

Early XX century Impressionist painting of a view.

“Albert Marquet: Dakar Harbour 1908”

Nicola Ludwig



Comments on the reflectograms: general

The reflectogram of the painting does not show significant variations from the version visible to the naked eye, there are no fusions of different pigments used for restoration demonstrating the painting's excellent condition of conservation. Similarly there is no evidence of preparatory drawings underneath the surface layer of paint. Traces of parts of the coloured background, the fishermen, the veranda, some houses, the sea and the rocks, on the other hand, are much in evidence and permit a more clearly *fauve* reading of the colour scheme of the picture which at first sight does not appear to conform completely to what the artist typically produced.

It should be noted that in the reflectogram the picture appears to have more contrasting shades of light and dark as a result of the transparency of the dirty patina still present on the picture's surface membrane.

Some minor compositional revisions, discussed below, permit an evaluation of the work as the fruit of labouring on an extremely complex, elaborate painting even if the end result is not as balanced scenically as in other works attributed to the same artist and more known.

As far as the angle of the signature is concerned, even the infrared picture does not allow the author's handwriting and other writings to be identified with certainty. In spite of the obvious presence of graphic marks, the irremediable

combination of pigments prevents any possibility of clearly and incontrovertibly identifying the signature.

Infrared image of the painting



Details

Fishermen

The reflectograms show the infrared transparency of several colours above all in the clothes and flesh. These are the main variations from what is normally visible, proof of the dedicated care taken by the artist to the scene, particularly to the anatomy of the figures and their distribution within the scene; the figures almost appear to dance on the beach.



fishermen

There are no variations from the version seen with the naked eye apart from a few details: an earlier position of the legs of the fourth and eighth fisherman and a change in the position of the rope pulled by the fishermen. The reflectogram clearly shows this has been raised.



Fishermen's rope



Note the change in position of the leg and feet of the fourth fisherman pulling the rope (bottom left in the picture) which were re-painted in slightly altered positions. A more decisive compositional change can be seen with the foot of the eighth fisherman.



Eighth fisherman

Hut



The transparency of some of the yellow/ochre pigments permits a clean reading of the structure of the extremely carefully drawn hut. Although there is no evidence in the reflectogram of anything different from what is already visible in the painting, the transparency of the patina of dirt and the improved contrast between certain pigments do nevertheless draw attention to the characteristic brush-work and the method of

painting the background colours which is more in the *fauve* manner than intuition would suggest at first sight.

Veranda

The reflectograms show the infrared transparency of several colours, particularly in the roof and in the green of the sea at the horizon. There are no variations from the version visible with the naked eye.



Veranda

Boats



In this case too the transparency of several pigments in infrared and the reading without the superficial patina allows more contrasts to be seen in the drawing and background colours, particularly the way the huge mass of quays visible between the horizon and the boat have been portrayed, lead to the conclusion that this

picture was painted in the usual manner of the author.

Signature

The reflectograms show the infrared transparency of several colours (little wall on the right) but they are generally not significant variations from what can be seen with the naked eye. It appears to be hard to distinguish any precise graphic mark indicative of writing or with which the handwriting of the artist can be recognised with any certainty. One must presume, therefore, that however easily distinguished the trace of a mark is, the pigments were

combined irremediably at the background stage or during the finishing touches to the extent that it prevents any possibility of reading the signature clearly and incontrovertibly.