineated the outlines of his shapes in paint and the exposed ground acts more as a gap or space between objects than a contouring line. The transition by Derain to a more restricted palette with thinner paint layers over a white priming could be interpreted as an attempt to grasp at something 'Cézannist'.¹² However, it could also be seen as part of the long road he was beginning to take toward traditional painting practices in a more general sense. Cézanne was not the only artist to leave partially exposed ground: the device of a white or cream coloured ground showing through a loosely painted sky was a common feature of Impressionist paintings and it could be argued that Derain was simply adapting a feature of his own earlier fauvist practice but restricting it to fit with the more subtle mood of his new style. The technical evidence is consistent with the art historical opinion that views Derain as having a deepening engagement with Cézanne during the period between 1907–14, but more with the notion of one artist intrigued by another than any attempt to specifically mimic their technique.

Derain's decision to use a previous painting as a support in *Trees by a Lake* has had a significant impact on the final artwork as it is seen today. It has caused both an extensive network of drying cracks and a pronounced texture that now shows even in normal light. The issue of artistic intentionality arises in relation to these two effects. It is highly unlikely that Derain intended the drying cracks that today reveal the bright colour beneath *Trees by a Lake*. That Derain primed over the entire canvas with a layer of lead white paint is evidence that this effect was unintended. This layer would have fully obscured the colour from the painting beneath at the moment of the painting's execution. This was surely a decision made by the artist to block out the bright hues from the work beneath. Derain's decision to block out the first painting with intermediate layers before painting over it stands in contrast to evidence discovered about Picasso's artistic practice in this period. Anne Hoenigswald of the National Gallery of Art, Washington has carried out extensive research into Picasso's use of previous paintings as supports for later works. Picasso often used past works without intermediate priming layers and allowed aspects of the first creations on a given canvas to influence the later paintings. In the case of *The Three Dancers* (1925), there is even explicit documentary evidence of Picasso's interest in the clues that the drying cracks give to the painting beneath.¹³ There is no such documentary evidence for Derain's interest in the drying cracks, in *Trees by a Lake* or any other works.

¹¹ Elisabeth Reissner, in *The Courtauld Cézannes*, eds Stephanie Buck, John House, Ernst Van Claerbergen and Barnaby Wright, exh. cat. London, The Courtauld Gallery (London, 2008), p. 55.

¹² 'Cézannist' is a term frequently used by Jane Lee to describe Derain's painting. See Jane Lee, *The Work of Derain between 1907 and 1914*, Master's Thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1984.

¹³ Information given at a lecture by Ann Hoenigswald, *Merging and Emerging images: Layer and Metamorphosis in Picasso's Art*, Research Forum Visiting Conservation Lecture, Courtauld Institute of Art, 17 April 2012. Also see www.nga.gov/feature/picasso/index.shtm.

As mentioned earlier, the conservation treatment of *Trees by a Lake* involved the removal of a layer of degraded natural resin varnish. The removal of this very thick varnish layer allowed the surface texture of the work to be seen more clearly. Most of the texture visible today comes from the painting below *Trees by a Lake*, not from *Trees by a Lake* itself, which was painted in thin layers with no use of impasto technique. The extent to which the texture from the first painting, so apparent today, would have been apparent when *Trees by a Lake* was first finished is debatable. As paint dries it contracts and this will have had some effect in increasing the extent of the texture on the surface of *Trees by a Lake* over time. Thus the texture seen today is likely somewhat greater than that seen by the artist. Derain did make some attempts to control the emergence of the surface texture from the underneath painting. Cross-sections have shown that he used both a general overall priming layer and also a thicker second 'filler' layer intermittently in specific places across the surface of the first work on this canvas before painting *Trees by a Lake*. This implies that he knew there would be an issue with the surface texture and took steps to control it. However, it also implies that the surface he arrived at was acceptable to him. He could have chosen to put down a thick second preparatory layer across the entire surface of the second canvas to ensure that no texture came through into the final work, but he did not do so. This suggests that he may have been prepared to accept a 'non-pristine' working surface for *Trees by a Lake*. This impression is reinforced by reference to the back of the painting, which is stretched haphazardly onto the strainer in a rough manner that suggests that the artist was content with an art object that expressed a sense of its materiality. The idea that Derain found a somewhat textured working surface for *Trees by a Lake* acceptable has been reinforced by examination of other Derain paintings from the period. *The Church near Carrières-sur-Seine*, *Landscape with Church Tower* and *Trees Near Martigues* all show pronounced surface textures, visible in normal light, that do not relate to the compositions depicted. It seems therefore that Derain was not only repeating the practice of painting over past works (as discussed earlier in this report), but also repeating the practice of allowing the first painting on his supports to have some effect on the final surface texture of his finished paintings in the 1908–9 period. The extent of the effect that Derain intended is unknown, but the repetition of the texture across a number of works produced over two years seems to indicate more than a singular unintended error of practice.

In order to regain a sense of this painting and its particular conception of texture within the context of Derain's output, it is crucial to acknowledge the sheer variety of his oeuvre. Over the half century of his career his painted work alone encompassed Fauvism, Cubism, and Classicism. As this research project has progressed, however, it has seemed increasingly important to consider Derain's work not only through the terminologies and schools in which it is usually discussed, but also through the prism of medium. In addition to his oils, Derain produced watercolours, drawings, engravings, ceramics, sculptures in stone, metal

and even paper, as well as being a sought after theatre designer.¹⁴ This diversity of materials was reflected in his own collection: in addition to paintings and sculpture, Derain formed one of the most important early collections of African art.¹⁵ Photographs of Derain in his studio and of the way in which he displayed his diverse collections suggest that such juxtapositions between his works and his collected work – and between works in different media – would not be counter to his own ideas and practices. One of the most striking things about the displays in these photographs is their treatment of dimensionality. Layers have been essential to both the construction and the study of this painting; not only discrete layers, but also the projection of these layers through one another. While it is traditional to think of a painting as a two-dimensional object, this technical and contextual research has prompted us to consider this painting in terms of a more complex conception of dimensions; one that seems also to be expressed, although in different form, in these studio photographs. A photograph from 1908 shows Derain holding a small sculpture: behind him on the wall hangs an engraving of bathers, while a sculpture of a woman sits next to him, juxtaposed in turn with an African sculpted figure. Four years later, a photograph from 1912 shows African masks hung on a wall, with primitive sculptures, a model of a ship and a painting of a ship placed in front of them.¹⁶ Hanging these masks on the wall, as one would a painting, they seem to fall somewhere between two and three dimensions, attached to the wall but projecting out from it. It is worth noting that in this photograph the painting that would traditionally be hung on the wall is brought, by Derain's curating, forward onto the floor, the two-dimensional representation of the ship leaning against the three-dimensional model. Although we have not been able to prove our suspicions, it is also worth acknowledging the similarity in shape between these masks and some of the marks visible beneath Derain's paintings of the period, such as *Trees Near Martinique* (Fig 19).¹⁷

Derain's sculptures offer another perspective on the problems of dimension and protrusion; a different working out in form of the same ideas. Pieces such as the *Crouching Figure* from 1907 typify his work from this period: discrete, formed of one piece of stone, many speak to a kind of introversion and interiority.¹⁸ Here, inwardness both form and subject of the piece. Not only does the figure turn in on itself; Derain's mark-making cuts shape into the whole. It is in a way a reversal of texture as seen in *Trees by a Lake*: in the painting, texture pushes out through from canvas, where here it is incised into the stone. Even into the next decade, Derain's sculpture bears the marks of this kind of working. Never quite in the round, many

¹⁴ See particularly Pieter Coray, *André Derain: Sculpteur*, exh. cat. Lugano, Galleria Pieter Coray; Paris, Galerie de France; Salzburg, Galerie Welz; Berlin, Galerie Wolfgang Werner (Milan, 1994).

¹⁵ See *Collection André Derain et à divers amateurs*, sale catalogue, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 9–11 March 1955 (Paris, 1955).

¹⁶ Although it has not been possible to reproduce these photographs, they can be found in Monod-Fontaine, *André Derain*, pp. 244, 247.

¹⁷ The most prominent mask in this second photograph is a Fang mask from Gabon, now in the collection of the Centre Pompidou, Paris.

¹⁸ For this and other examples, see Coray, *André Derain: Sculpteur*.

appear to be somewhere between relief and sculpture. It is important to note that Derain was not the only artist working in this way: but if anything, comparing his work to examples by artists such as Matisse and Brancusi presses how widespread this interest was.¹⁹ Although we have not been able to find anything in Derain's writings relating explicitly to texture, situating Derain as an artist working within a particular milieu and as an artist in media other than oil has helped us interpret the textured surface of his canvas. It is evident from his work in sculpture and his collection that Derain was interested in texture and in relief. It is also evident that such ideas were current amongst the group of artists with whom he worked most closely in the period from 1908–12: by 1912, Braque and Picasso would have already created the first Cubist collages.

ROGER FRY, LONDON AND THE COURTAULD COLLECTION

Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler acquired *Trees by a Lake: Le Parc de Carrières-Saint-Denis* from Derain in 1909; it is noted in the Kahnweiler archives as 'K2130', in accordance with Kahnweiler's cataloguing scheme.²⁰ In order, however, to address both how the painting came to be in the Courtauld's collection and how it fits into the broader production of Derain and his contemporaries, due attention must be paid to the importance of the painting's first and only collector on its subsequent history: Roger Eliot Fry. Born in 1866, Roger Fry is one of the most important figures in the development of modern art history. Having worked to found the Burlington Magazine in 1903 and then as its co-editor and as Curator of Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, it was Fry who coined the term 'Post-Impressionist', organized the first exhibition of the Post-Impressionists in London and, for this inaugural exhibition, brought *Trees by a Lake* from Paris to London, where it has remained ever since. The back of the painting bears witness to this movement: alongside Kahnweiler's label is one for the exhibition at the Grafton Galleries (Figs 20 and 21). It was here that Fry purchased it and directly from his collection that it entered The Courtauld Gallery, upon his death in 1934.²¹

Although it has not been possible to locate any reviews which mention Derain as more than just a fine painter of faience, the exhibition received a great deal of hostility from the critics: Fry's own copy of a book published as a guide to the exhibition, now in the Courtauld library, bears an inscription which, it would seem, makes a joke out of someone comparing the paintings to 'pats of margarine' (Fig 22).²² Fry's views on the Post-Impressionists remain some of their most pertinent and insightful criticism and, given both the relative dearth of scholarship on Derain

¹⁹ For more of these comparisons, see Coray, *André Derain: Sculpteur*.

²⁰ See Lee, *The Work of Derain*, p. 8.

²¹ See Christopher Reed, 'The Fry Collection at the Courtauld Institute Galleries', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 132, no. 1052 (November 1990), 766–72.

²² See C. J. Holmes, *Notes on the Post-Impressionist Painters: Grafton Galleries, 1910–1911* (London, 1910) in the Book Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, classmark D547 Hol.

and his importance to its history, Fry's writings provide an invaluable lens through which to reconsider *Trees by a Lake*. It was in 1909, the same year as Derain painted *Trees by a Lake*, that Fry set down in *Vision and Design* his thoughts on formal analysis. As one of the major exponents of formalism, Fry privileged a work's form over its social or cultural context. In Fry's eyes, the Impressionists had worked to the detriment of form. Impressionism

...encouraged an artist to paint a tree as it appeared to him at the moment under particular circumstances. It insisted so much upon the importance of his rendering this exact impression that his work often completely failed to express a tree at all; as transferred to canvas it was just so much shimmer and colour. The 'treeness' of the tree was not rendered... ; all the emotion and associations such as trees may be made to convey in poetry were omitted.²³

What, for Fry, abounds in the work of the Post-Impressionists is this very 'treeness'; what he terms 'the emotional significance which lies in things'.²⁴ It is not only, however, in the break with Impressionism that they achieve this. Fry's writings on the Post-Impressionists note repeatedly that they were also breaking away from the conventions of realistic representation that had dominated European art since the Renaissance. In what Fry calls 'the revolt against the photographic vision of the nineteenth century', the Post-Impressionists '[cut] away the merely representative element in art to establish more and more firmly the fundamental laws of expressive form in its barest, most abstract elements.'²⁵

This, then, seems a fruitful light in which to consider *Trees by a Lake*, not only because of the composition's strong geometric qualities, but also because closer examination, particularly without varnish, has revealed Derain's interest in texture. *Trees by a Lake* is a painting of trees and pool, but, as previously discussed, there are a whole host of shapes, contours and reliefs at work on this canvas that bear little or no relation to the depicted scene. There is more at work in *Trees by a Lake* than paint applied to canvas in an even, illusionistic manner. In the same defence of the Post-Impressionists, which was published in *The Nation* in November 1910 in response to criticism of the Grafton Galleries show, Fry wrote:

these pictures, like the works of the early primitives, and like the masters of Oriental art, do not make holes in the wall, through which another vision is made evident. They form part of the surface which they decorate, and suggest visions to the imagination, rather than impose them upon the senses.²⁶

²³ Roger Fry, 'The Post-Impressionists', in *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*, exh. cat. London, Grafton Galleries, 8 November 1910–15 January 1911 (London, 1910), pp. 7–13, p. 9.

²⁴ Fry, 'The Post-Impressionists', p. 9.

²⁵ Roger Fry, 'The Grafton Gallery – I', in Christopher Reed, ed., *A Roger Fry Reader* (Chicago and London, 1996), pp. 86–89, pp. 86, 87.

²⁶ Fry, 'The Grafton Gallery – I', p. 88.

Derain's painting, we suggest, can be viewed as just such a texturally rich decorative surface. Although we have found no explicit record of why Fry decided to buy this painting, it seems highly likely, given his own artistic and art historical interests, that valued precisely these decorative and poetic elements.

Cézanne's shadow looms large over *Trees by a Lake* and has loomed also over much of this research project. Its presence is equally palpable in the *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* exhibition and in much of Fry's writing on the Post-Impressionists: it was 'the mysterious and isolated' figure of Cézanne who, for Fry, was 'the great genius of the movement'; who 'recovered for modern art a whole lost language of form'.²⁷ It is Cézanne's work in which 'the feeling for plastic form and strict correlation of planes appears in the highest degree', though such discussion of plastic form and plane speaks equally to Derain's 1909 landscapes.²⁸ As *Trees by a Lake* owes such an explicit debt to Cézanne, did Fry purchase it purely because of its resemblance to the master? Happily for this project, Fry's writing on Derain bears strong witness to his appreciation of Derain's particular skill on its own terms. Of the paintings on show at the Grafton Galleries, Fry wrote that 'Derain, in particular, shows a strange and quite new power of discovering those elements in a scene which appeal to the imagination with an immediacy comparable to that of music': indeed, Fry concludes that particular article by describing Derain's power as the 'main achievement of the Post-Impressionists' and Derain as one of 'the most remarkable of all the contemporary men'.²⁹ Comparing him later to Picasso, he wrote:

...knowing both, I feel personally (though I should like to express it as tentatively and hesitatingly as possible)... that Derain, by pushing along the road which Picasso pointed down only to turn aside, has arrived at a weightier, more moving conception of pictorial expression.³⁰

Although they are rarely echoed in contemporary scholarship, these views recur amongst Derain's earliest critics and collaborators: in his early writings on the beginnings of Cubism, Apollinaire described 'Picasso's cubism [as] the outgrowth of a movement originating with Derain'.³¹ As this project has developed, it has become an increasing concern of the authors to acknowledge and, to some degree, to rectify the negative impact of two very different forms of collaboration on Derain's reputation. This is not only the collaboration of his early career, the extraordinary circle of artists with whom he worked and, in comparison with whom, he is

²⁷ Fry, 'The Post-Impressionists', p. 9; Roger Fry, 'The Post-Impressionists – II', in Reed, *A Roger Fry Reader*, pp. 90–94, p. 90; Roger Fry, 'Post-Impressionism', in Reed, *A Roger Fry Reader*, pp. 99–110, p. 109.

²⁸ Fry, 'Post-Impressionism', p. 108.

²⁹ Roger Fry, 'A Postscript on Post-Impressionism', in Reed, *A Roger Fry Reader*, pp. 95–98, p. 98.

³⁰ Roger Fry, 'Picasso', in Reed, *A Roger Fry Reader*, pp. 343–46, p. 344.

³¹ Guillaume Apollinaire, quoted in Lee, *The Work of Derain*, p. 9.

sometimes relegated to a second tier – the list includes Matisse, Picasso and Braque – but also that of the war years and a much darker stain on Derain's name. This is not the forum for a discussion of Derain's politics, but it must be recognised that in November 1941 Derain participated in an artists' tour to Nazi Germany organized by Arno Breker, Hitler's favourite sculptor, which irrevocably damaged his reputation. He joined this expedition partly as an attempt to recover property that had been requisitioned by the Nazis; he was also trying, at least in part, to free a group of arrested artists. After the war, however, Derain's name appeared on the first list of collaborators. It didn't matter that he had fought throughout the First World War: he was ostracized from the art world, banned from exhibiting, banned from the Musée national d'art moderne, whose first director had been a major figure of the Resistance and who devoted so much time and energy to Derain's former colleagues. No one was interested, or wanted to be seen to be interested, in a painter who had so compromised himself. He was not the figurehead with whom to imagine France's bright new future and so Derain became a somewhat peripheral figure. It has thus been imperative, in this research project, to pay due attention to Derain's debt to Cézanne, while also pressing his individual talent; to acknowledge the group of artists alongside whom he worked and exhibited, while also granting that this painting was first and should be now recognised as a unique and vital piece of the development of modern art.

Concluding Remarks: The Future of 'Trees by a Lake'

Upon Fry's death in 1934, *Trees by a Lake* entered The Courtauld Gallery's collection as part of 'a selection of the art he had accumulated through his career as a painter and critic'.³² The curatorial files note that, upon examination in the summer of 1936, its state was 'Fair', with 'signs of cracking'.³³ By 2012, when the painting was first presented for both the research project and conservation treatment, its condition had worsened. The drying cracks were extensive across the surface of the work and the thick, glossy and yellow varnish obscured the painting, preventing appreciation of the artistic merits of the piece. A major part of this research project has been the contextualisation of this painting, *Trees by a Lake*, within Derain's oeuvre, and particularly within his 1908–9 period. This contributed to the decisions made in conservation, as it was found that other paintings by Derain from this period had never been varnished, that many remain unvarnished today and that, as a result, they have a very different visual appearance to *Trees by a Lake* as it appeared in early 2012. Removing the old degraded varnish contributed significantly to bringing *Trees by a Lake* closer in appearance to other works in the Carrières-Saint-Denis series. Removing the varnish also allowed greater appreciation of the effect of Derain's artistic techniques, a number of which had previously been hidden from view. Removing the darkened varnish has led to a re-appreciation of the painting

³² Reed, 'The Fry Collection', p. 766.

³³ Curatorial files, The Courtauld Gallery.

as a work of art and has lead to discussions about hanging the painting on the walls of The Courtauld Gallery, instead of putting it back into storage, where it had been for decades. This research project concludes, therefore, not only having made important discoveries about Derain's working practices, but also having raised awareness and appreciation of this painting. The research project and treatment, proceeding in tandem, are an excellent example of how collaborations between art historical inquiry, technical research and conservation treatment bring about greater success than when the three modes act in isolation.

IMAGES

1. Before treatment photograph of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)
2. The pool at Carrières-Saint-Denis. (Photograph: Francesca Whitlum-Cooper)
3. Verso of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)
4. Cross-section photomicrographs showing thin paint layers to *Trees by a Lake* and white priming beneath paint layer. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)
5. Post-treatment photograph of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)
6. Photograph details showing instances where Derain has allowed the white priming layer to show through in the final painting. (Photographs: Cleo Nisse)
7. Photograph detail showing thin scumble of paint passing over white priming so that the viewer can see the light preparatory layer flicker beneath the surface of the coloured upper paint layer. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)
8. Photomicrograph detail showing that the dark contour lines around the green trees contains red lake and is warm in tone. Derain is using the contrast of complimentary colours. (Photograph and photomicrograph: Cleo Nisse)
9. Photomicrograph details of drying cracks on the surface of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photomicrograph: Cleo Nisse).
10. X-Radiograph of *Trees by a Lake* (X-radiograph: Cleo Nisse and Professor Aviva Burnstock)
11. Cross-sections showing both white priming layer beneath trees by a lake and 'filler layer' beneath. Both are lead based. (Photomicrographs: Cleo Nisse)
12. Cross-sections confirmed that the palette of the painting beneath *Trees by a Lake* is much brighter. Photomicrograph of cross-section. (Photomicrograph: Cleo Nisse)
13. Black and White Raking Light Photo of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)
14. Digital raking light photo of *Trees by a Lake* taken after varnish removal. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)

15. Infra-red reflectogram of *Trees by a Lake*, contrast enhanced, with orange lines indicating lines that are present on the reflectogram but do not show on the painting in normal light. (Image: Cleo Nisse)
16. André Derain, *The Church near Carrieres-Sur-Seine*, 1909. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSr17. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)
17. Photo-micrograph of drying crack showing bright orange/pink painting beneath *The Church near Carrieres-Sur-Seine*. (Photograph Cleo Nisse)
18. André Derain, *Trees at Martinique*, ca. 1908. Statens Museum fur Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSr15. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)
19. X-radiograph of *Trees at Martinique* (X-Radiograph taken by Jakob Skou-Hansen and Troels Filtenborg).
20. Galerie Kahnweiler label on the verso of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph: Francesca Whitlum-Cooper)
21. Label on the verso of *Trees by a Lake* noting name of packing company, CHENUE EMBAILLEUR, and, in pencil, '1910... a la Grafton Gallery, London'. (Photograph: Francesca Whitlum-Cooper)
22. Inscription in Roger Fry's copy of C. J. Holmes, *Notes on the Post-Impressionist Painters: Grafton Galleries, 1910-1911* (London, 1910) in the Book Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, classmark D547 Hol. (Photograph: Francesca Whitlum-Cooper)



Fig 1. Before treatment photograph of *Trees by a Lake*, (Photograph Cleo Nisse).



Fig 2. The pool at Carrières-Saint-Denis. (Photograph: Francesca Whitlum-Cooper)

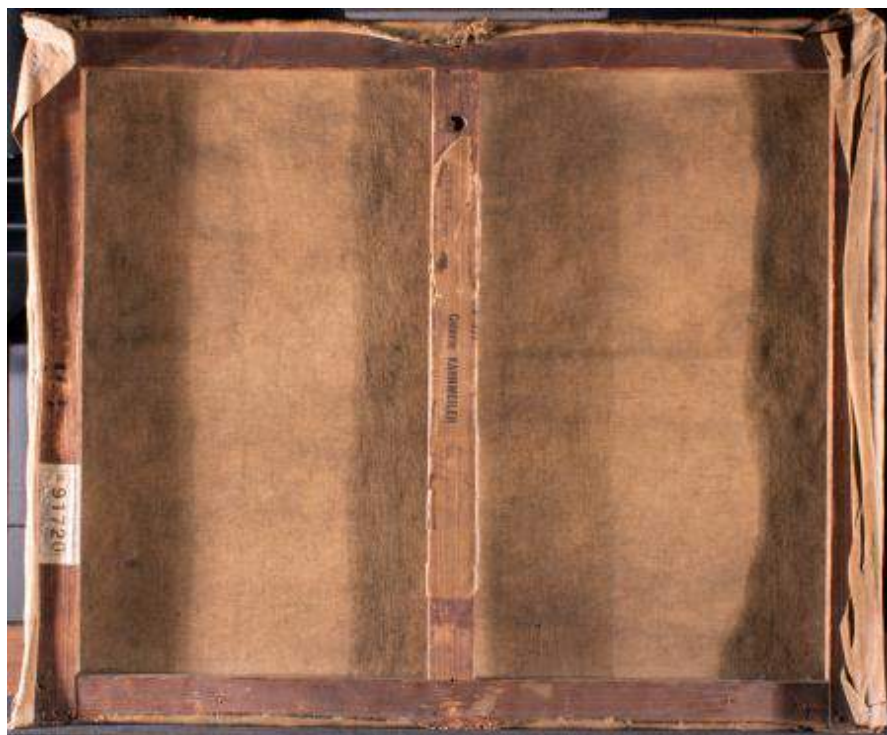


Fig 3. Verso of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph, Cleo Nisse).

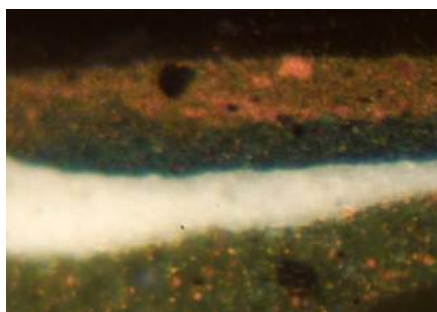
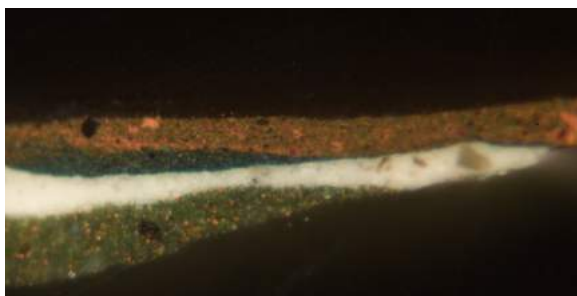


Fig 4. Cross-section photomicrographs showing thin paint layers to *Trees by a Lake* and white priming beneath paint layer. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)



Fig 5. Post-treatment photograph of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)



Fig 6. Photograph details showing instances where Derain has allowed the white priming layer to show through in the final painting. (Photographs: Cleo Nisse)



Fig 7. Photograph detail showing thin scumble of paint passing over white priming so that the viewer can see the light preparatory layer flicker beneath the surface of the coloured upper paint layer. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)

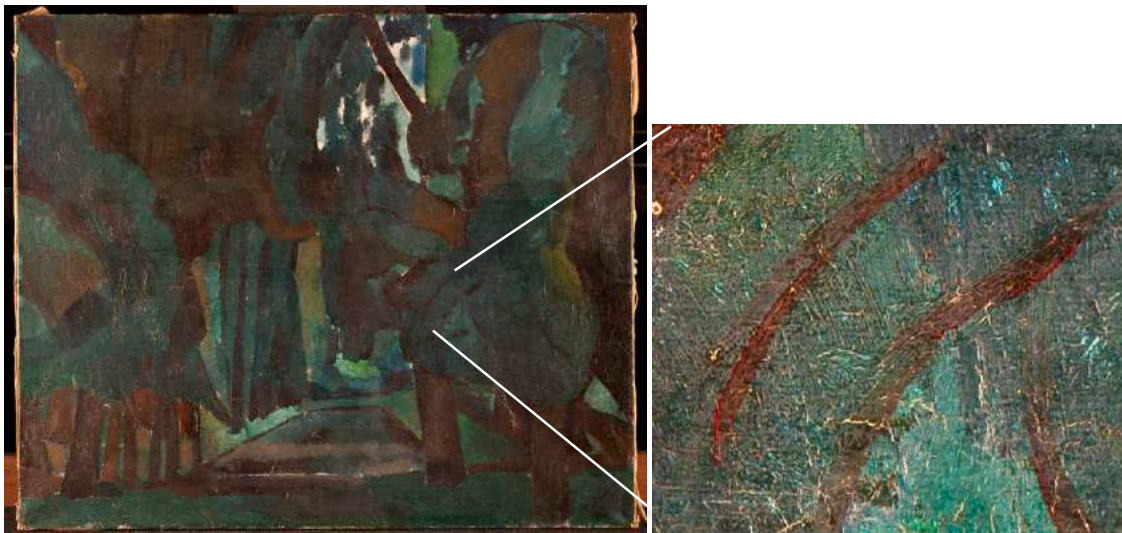


Fig 8. Photomicrograph detail showing that the dark contour lines around the green trees contains red lake and is warm in tone. Derain is using the contrast of complimentary colours. (Photograph and photomicrograph: Cleo Nisse)

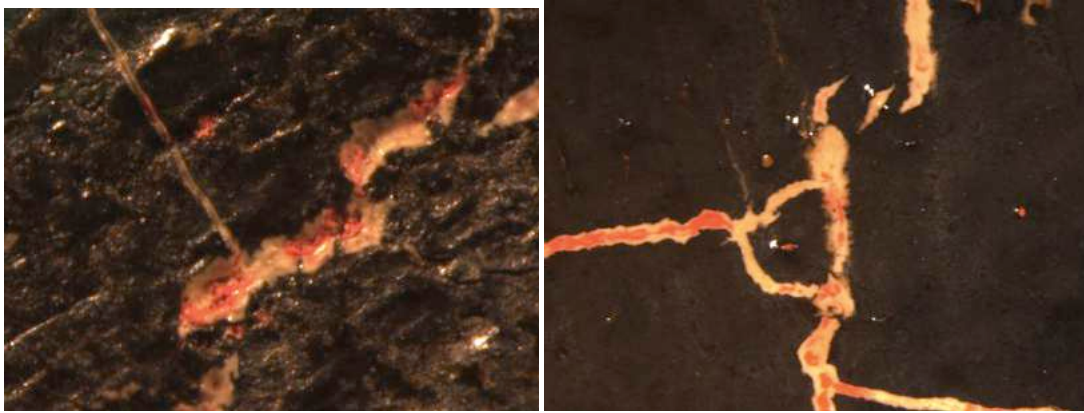


Fig 9. Photomicrograph details of drying cracks on the surface of *Trees by a Lake*.
(Photomicrograph: Cleo Nisse).



Fig 10. X-Radiograph of *Trees by a Lake* (X-radiograph: Cleo Nisse and Professor
Aviva Burnstock)

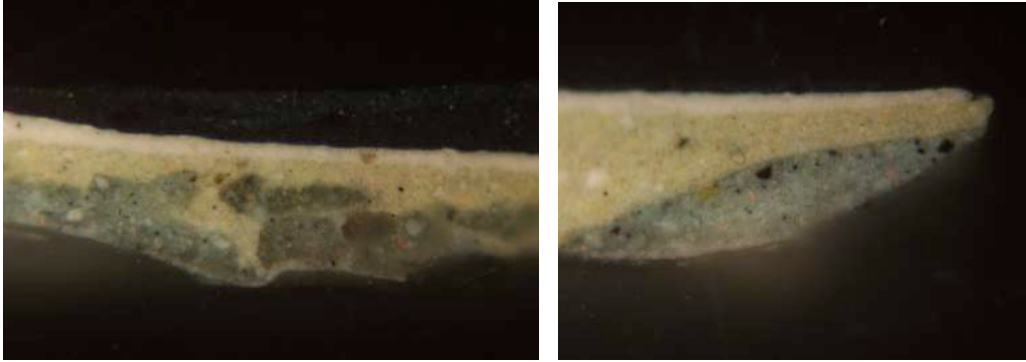


Fig 11. Cross-sections showing both white priming layer beneath *trees by a lake* and 'filler layer' beneath. Both are lead based. (Photomicrographs: Cleo Nisse)

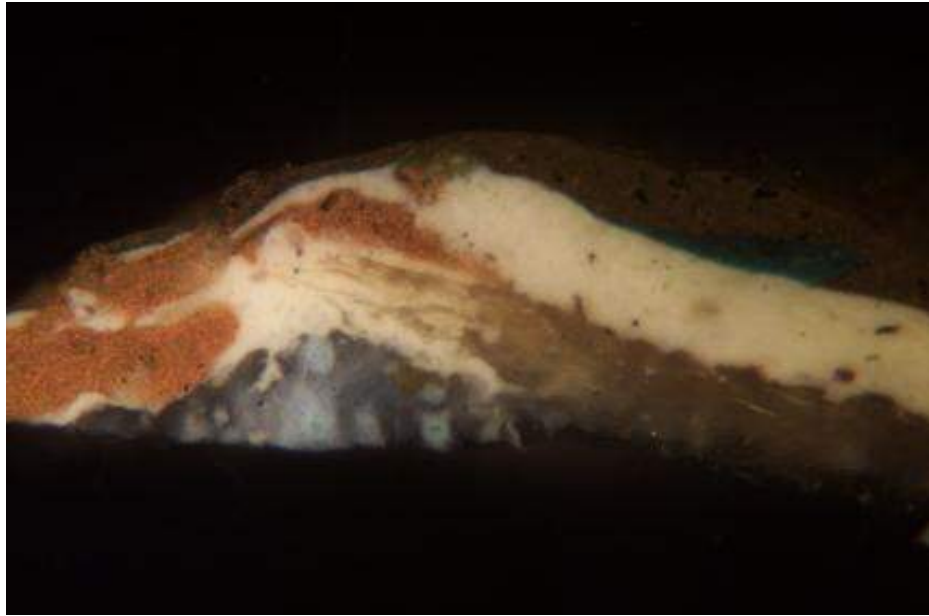


Fig 12. Cross-sections confirmed that the palette of the painting beneath *Trees by a Lake* is much brighter. Photomicrograph of cross-section. (Photomicrograph: Cleo Nisse)



Fig 13. Black and White Raking Light Photo of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)

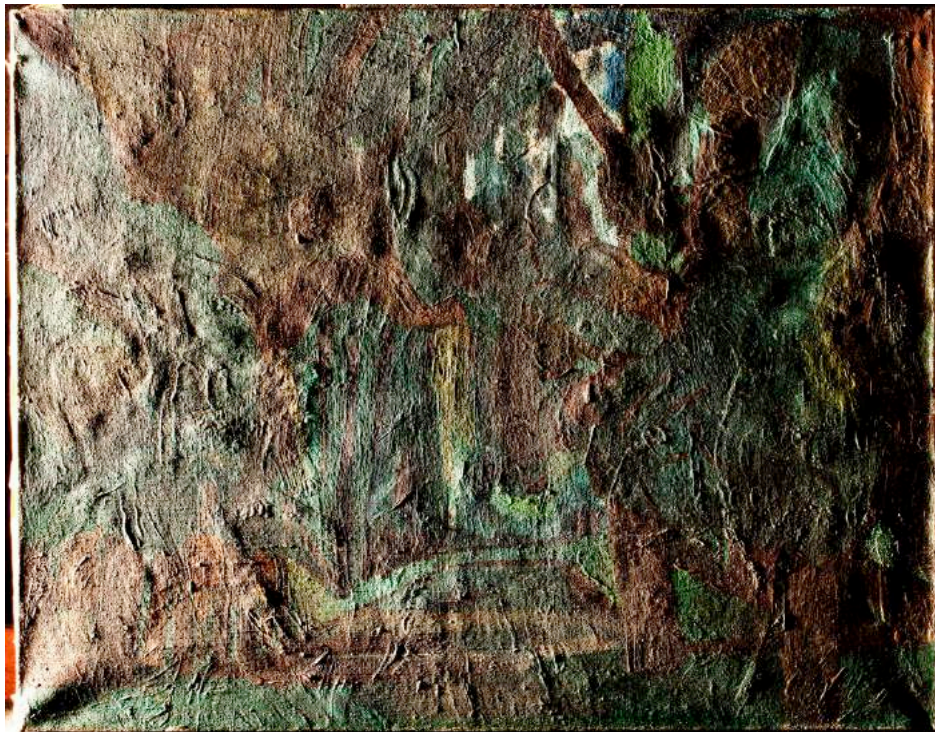


Fig 14. Digital raking light photo of *Trees by a Lake* taken after varnish removal. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)



Fig 15. Infra-red reflectogram of *Trees by a Lake*, contrast enhanced, with orange lines indicating lines that are present on the reflectogram but do not show on the painting in normal light. (Image: Cleo Nisse)



Fig 16. André Derain, *The Church near Carrieres-Sur-Seine*, 1909. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSr17. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)



Fig 17. Photo-micrograph of drying crack showing bright orange/pink painting beneath *The Church near Carrieres-Sur-Seine*. (Photograph Cleo Nisse)



Fig 18. André Derain, *Trees at Martinique*, ca. 1908. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSr15. (Photograph: Cleo Nisse)



Fig 19. X-radiograph of *Trees at Martinique* (X-Radiograph taken by Jakob Skou-Hansen and Troels Filtenborg)



Fig 20. Galerie Kahnweiler label on the verso of *Trees by a Lake*. (Photograph: Francesca Whitlum-Cooper)



Fig 21. Label on the verso of *Trees by a Lake* noting name of packing company, CHENUE EMBAILLEUR, and, in pencil, '1910... a la Grafton Gallery, London'. (Photograph: Francesca Whitlum-Cooper)

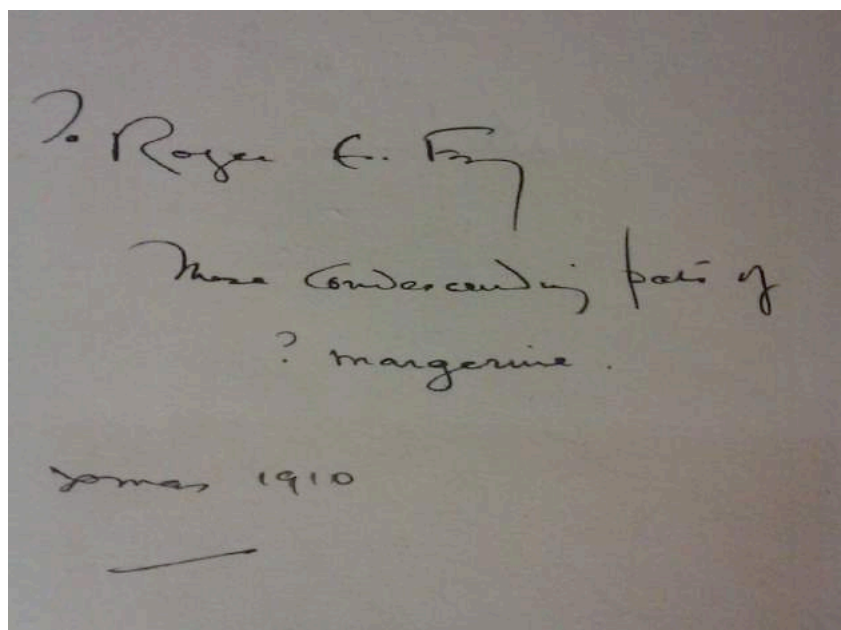


Fig 22. Inscription in Roger Fry's copy of C. J. Holmes, *Notes on the Post-Impressionist Painters: Grafton Galleries, 1910-1911* (London, 1910) in the Book Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, classmark D547 Hol. (Photograph: Francesca Whitlum-Cooper)

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