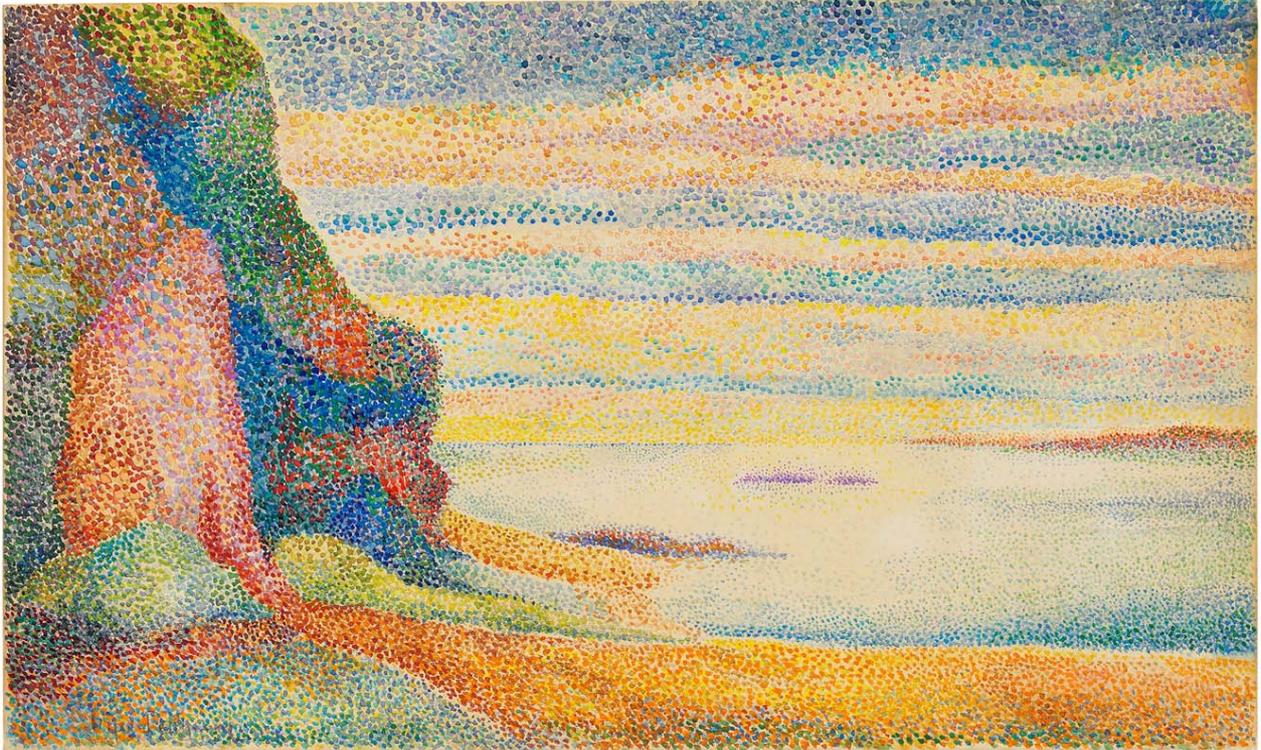


# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST

HIPPOLYTE PETITJEAN

Mâcon 1854 - 1929 Paris

*Falaise en Provence [Coastal Landscape with Cliffs]*

Watercolour on paper, laid down on board.

Signed in purple ink at the lower left: *hipp Petitjean*.

302 x 498 mm

PROVENANCE: Schoneman Galleries, New York – Monique Knowlton (Mrs Hugh Knowlton, Jr.), New York – Sale, Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, 9 December 1969, lot 44 – Private collection, New York – Colnaghi, London, by 2001 – Private collection, United Kingdom

EXHIBITIONS: *An Exhibition of Master Drawings*, Adam Williams Fine Art, New York, 2<sup>nd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> May 2001, and Colnaghi, London 13<sup>th</sup> June - 20<sup>th</sup> July 2001, no. 54, reprod.

The present sheet is a fine example of what are arguably Hippolyte Petitjean's most distinctive and original works; his vibrant pointillist watercolours. These were often made as independent works of art, to be sold to French or foreign collectors. The range and variety of Petitjean's pointillist watercolours were only rediscovered several years after his death, at a centenary exhibition of the artist's work held at the Galerie de l'Institut in Paris in 1955. As one modern scholar has noted, *As with most of [Petitjean's] works, his watercolours are not dated, nor are their locations identified. In executing them, he employed the divided colour technique very freely, applying dabs of colour in a loose network that allows the white of the paper to show through ... in his pure landscapes the artist takes a more individual approach, subtly modulating the different areas of colour to suggest gradual spatial recession or the light effects of a setting sun.*

Hippolyte Petitjean made his Salon debut in 1880, and four years later met Georges Seurat. He soon joined the group of artists known collectively as the Neo-Impressionists, led by Seurat and Paul Signac. Petitjean enjoyed a close friendship with Seurat, whose influence is particularly noticeable in the younger artist's dark conté crayon drawings of this period. In his mature work, he continued to remain true to the pointillist techniques of Seurat, although his compositions were also influenced by the work of the Symbolist painters, particularly Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. Petitjean exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Indépendants in Paris from 1891 onwards, and the following year took part in a number of small gallery exhibitions devoted to the Neo-Impressionist artists.

Unlike many of his Neo-Impressionist colleagues, Petitjean struggled financially for much of his career, and for many years lived in poverty, earning a modest salary as an art teacher. It was not until the sale of some of his paintings at a group exhibition of Neo-Impressionist artists at the Galerie Durand-Ruel in 1899 that he achieved a small measure of financial stability, but later years still found sales few and far between, with paintings, drawings and watercolours often sold to creditors in exchange for services, or to pay bills. Nevertheless, Petitjean continued to exhibit at the Indépendants, and in the 1909 exhibition a painting was bought by the State. After 1917 Petitjean's

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST

production slowed considerably, although his work continued to be exhibited with those of the Neo-Impressionists.

Although he lived to the age of seventy-five, Petitjean was never very prolific as a painter. His oeuvre of around 350 paintings includes landscapes, urban scenes, mythological subjects and, occasionally, portraits. These works were often preceded by several preparatory studies, made en plein-air, though the paintings themselves were almost always executed in his large Parisian studio, built with the proceeds from the sale of two paintings by his friend Seurat. Petitjean maintained an adherence to Neo-Impressionist principles throughout his career, even after the decline in the movement's critical fortunes following Seurat's death in 1891. Not long after this some members of the group, notably Camille Pissarro and his son Lucien, started to become disillusioned with the rigid demands of the pointillist technique. However, Petitjean seems never to have completely abandoned pointillism as a method of artistic expression.

A photo-certificate from Stéphane Kempa accompanies the present sheet, which will be included in his forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Petitjean's work.