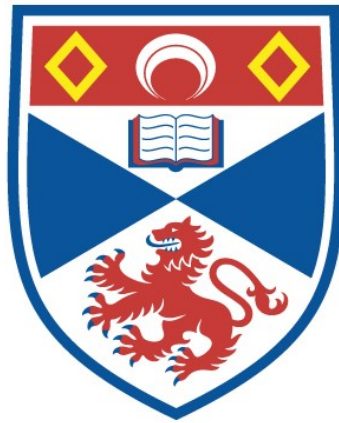


P. SIGNAC'S "D'EUGÈNE DELACROIX AU  
NÉO-IMPRESSIONISME" :  
A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

Heather Buckner Vitaglione

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MLitt  
at the  
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néo-impressionnisme ": a translation  
and commentary.

M. Litt Dissertation

University of St Andrews

Department of Art History

1985

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I, Heather Buckner Vitaglione, hereby declare that this dissertation has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a candidate for the degree of M.Litt. as of October 1983.

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## ABSTRACT

Paul Signac's 'D'Eugène Delacroix' au néo-impressionnisme'; a translation and commentary is, to begin with, the first English translation of the painter Signac's treatise written in defense of Neo-Impressionism in 1899. It is one of the rare theoretical treatises written at the end of the 19th century and perhaps more importantly, by an actual participant in the movement. Therefore the treatise's historical interest is unquestionable.

In addition to the translation is a brief glossary of technical terms used by Signac but not explained in the text and a colour chart for reference on passages on colour, for Neo-Impressionism was, above all, a movement concerned with colour.

The many scientific, literary and artistic sources cited by Signac in the text are either identified in detailed footnotes or, in some instances, in the introduction.

The introduction discusses Signac's background and his motives for changing from palette to pen. It also includes a brief comparison of Signac's practice vs his theory with several visual examples. Signac's major sources and the treatise's style are discussed in greater detail. Signac's later career is briefly touched upon particularly in reference to his contact with other artists.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this dissertation will provide the reader with enough supplementary material to better appreciate the vital qualities of D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, and to become better acquainted with its author, Paul Signac.

PREFACE

Why undertake an English translation of Paul Signac's D'Eugène Delacroix au nèó-impressionnisme first published in 1899? First of all, the work has never before been translated into English. Secondly, it is one of the rare theoretical treatises on painting written at the end of the 19th century. Finally, it was written by an actual participant in the Neo-Impressionist movement, the painter Paul Signac, hence the treatise's historical interest.

However, an English translation of the text alone would have been insufficient, a critical edition was called for. This is because the text in isolation leaves the reader with many questions such as; Who was Signac? Who are some of the sources and figures mentioned in the book? Why did Signac write D'Eugène Delacroix au nèó-impressionnisme? The aim of this edition is to answer some of those questions.

Information on Signac himself remains relatively difficult to obtain, if compared to his friend Seurat. Only recently has a modern book with reproductions of Signac's paintings been published, by his grand-daughter Françoise Cachin (Paul Signac, Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1973). However this book is out of print and according to the publisher, there are no plans to re-issue it. The only remaining way of consulting a copy is through second-hand bookstores, or libraries. Cachin mentions the existence of three other books by Signac: Jongkind (Paris: Cres, 1927), Stendhal (Anonymously published, 1914), and an unpublished translation of Ruskin's Elements of Drawing (started by H.E. Cross, and finished after his death by Signac during World War I). All three would have proved useful for this edition, as samples of this artist's writing, however they were unavailable to me, as I was unable to gain access to the Signac Archives.

Nonetheless, the situation was not totally bleak. Cachin's edition of D'Eugène Delacroix au nèó-impressionnisme (Paris: Hermann, 1978) is widely available in France and whereas the first book on Signac by his student Lucie Cousturier (Paul

Signac, Paris, Crès, 1935) was impossible to locate, an article in La Vie by the same author provided much needed information. I have simply tried to provide as much background information as possible so that the text might be better appreciated. Many questions are beyond the scope of this study but will hopefully be undertaken someday. The study of Signac deserves more attention.

Therefore the first step was to translate the text from French into English and identify the sources, persons and paintings cited within. The translation of Signac's vigorous, direct and almost aggressive French into English proved to be a difficult task. It was compounded by the fact that Signac was a painter, writing about a cause very dear to him which presupposed a fair amount of artistic knowledge on the part of the reader. Nonetheless, I have tried to remain faithful to the sense of urgency expressed in Signac's treatise in this English version.

Many sources cited by Signac needed to be identified for the modern reader which I have done either in footnotes or in passages in the introduction. Once again, material on some of Signac's sources was not widely available, even in France.

After the translation and notes, came the task of supplementing the information in the text. This involved putting the book into historical context, discussing Signac's career and work as related to his treatise, and providing a brief glossary of terms used by Signac but not explained in his text. In addition a colour chart is included for reference on colour questions. The introduction will hopefully answer many questions raised by the treatise.

Thus, my attempt to present D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme to the modern English reader is completed in hope that it will be more fully appreciated when accompanied with supplementary information and a presentation.

I would like to acknowledge Mr. Robin Spencer and Professor Martin Kemp for their continued assistance which

was invaluable to me. I would also like to thank my patient husband Daniel Vitaglione for his help throughout the course of my work.

Heather Buckner Vitaglione  
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GLOSSARY

Brilliance- I have translated the French word éclat as brilliance. Signac uses this word frequently.

Chromatisme- (Fr) This word has been translated as use of colour.

Colour- See Colour Chart.

Contrast- See Colour Chart.

Facture- brushwork, the actual texture of the paint.

Gouache- opaque colours made from pigment, water, honey and gum.

Gradation- the gradual blending of one tint, tone into another. Le dégradé in French.

Half-tints- See Colour Chart under Tone.

Hatching- application of paint in fine lines, parallel to each other. The French word is hachures. Signac uses this word frequently, particularly in reference to Delacroix's technique.

Irradiation- the quality of brilliance or brightness.

Key- high or low key. The amount of brightness a colour or tone possesses. The Impressionists' palette is high-key because it is nearer white on the colour scale.

Local Colour- actual colour of an object uninfluenced by reflected light or colour.

Luminosity- one of the properties of colour which conveys the illusion of giving off light. For our purposes this is synonymous with brightness.

Glossary continued.

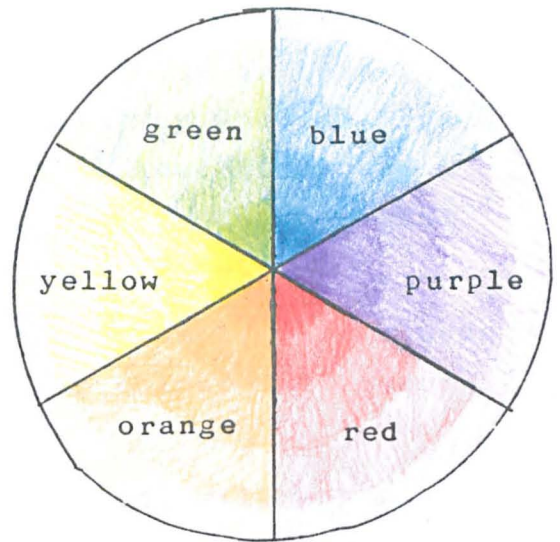
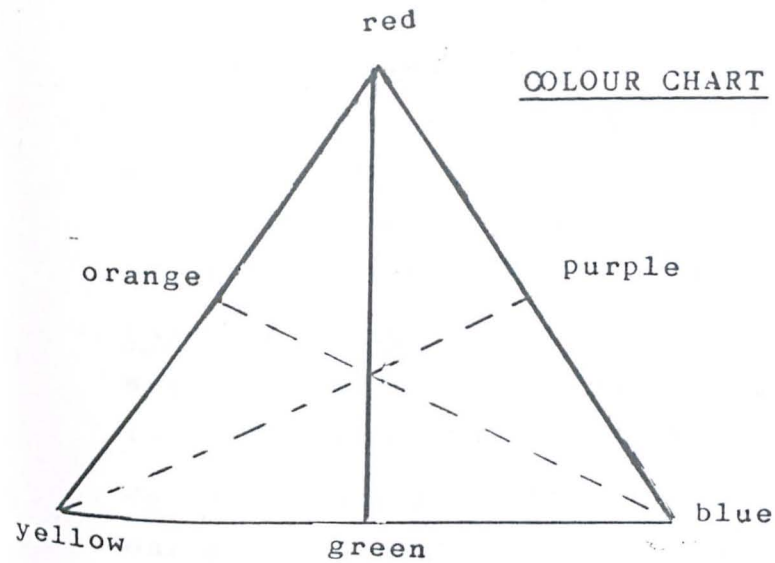
Pointillate- simply a technique of painting with a brush stroke in the form of a point or dot which is why the Neo-Impressionists considered the term pointillist derogatory, they also observed the contrast or division and their stroke was not necessarily a point. The shape of each painter's stroke varied, Signac's was more rectangular near the end of his career, and theoretically the stroke could be a triangle.

Purity- See Colour Chart under Tone. Synonymous for saturation.

Rapporteur Esthétique-(Fr) in mathematics, a protractor. In this instance, a device to measure angles and lines according to how pleasurable or painful they were.

Tache- refers to a mark made with paint and for our purposes is used synonymously with stroke. Tachisme later came to be used for a trend in the 1950's.

Touch -Touche (Fr)- means stroke or brush stroke, in particular " The Divided Touch". This is varied in this translation.

COLOUR CHART

Colour - Primary colours are those colours from which the others can be derived or mixed; red, yellow, blue for our purposes.

Secondary colours- The three secondary colours are green, purple and orange. Each of the secondaries is the complementary of the primary not included in its composition, thus:

The primaries: red (1), yellow (2), blue(3)

The secondaries: orange (1+2), green (2+3) and purple ( 1+3)

All the colours together make white light, therefore, each colour needs a complementary made up of the other two in order to make white light. Thus:

Red (1) = (2+3) green

yellow (2)=(1+3) purple

blue (3) = (1+2) orange

Tint- This is used by Signac for the quality of a colour, eg. red, yellow, blue and secondaries. Tint would be a circular motion on the upper right-hand scale.

Tone - This is used by Signac for two separate qualities of colour, saturation and value or brightness. Saturation means the vividness of a tint or degree of difference from grey of the same brightness. Value or brightness - means the value of a tint from light to dark, or the degree of light or dark of a given tint, Signac often uses chiaroscuro if he wants to be specific.



Colour Chart continued.

A half-tint is a colour or tint of medium value or tone , thus Delacroix uses " demi-teinte" in this way whereas Signac would use tone. Whenever modelling with colour is spoken of it can be assumed that using various tones of the same tint is meant, eg, a dark red, next to a lighter red etc.

Colour contrast - the effect of adjacent areas of colour upon one another either in space or time. The colour difference is accentuated when juxtaposed. Thus:

Two complementary colours ,eg. green and red, will enhance one another when juxtaposed but become dirty when mixed.

Two secondary complementaries ,eg, violet and green.

a. the complementary of green--red, acts on the violet which will seem more red.

b. the complementary of violet--yellow acts on the green which will seem more yellow.

Although both violet and green contain blue, its effect is diminished when they are juxtaposed.

Thus we have a simultaneous colour contrast, in space.

Complementary tints look more saturated when juxtaposed and when they are of equal brightness and saturation , appear to vibrate.

Seurat's definition of a contrast for tone was a lighter, more luminous one for a darker one, and for tint, complementaries, eg, a certain red with its exact complementary green.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Upon undertaking an English translation of Paul Signac's D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, many questions are raised: perhaps the most important is, what makes an artist undertake the writing of a book? This question leads us to examine Signac's career, his era, the formation of the Neo-Impressionist group and his role in it, as well as some of the personalities in his entourage. Then, we will continue our examination of the Neo-Impressionists after the premature death of their leader, Georges Seurat in 1891.

A close examination of the book itself gives much food for thought with its varied sources, including scientific, literary and artistic. The author's writing style also deserves some attention .

The period after the publication of the book will be examined, in which an important sub-question is raised: can Signac's painting style be reconciled with his treatise? In other words, did he practice what he preached? The evolution of his painting style in light of what he had written proves to be an interesting topic and will be supported whenever possible with visual examples as well as by quotations from his Journal.

In addition, the other articles and books written by Signac, and any possible changes in his attitudes, deserve attention.

Finally, we should look at the influence he exercised on younger artists, through his contacts and writings, asking what impact did D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme have on other painters.

This introduction is intended to answer some of the questions raised by D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, as well as familiarizing the reader with Paul Signac's life and artistic career.

Paul Signac was born in Paris the 11th of November, 1863 into a family of merchants who owned a saddlery business in Montmartre. Coincidentally, Delacroix died that same year. Signac was therefore never to suffer the financial hardships of many of his contemporaries nor, as it turned out, the opposition of his family. Signac's father, who was to die in 1880, was an amateur artist who was opposed to naturalist literature and Impressionist painting. This may explain Paul Signac's early attraction to them, out of rebellion. Signac's mother was apparently an energetic and strict woman, but although she tried to steer her only son into architecture, she never withdrew her support from him.<sup>1</sup>

Signac started his studies at the College Rollin, Boulevard de Clichy, which took him through Montmartre daily, with its art dealers. In 1879, he went to see the Impressionist exhibition on the Avenue de L'Opera. Sisley, Renoir and Cézanne were absent from this show. Although Pissarro was later to play a part in Signac's life, the young man was mainly interested in Degas, and in later life related an incident in which he was sketching from Degas' works when Gauguin had him thrown out.<sup>2</sup>

Signac also admired Manet and saw the Execution of Maximilien (1867) exhibited at the Salon. He never lost his admiration for Manet, even though his theories were opposed to those of the older artist.

Perhaps the most important initial contact with Impressionism was Claude Monet's exhibition in the Vie Moderne magazine offices in 1880.

Signac refused to sit his baccalaureat exams in 1881, although he was a good student, especially in literature. He made his career choice clear: he not only wanted to be a painter but an "Impressionist" one. For Signac "impressionist" meant everything he stood for: anti-bourgeoisie, anti-conformism and revolution. His choice was a normal one for an energetic young man: real life, the ocean, open air, modern subjects as opposed to the stale academic atmosphere the Beaux-Arts offered. It was a choice to be free rather than to try to conform to society's norms.<sup>3</sup>

After deciding upon a non-academic route, how would young Signac go about his apprenticeship, since there were no schools that taught Impressionism? Firstly, he started painting outdoors in his own surroundings: Asnières, Montmartre, etc. Then in 1883 he completed his first seascapes of Port-en-Bessin in Brittany. Or, as he reminisced in his Journal seventeen years later:

"... et pendant que je faisais une aquarelle, je revois des souvenirs d'il y a déjà dix-sept ans, où pour la première fois je vins dans ce pays. Il y avait deux mois que je 'faisais de la peinture', j'avais vingt ans.--L'année d'après, j'y revins et j'en remportai une quarantaine de toiles 'impressionnistes'. Ça consistait à empâter des rouges, des verts, des bleus et des jaunes, sans grand souci, mais avec enthousiasme."<sup>4</sup>

It can be seen that Signac's first works were as "Impressionist" as he could make them, and strongly influenced by Monet, whose work Signac saw at Durand-Ruel's gallery in 1883. This can be seen in La Route de Gennevilliers (1883,

Paris, Louvre, Jeu de Paume) in which we already notice a predisposition for bright, light colours and a rather thick impasto. On another occasion he painted a still life entitled Le Gateau ( 1882, London, Private Collection) which was closely inspired by Monet's Les Galettes of the same year.

It was also in 1883 that Signac began the only formal instruction he would ever receive, from the painter Bin, a former Prix de Rome winner. It was then he met the colour merchant , Père Tanguy, and saw Cézanne's work for the first time. Shortly afterwards he bought a landscape of Auvers by Cézanne which he prized throughout his life and refused to sell. <sup>5</sup>

Signac's mother moved to Asnières, after her husband's death in 1880, which at the time was inhabited by fairly well-off pensioners and frequented by the kinds of bathers and strollers that Seurat was later to immortalize in his Baignade, Asnières.

It was there, at Asnières, that Signac became initiated into boating by the painter Caillebotte<sup>6</sup>, who had spotted the younger artist painting on the riverbanks. Signac was to entitle his first boat in 1883, the "Manet-Zola-Wagner", Perhaps the three names most destined to shock the bourgeoisie. Even at such an early period of his life, he was the fighter he would always remain, loving to provoke the bourgeoisie.<sup>7</sup>

1884 would prove to be an extremely decisive year , for that was when he participated in the founding of the " Salon

des Indépendants" and as a consequence met Seurat. As Signac was later to write in an article<sup>8</sup>, the Salon des Indépendants was formed by artists rejected by the 1884 Salon and others who refused to submit works to the jury but wanted to find a way of showing their work. Signac was to meet Angrand<sup>9</sup>, Dubois-Pillet<sup>10</sup>, Cross<sup>11</sup> and Seurat who were to become his lifelong friends, while in the course of organizing the show.

So there began the decisive meeting for both Seurat and Signac. The former was as slight and reserved as the other was expansive, volatile and short. From most of Seurat's contemporaries comes a description of an extremely quiet, serious, and even mysterious man who only became impassioned when discussing the artistic problems which concerned him. Seurat's character seems to be accurately portrayed by his painting style: already calm and serene, scientifically controlled even as early as the Baignade, Asnières (1883-84, Tate Gallery, London). As Signac describes his friend's beginnings in D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, Seurat was already in search of a method that would enable him to paint more solid compositions, and had trained himself through laborious research into colour theory making copies of classical works, and drawing assiduously.

Seurat had passed through the Beaux-Arts. Although non-conformist in the sense of wanting to find something new, "une peinture sienne", he always remained in touch with the academic tradition and retained his affinities with classic-

ism. As Signac wrote, Seurat managed to "resist" his Beaux-Arts instruction by completing enormous quantities of reading on his own account. Signac's wording is interesting on this subject:

"..but his intelligence, will, clear and methodical mind, pure taste and painter's eye kept him safe from the depressing influence of the school.<sup>12</sup>

Regardless of Signac's antipathy for the academic tradition Seurat's mature style was definitely affected by it.

This was the era in which " science would deliver us from all incertitudes" as one of Seurat's sources, Sutter, would say.<sup>13</sup> It was a trend of thought that was " in the wind". Already many " Impressionists" were feeling that they could not continue in the same vein as they had been. They became dissatisfied with their work. Degas, Renoir, Pissarro, Monet and of course Cézanne all underwent a period of change. Renoir wanted to leave the group and wanted to exhibit in the Salon. His style grew more formal from around 1885-7, with his monumental Bathers. Monet expressed dissatisfaction with his work in the mid-1880's and we know in which direction it led him: towards cathedrals, haystacks and poplars painted in a rather different manner in the 1890's.

Pissarro underwent a comparable change will be seen in greater detail later, which included solidifying his art somewhat, from 1881 on.

As a matter of fact, as Robert Rey points out in La Renaissance du sentiment classique,<sup>14</sup> Impressionism was



never really a proper "school" at all but a group of artists exhibiting together for convenience's sake, not out of truly shared characteristics. The most highly regarded of the Impressionists were those painters who evolved, namely Degas, Renoir, Monet and Cézanne, whereas the painters who did not undergo any great change, such as Morisot and Sisley, remained less well-known.

Signac maintained that Seurat was unaware of Impressionism before meeting him in 1884.<sup>15</sup> But this version should be questioned. It would of course be in Signac's better interest to establish his contribution to the foundation of the division. Although Seurat had not yet excluded earth colours from his palette at that point, and might have done it at Signac's urging, this does not mean he was unaware of Impressionism.

Seurat probably visited the 6th and 7th Impressionist exhibitions in 1882 and 1883 with his friend and classmate Ernest Laurent, as well as the Durand-Ruel gallery exhibitions.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, Seurat later anti-dated his use of the division to 1884-5 in an 1890 letter to Fénéon which would preclude Signac's contribution.<sup>17</sup> However it is known that he revised La Grande Jatte in 1886, which puts his letter in question.

Some historians have taken Signac's version to be true; Rewald, whereas others maintain Seurat attended the Impressionist shows in 1882 and 1883 and that his early oil

studies show an Impressionist influence.<sup>18</sup> It seems as though the only statement available was that of Signac. However we can observe that Seurat's use of colour prior to meeting Signac, was akin to that of the Impressionists inasmuch as can be judged from the few paintings remaining from that period. This is probably due to Seurat's destruction of many of these early works.

Thus we can imagine the effect Seurat's Baignade must have exercised on Signac. He saw in it something extremely unusual and revolutionary and it provided the direction for which he was searching. Nonetheless, according to Signac, he felt the lack of pure colour in the work and an exchange of views took place between them. Signac maintained that he advised his friend to use the Impressionist palette in order to remedy the colour problem.<sup>19</sup> Signac, in his turn questioned Seurat about his scientific knowledge and started his own research. For Signac, Seurat's knowledge was a revelation, almost in the sense of a religious conversion.

This would not be the only time that Seurat's and Signac's relationship would take on the appearance of a Messiah and a Saint Paul. Signac became quickly convinced that this art would be the way of the future, towards progress, delivering them from uncertainty by the use of science. Once convinced, he became a diligent apostle and tried to propagate the new theory. Seurat, although the leader and the instigator of the new technique, never tried to propagate

his theories, and in fact, later tried to keep them to himself, resenting the increasing number of "converts". Signac, on the contrary, was a proselytizer from the very beginning.

As a result of this encounter Signac was to plunge into theoretical material with a vigour already characteristic of him. He quickly set about the task of studying Rood, Sutter, Chevreul and others. One example of his exuberance was his detailed technical questioning of the Gobelins workers (where Chevreul had long been in charge), to which he was invited to witness demonstrations at the factory. Later, Signac was to meet the elderly scientist twice, with rather unsatisfactory results, other than hearing the anecdote about Delacroix wanting to visit.<sup>20</sup>

Despite Signac's study of theoretical material, he maintained his admiration of Monet and only now wrote to the older painter in order to visit him;

"... Voici bien nettement ma situation: depuis deux ans je fais de la peinture, n'ayant jamais eu comme modèles que vos oeuvres et suivant la grande voie que vous nous avez ouverte. J'ai toujours travaillé régulièrement et consciemment, mais aussi sans conseils et sans aide, car je ne connais aucun peintre impressionniste qui aurait pu me guider, vivant dans un milieu plutôt hostile. Je crains donc m'égarer, et je vous demande en grâce de m'accorder l'autorisation de vous faire une petite visite; je serais si heureux de vous pouvoir présenter cinq ou six de mes études d'après lesquelles vous me pourriez juger et me donner quelques-uns de ces conseils dont j'ai tant besoin, car en somme je doute horriblement, ayant toujours travaillé seul, sans appui, sans critiques."<sup>21</sup>

What is curious about this letter is that it was written in 1885, after meeting Seurat and first admiring Monet's work. There are several possible reasons. It is clear from the letter that Signac felt in need of guidance and reassurance . Perhaps only after amassing a certain amount of work did he feel confident enough to approach Monet. Also, Monet might have been unavailable prior to 1885, because of his frequent travels, ie. Bordighera, late 1884-April 1885.

What must also be remembered is that although Signac had admired Seurat's technique in Baignade, Asnières , he had yet to see the Grande Jatte which would go far towards convincing him of the division's viability.

Although Monet did receive the younger artist's visit, he was unable to give the guidance Signac had hoped for, as he was not a teacher. Regardless of this, Monet remained a continuing model for Signac.

Another Impressionist who exercised a perhaps more concrete influence on Signac was Guillaumin, who befriended the younger artist in late 1884 or early 1885.<sup>22</sup>

The two often painted together on the quays. Previously Signac had completed a painting similar to Guillaumin's Quai de la Rapée (1881). It is interesting to note J.K. Huysmans' review of this painting, in light of Signac's known interest in Huysmans' criticism. In his review of the 1881 Independent show, Huysmans wrote how Guillaumin was a " ferocious colourist" and advised the observer to step back from the canvas and blink his eyes so that all

the wild, hostile colours would fall into place, permitting the delicacy of the painting to become visible. Huysmans gives the Quai de la Rapée as an example.<sup>23</sup> It was through Guillaumin that Signac was later to meet Pissarro in April 1885.

During the summer of 1885, Signac spent his holidays in Saint-Briac in Brittany painting numerous seascapes such as La Croix des Marins (1885, London, Private Collection). In such a work as this, Signac's treatment is Monet-like but begins to show deliberate touches of complementary colours such as red and green which indicate Seurat's influence. In the meantime Seurat was preparing his Grande Jatte.

Seurat's Grande Jatte was a milestone in the Neo-Impressionist group's foundation, as well as indicative of some of the tendencies emergent in the avant-garde. For Signac it must have been very revelatory to see the culmination of the theories he had studied allied to the Impressionist palette. In autumn of 1885 several artists began meeting, centering their interests on Seurat's "manifesto painting", which was already well-advanced. Firstly there were Dubois-Pillet, Signac and then Luce<sup>24</sup> and Angrand. For Signac, this was a period in which his convictions would grow stronger and stronger, confident that their new technique would prevail, especially after viewing the principles at work.

La Grande Jatte was different from other avant-garde paintings in several ways. Firstly, the great amount of time spent on it, which was unheard of at the time for an

Impressionist. Seurat did a large quantity of preparatory work, including oil sketches and outdoor drawings. Then, he implemented the new technique and his newly acquired palette to assemble the final work in the studio. Linear composition played a particularly important role.

Why were the young artists so impressed by the technical innovation? The answer lies in the simultaneous contrast of colours, which consists of juxtaposing areas of opposite tint, and in the mingling of strokes of opposite colours within each area, e.g. blue and yellow, which at a distance are intended to compose green. Strokes of an opposite colour may be placed on a large field of green in order to enhance it and make it vibrate. The new technique promised its users a "superior reality". It was a scientific version of Impressionism.

Seurat came to his conclusion, as we have seen, partly through an academic route, and partly through the stimulation of his new, "revolutionary" acquaintances. Signac, on the other hand, was a keen believer in "progress" in art through science, which corresponded to his political beliefs.

Signac's first work in which he deliberately applied the new technique was his Apprêteuses et Garnisseuses (1885-1886, Zurich, Bührle Collection) which is also known as "les Modistes". Degas' series of Modistes were done around 1882-85 which in view of Signac's early interest in Degas explains the choice of theme and the ambiguity of the title.

According to Seurat, Signac modified it at the same time as

he was working on his Grande Jatte. This work is very rigidly composed despite its naturalist subject and title.

In April 1885 Signac met Pissarro through Guillaumin and managed to convince the older artist, who was undergoing a period of uncertainty, that the new technique would be a distinct improvement on Impressionism. Signac must have been greatly encouraged when the older artist joined them. He must have felt their theories were well-founded in order to convince a respected "old guard" Impressionist. Together with Pissarro came his son Lucien, the same age as Signac. Signac introduced them to Seurat upon the latter's return. Pissarro was soon experimenting with divisionist methods. One of his earliest divisionist works is Le Train de Dieppe, Bragny, 1886 (Philadelphia, Mrs. Carroll Tyson Collection).

Pissarro, eager to help his new found colleagues, did his best to invite them to the 1885 Impressionist show, the first one since 1882, and the last. Degas was the only one to accept the newcomers, whereas the rest refused to exhibit with them and dropped out. This exhibition would become renowned as the one in which the new tendencies became evident, primarily in La Grande Jatte, which was by far the most controversial painting in the show.

As Signac says in his description <sup>26</sup> this was the first time a divided painting was exhibited. Signac proceeded to distinguish the Neo-Impressionists from Impressionism, using words such as "reflection and permanence" as opposed to "instantaneity and instinct". Then he mentioned their empha-

sis on "composition" as opposed to nature however it presents itself.

One important result of the 1886 exhibition was the encounter with the young critic Felix Fénéon, who was to become the Neo-Impressionist's chief defender, much as Zola had been their predecessor's champion. Fénéon, who had actually seen Seurat's Baignade, Asnières in 1884, had been impressed. He had previously shown a predisposition for simplifications in a Puvis de Chavannes manner<sup>27</sup> and felt drawn to the new style, which to his eyes went beyond Impressionism. He tried to find out more from Pissarro, who felt unable to explain the theories. Seurat was naturally reticent, and in the end Signac proved to be the most fruitful source of information.<sup>28</sup>

Fénéon belonged to the generation of writers who were searching for something more than Zola's naturalism, something more permanent. That they were looking for an art which would suit their generation is only natural. Some of these Symbolist writers or "decadents" appreciated Neo-Impressionism while others looked towards different styles.

A curious aspect of Fénéon's review, "Les Impressionnistes en 1886",<sup>29</sup> is its style. Fénéon's vocabulary is very unusual and his use of the "decadent" style remarkable in that it is not devoted to the capturing of the subjectivity of the paintings, but rather the opposite: to the describing of them objectively. This sort of precision may be seen in Signac's writing style as well.



Fénéon was certainly courageous to write about Impressionism as a spent force in 1886, concluding that "only Pissarro, Seurat and Signac innovate".<sup>30</sup> As a matter of fact Fénéon's review shows an incredible sense of modernity when compared to other critics of the time. Most criticism of the Grande Jatte centered on its lifelessness, because they were only able to accept Impressionism as a fresh version of reality, and therefore they focussed on the woodenness of the new style. Fénéon concentrated on the formal aspects, elaborating on the technique. He did not comment much on the subject matter.

Fénéon made an extremely important contribution to the fledgling Neo-Impressionists. He gave them their name, although at first they considered "chromo-luminairistes" (a title Seurat probably would have preferred).<sup>31</sup> Signac owed Fénéon a great deal in that it was Fénéon who later urged him to write D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme and published it in the Revue Blanche. As stated previously, Signac's writing style attempts to remain objective and "scientific", which is how Fénéon wrote.

This brings us to a paradox; what did literary symbolism, with its love of mystery and subjectivity, share in common with the most scientific, rigid painting of the time? For many writers of that era, science was an ally of art rather than an enemy. Charles Henry, the brilliant and eclectic scientist and writer, epitomized the era, as we shall see later. He saw connections between all the arts and ultimately sought a form of universal harmony. It was

in 1886 that several of the Neo-Impressionists started attending his lectures on colour theory.

The next important event was the Independent Show, the first for two years. Seurat dominated the exhibition with La Grande Jatte and some seascapes. Signac showed his Apprêteuses et Garnisseuses and his landscapes of Petit Andelys on the Seine ( a small village not far from Monet's Giverny where he had spent the summer with Lucien Pissarro). Fénéon's review expounded on their scientific theory.<sup>32</sup>

Then the artists readied themselves for their entries in the XX group show in Brussels, to which they had been invited. Seurat finished his Honfleur landscapes.

It was about this time that Seurat started manifesting signs of jealousy. Although he had never been expansive about his theories, he now grew more and more secretive. This was undoubtedly due to his fear that Fénéon's detailed explanation would divulge their secrets.<sup>33</sup>

The XX show turned out to be important, primarily by attracting the attention of other young artists who were alerted by the scandal centered upon La Grande Jatte . Signac, who went to see the 1887 exhibition, wrote to Pissarro about the crowds attracted to Seurat's painting and how the Belgian avant-garde artists were interested in what they were doing.

Seurat sold two landscapes at this exhibition. Afterwards he shut himself up in his studio, refusing to see anyone, and started on his Poseuses series. Perhaps he wanted to show he could give his characters life after hearing so

much criticism about his figures being lifeless. This was also the first time he experimented with coloured frames.

Seurat was becoming more and more anxious about the growing ranks of the Neo-Impressionists. Signac, on the contrary, was willing to welcome new painters to help them fight the battle.

The 1888 XX show included the growing recruits to Neo-Impressionism, and was not destined to pacify Seurat. Signac was actually surprised at Seurat's behaviour, which contrasted with his own beliefs. That summer, while Seurat was away at the seaside, an article by Arsène Alexander<sup>34</sup> was printed after an interview with Seurat, in which the writer concluded that "pointillism had spoiled the best talents such as Signac and Angrand". He claimed Seurat as the inventor and referred to Seurat's "unscrupulous comrades" who were copying his technique. Signac and Pissarro understandably agitated, immediately wrote to Seurat for an explanation. Seurat replied he had not said that, but, if asked, he would say that there were too many adherents to the technique.

Pissarro tried to calm Signac down by saying that it was not the technique but the talent that makes a painter, and to let Seurat take the credit if he desired.<sup>35</sup>

Seurat's jealousy created problems within the group, and although he was the uncontested "leader", each artist could contribute something of value. New applications of the technique were attempted continuously by the various

members, such as Van Rysselberghe,<sup>36</sup> Petitjean,<sup>37</sup> Cross and others. Signac was particularly eager to pass beyond the research phase and enter the phase of personal creation, as he indicated in his treatise.

All the painters experienced problems with the technique because of its particular restraints, and many became disenchanted with it, but perhaps the most important "defection" was that of Pissarro in 1890. The older artist increasingly felt that the technique hampered his spontaneity, and decided to abandon it. This defection was felt most keenly by Signac, who never quite managed to understand how Pissarro could be so convinced at one moment and then suddenly change his mind. Signac wrote more diplomatically about this in his book than he did in his own Journal.<sup>38</sup> This sort of volte face would have been impossible for Signac, who, although he experienced difficulties from time to time, always fought for his convictions and found a way of continuing consistently.

Signac began to feel the weight of responsibility on his shoulders. His role was already one of organizer, because of his many activities. Increasingly, Signac's role became one of defender of their theories, due to Seurat's reluctance or downright refusal to fill this role.

1890 and 1891 must have seemed decisive years for Signac and Neo-Impressionism. Firstly, he was affected by Pissarro's abandonment of the movement, and secondly by the 1890 Brussel's XX exhibition, of which he published an

anonymous review.<sup>39</sup> During the XX meetings, Toulouse-Lautrec vehemently defended Van Gogh's right to exhibit, and Signac offered to second him in a duel.<sup>40</sup>

Signac was elected the first non-Belgian committee member of the XX show in 1890, in addition to serving on the Independent's committee.

In July 1890 Van Gogh died. Signac, who had visited him in Arles and taken an interest in him, was to be involved in a retrospective exhibition at the request of Theo Van Gogh, and, after the latter's death, by Theo's widow, (January 1891). Another fellow artist, one of Signac's co-founders of the Independents, Dubois-Pillet, was to die, and again Signac was entrusted with a retrospective exhibition in 1891.<sup>41</sup>

In 1890, Jules Christophe published an article on Seurat, including a letter to Maurice Beaubourg, detailing his theories ( 28 August, 1890).<sup>42</sup> Seurat's publication of his theories came after the rivalries and quarrels led him to affirm his position as founder of the movement. He also continued to correct errors ( as he perceived them) in others' articles about himself and Neo-Impressionism as in the case of Fénéon's article on Signac cited earlier.<sup>43</sup> Seurat's attitude probably led or at least contributed to the defection of several members. Signac must have been discouraged by this. As he mentions in Chapter 4, the "severe criticism, several unfortunate deaths and resignations from the movement".<sup>44</sup> Louis Hayet,<sup>45</sup> a minor but fairly active member, wrote a resignation letter to Signac, deplor-

ing the division into two camps: the serious researchers and the ambitious attention-seekers. ( 10 February, 1890).<sup>46</sup>

Henri Van de Velde<sup>47</sup> was discouraged by Seurat's pettiness and began to doubt the seriousness of his theories. As a matter of fact, he actually considered Signac's works more luminous and therefore more successful than all the others.<sup>48</sup> Luce as well began to separate himself from the movement.<sup>49</sup> Pissarro was, of course, the most damaging defector. As he explained to Van de Velde, he felt unable to express his sensations with the technique which gave him the feeling of death.<sup>50</sup>

Seurat in the meantime continued his methodical work. Since La Grande Jatte, he had used more of Charles Henry's theories and applied them to more problems in painting: figures in artificial lighting (La Parade 1887-1888, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art), nudes in an interior (Les Poseuses, 1887-8, Merion, Pennsylvania, Barnes Collection), the Portrait (Jeune Femme se Poudrant, 1889-90, London, Courtauld Institute), an interior scene with moving figures (Le Chahut, 1889-90, Otterlo, Rijksmuseum Kroeller-Müller) and finally his Cirque (1890-91, Paris, Louvre, Jeu de Paume). Seurat was to apply his mysterious system of lines, with a dominant direction indicating the mood.

Signac, faced with the organization of the 1891 Independent show, had to take into account the fall in the number of Neo-Impressionist painters, and accept more of Gauguin's friends than he would have liked. Signac exhibited his Por-

trait de Felix Fénéon (1890, New York, Private Collection), some landscapes of the Seine and some seascapes. Seurat exhibited only five paintings: the incomplete Cirque and four landscapes.

It was during the meetings of the committee that Seurat caught cold, and on March 30, he suddenly died of complications. Signac was understandably overcome at the loss of his friend and partner. Seurat's death was to put an enormous burden on him, in continuing the fight. At first, Signac went through a period of intense work in an effort to forget, as he wrote to Pissarro from Cocarneau, July-August 1891, the time was when,

"... Où je croyais que, nous tenant tous par la main, apportant des oeuvres et des idées nouvelles, nous allions marcher au combat. Je me suis sacrifié, étant dans le groupe celui qui avait le plus de combativité, à l'intérêt général. Et je pense que je n'ai pas été inutile et que, se nos idées se sont un peu imposées, je n'y suis pas étranger. Ce serait à refaire, que je le referais encore et je suis sûr que vous ne m'en pourriez blâmer. Si je me tiens maintenant plus tranquille, c'est que maintenant le terrain est ensemencé, nos idées sont répandues, notre manifeste a été affiché... il n'y a plus qu'à travailler, qu'à laisser faire." <sup>51</sup>

As can be seen, Signac wanted to resign himself to simply painting, since their theories had already been published (Christophe's article on Seurat<sup>52</sup>), and considering their ideas fairly widespread. However he would be unable to remain silent for long, he would soon spring back to the defense of their movement.

Signac's reasons for returning to his role of defender are fairly clear. For, if he did not, it would mean he was but a mere shadow of Seurat. Once again we find a sort of religious fervor in action after Seurat's death. It was as though Seurat had been a martyr for their cause, in fact Signac said himself immediately after the death that his friend had "worked himself to death."<sup>53</sup> Naturally Seurat's theories and principles became somehow sacred and Signac alone felt he must defend them.

In the years following Seurat's death, and before the writing of D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, Signac was to bemoan the public's lack of comprehension and appreciation of his friend. On one occasion he compared his friend's fate to that of Van Gogh:

"Comme l'on est injuste avec Seurat. Dire que l'on veut pas reconnaître en lui un des génies du siècle! Les jeunes sont pleins d'admiration pour Laforgue et pour Van Gogh-morts eux aussi ( du reste, sans cela..) et pour Seurat, l'oubli, le silence. C'est pourtant un autre peintre que Van Gogh qui n'est intéressant que par son côté phénomène fou.. et dont les seuls tableaux intéressants sont ceux faits au moment de sa maladie, à Arles . Au moment de la mort de Seurat, les critiques rendaient justice à son talent mais trouvaient qu'il ne laissait aucune oeuvre! Il me semble au contraire, qu'il a donné tout ce qu'il pouvait donner, et admirablement. Il aurait certainement encore beaucoup produit et progressé, mais sa tâche était accomplie. Il avait tout passé en revue et instauré définitivement: le blanc et le noir, les harmonies de la ligne, la composition, le contraste, et l'harmonie de la couleur.. et même les cadres. Que peut-on demander de plus à un peintre ? "<sup>54</sup>



This Journal entry sums up Signac's feelings about his friends life and work. There is a clear sense of injustice present. Obviously, their theories were not as widespread as Signac had believed immediately following Seurat's death. The publication of Seurat's theories had not gained them any recognition or acceptance, and consequently something more was needed. Signac was the man for the task; from the role of defender and organiser, he would become the theorist.

Signac had already written letters, reviews and articles. Among them were letters to Le Cri du Peuple, from 1887-8, under the pseudonym "Néo". He also wrote to other Socialist publications, usually anonymously so that he could speak more freely about the Neo-Impressionists. His review of the 1890 XX exhibition was signed S.P.<sup>55</sup> He was well on his way to being a good propagandist.

In addition to this activity, Signac was a reasonably prolific letter writer, and corresponded with many of the group members, such as the Pissarros, Angrand, Cross and others. He also kept a Journal in which he noted down observations of his contemporaries, stylistic considerations, and ideas for articles.<sup>56</sup> Simply by reading the Journal one can trace the beginnings of Signac's eventual treatise. If something is mentioned several times in the Journal it is almost certain to be developed further in D'Eugène Delacroix au Néo-Impressionisme .

For example, the following passage from Nov. 27, 1894,

already takes up one of the points which Signac was later to emphasize in his book:

"On nous reproche d'être trop savants. Mais nous ne savons sur la couleur que ce que l'on nous aurait dû apprendre à l'école primaire! Dire que les girouettes du père Chevreul ne sont pas adoptées dans les écoles! Pourquoi se plaindre du manque de goût quand on ne fait rien pour éduquer l'oeil. Pourtant pour apprendre le piano, on exerce les doigts.. Ils ont des yeux et ils ne voient pas."<sup>57</sup>

Here Signac has even used the phrase, " They have eyes but do not see"; which he later attributes to Delacroix; as an answer to his critics.<sup>58</sup> It is clear that Signac had begun to associate the Neo-Impressionists' battle with that of Delacroix. Especially in the passage on Seurat and Van Gogh previously cited, he ended with a comparison with Delacroix. He lamented how few visitors go to the Saint-Sulpice paintings or understand Delacroix at all.

Signac's reflections on Delacroix can be seen as the first manifestation of the central theme of his treatise, since he has begun to compare his predecessor's battle for comprehension with theirs. He came to see this as a way of convincing people of Neo-Impressionism's validity.

Perhaps the first mention of the actual book is on June 2nd, 1897 when he wrote:

" Bien remis au travail.-- Toutes les heures je prends un petit repos que je passe soit à écrire quelques lignes du Delacroix, soit à copier quelque dessin de maître, ou à essayer de dessiner de souvenir."<sup>59</sup>

It is clear that reading Delacroix's Journal played an important part in Signac's decision to write his book, as will

be seen in greater detail when Signac's sources are discussed.

Signac had his own generation of critics to respond to as criticism of Neo-Impressionism had indeed become more prevalent. There was Octave Mirbeau's very negative article in the Echo de Paris ( May 12, 1895 ).<sup>60</sup> Gustave Geffroy's review of the Independent Show of 1896<sup>61</sup> was not much more positive and most people still were of the opinion of Camille Mauclair that " tous ces peintres se ressemblent".<sup>62</sup> (1894). Signac's highly defensive tone becomes obvious from time to time in his treatise , as in Chapter 6, sections 8 and 9, in which he tried to point out the individual characteristics of each Neo-Impressionist. Then he went on to attribute the confusion to lack of art education, the public simply had not been educated to appreciate the differences between the painters. These passages must be viewed as a direct answer to such criticism.

In summary, Signac's reasons for writing D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme were:

1. Seurat's premature death. Although his theories had been published, they needed more defense. Seurat had been virtually forgotten while others had been remembered. Signac felt the need to defend his friend's memory.
2. Response to criticism of Neo-Impressionism. The main reproach being that they all looked alike.
3. The publication in 1893-95 of Delacroix's Journal and Signac's subsequent identification with it, since the move-

ment was undergoing a difficult period at the time.

4. Neo-Impressionism needed a champion because Felix Fénéon had given up art criticism. Fénéon did, however, encourage Signac to write his treatise and eventually published in La Revue Blanche.

Signac's writing style is an extension of his personality. As in his political letters, his book comes across as a manifesto. All the years of serving as diligent propagandist show in the work. He worked hard to convince the readers that divisionism is the only possible answer to the problems facing painters. The tone of the book is not so much technical as propagandist. As he once wrote, "La division est plutôt une philosophie qu'un système."<sup>63</sup> This is precisely the message the reader receives. The message throughout is : work and think hard, persevere, never give up the fight. As we shall see, Signac often relied on his sources for quotes of this nature, and he found particular inspiration in Delacroix.

Signac's writing style has a certain detachment that owed a great deal to Fénéon. He tried to remain very precise and make his principles clear by regular repetition. Throughout, the reader is given the impression that Signac was very conscientious about his task of "educating the eye" as he might have said. He took his mission very seriously indeed.

As stated earlier, Signac's sources came from a wide range: art, literature, and science, primarily. The time

has come to examine some of those sources in greater detail.

The most obvious source for D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-Impressionnisme may be found in its title: Eugène Delacroix. As mentioned earlier, Signac most probably wanted to emphasize the comparison between Neo-Impressionism and Delacroix in order to gain recognition as a serious but misunderstood movement. Although Signac had probably already considered writing a more detailed, convincing treatise, Delacroix's Journals seemed to provide him with the spark he needed.

The idea of continuity from Delacroix through Impressionism to Neo-Impressionism is stressed in Signac's work. Whether or not Seurat would have insisted on the Impressionist connection is doubtful.

Signac's appreciation of Delacroix probably dates back to his meeting with Seurat and subsequent reading of Charles Blanc. In 1885 he and Seurat saw the Delacroix exhibition held at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.<sup>64</sup> In 1886, (the year of La Grande Jatte) Maurice Tourneux's Eugène Delacroix devant ses contemporains<sup>65</sup> was published, which included quotations from Delacroix as well as reviews showing the critics' lack of comprehension. Signac was to use some of these quotations in his work, in addition to using a similar style of using quotations.

For Signac, contemplating a manifesto and given his particular temperament, what a source Delacroix's Journal was! There were numerous examples of apparently Neo-Impressionist concerns defended, examples of idealistic advice and of

the critics' incomprehension.

The most frequently used quotations come from Delacroix's notes for a Dictionary of the Beaux-Arts, particularly whenever the master speaks of common technical problems such as the brush-stroke, colour, lines, composition, tone or simplification of details. Signac's comments on Delacroix's Journal in his own Journal, and his notes over the several years period, led to this chapter on Delacroix.

The other passages from which Signac quoted most frequently were those in which the very young, idealistic Delacroix made resolutions, or the old, experienced painter wrote about the injustice of the public and the critics. He is probably drawn to those passages in which the artist made a colour innovation.

On more than one occasion, Signac took quotations out of context or slightly altered them. For example: in Chapter 1, he took a phrase:

" Ma palette brillante du contraste des couleurs"

but the original sentence in Delacroix's Journal was:

" Ma palette fraîchement arrangée et brillante du contraste des couleurs suffit pour allumer mon enthousiasme."<sup>66</sup>

This came from a passage in which Delacroix was comparing the merits of the mediums of painting and writing, and not writing primarily about colour contrast, as Signac would have it. This is a fairly typical example of Signac's use of Delacroix: there are many fragments placed here and there

(not unlike a collage) which often mean little in isolation but support Signac's position when assembled. This will become clear in the notes to this translation.

Another important source is Chevreul. As we know, Serrurier studied Chevreul's work on the law of simultaneous contrast of colours while still in his first drawing school in 1875,<sup>67</sup> and subsequently introduced Signac to Chevreul's works. Signac, in his enthusiasm to learn, had contacted the elderly scientist by post and actually visited him twice.

Eugène Chevreul ( Angers 1786-Paris 1889) attended school in Angers, then came to Paris where he started as a chemist in the Gobelins dye works and professor of chemistry. He became a member of the Academy of Science in 1826 and then head of the Museum. He published numerous works on colours and their chemical properties, but for our purposes his Loi du contraste simultané<sup>68</sup> is the most important.

Signac himself in his own writing made many references to Chevreul. This was in keeping with his deep-seated belief in educating the masses aesthetically, a view which comes up again and again in his Journal. This was an underlying reason for writing D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme : to educate the critics, public and other artists. He often mentioned "fautes d'orthographe" or "spelling errors" in colour in the paintings he saw, and discussed the industrial use of colours. Although he may not follow Chevreul's advice to the letter, it is a part of " Science... that will deliver us from uncertainties" as Sutter said.<sup>69</sup> Armed with

"père" Chevreul's colour wheels, the world would soon be delivered from ignorance of colour.

So, how was Chevreul's theory used by the Neo-Impressionists? As Robert Rey puts it, in La Renaissance du Sentiment Classique dans la Peinture Française à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>70</sup>, the title of Chevreul's work is paradoxical, because if we say that a contrast is a relationship between two opposites (contrast is singular), then how can we have a simultaneous contrast. Are not the two terms mutually exclusive? Regardless of the rather paradoxical title, which Chevreul must certainly have assumed made sense to others, the work defines and demonstrates both the effects of tone contrast and those of tint contrast. Then Chevreul went on to define simultaneous contrast. Since according to the theory, a colour attained its maximum intensity when placed next to its complementary (but not mixed) the Neo-Impressionists modified colours by changing their surroundings rather than by mixing. Also, if two like colours are placed next to one another, eg, dark and light red, there is a contrast by intensity and harmony, because the tints are alike.<sup>71</sup>

Another notable source for Signac was Charles Blanc (Castres 1813 - Paris 1882). Blanc exercised an important influence on art history in the 19th century. As a young man he studied engraving in Paris, and subsequently turned to art criticism, beginning with Salon reviews in Le Bon Sens, edited by his Socialist brother, Louis. Later he began his Histoire des peintres français au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,



the first volume of which came out in 1845. In 1848 he became director of the Beaux-Arts and did much to further the arts. After the coup d'état of December 1851 he returned to writing and continued his history of art.

Blanc's influence was due to his publications being the most definitive and comprehensive studies of art history at the time. His work was accessible to the general public, which helped retain his supremacy in the field until Signac's time. However, it was in his second term as director of the Beaux-Arts that he probably influenced Seurat and Signac the most, ( from 1871 to 1873).

In an article on Seurat and Piero della Francesca<sup>73</sup>, Albert Boime discusses Blanc's influence on his own era and on the following generations. Since Blanc was director of the Beaux-Arts immediately before Seurat attended the school it does not seem unreasonable to assume that some of his policies were still in force when Seurat began in 1878. Basically, Blanc was unable to accept Impressionism because of its objectivity. He supported a revival of the Renaissance tradition as the only way to revitalise French art. This implied the use of the human figure. As part of his policy he proposed a museum of copies of Italian masters in order to educate the public. His project was an attempt to restore the human image in painting, against the trend towards landscape.<sup>74</sup>

Regardless of Blanc's staunch refusal of Impressionism Signac used him as a source. In preparation for his treatise

Signac must have recognized the importance of Blanc's ideas as they related to his movement and naturally relied heavily on Blanc as an authoritative source. It must be remembered that Signac was a "man with a mission" so to speak, and needed as many credible sources as possible in order to gain acceptance for his theories.

Perhaps the single most important scientific source for the Neo-Impressionists was the scholar Charles Henry. Curiously enough Signac does not once mention Henry in his treatise, although he was in frequent contact with Henry, and even collaborated with him on several occasions. The reasons for this omission should become clearer after a brief description of Henry.

As Signac noted in his Journal (14 December, 1894):

" Visite de Charles Henry, de plus en plus poétique. D'une donnée exacte et scientifique, il tire des conclusions d'une fantaisie charmante qu'il s'efforce de démonstrer mathématiquement."<sup>75</sup>

This summarizes Signac's impression of Charles Henry, one of admiration for such an unusual man.

Henry ( Alsace 1859-Paris 1926) was first trained as a scientist, but his great curiosity led him to explore the fields of music, literature, psychology, biology, chemistry and mathematics. He was an incredibly prolific writer on these subjects. By the age of 27, he had already published nineteen books. Henry saw connections between all the disciplines, which explains why many artists, writers and other figures were attracted to his theories.<sup>76</sup>

Henry's theory on lines, for instance, was an attempt to find, through the use of spatial geometry, mathematics and physics, the lines or combinations of lines that were the most agreeable and disagreeable. His Cercle Chromatique <sup>77</sup> of 1888 starts from a physiological basis, defining pain and pleasure respectively as continuity and discontinuity of mental function, relating this information to directions and finally to colours. Thus lines and colours which ascended were called "dynamogenic" and those which descended "inhibitory". This connection between human physiology, science and then art was part of the trend towards "humanization" in art, foreseen by Blanc and others.

Seurat, as may be seen in his later works, Cirque (1890-1) and Le Chahut (1889-90), put Henry's theories to work, having studied them closely. Signac experienced more personal contact with Henry, but did not rely heavily on his theories, except during a relatively brief period, which will be discussed later. Signac probably regarded them in much the same way as Chevreul's theories: he was for the education of the masses but personally did not feel compelled to follow the theories to the letter in his own work. Full of enthusiasm for Henry's Rapporteur esthétique <sup>78</sup>, a project on which he was collaborating, he wrote Van Gogh the following explanatory letter:

" C'est un livre sur l'esthétique de C. Henry-permet d'étudier des mesures et les angles. On voit si la forme est harmonieuse ou pas. Cela aura une grande portée sociale au point de vue surtout de l'art industriel.

"Nous apprenons à voir juste et beau aux ouvriers, apprentis, etc., dont jusqu'ici on n'a fait l'éducation esthétique qu'au moyen de formules empiriques, de conseils malhonnêtes ou niais. Je vous adresserai une de ces brochures lorsqu'elles auront vu le jour."<sup>79</sup>

Signac's tone is one of educator of the working classes.

However it is doubtful whether he actually used this instrument in his own work. On another project Signac tirelessly measured vases and other objects in preparation for Henry's Applications des nouveaux instruments de précision ( cercle chromatique, rapporteur et triple-décimètre esthétique) à l'archéologie,<sup>80</sup> or as Fénéon described it;

" Lorsque M. Charles Henry voulut appliquer à l'art industriel les méthodes d'études esthétiques de la forme et de la couleur auxquelles l'avaient conduit une théorie générale de la dynamogénie et des expériences patientes, M. Signac lui apporta son concours: son analyse du profil (anses déployées) des vases de Cnide, de Thasos et de Rhodes et leur définition par indicateur d'écart, de dynamogénie, d'inhibition, de contraste, d'acuité, de diversité, de variété et de complication, sont un type très pur de critique scientifique."<sup>81</sup>

However, Fénéon goes on to add that;

"..Mais il serait illusoire que M. Signac cherchât à l'utiliser pour l'exécution d'un tableau ou M. X. pour l'analyse ultérieure de ce tableau. Du moins semble-t-il d'après la maîtrise dont témoignent les dernières oeuvres de ce peintre que parmi tant d'ardues investigations, sa faculté de contrôle sur ses intuitions d'harmonies polychromes et linéaires ait acquis plus de décision encore et de lucidité."<sup>82</sup>

Regarding Signac's use of Henry's theories, Fénéon also

wrote in 1890 that Signac relied more on his intuition than principles when finding a dominant direction for his paintings, and that Henry's statement, "all directions are symbolic", had destroyed Signac's faith in chance and limited him to a clear empiricism on the edge of consciousness.<sup>83</sup>

Signac's reply to Fénéon was:

" Ne vous souciez pas trop des critiques de notre Henry: il se soucie fort peu du jeu des complémentaires qu'il trouve fort barbare."<sup>84</sup>

Signac's exclusion of Henry was understandable in the face of a sceptical public. He needed to play down Neo-Impressionism's scientific aspects and emphasize its traditional qualities. Henry, who is contemporary and a scientist is excluded on two counts. However he must not be neglected as a source, because his Introduction à une esthétique scientifique (1885)<sup>85</sup> in which Rood, Chevreul, Helmholtz, Sutter and others are synthesized and presented in a positivist version, influenced Signac a great deal.<sup>86</sup> Signac himself, in a tribute to Henry in 1930<sup>87</sup> wrote that the best homage to Henry would be to publish his complete works and his experiments.

Yet another source cited by Signac is Daniel Humbert de Superville<sup>88</sup>. André Chastel, in an article entitled " Une source oubliée de Seurat",<sup>89</sup> maintains that Charles Blanc's ideas on the moral significance of lines come directly from Humbert de Supervilles' Essai sur les signes inconditionnels de l'art (1827). This treatise was virtually unknown until Blanc and others revived it. Blanc's Grammaire du dessin,

an important source for Neo-Impressionism, is extremely close to this.

Humbert's treatise is a "call for humanity", in which the primary points are:

1. There are three types of lines in the study of directions.
2. A corresponding colour system accompanies the line system.
3. The signs are applicable to all arts.
4. Arts must be renovated by using old techniques such as stained glass.

The impact of this treatise is more apparent when we consider its influence on Charles Henry, Blanc and subsequently on the Neo-Impressionists. For example, Humbert's treatise on the directions of three facial types-- laughter as a v-shape, inertia as a horizontal, crying as an inverted v-- which were then associated with particular colours, may be directly compared to Seurat's diagram in his letter to Maurice Beaubourg. The facial expressions in Seurat's later works were carefully calculated in this way, eg. Cirque, La Parade, Le Chahut.

Humbert's theories extended to objects in nature, some objects possessing symbolic value, such as oak-horizontal, neutral, fir-descending-sadness, pine -ascending, happy. This is interesting in light of Signac's St. Tropez works in which pines are prominent or dominate the composition.

One source who Signac mentioned only once in his treatise is the once Naturalist and subsequently "decadent" writer Joris-Karl Huysmans.<sup>90</sup> In Chapter 4 Signac mentioned how he

had mistaken a remark by Huysmans on Monet to mean that the latter used a scientific technique.<sup>91</sup>

Whether he agreed with it or not, Signac was certainly observant of Huysmans' criticism. He mentioned it on several occasions in his own Journal. For instance when he used Huysmans' term "indigomanie" (Feb.16,1897) in reference to a Renoir painting of a woman in blue:

" C'est de l'époque de ce que le trop littéraire J.K. Huysmans appela 'indigomanie'."<sup>92</sup>

The writer had also made a famous remark about Signac's early work, referred to later ( Sept.29,1894):

"Huysmans écrivait que 'j'emmarseillais' les banlieues, Ret-ti trouve que je 'banlieuese' le Midi..Cela se balance et du reste 'm'en fouti. "<sup>93</sup>

However, Huysmans was an influential figure because of his break from Naturalism and Zola's circle (A Rebours 1883) and the return to mystery in his writing.

A reading of his 1880 Independents' Exhibition review<sup>94</sup> might have provided many examples for Signac in addition to the misunderstood remark on Monet's "system". Huysmans devoted two pages to Raffaelli's Route de Gennevilliers, pointing out the modernity of the suburban scene. This is interesting in light of Signac's painting of the same area in 1883. Perhaps more significantly , Huysmans made a connection between Delacroix and Degas in the same review:

"Quelle nouvelle application depuis Delacroix du mélange optique, c'est-à-dire du ton absent de la palette, et obtenu sur la toile par le rapprochement de deux autres...  
Aucun peintre, depuis Delacroix qu'il a étudié

longuement et qui est son véritable maître, n'a compris comme M. Degas, le mariage et l'adultère des couleurs.."95

When we consider L'Art Moderne was published in 1883 (just before A Rebours) and Certains in 1889, Huysmans' art criticism could very well have had a significant effect on Signac. Fénéon also regarded Huysmans highly for his "sûreté de verdict" 96 in his art criticism. Huysmans was the Neo-Impressionists' closest equivalent to Baudelaire, and therefore Signac followed Huysmans' writing fairly closely.

Baudelaire himself proved to be a fruitful source for Signac, in his search for support from recognized authorities. Signac used many quotations from Baudelaire, firstly as a source of information about Delacroix and secondly as a source of support for Neo-Impressionist theories.

Several publications of Baudelaire appeared in the 1880's: L'Art Romantique (1868) and Curiosités Esthétiques (1868) were both reprinted in 1885.

Baudelaire's passages on colour must have been particularly inspiring for Signac, especially when he spoke of the poppies in the grass, red singing the glory of green, and in the same passage he speaks of mixtures of tones, reflections etc. 97 One other relevant aspect of Baudelaire's criticism is his use of musical analogies, such as Signac frequently uses in his own writing and paintings during a brief period.

Amongst the scientific sources cited by Signac is O.N. Rood. Ogden N. Rood (1831-1902), an American scientist, wrote Modern Chromatics: with applications to art and indust-



(1879) in the hope of educating the layman and artist in basic colour facts. The French edition appeared in 1881. Signac quoted from Rood's introduction because, once again, it corresponded with his own wish to educate the public in aesthetic matters. However it is unlikely that the book proved to be as accessible to the general public as its author and Signac hoped it would be because of its reasonably complicated scientific terminology.

Rood's Modern Chromatics demonstrates in detail the properties of colour and the way various effects may be produced. The most interesting material with regards to Signac's standpoint, comes when Rood compares a retinal image which combines coloured points, to a mosaic, and when he explains how painters paint not only with colours but also with light. Passages such as this would have appealed to Signac.

Another important source is John Ruskin. Ruskin (London 1819- Brantwood, Cumberland 1900), the outspoken British authority on aesthetic matters, proved to be a fruitful source, as may be seen by the lengthy quotations from the chapter "On Colour" in The Elements of Drawing. However, approximately half the quotations are taken not directly from Ruskin but from a French writer, Robert de la Sizeranne<sup>98</sup> who published an article entitled "La religion de la beauté" in La Revue des Deux Mondes, March 1, 1897. Sizeranne quoted Ruskin directly on some occasions and on others paraphrased him. Then he made comments of his own. Signac simply attri-

buted all three to Ruskin without elaborating. Therefore, Signac's source is not always Ruskin but Sizeranne commenting on Ruskin. This is duly noted in the footnotes to this edition.

In his introduction to Ruskin, Signac also mentions his fellow Neo-Impressionist Henri-Edmond Cross' French translation of *The Elements of Drawing*. Cachin states that this translation was completed by Signac during WWI after Cross' death in 1910 but never published.<sup>99</sup> This manuscript is presumably in the Signac family archives.

Signac's trip to Venice in 1909 might be seen as reflecting the direct influence of Ruskin. Signac's use of Ruskin as a source for his treatise may also be linked to his appreciation of Turner. In Chapter 3 he stressed the connection between Turner and Monet and Pissarro by citing latters' voyage to London in 1871. Signac's source for this was undoubtedly Pissarro around 1886, but whether Turner was as important as Signac implied is questionable.

Signac also stressed Turner's influence in his chapter on Delacroix. The notebook he kept during his trip shows how he probably went to London intentionally to prove the connection in preparation for his book.

" Son (Turner) influence sur Delacroix est incontestable. Certainement en 1834 le maître français à étudié et compris Turner. Des tons, des teintes, des harmonies que j'ai vus dans Delacroix, je les retrouve dans Turner. Les figures sont traitées avec la même liberté."<sup>100</sup>  
 Signac's emphasis on this connection coincides with his own wish to free himself from Nature, Turner was seen as an

example of a "free artist". Signac's trip to London had been undertaken as a "pilgrimage",

"Il est certain que ce matin, en regardant mes toiles, elles me semblent trop photographiques, trop études d'après nature. Je suis sûr que la leçon que me donneraient les Turner me sera des plus profitables. Lui a su se débarrasser des réalités et être un peintre libre."<sup>101</sup>

This brings us to Signac's fidelity to his theoretical standpoint; or did he practice what he preached? Throughout his career in painting, his style revealed a certain dichotomy. First, there was the effort towards control, stylization, and composition, which was complemented by his theoretical writing. Signac wanted to remain faithful to the division which he and Seurat had established, and which would free the artist from copying nature. However, given his character and Impressionistic background, it is not surprising that another tendency emerges, that of the sheer pleasure of observation of nature which results in a free, spontaneous style.

In his very early works, such as Le Gateau (1882) and early landscapes, Signac aspired to be an Impressionist, under the initial influence of Monet and then of Guillaumin and others. In his Route de Gennevilliers (1883, Paris, Louvre, Jeu de Paume) of which Huysmans said he "marseilleized" the suburbs because he gave them such bright colours<sup>102</sup>, his taste for strong, bright, pure colour was already pronounced. Signac did not sentimentalize the suburbs as other artists might have done. His choice of subject might be due to



Plate 1. La Route de Gennevilliers, 1883, Paris, Louvre,  
Jeu de Paume.

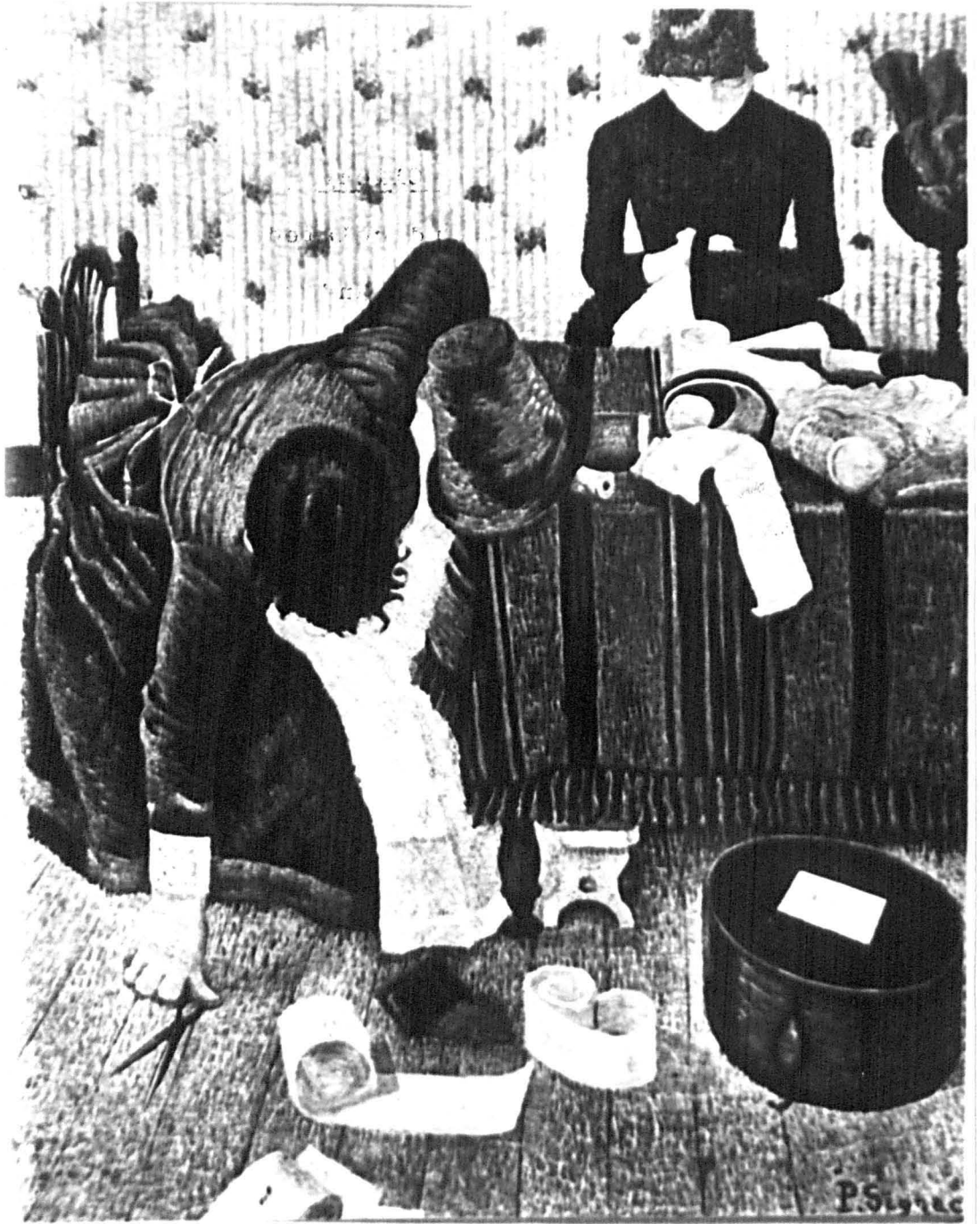


Plate 2. Apprêteuses et Garnisseuses, 1885-1886, Zurich,  
Bührle Collection.

his political beliefs, in that the artist should translate popular life or else art will remain decadent, and his reading of Naturalist literature, but his treatment of these rather dismal places is not "Realist", nor is it a "genre" painting. After being initiated into the division he applied it to tone in Les Gazomètres de Clichy (1886, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria) and related paintings.

After his meeting with Seurat and the founding of their technique, Signac's paintings became an attempt to go beyond superficiality to a "superior reality", via science. In this way, human figures such as those in Apprêteuses et Garnisseuses (1885-6, Zurich, Bührle collection) and Le Petit-Déjeuner, Op152 (1886-87, Otterlo, Kroller-Müller Museum) were destined to go beyond mere portraits and towards archetypes. In the former painting, the first to which Signac applied the division, he made an effort to regulate the composition, with the two female figures' curves and angles opposed to the vertical patterns of the carpet and decor. The hatboxes and curls of fabric give the painting a geometric appearance. The faces are de-emphasized so as not to destroy their "effigy" appearance. The Petit-Déjeuner is a similar attempt to go beyond the genre painting towards definitive types: the bourgeois, the maid, etc. The contrast between this and similar scenes by Impressionists, such as Monet and Renoir, is great.

After meeting Charles Henry (1886) and collaborating with him later (1888-9), Signac, although never as mathemat-

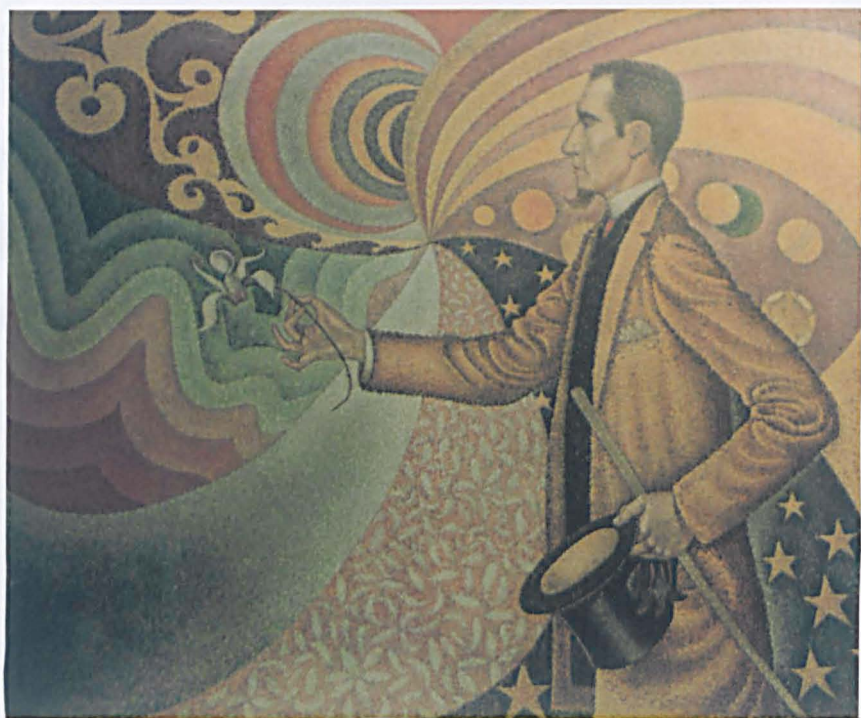


Plate 3. Portrait de Félix Fénéon, op. 217, 1890, New York, Private Collection.



ical as Seurat, did apply some of the scientist's theories to his work. He attempted to exploit linear elements to the utmost in landscapes, and about 1890 some paintings such as Soleil Couchant, Pêche à la sardine, Adagio (1891, New York, John Hay Whitney Collection) exhibit a distinctly abstract repetition of motifs. This is most likely in accordance with Henry's theories on the unification of the arts and in this instance, music, as may be seen in the musical title. Signac entitled certain works "Opus", "Larghetto", "Adagio", until about 1892. Perhaps his most abstract works were designed under Henry's influence. Examples are the seascapes done at Concarneau such as Le Port de Portrieux (1888, Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie) a seascape which is very linear in its composition. However, as stressed earlier, Signac did not feel compelled to follow all Henry's advice and what might be taken to be his most obvious Henry-influenced painting, Sur l'émail d'un fond rythmique de mesures et d'angles, de tons et de teintes, portrait de M. Felix Fénéon (1890, Joshua Logan collection, New York) is more likely dependent on Japanese influences.

103

An important aspect of Signac's stylistic evolution was his use of watercolours, which increasingly became an integral part of his working procedure. As early as 1888, Pissarro recommended him to use watercolours for fixing the sensation rapidly, but they were to play a more important part later.

As we have seen, around 1890-1, Signac was extremely



busy, with several exhibitions. There were also several deaths with which he had to come to terms: those of Dubois-Pillet, Van Gogh and then Seurat. After a brief period in Brittany, shocked by Seurat's death, he returned to Paris, but soon felt the need to work elsewhere. His friend Cross wrote to him from the Côte d'Azur, and Signac decided to sail South to St.Tropez. This move was to mark a new phase in his development. Not only was it there that his treatise took shape, but a gradual evolution in his style began.

Signac expressed dissatisfaction with the way colour tended to appear dirty with their technique, after attempting to use freer strokes. He wanted to enlarge the strokes.<sup>104</sup> Around 1892-4 he began to stop working directly from nature, but simply took "notes" to use later in the studio, as he spelt out in his Journal entry for 23 Aug., 1894:

" La toile de 25(81 X 60 cm) d'après nature me semble de plus en plus du temps perdu. Le travail doit consister en 1) documents pris rapidement d'après nature au fur et à mesure des besoins ou des sensations, 2) création de l'oeuvre d'après ces documents..(..)Et dire que ces peintres, parce qu'ils se sont condamnés à ne travailler que d'après de la nature, se croient des 'naturalistes'.-- 105

This marks a constant preoccupation throughout his Journal passages with freeing himself from nature. It was during this same period that Delacroix's Journals became available to him (1893-1895) and these would have helped to confirm his beliefs. However, the change Signac envisioned was not one of total abstraction --that was to be for future genera-

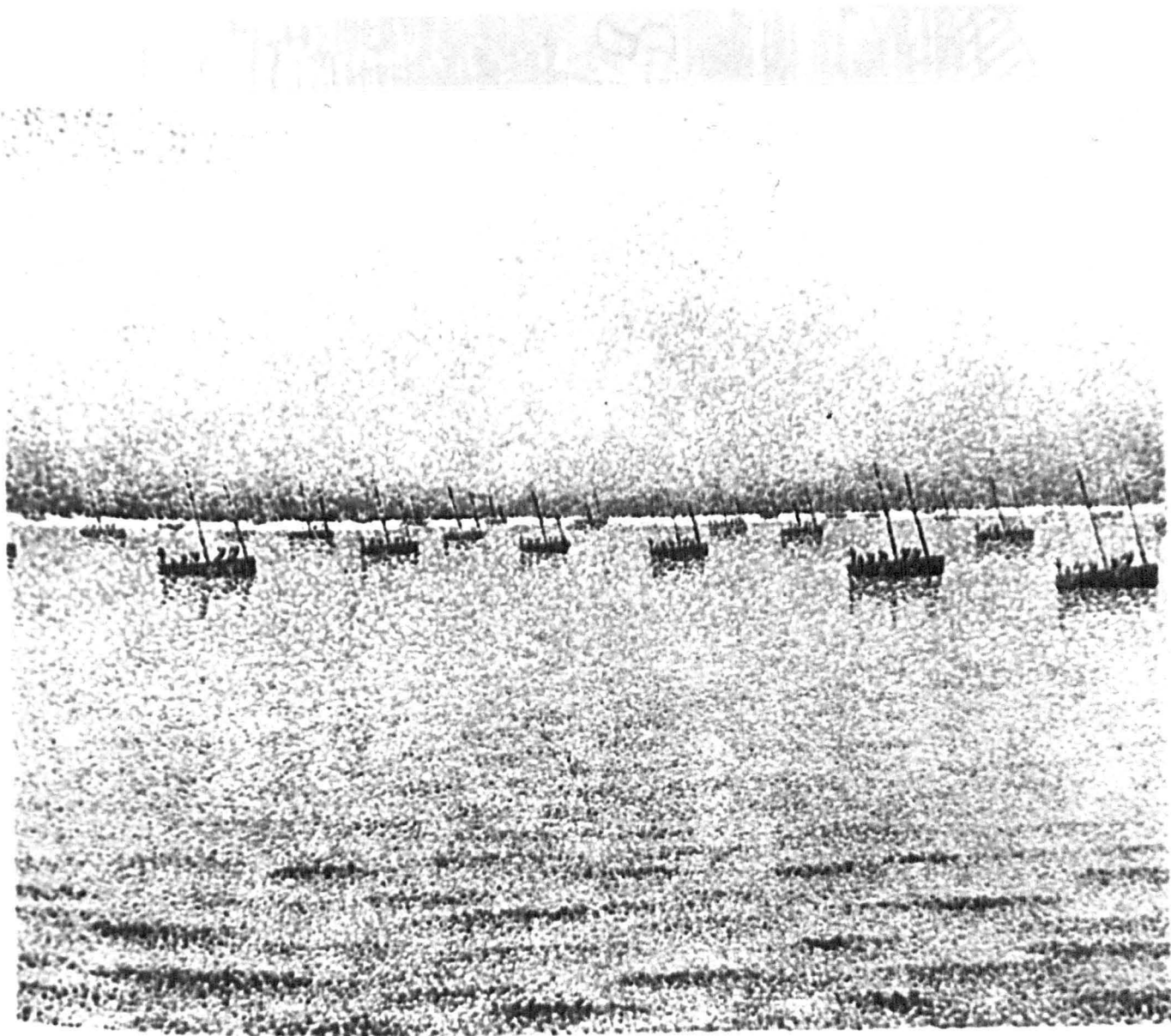


Plate 4. Soleil Couchant, Pêche à la Sardine, Adagio, 1891,  
New York, John Hay Whitney Collection.



Plate 5. Drawing after Delacroix's Heliodorus chased from the temple, in the Saint-Sulpice, c.1900, Signac Archives.  
(Bamboo and ink drawing)



Plate 6. Le Port de St. Tropez, Tartanes pavoisées,  
op. 240, 1893, Wuppertal, von der Heydt  
museum.

sions. He still needed nature for inspiration, from which he would develop his compositions in the studio, such as Le Port de St. Tropez, tartanes pavoisées Op 240 (1893, Wuppertal, von der Heydt Museum). In this painting he has used a triangular pattern with the secondary lines formed by the boats and their reflections. This is accompanied by a calm blue and yellow colour scheme, punctuated by the bright flags.

Signac's interest in art nouveau may be observed in such works as the Femmes au puit (1892, Paris, Louvre), subtitled "une décoration pour un panneau dans la pénombre." The significance of the subtitle is clear in the extremely high-keyed yellow and blue hill and the sea. The curious curves of the shadow in the foreground and the strange female figures at the well are so stylized that the final effect is startling. It was an experience that he would not repeat.

Signac's attempt to depict a Socialist theme is his Au temps d'harmonie (1894, Paris, Private Collection) which he wanted to entitle "Au temps d'anarchie". Signac's version of Utopia is man living in harmony with nature, an artist painting by the seaside, a strolling couple who represent "free love", pine trees and "boule" players. This painting owes a great debt to Puvis de Chavannes' calm, simplified compositions, which Signac greatly admired, particularly Puvis's Doux Pays of 1882. The preparatory studies for this work are very spontaneous (Coquelicots,

Paris, private Collection) exploiting abstract plays of colour which would not be translated into the final work. When he exhibited the painting at the Salon des Indépendants of 1895, he repainted the entire work shortly before the exhibition opened because he found he had paid too much attention to details and lost sight of the essential view.<sup>106</sup>

Pissarro in an 1894 letter to Signac advised the younger painter:

" Je suis loin de trouver que vous êtes dans la voie qui convient à votre tempérament essentiellement peintre, - et si jusqu'à présent je ne vous ai rien dit, c'est parce que cela vous serait désagréable. Réfléchissez mûrement et voyez si le moment n'est pas venu de faire votre évolution vers un art plus de sensations, plus libre, et qui serait plus conforme à votre nature."<sup>107</sup>

But Signac was not one to give up the division. If a change was to occur it was to be through the division, rather than by its abandonment.

" Toujours à la recherche d'une facture plus libre, tout en conservant les bénéfiques de la division et du contraste. (...) Il faudrait, je pense, poser légèrement du premier coup chaque touche, de façon que le contour de ces touches ne soit pas net mais irradié, fondu, divisé. (...) Le progrès de ces recherches c'est l'horreur que j'ai de plus en plus du 'petit point' et la haine de la sécheresse."<sup>108</sup>

It was in this year that Signac exhibited for the first time some watercolours at the Salon de Libre Esthétique in Brussels.<sup>109</sup>

This brings us to a period during which he was working on D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme in St Tropez,



as well as painting a series of views of Mont St. Michel from "notes" taken earlier. This would be his working procedure from now on.

When he saw Seurat's Poseuses after 10 years, it now looked too divided, the brushstrokes too small, so that it appeared grey and mechanical. He concluded:

" Nous avons bien fait de délayer notre facture."<sup>110</sup>

This implies that Signac had given way to more colour and larger strokes, and felt justified in having gradually evolved his style as may be understood in the last paragraphs of his treatise.

His later career shows aspects of two tendencies: a highly structured mosaic-like composition; and a free form play of flowing colour. The latter tendency can be seen most clearly in works he considered minor or preparatory such as Coquelicots.

In 1927 he published a little-known book on Jongkind, including a traité sur l'aquarelle<sup>111</sup> which reveals his own love for this medium as the best way to fix sensations rapidly. A Journal entry for the 30th of September, 1897, shows the great pleasure he took in making watercolours outdoors:

"Il a plu.-- aujourd'hui il fait soleil, le port est rempli de bateaux venus pour charger les vins. Toutes les voiles sont au sec. Je renonce à une matinée de travail à l'atelier pour m'offrir la joie de quelques croquis à l'aquarelle. Ce sera, d'ailleurs, d'un bon entraînement pour notre séjour à Marseille, où je vais aller avec Cross."<sup>112</sup>



Plate 7. Anémones, c. 1910, Paris, Private Collection.



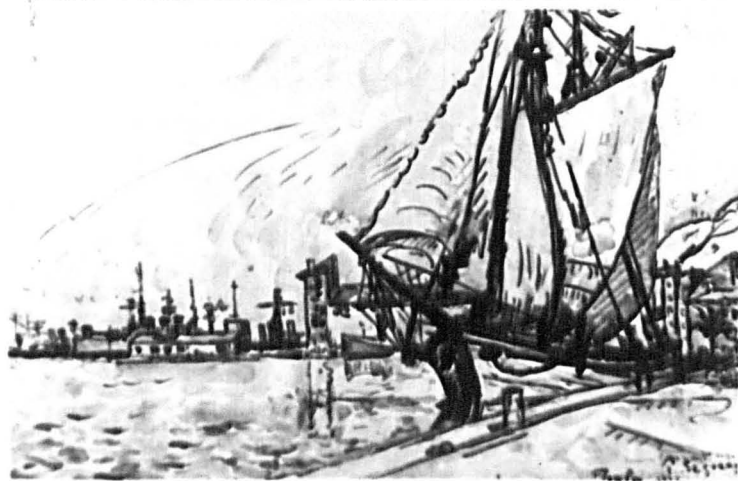
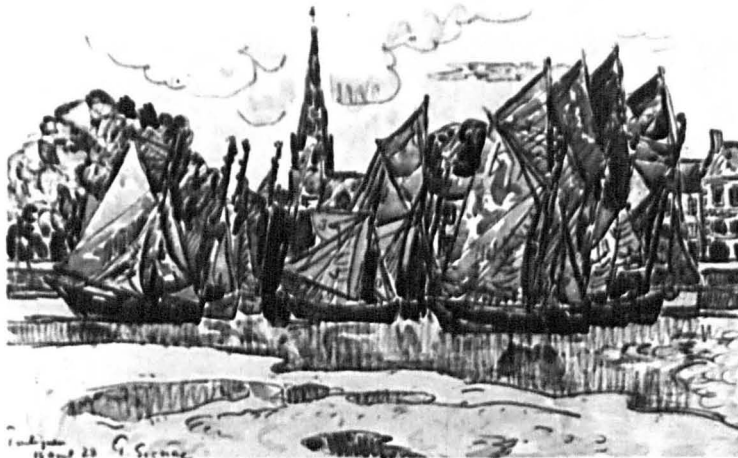


Plate 8. Le Poulingen, 1928 and Toulon, 1931, Saint-Tropez,  
Musée de L'Annonciade. Watercolours.

So, was he faithful to the principles he and Seurat had established and about which he wrote? The only possible answer is that in some ways he was, and in others he was not. He himself did not seem to worry unduly over the inconsistencies. With regards to the central idea, the division, his conscience was clear. The two tendencies, the "stylistic" and the "sensational" factors, seem to co-exist without either becoming dominant.

We find spontaneous, vigorous watercolours and occasional free "oil studies" such as Anemones (1910, Paris, Private Collection) alongside his large, highly-structured compositions such as Constantinople (1909, Brussels, Clive Morris Collection).

D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme was successful as one of the few theoretical works of the period but perhaps not for the reasons Signac had hoped. Signac's insistence on colour led Fénéon to suggest "la couleur du néo-impressionnisme" as a title. Signac had taken their theories and modernized them, so that the end result was a glorification of colour, at the expense of the observation of nature. The younger generation of painters consulted it for this reason.

Signac's role in later life was one of mentor for many of the young artists, and through his Independent exhibitions many of them were able to exhibit, regardless of whether their tendencies coincided with Signac's own intentions.

Matisse came under Signac's influence around the turn

of the century, and even spent time in 1904 in St. Tropez where he painted Luxe, Calme et Volupté (1904) which was later purchased by Signac. Signac was perhaps thinking of Matisse in his closing paragraph. But Neo-Impressionism was not to find a true successor to carry the torch. Rather, it was to serve as a training ground for such painters as Delauney, Klee, the Italian Futurists and other early twentieth century artists.

Signac remained observant of the new tendencies and although he might not have been able to go as far in his own work as the the new artists, he appreciated the painterly qualities of such young painters as Bonnard,<sup>113</sup> Vuillard,<sup>114</sup> and Denis<sup>115</sup>. The one thing he could not tolerate was a return to muddy, dark colours. He was disgusted by the aging Impressionists' return to darker colours, around the turn of the century. He attributed it to senility. After all, they had fought to use colour, and now they were returning to mud. This feeling may be observed in his chapter on the Impressionists.

Signac's later writing included his book on Jongkind in 1927, which was inspired by his admiration for the master and his use of watercolour. In December 1933 he was to write an article for the exposition "Seurat et ses amis, la suite de l'impressionnisme", which was published in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts of January 1934.<sup>116</sup> Almost 50 years after the first meeting, Signac retraced the events in the history of the movement.

The main additions are Signac's more detailed explanation of the birth of the Independents, about to celebrate their 50th anniversary and of which he was still president, and a more confident tone.

He also detailed his explanation of why the term pointillist was as derogatory to them as Confettist, because it is simply a superficial description of a means and not an end. His own brush stroke was by then predominantly square or rectangular. He indicated that "chromo-luminairistes" was Seurat's preferred term but that "Neo-Impressionists" indicated their debt to Impressionism. He also added that the term divisionism was used by Segatini and the Italians.<sup>117</sup> It is clear that Seurat would not have insisted on the Impressionist connection and that Signac after 50 years continued to adopt a distinct stance. For, as Pissarro had written to Signac as early as 1888,

"... Pour l'avenir de notre art 'impressionniste' il faut absolument rester en dehors de l'influence d'Ecole de Seurat. Vous l'avez du reste vous-même pressenti. Seurat est de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, il en est imprégné ... Prenons donc garde, là est le danger. Il ne s'agit pas ici de technique ni de science, il s'agit de notre tradition, il faut la sauvegarder."<sup>118</sup>

Another interesting article by Signac is "Les Besoins Individuels et la Peinture" written for the Encyclopédie Française and published in 1935.<sup>119</sup> In this article Signac expounded the difference between pictorial and picturesque and concluded by saying that if the masses received aesthetic

training to appreciate beauty in the harmony of lines and colour, they would not simply rely on the pictorial or figurative aspect in their appreciation of a painting. This article puts into words what had obsessed Signac for many years, and had largely remained unexpressed in his previous writing, namely freedom from imitation of nature.

However, Signac does not recommend total freedom from nature and eventual abstraction: nature remains a dictionary, to quote Delacroix, and provides all the necessary elements for composition. Therefore it is for other artists to go beyond this. Signac cites Bonnard's, Cézanne's and Matisse's ways of working from nature, but he is writing about the past. Matisse's art had already progressed far beyond Signac's account. Matisse himself as early as 1908 stated that his choice of colours did not depend on any theory as did that of Signac.<sup>120</sup>

Thus, in conclusion, D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impres-  
ionnisme remains a fascinating and vital historical, artistic, and theoretical document from a period relatively sparse in such writing. For the modern reader, some general historical background is helpful as well as specific information on its author. Because the Neo-Impressionist movement and this treatise occurred at the close of the 19th century, encompassing many literary, artistic and scientific sources perhaps unfamiliar to the modern reader, it has been the intention of this English edition to clarify the surrounding issues as well as possible in order to appreciate more

fully Paul Signac's motivation in moving from palette to pen.

Footnotes to Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Françoise Cachin, Paul Signac, Paris, Bibliothèque des Beaux-Arts, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Signac, " Extraits du Journal Inédit de Paul Signac", ed. John Rewald, Gazette des Beaux-Arts , I-1894-1895; July-Sept. 1949, pp.97-128, II-1897-1898; April 1952, pp.265-284, and III-1898-1899; July-August 1953, pp.27-57. Signac's friend and executor, Georges Besson also published " Fragments du Journal de Paul Signac", Arts de France, nos.11 to 20, 1947, pp.75-82, and pp.97-106, but I will be citing from Rewald's edition unless otherwise specified. This particular quotation came from III, p.52.

<sup>5</sup> Signac, Journal, III, p.34, fig.4. Rewald has reproduced this painting, identified only as Paysage d'Auvers, c.1873. Signac's entry for Dec. 23, 1898 concerned how he refused to sell this painting to Vollard but did let a Cézanne still-life go.

<sup>6</sup> Caillebotte, Gustave (1848-1894) was a wealthy naval engineer who also painted, and he exhibited his work in several Impressionist exhibitions (1876, 1877, 1879, 1880, and 1882). He is perhaps better remembered as having donated his large Impressionist collection to the French government in his will, which the State only partially accepted in 1894.

<sup>7</sup> Cachin, Signac, op.cit., p.11.

<sup>8</sup> Signac, " Fondation de la Société des artistes indépendants", Partisans, 3rd Series, Jan.1927.

<sup>9</sup> Angrand, Charles (Criquetot sur Ourville 1854-Rouen 1926) participated in the 1st independent exhibition with Signac and Seurat and in subsequent exhibitions. Signac regarded him quite highly, particularly for his drawings.

<sup>10</sup> Dubois-Pillet, Albert ( Paris 1846-Le Puy 1890) was an officer of the republican guard. He exhibited with the Independents frequently of which he was a founder. His most famous work is perhaps his portrait of a dead child said to be the model for the dead child in Zola's L'Oeuvre . Signac later organized his retrospective exhibition in 1890.

<sup>11</sup> Cross, Henri-Edmond (Douai 1856-Saint Clair 1910) his true family name was Delacroix which he changed for obvious reasons. He met Seurat and Signac at the 1st Independent Salon. In 1891 he became more divisionist. He remained Signac's close friend for many years and later persuaded him to move to the South of France.

<sup>12</sup> Signac, D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, this edition, p. T61.

<sup>13</sup> David Sutter, " Les Phénomènes de la vision", a series of six articles published in L'Art, Paris, 1880 and collected by Seurat.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Rey, La Renaissance du Sentiment Classique dans la Peinture Française à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Paris, Les Beaux-Arts, 1921.

<sup>15</sup> See this edition, p. T62.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Hautecoeur, Seurat, Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Fab-  
bri, 1974, p.13.

<sup>17</sup> Seurat to Fénéon, letter of summer 1890. Cited in Re-  
wald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, trans. Alice Rewald, Paris,  
Albin-Michel, 1961, p. 253.

<sup>18</sup> Hautecoeur, Seurat, op.cit., p. 15 and p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> This edition, pp. T62, T64, and T65.

<sup>20</sup> See Footnote 17 to Chapter 2 of this edition for a more detailed account of this visit.

<sup>21</sup> Signac to Claude Monet, letter reprinted by Rewald in Seurat, Paris, Albin-Michel, 1948, p. 47; undated. It is also reproduced by Cachin in Paul Signac, op.cit., pp. 14-15 dated in late 1885.

<sup>22</sup> Guillaumin, Armand ( Paris 1841-Château de Grignon, Orly, 1927) was an employee of the railroad company in 1860 when he first started attending the Académie Suisse with Cézanne and Pissarro. After 1868 he devoted his time only to painting. He exhibited in several Impressionist exhibitions. Guillaumin was particularly fond of seascapes and water scenes in general which explains part of the interest Signac had in his work. See Cachin, Signac, op.cit., pp. 16-17.

<sup>23</sup> Joris-Karl Huysmans, " L'Exposition des Indépendants en 1881", L'Art Moderne/Certains, Paris, Union Générale d'Édition, 10/18 collection, 1975, p. 238.



<sup>24</sup>Luce, Maximilien (Paris 1858-1941) was marked by a particularly difficult childhood which may be observed in his work. Adopting the Neo-Impressionist technique around 1885, he was taken into the group. He applied the technique to socialist themes such as factories, railroads and suburbs.

<sup>25</sup>Pissarro, Lucien ( Paris 1863- Dorset 1944) was the same age as Signac. It was probably through his acquaintance with Signac that his father became aware of the technique. He was particularly active in printmaking techniques. He later became a British subject and died in England.

<sup>26</sup>See Chapter 4, this edition.

<sup>27</sup>Puvis de Chavannes, Pierre ( 1824-98) painted monumental frescoes greatly admired by the Néo-Impressionists for their simplification of details, flat colours and linear patterns. Signac regarded Puvis highly as did Seurat who painted a "Pauvre Pêcheur" after Puvis' exhibited at the Salon of 1881.

<sup>28</sup>Cachin, Françoise, ed. Intro to Au-Delà de L'Impressionnisme, Paris, Hermann, 1966, Miroirs de L'Art series, pp.14-17; this is a collection of Fénéon's art criticism.

<sup>29</sup>Felix Fénéon, "Les Impressionnistes en 1886", reprinted in Au-delà de L'Impressionnisme, Paris, Hermann, 1966, pp.73-80.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p.58.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp.20-21.

<sup>32</sup>Idem., "L'Impressionnisme Scientifique", reprinted in Au-Delà de L'Impressionnisme, op. cit., pp.73-80.

<sup>33</sup>Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit., p.67.

<sup>34</sup>Alexander, Arsène ( no date av.), a Parisian art critique often credited with naming the Neo-Impressionists. The article in question here was "Le mouvement artistique", Paris, Aug.13, 1888. See also Rewald Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit., pp.114-5.

<sup>35</sup>Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op. cit., pp.71-72. See also Idem., Seurat, op.cit., pp. 14-115. The letters cited in this incident were:

Signac to Pissarro, Aug. 24, 1888.

Seurat to Signac, Aug. 26, (1888).

Pissarro to Signac, Aug.30, 1888. All cited in Seurat.

<sup>36</sup>Rysselberghe, Théodore Van ( 1862-1926) a Belgian, participated in the 1st exhibition of the XX group in 1884. He met Seurat in 1887 and later became a member of the Neo-Impressionist group until around 1916. He applied the technique primarily to portraits. He was also involved in the Art Nouveau movement and designed furniture and jewelry.

<sup>37</sup>Petitjean, Hippolyte (1854-1929) suffered from poverty all his life. He met Seurat in 1884 and exhibited with the group for many years. He primarily applied the technique to the nude human figure.

<sup>38</sup>See note 6 Chapter 4, this edition.

<sup>39</sup>Anonymous review of XX show," Catalogue de l'exposition des XX, Bruxelles", Art et Critique, Feb.1,1890. Signed S.P.

<sup>40</sup>Incident cited in Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit., p.222.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp.249, 251, 256, 335.

<sup>42</sup>Seurat to Maurice Beaubourg, 28 Aug.(1890) first printed by Jules Christophe," Chromo-Luminairistes: Georges Seurat", La Plume, Sept. 1,1890.

<sup>43</sup>Fénéon, Felix, " Paul Signac", Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui, no. 373, 1890. Reprinted in Au-Delà de l'Impressionnisme, op.cit., see Cachin, ed. note 26, p.122 in which Fénéon revised his passage on Seurat because of the date 1885 in Signac article.

<sup>44</sup>See Chapter 4, this edition, p.T56.

<sup>45</sup>Hayet, Louis (1864-1940) came from a poor family. He was first apprenticed to a house painter and later worked as a sign painter. He met Camille and Lucien Pissarro and painted with them before meeting the Neo-Impressionists in 1886. He did many experiments with the technique.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Hayet to Signac, Feb. 10, 1890. Printed in Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit., p.116.

<sup>47</sup> Van de Velde, Henri-Clemens ( Antwerp 1863-Zurich 1957), first studied painting at the Academy in Antwerp then went to Paris and attended Carolus Duran's Studio. He was a member of the XX and from 1887 on used the Neo-Impressionist technique. In 1890 he abandoned painting for industrial art and architecture.

<sup>48</sup> Van de Velde to John Rewald, Jan.17, 1950. Printed in Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit., p.253.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Camille Pissarro to Van de Velde, March 27th 1896. Printed in Rewald , Le Post-Impressionnisme , op.cit. , p.261.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Signac to Pissarro ( Concarneau, July-Aug 1891) Printed in Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit. , p.261.

<sup>52</sup> Jules Christophe, "Chromo-Luminairistes: Georges Seurat", op.cit.

<sup>53</sup> Signac as quoted by Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op. cit. , p.257.

<sup>54</sup> Signac, Journal, op.cit. , I, p.109.

<sup>55</sup> Rewald's Le Post-Impressionnisme includes a very complete bibliography for Signac as does Cachin's Paul Signac, op.cit. however many of the minor periodicals are difficult to find in French libraries.

<sup>56</sup> Signac, Journal, op.cit.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. , I-p.109.

<sup>58</sup> "Oculos Habent et non vident", see Chapter 8, Footnote 17 this edition for more information.

<sup>59</sup> Signac, Journal, op.cit. , II, p.269; June 2, 1897. St. Tropez.

<sup>60</sup> Octave Mirbeau, "Neo-Impressionnistes", L'Echo de Paris, May 12, 1894. Mirbeau (1848-1917) was a Naturalist writer and occasional art critic. He was particularly fond of Monet and Pissarro.

<sup>61</sup> Geffroy, Gustave, "Le Salon des Independents de 1896", La Vie Artistique, 1st Series, Paris, 1897. Geffroy (1855-1926) was the author of Histoire de l'Impressionnisme in 1894 which was one of the first attempts to defend Impressionism, in a historical context. He also wrote a book on his friend Monet.

<sup>62</sup> Camille Mauclair, Mercure de France, March 1894.

<sup>63</sup> Signac, Journal, op. cit., II, p. 276; April 4, 1897.

<sup>64</sup> According to Cachin in her introduction to D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> Tourneux, Eugène Delacroix devant ses contemporains, ses écrits, ses biographes, ses critiques, Paris, Libraires de l'Art, 1886.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter 1, Footnote , this edition.

<sup>67</sup> Andre Chastel, "Une Source Oubliée de Seurat", Archives de l'Art Français, Tome XXII, Etudes et documents sur l'art français du XII<sup>e</sup> au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1959.

<sup>68</sup> Chevreul, Eugène, De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortissement des objets colorés considérés d'après cette loi dans ses rapports avec la peinture, Paris, Pitois-Levrault, 1839. Re-edition in 1889, Paris, Gauthier Villars et fils with introduction by Chevreul's son Henri.

<sup>69</sup> David Sutter, "les Phénomènes de la vision", L'Art, op. cit.

<sup>70</sup> Rey, La Renaissance du sentiment classique, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Lucien Pissarro as cited by Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op. cit., p. 55. Notes taken from Seurat.

<sup>72</sup> Encyclopedie Larousse, 1961.

<sup>73</sup> Albert Boime, "Seurat and Piero della Francesca", The Art Bulletin, 1964, pp. 265-271.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. ,

<sup>75</sup> Signac, Journal, op. cit., I, p. 112.

<sup>76</sup> Sources for Charles Henry have been Rewald, Cachin, and some of his own work.

<sup>77</sup> Charles Henry, Cercle Chromatique presentant tous les complements et toutes les harmonies de couleurs, Paris, Charles Verdin, 1888.

<sup>78</sup> Idem., Rapporteur esthétique de M. Charles Henry, Paris, G. Séguin, 1888.

<sup>79</sup> Letter from Signac to Vincent Van Gogh, Cassis, April 1889. Reprinted in Rewald, Le Post-Impressionisme, op.cit., p.77.

<sup>80</sup> Charles Henry, Applications de nouveaux instruments de précision (cercle chromatique, rapporteur et triple décimètre esthétiques) à l'archaéologie, Paris, E. Leroux, 1890.

<sup>81</sup> Fénéon, "La Peinture Optique: Paul Signac", Au-Delà de L'Impressionisme, op.cit., pp.118-119.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Fénéon in Rewald, Le Post-Impressionisme, op.cit., p.255.

<sup>84</sup> Signac to Fénéon, April 29, 1890. Reprinted in Ibid., p.256.

<sup>85</sup> Henry, Introduction à une esthétique scientifique, Paris, Revue Contemporaine, 1885.

<sup>86</sup> Cachin, ed. introduction to D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impessionisme, op.cit., p.15.

<sup>87</sup> Signac, "Hommage à Charles Henry", Cahiers de L'Etoile, January-February, 1930. Special Edition dedicated to Charles Henry.

<sup>88</sup> Humbert de Superville, Daniel (1770-1844) was an engraver and painter who taught in Rotterdam and Leyde where he was director of the Cabinet des Estampes after 1825. His Essai sur les signes inconditionnels de l'art went virtually unnoticed until 19th century theorists such as Blanc and Henry revived it.

<sup>89</sup> Chastel, "Une Source Oubliée de Seurat", op. cit.

<sup>90</sup> Huysmans, Joris-Karl (Paris 1848-1907) on his father's side he was descended from a long line of Dutch artists. He wrote several Naturalist novels ( appreciated by Signac) then changed direction and wrote A Rebours in 1884.

<sup>91</sup> See Chapter 4, p. T65 this edition.

<sup>92</sup> Signac, Journal ,op.cit., II, p. 276.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., I, p. 106.

<sup>94</sup> Huysmans, " L'Exposition des Independants en 1880", published in l'Art Moderne, Paris, 1883. Certains was first published in 1889. L'Art Moderne/ Certains, Paris, Union Générale d'Editions, Collection 10/18, 1975 , pp. 99-135.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 131-132.

<sup>96</sup> Fénéon, "J.K. Huysmans", ( Review of Huysmans' Certains, 1889), Art et Critique, Dec. 14, 1889. Reprinted in Au-Delà de L'Impressionnisme, op.cit., pp. 138-141. This particular quotation is from p. 141.

<sup>97</sup> Charles Baudelaire, " De la Couleur", in "Salon de 1846", Oeuvres Complètes, Bruges, Gallimard, Edition de la Pleiade, 1961, pp. 880-1.

<sup>98</sup> Sizeranne, Robert ( no biographical data available), "La Religion de la Beauté: Etude sur John Ruskin", Revue des Deux Mondes , March 1st, 1897, p. 169.

<sup>99</sup> Cachin, notes to Signac's D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, op.cit., p. 131.

<sup>100</sup> Signac, Journal, op.cit., III, p. 31; London notebook, March 29, 1898.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., II, p. 277; Feb. 16, 1898.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., I, p. 106; Sept. 29, 1894. The Huysmans quotation is unidentified.

<sup>103</sup> Cachin, Paul Signac, op.cit., I, p. 101; April 26, 1895.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>105</sup> Signac, Journal, op.cit., I, p. 101; April 26, 1895. St. Tropez.

- 106 Ibid., I, p.118; April 26, 1895. St Tropez.
- 107 Letter from Pissarro to Signac. Reprinted by Cachin in Paul Signac, op.cit., p.75.
- 108 Signac, Journal, I, op.cit., pp.124-125.
- 109 Cachin, Paul Signac, op.cit., p.73.
- 110 Signac, Journal, III, op.cit., p.220.
- 111 Idem., Jongkind, Paris, Crès, 1927. Unfortunately this book was unavailable to me.
- 112 Idem., Journal, op.cit., II, p.283.
- 113 Bonnard, Pierre, (1867-1947) shared a studio with Vuillard and Denis in the early 1890's at which time their work was heavily influenced by Gauguin. Later Bonnard and Vuillard did primarily interior scenes which led them to be called intimistes. Signac greatly admired Bonnard's 1909 exhibition because of Bonnard's freedom from nature and his change from low-keyed colours to a brighter palette. ( See "Fragments du Journal de Paul Signac", Arts de France, ed. George Besson, op.cit., pp.80-82; Feb.6, 1909, for Signac's account).
- 114 Vuillard, Edouard (1868-1940) see Bonnard. Signac was in reasonably frequent contact with Vuillard, in his Journal, he once wrote that Vuillard was completely liberated from the reality that kept them ( the Neo-Impressionists) down. ( Journal, II, p.276).
- 115 Denis, Maurice ( 1870-1943), Signac had more reservations about Denis, for, among other things, his Catholic affiliation whereas Signac was a Dreyfusard and above all Denis' artistic honesty. He considered Denis the closest equivalent to Puviss amongst the younger generation of painters ( See Journal p.268, April 14, 1897.
- 116 Signac, "Le Néo-Impressionnisme", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, Jan.1934. Reprinted in Annexe to Cachin's editions of D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impresionnisme, op.cit., pp.161-173.
- 117 Ibid., p.171.
- 118 Letter from Pissarro to Signac, (Aug)1888. Reprinted by Rewald in Seurat, op.cit., p.115.
- 119 Signac, " Les Besoins individuels et la peinture", Encyclopedie Française, tXVII, Chapter II, Paris, 1935. The segment entitled "Le Sujet en Peinture" is reproduced by Cachin in her edition of D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impresionnisme, op.cit., pp.174-190. Annexe.

120 Henri Matisse, "Notes d'un peintre", La Grande Revue,  
Dec. 1908, pp. 731-745. Excerpts reprinted in Herschel Chipp,  
Theories of Modern Art, Berkeley, University of California  
Press, 1968, pp. 130-137.



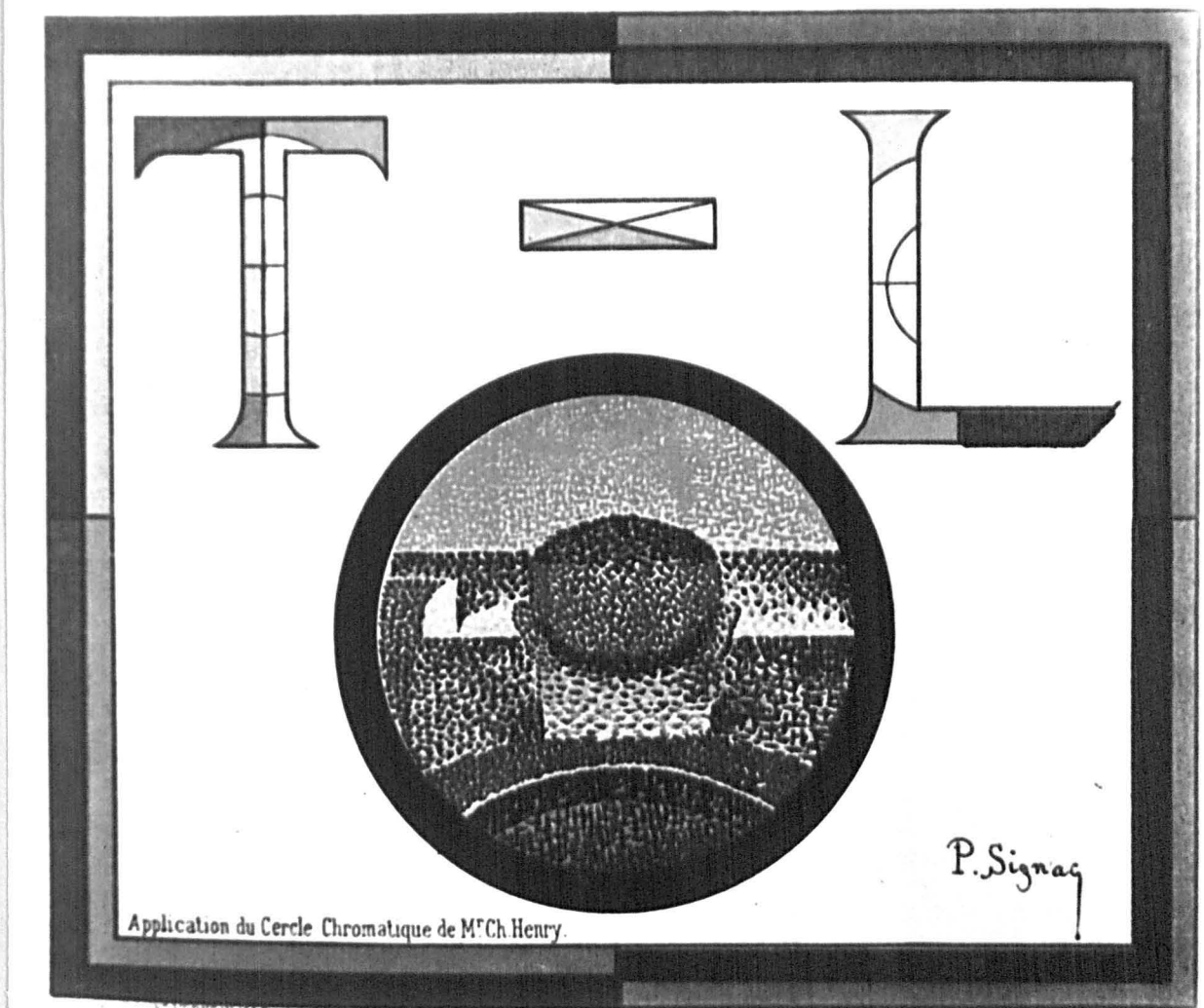


Plate 9. Application du Cercle Chromatique de Ch. Henry,  
1888, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. ( First appeared  
on the programme for the Théâtre Libre, 1888 ),  
Lithography.

FROM EUGÈNE DELACROIX  
TO NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

by

Paul Signac

In memory of Georges Seurat

PREFACE

1. Neo-Impressionist painters are those who founded and, since 1886, have developed the technique called division by using an optical mixture of tones and tints as their means of expression.

These painters, respectful of the permanent laws of art: rhythm, measure and contrast, were led to this technique by their desire to obtain as much luminosity, colour and harmony as possible which seemed impossible to them to obtain by any other means of expression.

Like all innovators, the Neo-Impressionists surprised and agitated the public and critics, who have reproached them for their use of a bizarre technique which obscures whatever talent they might have.

Here we shall not attempt to defend the merits of these painters, but we shall attempt to demonstrate that their much-abused method is neither unusual nor unprecedented; that it had been completely envisioned and virtually formulated by Eugène Delacroix, and that it was the inevitable successor to the Impressionists' method.

Is it useful to affirm that it is not at all our intention to compare them to their illustrious predecessors? We would simply like to prove that they have the right to profit from the teaching of these masters and that they might then take their rightful place in the tradition of colour and light.

2. Perhaps it seems unnecessary to explain a pictorial technique. Painters should be judged solely by their works, and

not by their theories. But, what the Neo-Impressionists are attacked for, in particular, is their technique; they seem to be seen as regretfully going astray with their futile research; they are condemned in advance by many, for their facture, without any serious examination of their paintings; for them, [the critics], only their method counts, they do not wish to acknowledge the benefits of the results. Thus, it seems justifiable to us to come to the defence of their means of expression and to show that it is logical and productive.

May we not be permitted to hope that their works will be examined without prejudice, for if a technique, recognized as valid, does not impart talent to those who use it, then why would it diminish the talent of those who find in it the best means of expressing that which they feel and desire ?

3. It will also be a simple task for us to demonstrate that the reproaches and criticisms levelled at the Neo-Impressionists are likewise traditional and that they were endured by their predecessors as well as by all artists who introduce an unusual means of expression.

## CHAPTER 1

DOCUMENTS

It is foreseen by Delacroix.

Similarity between his technique and that of the Neo-Impressionists.

References from Delacroix, Baudelaire, Charles Blanc, Ernest Chesneau, Théophile Silvestre, and Eugène Véron.

Similar research, identical reception:

some criticisms.

1. Most people believe that Neo-Impressionist painters cover their canvases with multi-coloured small points. This is a widespread error. As we will demonstrate further on, but emphasize from the very beginning, the mediocre process of points has nothing in common with the aesthetics of the Neo-Impressionist painters nor with the technique of division they use.

The Neo-Impressionist does not pointillate but divides.

For him, to divide is to be guaranteed as much luminosity, colour, and harmony as possible. The division is constituted by:

A. The optical mixture of only pure pigments (All the tints of the prism and all their tones) §

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§ Signac's note: The words tone and tint being generally used interchangeably, let us specify that by tint we mean the quality of a colour and by tone the degree of saturation or luminosity of a tint. The transformation of one colour into another will create a series of intermediary tints, and the breaking-up in degrees of one of these tints towards the light or dark will take place through a succession of tones.

B. The separation of diverse elements ( local colour, colour of lighting, their inter-reactions, etc.);

C. The balance of these elements and their proportion( according to the laws of contrast, gradation and irradiation);

D. The choice of a brush stroke appropriate to the size of the painting.

The above method formulated in these four paragraphs determines the Neo-Impressionists' use of colour. In addition, most of them also apply the even more mysterious laws that govern lines and direction, assuring their harmony and proper order.<sup>1</sup>

With this knowledge of line and colour, the painter determines with certainty the linear and chromatic composition of his painting in which the components of direction, tone and tint will be appropriate to the subject he wishes to represent.

2. The rules of colour, line and composition mentioned above and which constitute the division were proclaimed by Eugène Delacroix. Therefore it seems appropriate to quote from the wisdom of the great master.

First we will examine one by one all the steps of the Neo-Impressionists' aesthetics and technique. Then we will compare them to Delacroix's writing on the same questions in his letters, articles, and in the three volumes of his Journal.<sup>2</sup> This will demonstrate how the Neo-Impressionists follow the teaching of the master and continue his researches.

3. The goal of the Neo-Impressionists' technique is, (as we have seen), to attain as much colour and luminosity as possible. The same desire had already been expressed by Delacroix when he wrote in his Journal:

" Grey is the enemy of all painting ! " <sup>3</sup>

In order to achieve their goal the Neo-Impressionists use only pure colours. Their colours are as close as possible to the colours of the prism to the extent that material pigment can approximate light.

On this point they once more followed Delacroix's advice who wrote in his Journal:

" Bannish all earth colours ! " <sup>4</sup>

The Neo-Impressionists will always respect the purity of pure colours, taking care not to dirty them through mixture on the palette (except of course with white and with neighbouring colours in order to obtain all the tints of the prism and all their tones). They will juxtapose the colours in small, distinct strokes, and using the device of optical mixture, will achieve the desired result. The optical mixture is essential because a pigmentary mixture tends to become darker and to lose colour whereas the optical mixture becomes lighter and brighter.

Delacroix undoubtedly knew of the advantages of this method when he wrote:

" Tints of green and violet put here and there, haphazardly, light tones, without mixing them." <sup>5</sup>

" Green and violet: it is indispensable to put them one beside the other and not to mix them on the palette." <sup>6</sup>

Delacroix was right; green and violet, which are virtually complementary colours, would have produced a dull and dirty tint in pigmentary mixture, one of those greys which are enemies of any painting. But if juxtaposed they will optically reconstitute a fine and pearly grey.

The Neo-Impressionists have logically generalized Delacroix's treatment of green and violet, and subsequently applied it to other colours. Inspired by the research of the master and of Chevreul, the Neo-Impressionists found a unique and consistent way of obtaining light and colour simultaneously. All pigmentary mixture was replaced by an optical mixture of opposing colours.

4. To the Neo-Impressionists, uniform tints seemed lifeless. They tried to make all the parts of their paintings brighter with an optical mixture of juxtaposed, broken-up touches of colour. Delacroix had clearly noted the principle and advantages of this method:

" It is preferable not to blend the strokes together; they naturally blend at a distance fixed by the law of sympathy which joins them together, thus colour acquires more energy and freshness." <sup>7</sup>

" Constable says that the superiority of the green of his fields is due to it being composed from a multitude of different greens. The lack of intensity and life in the green of common landscape artists is due to it being of a uniform tint. What Constable says of the green of the fields may be applied to all colours." <sup>8</sup>



This last sentence shows that the decomposition of tints into broken touches, such an important part of the division, was anticipated by Delacroix whose passion for colour ultimately led him to realize the advantages of optical mixture.

But to guarantee the optical mixture, the Neo-Impressionists had to use strokes of small size, in order that the different elements could, from a distance, reconstitute the desired colour, without each stroke being perceived separately. Delacroix had considered using such strokes, and was aware of their advantage, as he wrote in the following notes:

" Yesterday, as I was working on the child next to the woman on the left in Orpheus, I remembered those small strokes multiplied with the brush, as if in a miniature, in the Virgin of Raphael that I saw on the rue Grange-Batelière."<sup>9</sup>

" Try to see the great gouaches of Correggio in the museum. I believe they are executed in very small strokes."<sup>10</sup>

5. For the Neo-Impressionist, the various elements that reconstitute a tint by their optical mixture are distinct from one another. Light and local colour are clearly distinguished. The painter makes one or the other dominate, as he wishes. The principle of keeping these elements distinct is also to be found in the writings of Delacroix:

" There must be simplicity of local colours and breadth of light."<sup>11</sup>

" One must reconcile 'colour' which is colour and 'light' which is light."<sup>12</sup>

Delacroix clearly indicates the balance and proportion of these separate elements:

" Over-emphasizing the light and the breadth of planes leads to the absence of half-tints and thus will appear colourless. The opposite is particularly harmful, especially in the large compositions intended to be seen from a distance. Veronese surpasses Rubens in his simplicity of colours and breadth of light."<sup>13</sup>

" In order not to appear faded in such a broad light, Veronese's local colour must be very high-key in tone."<sup>14</sup>

6. Among contemporary painters only the Neo-Impressionists observe the contrast of tone and tint. It was formulated and prescribed in Delacroix's notes:

" My palette is brilliant with colour contrasts."<sup>15</sup>

" General rule: The more opposition you have, the more brilliance."<sup>16</sup>

" How satisfying beauty, proportion, contrast and harmony of colour are in the spectacle of nature."<sup>17</sup>

" Although it is against the rule that says highlights should be cold, by putting yellow ones on violet flesh tones the contrast produces the desired effect."<sup>18</sup>

" When you have already well established the edge of a plane and it is slightly lighter than in the centre, you emphasize even more its contour or projection... If you attempt the same with black, you will not be able to make it appear modelled, no matter how hard you try."<sup>19</sup>

The following passage from one of Delacroix's travel notebooks of Morocco, shows the importance of the rules of contrast and complementary colours, inexhaustible sources of harmony and strength to him.

" The three complementary colours are formed from the three primary colours. If, to the complementary colour, you add the primary colour opposite it, you destroy it or in other words you produce the necessary half-tint. However, adding black is not the same as adding half-tint. On the contrary, it dirties the tone, whose true half-tint is to be found in its opposite, as mentioned earlier. This is the origin of the green shadows of the red, the two young peasants' heads. The one that was yellow had shadows and the one that was blood-like and red had green shadows."<sup>20</sup>

7. According to the Neo-Impressionists' technique, light whether yellow, orange or red, and depending on the time of the day and effect, is added to the local tint giving warmth or gold to the most illuminated areas. The shadow, faithful complementary of light, its regulator, is violet, blue or bluish green and these elements modify and cool the dark parts of the local colour. These cool shadows and warm lights, whose interplays between themselves and the local colour constitute contour or form, spread out, blended or contrasted, throughout the entire surface of the painting, lighting up here, dimming there, in the location and proportion determined by chiaroscuro. So, those yellow or orange lights, those blue or violet shadows which are the cause of so much mockery, here they may

be found categorically prescribed by Delacroix in his notes:

" In Veronese, cold drapery in the shadow, warm in the light."<sup>21</sup>

" Golden and red tones of the trees, blue and luminous shadows."<sup>22</sup>

" Chrome tones on the light side and blue shadows."<sup>23</sup>

" At Saint-Denis du Saint-Sacrament, I had to paint the lights with pure chrome yellow and the half-tints with Prussian blue."<sup>24</sup>

" Matt orange in the brights, the most vivid violets for the passage of the shadow and golden reflections in the shadow facing the ground."<sup>25</sup>

" All edges of shadow participate in the violet."<sup>26</sup>

8. The Neo-Impressionists are often criticized for painting with gawdy and exaggerated colours, yet they ignore such reproaches because as Delacroix remarked:

" Earth and olive colours have dominated painting so much, nature with its vivid and bold colours appears disharmonious to some."<sup>27</sup>

The true colourist, that is, he who like the Neo-Impressionists submits his colour to the rules of harmony, need never fear appearing too loud when he uses excessively bright colours. He will let the more timid painters wish for " not colour but more nuance" and he will not be afraid to continue his search for brilliance and power by all possible means. Because Delacroix advises him:

" Colour, with the light falling obliquely onto it, always appears greyer..."<sup>28</sup>

and he shows him the sad effect of a dark and colourless painting:

" It will be seen for what it really is--earthy, bleak, and lifeless. Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return."<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the colourist will not hesitate to use the brightest colours, the tints:

"-that Rubens produced with strong, distinct colours such as greens, ultramarines, etc."<sup>30</sup>

Even when he wants to obtain greys, he will only use pure colours, which by optical mixture will produce the desired result. The end result is a more precious grey than one obtained by pigmentary mixture which does not produce a true grey but a dirty colour. When he deems it necessary, he will make these brilliant and intense colours even more so, by gradation and contrast. If he knows the laws of harmony, he need never fear going beyond the limits. Delacroix urges him to use colour to excess, or orders him to:

" The half-tint, or in otherwords all the tones, must be exaggerated."<sup>31</sup>

" All the tones must be exaggerated. Rubens and Titian exaggerated. Veronese sometimes appears grey because he searches too hard for the truth."<sup>32</sup>

9. The Neo-Impressionists' technique, the optical mixture of small strokes of colour methodically placed next to one another, does not lend itself to virtuosity. The hand has little importance. Only the painter's eye and intellect have a role to play. By refusing to fall under the spell of

brush strokes, and persisting with their method that is not brilliant, but consciencious and precise, the Neo-Impressionists have followed Delacroix's advice:

" The infernal facility of the brush must be avoided at all cost."<sup>33</sup>

" Young painters have become infatuated with the skill of the hand. There is perhaps no greater obstacle to any sort of true progress than that universal mania to which we have sacrificed everything."<sup>34</sup>

Then Delacroix reiterates the hazards of an over easy execution:

" The beautiful, free and proud brush of Van Loo leads only to approximations: style can only be the result of prolonged effort."<sup>35</sup>

In order to defend those small strokes, so shocking to those unable to appreciate their harmonious result, and who have been stunned by the novelty of the method, let us turn to Delacroix's thoughts on the brush stroke. Everything he said about this method which he used to give colour more splendour and brilliance, can be applied to the technique used by the Neo-Impressionists, with the same aim.

" In all the arts, methods are adopted and agreed upon. He is but a poor connoisseur who is unable to interpret such thoughts. This is apparent in the layman's preference for the smoothest paintings with the least visible brush strokes."<sup>36</sup>

" And what about those masters who mark the contours drily without using brush strokes?"<sup>37</sup>

" Nature shows neither contours nor brush strokes, and one must always return to the rules agreed upon for each branch of art which make up its language."<sup>38</sup>

" Many painters avoid the use of the brush stroke with the utmost care under the pretext that brush strokes do not exist in nature, and then go on to exaggerate the contours, which do not exist in nature either."<sup>39</sup>

" Many of the masters have avoided letting their brush strokes show, doubtlessly thinking this to be more like nature, which effectively does not show any. The brush stroke is simply one means, among many others, by which thought may be expressed in painting. A painting can certainly be beautiful without obvious brush strokes, but it is naive to think that it is closer to nature's way, that is comparable to putting actual coloured relief on a painting under the pretext that the objects being represented are projecting."<sup>40</sup>

Because of the distance necessary in order to appreciate such large paintings, the Neo-Impressionists' paintings will not shock the public. From a certain distance, the brush strokes will not be apparent, only their harmonious and luminous effects will remain.

Perhaps the following remark by Delacroix will lead some to undertake the necessary steps that the understanding and appreciation of a divided painting require:

" Moreover, everything depends on the observer standing at a proper distance to look at the painting. At a certain distance the brush strokes blend into the whole

effect, but give an accent to the painting which the blending of colours alone could not produce."<sup>41</sup>

To those who prefer smooth and dull paintings and who are upset by vibrant and colourful ones, Delacroix explains that:

" Time will give the work its definitive appearance by erasing the strokes, the first as well as the last."<sup>42</sup>

" Even if we are tempted to argue that the brush strokes are absent in certain paintings by the great masters, we should not forget that the strokes are flattened by the effects of time."<sup>43</sup>

10. All of Delacroix's remarks on colour would appear typical of someone defending the process of division. The Neo-Impressionists will refer to the experience of the master on many other points. His numerous notes show the painters the importance he gave to the role of the line, in such a way that they could not help but achieve the harmony of colours through a rhythmic arrangement and an appropriate balance:

" In a composition, the influence of the main lines is extremely important."<sup>44</sup>

" A good arrangement of lines and colours: in other words arabesque."<sup>45</sup>

" When drawing an object, the first thing to capture is the contrast of the main lines."<sup>46</sup>

" Admirable balancing of lines in Raphael."<sup>47</sup>

" A line by itself is meaningless; there must be a second one in order to give it expression. Great law; one single note: music..<sup>48</sup>



" The composition is somewhat the shape of a St Andrew's cross." <sup>49</sup>

" If to a composition with an already interesting subject you add a disposition of lines that enhance the impression." <sup>50</sup>

" In nature there are no straight lines." <sup>51</sup>

" In nature there are no parallels, neither straight nor curved." <sup>52</sup>

" There are some lines which are monsters: the straight line, the regular serpentine, and especially two parallels." <sup>53</sup>

11. Once his linear composition is determined, the Neo-Impressionist will try to perfect it with a combination of lines and colours appropriate to the subject and to its execution. He will vary the dominant tones according to the different feelings of joy, serenity, sadness or other intermediate emotions that he wishes to express. <sup>54</sup> Thus preoccupied with the moral effect of his lines and colours, the Neo-Impressionist will once more follow the teaching of Delacroix. The following is what he thought of that considerable aspect of beauty, so neglected by contemporary painters:

" All this, is composed with harmony of lines and colour." <sup>55</sup>

" Colour is useless unless it is appropriate to the subject and increases the effect of the painting through the power of the imagination." <sup>56</sup>

" If, to a composition already interesting through its choice of subject you add a disposition of lines to enhance its impression either by chiaroscuro , striking the imag-

ination, or by a colour adapted to the characters, you obtain the blending of harmony and its combinations into a single song."<sup>57</sup>

" Once an idea has become a composition, it must evolve in its appropriate environment of colours. Then, a particular tone somewhere in the painting becomes the key-tone and dominates all the others. Everyone knows that yellow, orange, and red represent the idea of joy, wealth, glory, and love."<sup>58</sup>

" In painters, I see prosewriters and poets; rhyme restrains them, the turn that is indispensable to verse and gives it so much vigour is like hidden symmetry, studied yet inspired balancing, that governs the meeting or parting of lines, strokes and highlights of colour, Yet, one's senses must be more acute and one's sensitivity greater in order to detect a mistake, a discord, or a false combination of lines and colours."<sup>59</sup>

12. The Neo-Impressionists strive to express the beauty of light and colour found in nature and draw from such a source of beauty the elements of their compositions. They also believe that the artist must choose and arrange those elements. For them, a painting composed in terms of line and colour is superior to a mere copy of nature. To support this idea they again return to Delacroix:

" Nature is but a dictionary, one looks there for the meaning of words, one extracts from it all the elements which compose a sentence or story. But no one has ever conceived of a dictionary as a composition, in the poetic

sense of the term."<sup>60</sup>

" Nature is by no means always a good model for the effect of the whole ensemble... Although each detail taken separately may be perfect, collectively the details rarely produce an effect equal to what a great artist obtains from his feelings for the whole scene and its composition."<sup>61</sup>

13. The major criticism levelled at the Neo-Impressionists is that they are too intellectual for artists. But, we will see that in fact, such criticism relates only to four or five precepts, stated by Chevreul, and which every primary school pupil should know. Delacroix insisted that an artist should know the laws of colour:

" The art of the colourist has obvious similarities with the art of the mathematician and of the musician."<sup>62</sup>

" An artist must be a scholar. Explain how knowledge must be acquired independently from one's ordinary practice."<sup>63</sup>

14. It is curious to note how, even in the smallest details of their technique, the Neo-Impressionists have put Delacroix's advice into practice. For instance, they only paint on white grounds so that the light will reflect through the colours, giving them more brilliance and life. This practice closely follows Delacroix's comments on the advantage of a white ground:

" What gives painting on white paper such delicacy and brilliance must be the transparent quality of the whiteness

of the paper..the early Venetian painters must have painted on very white grounds."<sup>64</sup>

The Neo-Impressionists do not use gilded frames which alter or destroy the harmony of a painting with their garish brilliance. They generally choose white frames which offer an excellent transition between the painting and its background. White frames also bring out or enhance the colours without disruption the harmony of the painting. The colours appear more saturated.

Interestingly enough, paintings with white frames are excluded from official and pseudo-official Salons. Yet, white frames, which are discreet and appropriate, along with contrasting frames, are the only ones which do not detract from a bright and colourful painting.

Delacroix, ever-concerned with harmony, was hesitant to add a foreign element to his composition that might be discordant. He recognized the advantages of the white frame and was considering using one in his Saint-Sulpice wall decorations as his notes on the subject show:

" They [frames] can have a good or bad influence on the effect of a painting-lavish use of gold at the present time- their shape in relation to the character of the painting."<sup>65</sup>

" A gilt frame with little in common with the monument and too big for the painting."<sup>66</sup>

" At Saint-Sulpice frame the paintings with white marble ..if only we could make white stucco frames."<sup>67</sup>

15. We end our quotations here. Nevertheless, in order to show that we have not manipulated the texts in our favour, we shall now reproduce passages from the principal critics who have studied Delacroix. All of them mention his constant preoccupation with finding an elaborate and reliable technique based on contrast and optical mixture. They recognize the logic and excellence of his method which in many ways is similar to the much-criticized method of division.

From Charles Baudelaire: " It is to this everpresent preoccupation that we must attribute his perpetual researches on colour." <sup>68</sup>

" His colour is an incomparable science; it is always frightful and bloodthirsty, and never loses its cruel characteristic in this new and more complete science. Our soul delights in the harmony of green and red." <sup>70</sup>

" In colour we find harmony, melody, and counter-point." <sup>71</sup>

From Charles Blanc:

" Colour is regulated by laws, and can be taught, like music. Delacroix first knew those laws intuitively and then studied them in depth becoming one of the greatest colourists of our time." <sup>72</sup>

" Once the law of complementary colours is mastered, the painter may either emphasize the brightness of his colours, or moderate them. Delacroix, who knew those laws either intuitively or through study, was always cautious not to give his paintings a uniform tone." <sup>73</sup>

" Such audacity, to brutally cross-hatch the nude torso

of that figure with a brilliant green."<sup>74</sup>

From Ernest Chesneau:

" He had discovered one of the secrets that the schools do not teach, a secret even many professors do not know, he had discovered that in nature, a seemingly uniform colour is actually composed of a great number of different tints that only an experienced eye can perceive."<sup>75</sup>

Delacroix's feverish impatience and unrestrained inspiration would give way to his rational and scientific technique. Théophile Silvestre, a long-time guest of Delacroix's workshop gives us the following precise and detailed account:

" After many experiments Delacroix discovered an absolute system of colour. Instead of simplifying the local colours into one representative colour he would multiply the tones indefinitely and juxtapose them, in order to double their intensity. To his eyes Titian was monotonous. It was only much later in his life that Delacroix came to appreciate the grandeur of the Venetian master.

The picturesque effect of Delacroix's colour is the result of multiple and intricate contrasts. Whereas Rubens' colour is smooth like a still lake, Delacroix's is alive like a river troubled by a sudden shower."<sup>76</sup>

" An example of the variations of tones: if in a painting green dominates in the shadowed part; red will dominate in the luminous part; if the light part is yellow, then the shadowed part will be violet; If the former is blue then the latter will be orange and so on for the remainder of the painting.

In order to apply his system Delacroix devised a sort of cardboard dial that we might call his chronometer.<sup>77</sup> As on the palette, each degree had a small amount of colour along with its immediate neighbour and its diametrical opposite."<sup>78</sup>

"In order to picture this arrangement, look at the clock dial and imagine that noon is red, six is green, one is orange, seven is blue, two is yellow and eight is violet. The intermediates were sub-divided into half-hours, quarters of an hour, minutes, etc..."<sup>79</sup>

"This almost mathematical knowledge does not make his works lifeless but on the contrary enhances their precision and stability."<sup>80</sup>

Eugène Véron: " Delacroix studied the laws of complementary colours, how they could be modified by light, and the effects of the contrast of tones, until the day he died."<sup>81</sup>

" He frequently used the optical mixture to produce the sensation of a colour that had never existed on the palette. In Delacroix, science and conscience combined with a natural gift, and enabled him to achieve an extraordinary precision."<sup>82</sup>

" Among his works most known for their colour, are those whose contrasts were made directly visible by bold brush strokes."<sup>83</sup>

" For Delacroix, to compose is to combine colour and line in a way that enhances the aesthetic meaning of the subject."<sup>84</sup>

16. Delacroix and the Neo-Impressionists were the objects of the same sort of criticism. The insults and mockery that the divided paintings have caused are not unlike those addressed to Delacroix. Does not this similar attitude on the part of the critics clearly imply the similarity of the Neo-Impressionists' method to Delacroix's ? Like the Neo-Impressionists, Delacroix was considered by some critics to be a charlatan, a madman, and an eccentric. Because of his use of strong colours for his characters, Delacroix was called the painter of the Morgue, of pestilence and of cholera morbus. Likewise, the Neo-Impressionists' divided paintings have been compared to small-pox and confetti. This sort of wit does not vary with time. Could not the following reviews of the master's various exhibitions have been written today, on the subject of Neo-Impressionist paintings ?

Salon of 1822 ( Dante and Virgil):

" This is not a painting, it is just a hodge-podge of colours !"<sup>84</sup>

E. DELECLUZE

" When seen from a proper distance, the strokes are not apparent and the painting produces a remarkable effect. But without the proper distance the strokes appear extremely hatched and incoherent in spite of their calculated effect. It is difficult to imagine a painter of our school adopting such a strange method of working, in view of the technical achievements already attained."<sup>85</sup>

C.-P. LANDON



Salon of 1827 ( The Death of Sardanapalus ):

" " Delacroix is talented but he could do better if he wanted to. The more he works the more extravagant he becomes." <sup>86</sup>

D.

" Delacroix, Scheffer and Champmartin, leaders of the new school, have not received any award but as compensation they will be allowed to sit in the Morgue for two hours daily. Young talent must be encouraged." <sup>87</sup>

" From a distance, the effect is that of wall decorations, a closer observation reveals a chaotic smudge." <sup>88</sup>

(Journal des artistes et des amateurs, 1829)

Regarding the Pieta ( Church of Saint-Denis du Saint-Sacrament ):

" Try to kneel in front of those repulsive characters, in front of that Madeleine with drunken eyes, that crucified, defaced and lifeless virgin, before that hideous putrified and revolting body that the painter has the audacity to present as the image of the son of God ! He delights in morbidity, disease and death." <sup>89</sup>

If a local council dared to entrust the decoration of one of their walls to a Neo-Impressionist, wouldn't the press immediately raise objections such as the following ?

"One of the largest mural painting commissions of our time has been entrusted to a painter who has little regard for his reputation and who is uncertain of his work !

He has been chosen to decorate an entire room in the Chamber of deputies on the sole basis of a few insignificant sketches and barely detailed plans. The person responsible for this decision is most certainly compromised !"<sup>90</sup>

" We do not call Delacroix an imposter, but we maintain that he has all the appearances of an imposter."

" We do not blame the management of the Beaux-Arts of the city for having chosen Delacroix for such an important task. We know that the ideas of the members of that group are generally sound and noble, but we are also convinced that they have had their hand forced in this matter. We do blame Cabinet officials and legislative assembly members who scheme and plot for their acquaintances. Certain artists owe their success to their connections and audacity rather than their talent and knowledge."<sup>91</sup>

" What will our descendants think when they find the ceilings of our museums and monuments decorated with such hideous colours ? Probably just what we feel when we see our ancestors place the Pucelle of Chapelain amongst the masterpieces of poetry."<sup>92</sup>

ALFRED NETTEMENT.

## CHAPTER 2

THE INFLUENCE OF DELACROIXThe colourist evolution.The influence of Constable and Turner on Delacroix.The importance of the oriental tradition and of science.From Dante and Virgil to the Saint-Sulpice decorations.Advantages of his scientific method.Examples.His progressive mastery of colour and light.What he accomplished and what he left to be accomplished.

1. Delacroix was aware of most of the advantages that the use of contrast and optical mixture offered the colourist. He even foresaw the advantages of a more methodical and precise technique than his own which would enable him to give more brightness to light and make colour more brilliant. A study of the painters that make up the colourist tradition of this century reveals, from one generation to another, a lightening of the palette and a preference for more light and colour. Delacroix put the studies and research of Constable and Turner to good use, and Jongkind and the Impressionists in their turn would profit from the experience of the Romantic master. The Impressionist technique evolved towards the Neo-Impressionist mode of expression: the DIVISION.

2. As soon as he left Guérin's studio in 1818<sup>1</sup>, Delacroix realized the limitations of his traditional palette overloaded with dull and earth colours. When he painted the Massacre at Chios ( 1824 ), he willingly dispensed with all ochres and replaced them with the following beautiful pure

and intense colours; cobalt blue, emerald green, and madder lake. But this did not completely satisfy his creative spirit. He tried unsuccessfully to place a quantity of half-tones and half-tints on his palette, carefully prepared in advance. But he still felt the need for new resources and for his decorations of the Salon de la Paix, he enriched his palette (which according to Baudelaire "resembled a studiously-arranged bouquet of flowers") with the sonority of cadmium, the accuracy of Zinc yellow, and the energy of vermillion, the most intense colours a painter possesses.

Enhancing the numerous but dull colours used before him, with powerful colours such as yellow, orange, red, purple, blue, green and yellow-green, Delacroix invented the sonorous but tumultuous Romantic palette.

We must remark here that those pure and bright colours are precisely those which the Impressionists and the Neo-Impressionists would choose, no others, for their simplified palette.

3. Constantly obsessed with the desire to obtain more brilliance and luminosity, Delacroix, not satisfied with having thus improved his palette, also attempted to improve his use of it.

If he came upon a harmonious combination in nature or if a chance mixture produced a beautiful tint, he would record them in one of his numerous notebooks.

He went to the museums to study the colour of Titian, Velasquez, Veronese, and Rubens. When he compared his colour to that of these masters, it still seemed too dull and dark

to him. He made numerous copies of their work in order to better capture the secrets of their strength. He delved amongst their riches and adapted all the results of his studies to his advantage without sacrificing any of his own personality.

4. If the colour of the Massacre of Chios seems more sumptuous than the colour of Dante and Virgil then this progress is due to the influence of the English master, Constable.

Several days before the opening of the Salon of 1824, Delacroix was finishing his Scene of the Massacre of Chios when he happened to see the paintings of Constable. They had been purchased by a French collector and were to be exhibited at the Salon. Delacroix was deeply impressed by their colour and brilliance. He studied the paintings' facture and realized that the artist had not used flat colours but small juxtaposed brush strokes which from an appropriate distance reconstituted themselves and thus acquired an intensity much superior to his own painting's. This was a revelation for him, the next days he repainted his entire painting, adding individual brush strokes to his evenly spread colour, and giving it brilliance with transparent glazes. As a result his painting became more unified, animated, full of light and acquired more vigour and life.

" He had discovered one of the great secrets of the art of Constable, a secret that the schools do not teach and that too many professors know nothing of. He had discovered that in nature a seemingly uniform tint is in fact composed of a great number of tints that only an experienced

eye can perceive. Delacroix would never forget this lesson which led him to the use of hatching to render form." <sup>3</sup>

Besides, Delacroix, self-confident genius that he was, was the first to acknowledge being influenced by the English master. At the time when he was painting the Massacre of Chios in 1824, he wrote in his Journal.

" I have just seen Constable's paintings. That Constable does me a world of good." <sup>4</sup>

And further on:

" I saw a sketch of Constable's again; how wonderful and incredible." <sup>5</sup>

And in 1847, the year when for the third time he repainted the Massacre of Chios he entered in his Journal this note already cited but which shows that he was already preoccupied by one of the most important aspects of the future Neo-Impressionist technique : the infinite gradation of elements:

" Constable says that the superiority of the green of his fields is due to its being composed of a multitude of different greens. What causes the lack of intensity and life in the green of common landscape artists is due to it being of a uniform tint. What Constable says of the green of the fields may be applied to all the colours." <sup>6</sup>

Delacroix was to admire Constable until his last days. In 1850 he wrote to Th. Silvestre:

" Constable is truly amazing, one of the geniuses of England. I have already told you about the impression he made on me when I was painting the Massacre of Chios. He

and Turner are true reformers. Our school, which now abounds with many talented men in this genre, has greatly profited from their example. Géricault returned from England deeply moved by one of the great landscapes he had sent us."<sup>7</sup>

It is therefore quite certain that it was via Constable that Delacroix was initiated to the advantages of gradation. Delacroix immediately saw the immense benefits inherent in it, and from then on he would banish all flat tints replacing them with glazes and hatching in order to obtain more brilliance. But soon, Delacroix would surpass his initiator, because he was better acquainted with the resources that science offered the colourist.

5. Still moved by this revelation and disgusted with the insignificant and dull paintings of the then-fashionable French painters such as Regnault, Girodet, Gérard, Guérin, Lethière,<sup>8</sup> all minor students of David whom the public preferred to Prud'hon and Gros,<sup>9</sup> Delacroix decided to go to London in 1825. There, he wanted to study the English master colourists about whom his friends, the brothers Fielding<sup>10</sup> and the painter Bonington<sup>11</sup> had been so enthusiastic in their praise. He returned amazed by the hitherto unsuspected splendour of Turner, Wilkie, Lawrence and Constable<sup>12</sup> and immediately put his new experience into practice.

From Constable, he learned to despise flat tints and to paint with hatching. His love of intense and pure colour would be encouraged by Turner's paintings which were already free from any restraint. The unforgettable memory of these

strange and magical colour would remain a source of inspiration for the rest of his life.

Théophile Silvestre described the similarities between the two geniuses and their similar development:

" We find in looking at them a great similarity, in some ways, between Delacroix's late style in which the grey contains a delicate silvery light pink, and Turner's late studies. But there is not the least imitation of the English master on the part of the French master. Let us simply note that the two painters seem to have shared the same sort of inspiration for colours towards the end of their lives. They strove for more brightness, while nature, each day losing in their eyes its reality, became an enchantment."<sup>12</sup>

" He [Turner] found that the most illustrious artists of all the schools, including the Venetians, had not captured the pure and joyous light of nature. They darkened their shadows according to convention, and they did not dare to use all the lights that they saw before them in a natural state. Therefore he decided to use the most strange and most brilliant colours possible."<sup>13</sup>

" Delacroix, a man more ardent and positive than Turner, did not take things that far, but, like Turner he imperceptably moved from a sombre harmony like the sounds of a cello to a brighter harmony like the accents of an oboe."<sup>14</sup>

6. Delacroix's journey to Morocco (1832) was still richer in experience than his excursion to England. He returned



from Morocco dazzled by light and greatly impressed with the harmony and force of oriental colour. He studied the colouring of carpets, fabrics, and earthenware. He noticed that they were composed of intense and bright elements that when brought together, reconstituted into extremely refined colours in accordance with the laws of harmony.

He noticed that a coloured surface was only bright and agreeable if neither smooth nor uniform, and that a colour was beautiful only when it exhibited the lively force which animated it. He soon understood the secrets and laws of the oriental tradition. This knowledge was the source of many of his most daring colour combinations and contrasts which still retained their soft and harmonious appearance.

From then on, a little of this flamboyant , resonant and melodious Orient was forever present in Delacroix's works. His unforgettable impressions of Morocco gave his most varied use of colour with the most tender harmonies and the most dazzling contrasts. In his accurate criticism, Charles Baudelaire did not fail to note the importance of the journey to Morocco on Delacroix's colour:

" Observe that Delacroix's colour bears a resemblance to the colour of oriental interiors and landscapes."<sup>15</sup>

After returning to France and becoming acquainted with the work of Bourgeois <sup>16</sup> and Chevreul, Delacroix found that the precepts of oriental tradition were in perfect accordance with modern science. And when he went to the Louvre to study Veronese of whom he once said, " Everything I know I owe to Veronese ", he realized that the Venetian master himself

had been a student of the secrets and magic of oriental colour, most probably via Asians and Africans who at the time brought the riches and craftsmanship of their art to Venice.

7. Delacroix realized that the science of the harmony of colour, already known to the master colourists and the orientals, could be of great use to him. He noticed the play of complementary colours in nature and wanted to learn more about them, thus he began to study the scientific theory of colour and the interreactions of successive and simultaneous colour contrasts. As a result of these studies he was to put these contrasts on his canvas and use the optical mixture.

8. Delacroix was always ready to learn from the discoveries and methods of others. Instead of diminishing his originality this gave his work its unique quality. As a result he possessed the richest repertoire of colours of any painter.

This was the route he took with his first painting, Dante and Virgil in which the colour seems discreet and almost dull to us now but which nevertheless seemed quite revolutionary at the time! M. Thiers, one of the rare critics to defend the painting when it was exhibited at the Salon of 1822, could not help but find it, "a bit crude".<sup>18</sup>

The Massacre of Chios was conceived under the influence of Gros' Pesthouse at Jaffa and the colour influenced by Constable. It is such a change and marks Delacroix's complete break with all official conventions and academic methods that even his first defenders would abandon him. Gérard

declared," He is a man who runs on rooftops"<sup>19</sup>, M. Thiers was alarmed and questioned his boldness, and Gros said," The Massacre of Chios is the massacre of painting."<sup>20</sup>

Then he [Delacroix] combined scientific knowledge with passionate inspiration to invent a rigorous, logical, comprehensive and original technique, which far from restraining his creative spirit, greatly enhanced it.

9. This knowledge of scientific colour theory enabled him first of all to harmonize or to enliven by contrast of two neighbouring colours. It also helped him to successfully regulate the meeting of tints and tones by the agreement of like colours or the law of contrasting colours.

Then, this continued observation of the plays of colour gradually led him to the use of optical mixture. He also excluded all flat tints which for him had a negative effect. From then on, he was careful not to spread a uniform colour onto his canvas; he made a tint vibrate by superimposing touches of a neighbouring tint. For example: a red would be composed of brush strokes of either the same red with darker or lighter tones, or of another red slightly warmer-- more orange-- or slightly cooler-- more violet.

After having thus enlivened the tints by the vibration and gradation of tone upon tone by small intervals, he created a third tint by juxtaposing two colours from further apart on the colour scale thus resulting in an optical mixture. Delacroix's rarest colours were created by this ingenious device and not mixed on the palette.

If he wanted to modify, pacify, or bring down the key of a colour, he would not dirty it by mixing it in an opposite colour. Instead he would create the desired effect by superimposing light hatching that would simply influence the tint without altering its purity. He knew that complementary colours enhanced one another when opposed and destroyed one another when mixed: if he wanted brilliance he would obtain it by optical mixture. He would obtain grey, not dirty, tints and no grinding on the palette could produce as fine and luminous colours.

By the juxtaposition of neighbouring or contrasting elements and by varying their proportion or intensity, he created an infinite series of tints and tones, soft or brilliant.

10. Several examples taken from Algerian women in their apartment will demonstrate the application of these various principles.

The orange-red blouse of the woman seated to the left has blue-green lining: its surfaces, composed of complementary tints, harmonize with each other. This favourable contrast gives the fabrics a brilliance and an intense luminosity.

The red turban of the black woman stands out from a great curtain of different coloured bands. However it only adjoins the greenish band that is its best complementary.

The woodwork of the closet door in the background al-

ternates between red and green which gives us another example of binary harmony. The violet and green of the floor tiles, and the blue of the black woman's skirt and its red stripes are no longer examples of complementary colours but of colours closer to one another on the scale.

In addition to these examples of the agreement of complementary colours we also find the agreement of like colours in almost every part of the painting. The colours vibrate and shimmer due to strokes of tone upon tone, or almost identical tints that Delacroix has stamped, daubed and caressed onto the canvas, first spread on flat and then ingeniously reworked using an infinite breaking-up of tones.

The brilliant quality and extreme charm of this work are not only due to the application of tone upon tone at minute intervals but also to the artificial tints that result from the optical mixture of colours further apart on the colour scale.

The green trousers of the woman at the right are flecked with tiny yellow patterns: the green and yellow mix optically and create, in one place, a yellow-green that is truly yellow-green, soft and glowing, a silky fabric.

An orangish garment is set off by yellow trim. A yellow scarf is brought out by red stripes which stand out in the center of the painting. The blue and yellow ceramic tiles in the background fuse into an indescribable green tint of rare freshness.

Other examples of grey tints obtained by pure but con-

trasting colours: the white of the blouse of the woman at the right is broken by a tender, indefinite tint. These are the tiny flowers composed of green and red. The soft and glistening quality of the cushion on which the woman at the left is leaning, is produced by the mass of tiny red and greenish embroidery which, being close to one another, re-constitute an optical grey.<sup>21</sup>

11. The same knowledge of colour that enabled him to harmonize the smallest details of the painting and to embellish the smallest surfaces also helped him to regulate the chromatic composition by set rules in order to obtain a general harmony.

After having established the physical harmony of his painting by judicious balancing and careful oppositions, from the smallest detail to the whole effect, he was able to move on to establish the moral harmony with the same degree of scientific certitude.

Using this knowledge to his advantage, he decided which combination to use. He made one colour or the other dominate according to the subject he was working on. His colour always possessed an aesthetic language that conformed to his thoughts. The drama he had conceived, the poem he wanted to recite, was always expressed by an appropriate colour. This eloquence of colour and lyricism of harmony was the main strength of Delacroix's genius.

Due to his understanding of the aesthetic character

of colour he was able to express his dream with assuredness, and paint dramas, triumphs, intimacies, and suffering, one after the other.

The study of the moral role of colour in Delacroix's paintings would lead us too far astray.<sup>22</sup> It is enough to point out the Death of Pliny expressed by dismal agreements of a predominant violet. The calm of Socrates and his Familiar Demon obtained by a perfect balance of greens and reds. In Muly-abd-er Rahman surrounded by his Guard the tumult is conveyed by an almost dissonant combination of the large green parasol against the blue of the sky which had already been stimulated by the orange of the walls. Nothing better illustrates the subject of the Revolutionaries of Tangiers than the exaltation of every colour, pushed into the canvas to the point of frenzy.

23

The tragic effect of the Shipwreck of Don Juan is due to a dominant, dark, sea-green subdued by dismal blacks, the sinister note of white, dramatically bursting through the darkness completes this desolate harmony.

In the Women of Algiers, the painter does not wish to express any passion but the calm and contemplative life in a sumptuous interior; there is no dominant colour. All the warm and gay tints are balanced by their cool and tender complementaries in a decorative symphony in which we are convincingly given the impression of a calm and delectable harem.

12. Nevertheless, at this point, Delacroix had yet to obtain the brilliance and harmony that he would later arrive at. By examining attentively the painting Women of Algiers that we have taken as an example of the application of the scientific method it is clear that it lacks the perfect unity in variety seen in his later work.

Although the backgrounds, costumes and accessories vibrate with an intense and melodious brilliance, the flesh tones of the figures seem flat and slightly dull, out of key with the rest of the work.

If the jewel case shines more than the jewels it is because Delacroix made the colour of the smallest surfaces of the fabrics, curtains, carpets and ceramic tiles glisten by introducing minute details and tiny ornaments whose different colours have either pacified or enlivened these parts of the painting. On the other hand, he has painted the flesh tones with a flat and almost monochrome tint in order to remain more faithful to their natural appearance. He had not yet ventured to introduce multicoloured elements not observed in Nature. It was only later that he was to dominate the cold, exactitude, not hesitating to set off flesh tones by artificial hatching to obtain more brilliance and light.

13. The treasures of Delacroix's palette were never depleted. He gradually moved away from the chiaroscuro of his earlier works. Now his more powerful use of colour extends across the entire surface of his canvases. Black and earth colours disappear as well as flat tones only to be replaced by pure and



vibrant tints, his colour seems to become immaterial.

By using the optical mixture he created colour that gives off light.

If a little more lighting in the Gallery of Apollo or a little less unnecessary prudence on the part of the Senate and the Chamber permitted closer study of Delacroix's decorations, we would easily be able to see that the freshest tints and most delicate flesh tones are produced by large green and red hatching. Likewise the luminous brilliance of the skies is done in the same way. From further away the hatching disappears but the resulting colour produced by the optical mixture is strong. A flat tone viewed from that distance would have faded out or been erased.

Delacroix then reached the peak of his career: the wall decoration of the chapel of Saint Ange at Saint-Sulpice. There the achievements of forty years of effort and battles are summed up. He completely rid himself of the dark preparations and bituminous undercoats that obscured some of his earlier works, and that now resurface, destroying and cracking them. 24

For the decoration of the chapel he only used the purest and simplest colours. He definitively renounced the subordination of his colour to chiaroscuro. The light is expanded throughout, without a single dark hole or sombre streak in disagreement with the other parts of the painting. There are no more opaque shadows or flat-tones. He composed his

tints from all the elements that will raise the key and enliven the work without trying to imitate natural appearances and colours. Colour for colour's sake, without any other pretext ! Flesh-tones, decor, and accessories are all treated in the same way. There is not a single fragment of the painting that does not vibrate, shimmer or glisten. Each local colour is pushed to its maximum intensity but always in agreement with its neighbour. It is influenced by the neighbour and influences in its turn. All the colours fuse with the shadows and lights in a colourful and harmonious ensemble and perfect equilibrium where nothing clashes. Clearly the melody takes off from the multiple and strong elements that enter into its composition.

Delacroix finally attained the unity in the complexity that he had sought for all his life.

14. So, for nearly half a century, Delacroix strove to obtain more brilliance and more light, thus pointing the way for the colourists who were to succeed him. He left them much to do, but due to his contribution and his teaching, their task was much simpler.

He showed them all the advantages of an intellectually-based technique, of relationships and logic that in no way hindered the passion of the painter but fortified it.

He delivered the secret of the laws that govern colour: the agreement of like colours, the agreement of contrasting ones.

He demonstrated to them how inferior flat, uniform colours were compared to a tint produced by the vibrations of

different elements combined.

He established for them the resources of the optical mixture, permitting them to create new tints.

He advised them to rid themselves as much as possible of sombre and lifeless colours.

He taught them that it is possible to modify or bring down the key of a tint without dirtying it by mixture on a palette.

He showed them the moral influence of colour that contributes to the effect of a painting.

He initiated them in the aesthetic language of tints and tones.

He incited them to attempt everything and never fear that their harmonies were too colourful.

A powerful creator is also a great teacher. His teaching is as valuable as his work.

15. However, Delacroix's painting, regardless of his efforts and scientific knowledge, are less luminous and colourful than the painters that followed. The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople would appear sombre when compared to Renoir's The Boatmen's Lunch and Seurat's Circus.

Delacroix had used all the possible resources of the Romantic palette, overloaded with colours, some brilliant but far too many others were earthy and sombre.

The only element missing that would have enabled him to pursue his ideal, was a more perfected palette. All he needed to do was excluded the earth colours that were needlessly encumbering it. He would work violently with them,

trying to extract some brilliance, but he did not dream of only painting with the virtual and pure colours of the prism. This advance was to be made by another generation, the Impressionists.

Everything advances and comes in its own time. If the Impressionists simplified the palette and obtained more colour and luminosity, then they owe it to the research of the Romantic master and his battles with a complicated palette.

Besides, Delacroix needed the toned-down but warm and transparent colours that the Impressionists repudiated. Because of his admiration for the old masters and in particular Rubens, he refused to abandon the dripping mixtures, brown sauces and bituminous undercoats they had used. It was these traditional procedures used in most of Delacroix's paintings that gives them a sombre appearance.

A third explanation: although he had studied the laws of complementary colours and optical mixture, he was not aware of all their possibilities.

During a visit we made to Chevreul at Gobelins in 1884<sup>25</sup> that was our introduction into the science of colour, the eminent scholar told us that around 1850 Delacroix, unknown to Chevreul, had written him a letter. In the letter, Delacroix had expressed the desire to discuss the scientific theory of colour and question him on several points that he was preoccupied with. Although they arranged to meet, Delacroix was taken ill with his recurrent sore throat and was unable to come. Had it not been for this incident Delacroix might have been more fully enlightened by the scholar.

Théophile Silvestre said that in his old age Delacroix still often said, "Every day I realize I do not know my own craft."<sup>26</sup> Therefore he must have sensed that there were more fruitful methods than the ones he had used. Had he known all of the resources of the optical mixture he would have generalized the process of juxtaposed hatching of pure colours that he used on some parts of his works. He would have only painted with the colours that were close to those of the solar spectrum.

The coloured light he obtained in the flesh-tones of his decorative works by using zebra-stripes of green and pronounced pink according to Charles Blanc's expression, would have extended to all his works.<sup>27</sup>

A sentence attributed to Delacroix sums up his efforts well:

"Give me the mud of the streets, and I will transform it into the delectable tint of a woman's skin."<sup>28</sup>

This meant that by the contrast of other intense colours he would modify the mud and give it whatever colour he wanted.

The above statement sums up his technique. He strove to bring up the key of dull mixtures by using pure elements. He did his utmost to make light out of mud-like colours. Instead of beautifying this mud he finally dismissed it entirely. But, other painters were yet to come who would take another step towards light by painting only with the colours of the rainbow.

## CHAPTER 3

CONTRIBUTION OF THE IMPRESSIONISTSJongkind the precursor.Renoir, Monet, Pissarro,Guillaumin, Cézanne, Sisley.At first they are influenced by Courbet and Corot.Turner leads them to Delacroix.The simplified palette.Impressionism.Pure colours dulled by pigmentary mixture.Sensation and method.

1. Delacroix's successors were the painters primarily concerned with colour and light, who were later to be called Impressionists: Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, Guillaumin, Sisley, Cézanne and their remarkable precursor Jongkind.<sup>1</sup>

Jongkind was the first to abandon flat tints, break up his colour, divide his brush strokes into infinity, and obtain the rarest colours by combining multiple and almost pure elements.

At that time, the future Impressionists were under the influence of Courbet and Corot except for Renoir who followed Delacroix and did copies after his work.<sup>2</sup> They still painted with large flat and simple strokes and seemed to try for white, black, and grey rather than pure and vibrant colours.

Fantin-Latour, the painter of Homage to Delacroix and many other serious and serene works, already drew and painted with tones and tints that were if not intense, at least broken-up and separated.<sup>3</sup>

In 1871, however, during a long stay in London, Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro discovered Turner.<sup>4</sup> They were struck by the charm and enchantment of his colours: they studied his work and analysed his technique. First they were amazed at Turner's snow and ice effects. They were surprised at how he succeeded giving the sensation of the whiteness of snow while they had been unable to with their large strokes of silver white spread out flatly. They realized that this marvellous result was not obtained by a uniform white but by a large quantity of strokes of different colours put side by side and reconstituting the desired effect when seen at a distance.

This process of multi-coloured brush strokes was first noticed by them in the snow effects because they were surprised not to see them done with white and grey as was customary. They then observed the same process used in other paintings by the English painter, equally brilliant and intense. It was due to this device that the paintings appeared painted not with ordinary pigment, but with intangible colours.

2. When they returned to France, preoccupied with their discovery, Monet and Pissarro visited Jongkind, who had perfected his technique that enabled him to interpret more subtle and fleeting plays of light.<sup>5</sup> The two artists noted the similarities between Jongkind's and Turner's methods.

They understood the advantages to be gained by the purity of the one technique and the facture of the other. Gradually the blacks and earth colours disappeared from their

palettes and the flat tints from their paintings. Soon they broke down tints and reconstituted them on the canvas in small juxtaposed comma-shapes.

Therefore the Impressionists were led, by the undeniable influence Turner and Jongkind had on them, to the technique of Delacroix. They had first tried to achieve the effect by oppositions of black and white.

Is not the comma-shaped stroke of Impressionist paintings like the hatching in Delacroix's large wall decorations reduced to small canvases painted directly from nature? It is certainly the same procedure which they all used to attain the same goal: light and colour.

Jules Laforgue noted just that same trend:

" The vibrating effect of the Impressionists is achieved by a thousand spangles. Marvellous discovery foreseen by that lover of movement, Delacroix, who during his fits of Romanticism, was not content with violent motions and furious colours, and began to model with vibrant hatching." <sup>6</sup>

3. But, while Delacroix used a complicated palette of both pure and earth colours, The Impressionists used a simplified palette of seven or eight colours, the most brilliant and closest to those of the solar spectrum.

As early as 1874,<sup>7</sup> Monet, Pissarro and Renoir, who was the first, what does it matter?, used only yellows, oranges, vermillions, lakes, reds, violets, blues, and intense greens such as Veronese green and emerald. This simplification of the palette, by only leaving a small selection of colours, led



them to break down the tints and multiply the elements. They did their utmost to reconstitute the colours by optical mixture of innumerable multi-coloured commas, that were juxtaposed and criss-crossed.

4. With the aid of these new resources-- breaking-down of tints and only using intense, pure colours-- they were able to paint landscapes of Ile-de-France or of Normandy that were much more brilliant and luminous than Delacroix's Oriental scenes. It was the first time one could admire landscapes and figures truly suffused in sunlight. There was no longer a need for a dark and bituminous repousoir that their predecessors -even Turner- had used to set off the luminosity and colour of the background.

The entire surface of the painting was resplendant with sunlight: the air circulated, the light envelopped, caressed, radiated the forms, penetrated throughout; even in the shadows it illuminated.

Fascinated by the magic of nature, the Impressionists succeeded, with their rapid execution in capturing her ever-changing aspects. They were the painters of fleeting effects and rapid impressions.

5. The Impressionists achieved so much brilliance and luminosity with their new technique that they shocked the public and the majority of the painters, so unwilling were they to accept the splendour and charms of colour. Their paintings were rejected from the official Salons and when they were able to exhibit in basements and dark shops, they were ridiculed

and insulted.

Nonetheless, they influenced Edouard Manet who until then had been involved with the opposition of black and white more than with the use of colour. Manet's paintings gradually became paler and more luminous. From that point on, he joined their cause and fought to introduce the new technique into the official Salons while the Impressionists carried on the battle with their independent exhibitions.

For twenty years the battle continued. Gradually even the most determined opponents came under the Impressionists' influence. Palettes were cleaned up, the Salon paintings became so light and high-keyed as to appear discoloured. Some clever competitors for the Prix de Rome copied the innovators' ideas and tried in vain to imitate them without understanding them.

Impressionism certainly characterizes one of the greatest periods of art, not only because of the masterful expressions by these painters of life, movement, joy and sunlight, but also by the considerable influence they had on all contemporary painting, whose colour they renewed.

We have no intention of giving a history of the movement here but simply to specify the useful technical contribution of the Impressionists. This was the simplification of the palette (using only pure colours of the prism) and the breaking-down of tints into multiple elements.

We are greatly indebted to their research and would like to express our admiration for their lifelong struggle, but above all for their work.

6. Nevertheless, the Impressionists did not take every advantage of their luminous and simplified palette. Although they used only pure colours on their palettes, they did not consistently respect the purity of those colours. This was left to their successors.

By mixing the pure colours the Impressionists obtained dull, dark tints. Yet these were the tints they wanted to avoid in the first place. The pure colours were not only brought down in key by pigmentary mixture but their intensity was diminished even more because opposite colours met on the canvas by chance brush strokes.

In the haste of their rapid execution a touch of orange ran into a touch of still-fresh blue. A slash of green met with a still-wet red madder, a violet swept into a yellow and these repeated combinations of hostile molecules spread a grey over the canvas that was neither optical nor fine but pigmentary and dull, detracting from the brilliance of the painting.

7. In spite of this, several famous examples would tend to prove that for these painters, the keyed-down tints were not without charm nor were their muted tones without interest. Was not Claude Monet ingenious in certain paintings of his remarkable Cathedral series, in fusing together the jewel-like colours of his palette in order to attain the same grey and murky colour of old, mouldy stone walls?

In Camille Pissarro's most recent works not a single particle of pure colour is to be found. In his "Boulevards" of 1897-98 in particular, the great painter had tried to

reconstitute the streets by complex mixtures of blue, green, yellow, orange, red and violet. He wanted to represent in their sad reality the shabbiness of the houses, the soot of the chimneys, blackened trees, lead-covered roofs and crowds in the rain. But in that case, why exclude ochres and earth colours which still have a warm, transparent beauty, and give a much finer grey tint than those from mixtures of pure colours? What is the use of such beautiful raw materials if their brilliance is dimmed?<sup>8</sup>

Delacroix strove to create light with dim colours: the Impressionists, who already had light of their palettes dimmed it voluntarily.

8. Although the Impressionists used the optical mixture<sup>9</sup>, they did not use it in a scientific or consistent way. According to the charming words of one of them:

" They paint like a bird sings."<sup>10</sup>

By doing so they did not follow Delacroix who attached great importance to the use of a technique permitting the application of the laws that govern colour and harmony.

Although they knew these laws, the Impressionists did not apply them methodically. In their paintings, one contrast might be observed and another omitted: one interreaction might be correct and another one doubtful. The following example will show how deceptive sensation without control can be.

Take the Impressionist who is painting a landscape from nature. He has before him grass or green leaves of which some are in the sun and others in the shade. In the green of the

shady parts closest to spaces of light, the observant eye of the painter senses a fleeting hint of red. Satisfied to have noticed this, he quickly puts a touch of red on the canvas. But in his haste to fix his sensation he has barely enough time to control the quality of red that by a chance brush stroke might be orange, vermillion, lake or even violet. Nevertheless it was a very precise red strictly subordinate to the colour of green, and not just any red. If the Impressionist had known the following law:

" Shade is always tinted lightly with the complement of the light colour."<sup>11</sup>

it would have been as easy for him to put the exact red, purplish for a yellow-green or orangish for a blue-green, than the ordinary red for which he settled.

It is difficult to understand how science could have harmed the artist's improvisation in this case. On the contrary we see the advantages of a method that prevents such discords, however minor, that do not enhance the beauty of a painting any more than mistakes in harmony enhance a piece of music.

9. The absence of a consistent method meant that the Impressionist was often mistaken in his application of contrasts. If the painter happens to be very observant and the contrast very marked, he receives the sensation and the exact formula is found. However, in less favourable circumstances the sensation is perceived in a confused state and the painter either fails to express it or does so imprecisely. Sometimes in Impressionist paintings we see the shadow of a local colour that

is not the correct shadow for that particular tint but a more or less equivalent tint or one that has not been logically modified by light or shadow. For example, we might find a blue that is stronger in the light than in the shadow, a red that is warmer in the shadow than in the light or a light that is too dull and a shadow that is too bright.

The same arbitrary procedure of the Impressionists may also be found in the fragmentation of their colours. It is a remarkable spectacle to watch their insight at work, but it does not seem as though the use of guidelines would be detrimental to them. Without guidelines, and in order not to lose a single opportunity, they put samples of their palette's colours onto the canvas, they put a little of everything everywhere. Within this kaleidoscope of colours are antagonistic elements which neutralize each other and dull the entire effect of the painting.

When there is a strong contrast of light and shade, these painters will add blue to the orange of the light and orange to the blue of the shadow thus greying the two tints they wanted to enliven by opposition and as a result, dissipating the effect of contrast for which they seemed to be striving. Instead of the appropriate blue shadow that corresponds exactly with the orange light, we find an approximate green or violet. In a single painting one part will be lit with red light and another with yellow as if it could be simultaneously two o'clock in the afternoon and five o'clock in the evening.

10. Observation of the laws of colour, the exclusive use of pure tints, renunciation of all low-key mixture and the methodical balance of elements; these are the advances the Impressionists left to their successors to make, those painters anxious to continue their research.

## CHAPTER 4

CONTRIBUTION OF THE NEO-IMPRESSIONISTSImpressionism and Neo-ImpressionismGeorges Seurat: Sunday at the Grande Jatte.The exclusive use of pure tints and the optical mixture.Division: guarantees maximum brilliance  
and integral harmony.A difference of technique not talent.Neo-Impressionism proceeds  
from Delacroix and the Impressionists.The technique held in common leaves the individuals free.

1. Works painted with only pure tints that were separated, balanced and optically mixed according to a scientific method, were first seen at the last Impressionist exhibition in 1886.<sup>1</sup>

It was there that Georges Seurat, the founder of the new development, exhibited the first divided painting. This decisive work, Sunday Afternoon at the Grande Jatte, demonstrated the rarest qualities of a painter.<sup>2</sup> Grouped around Seurat were Camille Pissarro, his son Lucien Pissarro and Paul Signac who exhibited paintings executed according to a similar technique.

The unusual brilliance and harmony of the innovators' work immediately attracted attention and was fairly well received. These qualities were due to the use of the fundamental principles of division.<sup>3</sup>

Since that time, this technique has been continually developed. Thanks to the research and contributions of MM. Henri-Edmond Cross, Albert Dubois-Pillet, Maximilien Luce, Hippolyte Petitjean, Theo Van Rysselberghe, Henry Van de



Velde, and some others. Despite several unfortunate deaths, in the face of attacks and desertions, these painters established the precise method that we summarized at the beginning of this study and called Neo-Impressionist.

If these painters, who would perhaps have been better named chromo-luminairistes, adopted the name Neo-Impressionist, it was not to profit from the success of the Impressionists (who were, in fact, still fighting to be recognized at the time) but to give credit to the achievements of their predecessors and draw attention to the goal they shared; light and colour.<sup>4</sup> It is in this way the term Neo-Impressionists must be understood, because the technique these painters use is not at all Impressionist. Whereas the Impressionist technique is based on instinct and instantaneity, the Neo-Impressionist's is based on thought and permanence.

2. The Neo-Impressionists, like the Impressionists, have only pure colours on their palettes. But in addition they reject any pigmentary mixture on the palette except, of course, those colours that are adjacent to one another on the chromatic circle.

Colours that are gradated between themselves and lightened with white tend to restore the variety of the tints of the solar spectrum and all their tones. An orange mixed with yellow and red, violet gradated towards red and blue and a green passing from blue to yellow are the only colours that the Neo-Impressionist uses together with white.

But, by optical mixture of pure colours and variation of

their proportions the Neo-Impressionist achieves an infinite variety of tints from the most intense to the most grey.

Not only do they rid themselves of any mixture of low-key tints from their palettes but also avoid dirtying the purity of their colours by letting opposite elements meet. Each stroke taken pure from the palette remains pure once on the canvas.

Thus, as if they were using colours prepared with more brilliant powders and richer ingredients, they were able to go beyond the Impressionists in light and colour. The Impressionists dulled and greyed the pure colours of the simplified palette.

3. Not only does the technique of division ensure maximum luminosity and colour by optical mixture of pure elements, but also by the dose and balance of those elements, according to the rules of contrast, gradation and irradiation that guarantee the integral harmony of the work.

The rules that the Impressionists only observed occasionally and instinctively, were constantly and rigorously applied by the Neo-Impressionists. It was a precise method that while not hampering their sensation, guided and protected them.

4. The first task of a painter in front of his blank canvas is to decide which curves and arabesques he will divide the canvas into and which colours he will use. Not many painters worried about it at a time when most paintings were like instantaneous photographs or illustrations.

It would be unfair to reproach the Impressionists for having neglected these tasks because they were attempting to capture the arrangement and harmonies of nature however it presented itself, without worrying about order or combination. As their critic Théodore Duret said:

" The Impressionist sits beside the river and paints what he sees in front of him."<sup>5</sup>

And indeed, they were able to show that with this style of painting one could accomplish miracles.

The Neo-Impressionist, following the advice of Delacroix, does not begin a painting without first having established the arrangement. Guided by tradition and science he harmonizes his composition the way he wishes. He adapts the lines ( directions and angles), chiaroscuro (tones) and colours (tints) to the mood he wants to create.

Calm is indicated by predominant horizontal lines. Ascending lines indicate joy or happiness. Sorrow is indicated by predominant descending lines. The secondary lines serve to show the other sensations in their infinite variety.

An expressive and diverse colour system accompanies the linear system. Along with the ascending lines go warm colours and high-key tones. With descending lines go predominantly cool colours and low-key tones. A careful balance of warm and cool colours accompanies the calm of the horizontal lines.<sup>6</sup> The painter works like a poet by submitting colour and line to the emotion he feels and wants to evoke.

5. In general a Neo-Impressionist work is more harmonious than an Impressionist work. This is because in the former the contrast is consistently observed which makes for more precise details. In the former, the composition is more studied and uses the aesthetic language of colour. The Neo-Impressionist work has a harmony of the ensemble and a moral harmony that the Impressionist work does not have. The Impressionist simply chooses not to use the same system for personal reasons.

The merits of the two generations of painters should not be compared: the Impressionists are the definitive masters whose work is respected and whose influence continues to be felt. The Neo-Impressionists are still in the research stage and realize how much more remains to be done. The difference is not one of talent but of technique.

It is not out of disrespect to the Impressionists when we say that the Neo-Impressionists' technique guarantees more luminosity, colour and harmony, just as it is not unfair to observe that Delacroix's paintings are less luminous and colourful than the Impressionists'.

6. Neo-Impressionism, characterized by its search for complete harmony and integral purity, is the logical expansion of Impressionism. The painters who practice the new technique merely organized and redeveloped the research and advances of their predecessors. Was not division <sup>as they understood it</sup> composed of these elements of Impressionism that were combined and systemized : brilliance ( Claude Monet), contrast ( almost always found in Renoir) and the building-up of a surface of

little touches ( Cézanne and Camille Pissaro) ? Does not the example of Camille Pissarro's adoption of the Neo-Impressionists' technique in 1886 and bringing his reputation to the new group show the ties between the two generations of colourists ?

Without an abrupt change, the grey mixtures gradually disappeared from Pissarro's works and the interreactions observed. The Impressionist master became Neo-Impressionist by simple evolution.

However, he Pissarro chose not to continue in that direction.<sup>7</sup> Being a direct follower of Corot he did not try to obtain brilliance by opposition as Delacroix had, but softness by bringing elements closer together. He would carefully avoid juxtaposing two tints that were far away from each other to obtain a vibrant note by contrasting them, but he would do his utmost to diminish the distance between the two tints by introducing intermediate colours into each of them which he called passages. However, the Neo-Impressionist technique is based on precisely that contrast which he does not feel he needs and on exactly that brilliant purity of tints from which his eye recoils. From division , he chose only the procedure, the small point, whose sole raison d'être is precisely that is permits the notation of that contrast and retains that purity. Therefore it is perfectly understandable that he (Pissarro) did not pursue this method, mediocre as it was in isolation.

There is yet another sign of the connection between the Impressionists and the Neo-Impressionists. Division was

Helmholz<sup>14</sup> provided Seurat with background information. He did a lengthy analysis of Delacroix's work<sup>15</sup> in which he found the use of the traditional laws of colour as well as line. Seurat saw what more remained to be done to achieve the goals the Romantic master had anticipated.

The result of Seurat's studies was his productive and carefully thought-out theory of contrasts. From that point on he applied it to his work. First he applied it to chiaroscuro. Using just the white of a page of Ingres paper and the black of a Conté-crayon skilfully gradated or contrasted, he did approximately four hundred drawings<sup>16</sup>, the most beautiful "painter's drawings" that exist. Because he had a perfect knowledge of values, these "black and white" drawings are more luminous and colourful than many paintings.

After mastering the contrast of tones, Seurat applied the same principles to tints. From 1882 on he applied the laws of contrast to colour and he painted using separate elements. He did continue to use low-key colours but this was because he had not yet been influenced by the Impressionists. In fact, he was unaware of their influence at that time. <sup>17</sup>

Paul Signac, on the contrary, from his very first studies, in 1883 was influenced by Monet, Pissarro, Renoir and Guillaumin. Signac did not frequent any studio and it was only after working from nature that he noticed the harmonious plays of simultaneous contrast. After studying Impressionist works he believed he could make out a scientific technique in them. It appeared to him as if the multi-coloured elements which were reconstituted into tints by optical

seen for the first time at the last exhibition of the Impressionists. The early works of Seurat and Signac had been welcomed as well within the other painters' tradition. It was only later that, in view of the importance of the new movement, the separation occurred and the Neo-Impressionists exhibited separately.<sup>8</sup>

7. Although Neo-Impressionism is a direct descendant of Impressionism, it also owes a great debt to Delacroix. Neo-Impressionism is the combination and development of the theories of Delacroix and the Impressionists. It is the return to the tradition of the former while benefitting from the contribution of the latter. This is best illustrated by the development of the work of Georges Seurat and Paul Signac.

Georges Seurat studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris but his intelligence, will, clear and methodical mind, pure taste and painter's eye kept him safe from the depressing influence of the school.<sup>9</sup> Assiduously frequenting museums, browsing through art books and engravings in libraries, he gathered the strength from his study of classical masters necessary to resist his professors' teaching. He discovered in the course of these studies that similar rules governed line, chiaroscuro, colour and composition. It was to be seen as much in Rubens as it was in Raphael, Michelangelo, and Delacroix; rhythm, measure and contrast.

The Eastern tradition<sup>10</sup>, and the writings of Chevreul,<sup>11</sup> Charles Blanc, Humbert de Superville<sup>12</sup>, O.N. Rood<sup>13</sup>, and H.

mixture had been methodically and deliberately separated. He also believed the reds, yellows, violets, blues, and greens were composed according to categorical rules; those same effects of contrast he had seen in nature but did not know the theory behind them, seemed to be theoretically applied by the Impressionists.

Several lines written by J.-K. Huysmans, in which complementary colours, yellow light and violet shadow were mentioned in reference to Monet and Pissarro, led him [Signac] to believe the Impressionists were aware of colour theory.<sup>18</sup> He [Signac] attributed the beauty of their work to this knowledge and felt he was devotedly following in their footsteps by studying the simple laws of simultaneous contrast in Chevreul's book.

Once he knew about the theory, he was able to observe contrasts exactly which prior to that time he had only noted down empirically according to the sensation, more or less successfully.

Each local colour was haloed by its true complementary, and gradated into the surrounding one by sweeping strokes, the interplay of which blended the two elements. This method only worked if the local colour and the surrounding one were similar or close on the colour scale as in, for example, blue on green and yellow on red, etc. etc. But if the two colours were opposites, like red and green or blue and orange, they would blend into a dirty and dark pigmentary mixture.<sup>19</sup> Signac's dislike of these dirty mixtures led him inevitably and progressively to separate elements by distinct brushstrokes or in other words, an optical mixture. This



was the only method that would enable him to gradate one colour into a contrasting one without impairing the purity.

Thus Signac arrived at the same conclusion and method as Seurat but by a totally different process.

At the first exhibition of the group of Independent Artists in the Tuileries in 1884, Seurat and Signac met for the first time. Seurat was exhibiting his Bathers that the Salon had refused that year. The painting was done with large flat strokes, swept [balayés] over one another and based on a palette of pure and earth colours like Delacroix's had been. Because of the ochres and earth colours the painting appeared darker and less brilliant than the Impressionist paintings. This was because the Impressionists' palettes had been reduced to the colours of the prism. However, Seurat's use of the laws of contrast and his consistent use of the separation of elements--light, shadow, local colour, and interreactions-- in the correct proportions and balance-- gave the painting a perfect harmony.

Signac contributed four landscapes.<sup>20</sup> They had been painted using only colours of the prism and the colours were placed on the canvas in small comma-shaped strokes like the Impressionists' but already without any pigmentary mixture. Contrast had been respected and the colours were mixed optically. Nonetheless, Signac's work lacked the correctness and balance of Seurat's rigorous method.

After discussing their mutual discoveries, Seurat soon adopted the simplified palette of the Impressionists and Signac put to use the valuable contribution of Seurat: method-

ically balanced separation of elements.

As we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, Seurat and Signac, along with the enthusiastic Camille and Lucien Pissarro, represented the beginning of Neo-Impressionism at the Impressionist exhibition of 1886.

8. Many a visitor to the exhibition would say that all Neo-Impressionist paintings were alike and that the artist's personality was lost in the technique. This is probably due to the common habit of not looking at a painter's work without a catalogue in one's hand. A viewer must be quite blind to the laws of colour and insensitive to the charms of harmony to confuse a Seurat with a Cross. The former is light, fine and in local colours toned-down by light and shadow. The latter's local colours are brilliant and dominate the other elements.

If one shows Epinal prints and Japanese prints to primitive people or children, they will not be able to distinguish one from the other. But people with some artistic education will be able to tell the difference. Those with even more education will be able to give the name of the artist of each print.

If the same group of subjects are shown paintings by different Neo-Impressionists, the first group will find them "all the same", the second "all pointillated" and only the third group will be able to recognize the personality of each painter.

Although some people are capable of distinguishing an

Hokusai from an Hiroshige<sup>21</sup>, a Giotto from an Orcagna, or a Monet from a Pissarro, they still confuse a Luce with a Van Rysselberghe. Hopefully these connoisseurs will continue their artistic education.

9. The truth is that there are as many divergences between Neo-Impressionists as there are between the Impressionists. When a Neo-Impressionist must choose between one element or the other in the sense of his work ( according to whether one is more interesting by its contrasts of light than by its study of local colours or vice versa), his personality , if he has one, will then have a pretext- amongst 100 others we could cite-- to express itself with the utmost frankness.

How can a technique that has produced so much diversity amongst its users be accused of nullifying their personalities ? This technique has given us the great synthetic compositions of Georges Seurat, the graceful or powerful portraits of Van Rysselberghe and the ornamental paintings of Van de Velde. It was this technique that enabled Maximilien Luce to express the street, the people and work. Cross expressed the rhythm of gestures in harmonious decors, and Charles Angrand, the life in the fields. Petitjean used it to express the graceful nudity of nymphs. How can a technique that brings together such distinct talents and produces such a variety of works be accused of destroying the individual personality of those who adopt it ? Only through ignorance or malice.

The discipline of division was no more difficult for

these artists than rhythm for a poet. Far from nullifying their inspiration, the discipline helped to give their works a strict and poetic appearance that was far from the anecdote and from trompe-l'oeil.

Delacroix also thought that the constraint of a studied and precise method could only enhance the style of a work of art:

" In painters, I see prosewriters and poets; rhyme restrains them, the turn that is indispensable to verse and which gives them so much vigour, is like hidden symmetry , studied yet inspired balancing, that governs the meetings or the separation of lines, strokes, highlights of colour."<sup>22</sup>

CHAPTER 5  
THE DIVIDED TOUCH

The divided touch of the Neo-Impressionists;  
the only way to obtain the optical  
mixture, purity and proportion.

The division and the point.

Delacroix's hatching,  
the Impressionists' comma, the divided touch;  
identical conventional methods;  
why accept the first two and not the third ?

It is not any more difficult and  
offers more advantages than the other two.

Division and decorative painting.

1. Many observers only see the Neo-Impressionist method and do not consider the harmonious, colourful, and brilliant results.

The Neo-Impressionist method is successful because of the purity of elements, the balanced proportions and the perfect optical mixture. The technique is not merely the point, as many imagine, but any sort of stroke that is not, sweeping, distinct and that is of a size proportionate to the painting's format. The form of the stroke is immaterial because it does not serve to give the appearance of objects but to represent the various coloured elements of tints. The stroke must be distinct, in order to permit the correct proportion, and not overlaid so as to retain the purity of the colours. It must be of a proportionate size to the painting so that from a distance the optical mixture reconstitutes the desired tint. How else may the encounters and plays of

contrasting colours be noted down precisely ?

Take the amount of red used to tint the shadow of a green for example. What about the effect of an orange light on a blue local colour or a blue shadow on an orange local colour ? If it is combined by any other method than the optical mixture of these opposite elements, the mixture will end up in a muddy tint. If sweeping strokes are used one upon the other one risks muddying the tint. If one juxtaposes even pure strokes imprecisely the methodical proportions will not be possible and one of the elements will always dominate at the expense of the others. This brushwork still has the advantage of ensuring each coloured pigment of its maximum intensity in full flower.

2. The Neo-Impressionists' divided touch, is -- subjected to the discipline of the new technique--the same procedure as Delacroix's hatching and the Impressionists' comma. These three factures have a common aim; to give colour as much brilliance as possible by creating coloured highlights using an optical mixture of juxtaposed pigments. Hatching, commas, and divided touches are all three identical conventional methods.

In this way, they are adapted to the needs of three corresponding aesthetics. Therefore the techniques are attached to the aesthetics and double the strong connection between the Romantic master, the Impressionists and the Neo-Impressionists.

Delacroix, with his passionate but deliberate mind, covered his canvas with spirited hatching , but separated

colour precisely and methodically. By using this method, which was favourable to the optical mixture and rapid modelling in the direction of the contours, he solved his problem of colour and movement.<sup>1</sup>

By ridding their palettes of sombre or dull colours the Impressionists had to make a more extensive "keyboard" with the remaining colours. This is how they came upon a facture that was much more fragmented than Delacroix's had been. In place of Delacroix's Romantic hatching, the Impressionists used small strokes applied from the end of a rapid brush resulting in a multi-coloured tangled-up mass. This was much better adapted to the aesthetic of sudden and fleeting sensation.

Jongkind and Fantin-Latour before them had used a similar facture but without using as much fragmentation of the stroke.<sup>2</sup> In the 1880's Camille Pissarro ( paintings of Pontoise and Osny) and Sisley( landscapes of Bas-Meudon and Sèvres) exhibited canvases with a totally fragmented facture.<sup>3</sup>

Claude Monet's paintings of the time showed certain portions treated in the same way next to light, scumbled areas.<sup>4</sup> It was only later that the master appeared to give up unified tints and covered the entire surface of his canvas with multi-coloured comma shapes.

Renoir separated his elements as well but in larger strokes--due to the larger size of his canvases---and flatter strokes which his brush swept into one another.<sup>5</sup>

Cézanne, by juxtaposing the different elements of fragmented tints in clear, square touches and not worrying about imitation or skill, came quite close to the methodical division of the Neo-Impressionists.<sup>6</sup>

The Neo-Impressionists did not attach any significance to the shape of the stroke because they did not use it to model, to express a feeling, or imitate the form of an object. For them, a touch was simply one of the infinite coloured elements which made up a painting when assembled. Strokes only had the importance of a note in a symphony. Sad or happy feelings and calm or moving effects would be expressed not by the virtuosity of the brush stroke but by combinations of lines, tints and tones.

Did not this precise and simple method of expression, the divided touch, well suit the clear and methodical aesthetic of the painters who used it ?

3. The comma stroke of the Impressionists plays the same expressive role as the hatching of Delacroix in certain instances. When for example, the strokes imitate the form of an object such as a leaf, a wave, a blade of grass, etc. In other instances, just like the Neo-Impressionists' divided touch, the stroke only represents coloured elements that are separated and juxtaposed to be reconstituted by the optical mixture.

Clearly, when the Impressionist wants to paint objects that look unified and flat such as blue sky, white linen, monochrome paper or a nude, he uses multi-coloured comma



strokes and the role of these strokes is simply to decorate the surfaces by multiplying the colours and not attempting to copy nature. The Impressionist comma is therefore the transition between Delacroix's hatching and the Neo-Impressionists' divided touch because according to the circumstances it plays the role of one or the other of these factures.

Similarly, Cézanne's stroke is the link between the brushwork style of the Impressionists and the Neo-Impressionists. The common but differently applied principle of optical mixture unites the three generations of colourists that all seek light, colour and harmony. They all three have the same goal and in order to achieve it, use almost identical methods...the methods have continued to improve.

4. Division is a complex system of harmony. It is more of an aesthetic than a technique.<sup>7</sup> The point is only a method.

To divide, is to try to obtain the strength and harmony of colour by representing light coloured by its pure elements, separated and measured according to the essential laws of contrast and gradation.

The separation of elements and the optical mixture guarantee purity, in other words, luminosity and intensity of tints. Gradation raises the key of the brightness. The contrast, by regulating the agreement of like colours and opposition of contrasting ones, subjects these powerful but balanced elements to the rules of harmony. The basis of division is contrast. After all, is not art contrast ?

To pointillate is the means of expression chosen by the painter who places colour on a canvas by small points rather than spreading the paint on flatly. It is to cover a surface with a small, multi-coloured touches that are close to one another, pure or darkened, and trying to imitate the various tints of nature by the optical mixture, without any effort to balance or contrast. The point is only a brush stroke, a means of painting and like any means has little importance.

The term point, the word or the facture, has been used only by those who have not been able to appreciate the importance and appeal of contrast and balance of elements, they only see the method and not the spirit of the division.

Some painters have tried unsuccessfully to obtain the effects of the division. It can be seen in their work, where the paintings in which they tried the technique are inferior, at least in luminosity or harmony, to before and after their divisionist attempts. This is because only the method was used but the divine proportions were absent. This failure was not the fault of division, in that they pointillated, not divided.

Neither Seurat, Cross, Luce, Van de Velde, Van Rysselberghe nor Angrand have ever spoken about points nor have they been preoccupied with pointillism. Read these lines that Seurat dictated to his biographer, Jules Christophe:

" Art is harmony; harmony is the similarity of opposites, the similarity of likes, of tone, of tint and of line: By tone, I mean light and dark; tint, I mean red and its complementary green, orange and its complementary blue, yellow

and its complementary violet...the means of expression, is the optical mixture of tones, tints and their inter-reactions ( shadows according to very precise rules)." <sup>8</sup>

In these principles of art, which are those of the division, is there once any mention of points , or hint of a petty preoccupation with point-making ?

It is possible to divide without pointillating. A sketch of Seurat's done after nature on a panel with a few brush strokes is not pointillated but divided. This is because in spite of the rapid work the touch is pure, the elements balanced and the contrast observed. It is these qualities alone that make up the division and not minute niggling strokes.

The role of pointillism is much more minor, it simply renders the painting's surface more vibrant. It does not assure luminosity nor intensity of colours or harmony. Therefore, complementary colours, that are friends and enhance each other when opposed, are enemies and destroy each other if mixed, even optically. A red and a green surface when opposed to one another stimulate each other , but red points mixed with green points combine to make a dull, colourless grey.

Division does not require a stroke in the form of a point at all. It may be used for small paintings but is not recommended for larger ones. In order to avoid discoloration, the size of the divided touch must be proportionate to the size of the work. The divided touch, changing, living "light" is therefore not at all the point which is uniform,

lifeless and "matter".

5. It is wrong to think that a painter who divides simply scribbles right and left, up and down on his canvas in small multi-coloured touches. Starting with the contrast of two tints without bothering with the surface to be covered, he will oppose, gradate, and put into proportion the various elements on both sides of the dividing line, until he finds another contrast, a motif for a new gradation. From one contrast to another the canvas will become covered.

The painter will have played from his keyboard of colours just as a composer uses the different instruments for the orchestration of a symphony. He will modify the rhythms and measures the way he wants, paralyse or bring out some elements, modulate a certain gradation infinitely.

Just for the sheer pleasure he directs the interplays and conflicts of the seven colours of the prism, just as the musician multiplies the seven notes of the scale to produce a melody. How serious, on the contrary, is the work of the pointillist ! It is surely natural that several painter who have pointillated, either by fashion or conviction, soon gave it up , although they had been enthusiastic in the beginning.

6. Delacroix's hatching, the commas of the Impressionists, and the divided touch of the Neo-Impressionists are all identical conventional methods that are used to give colours more brilliance and splendour by suppression of all flat

tints. They are all three painter's devices for embellishing the surface of the canvas.

The first two factures; hatching and commas are by now, fairly well accepted. The third, the divided touch, is not yet accepted. Nature is not like that, the critics say, there are no multi-coloured strokes on the human face!<sup>9</sup> But, are there black, grey, brown hatching or commas either?

Ribot's black,<sup>10</sup> Whistler's grey,<sup>11</sup> Carrière's brown<sup>12</sup>, Delacroix's hatching, Monet's commas and the Neo-Impressionists' divided touches are all devices used by painters to express their personal vision of nature.

How is the divided touch more a convention than the other methods? Why is it more awkward? By being a simple coloured element it can be used for any subject because of its impersonality. After all, if it is an asset for an art technique to resemble the technique of nature, it must be said that nature only paints with the colours of the solar spectrum, fragmented to infinity and never is there a square millimetre of flat tint to be found. Therefore, does not the division conform, more than any other process, to the technique of nature?

Who pays more homage to nature-- the Neo-Impressionist who limits himself to putting its essential principle, light, on the canvas, or the painter who slavishly copies the tiniest blade of grass or pebble?

In addition, we subscribe to these aphorisms by Delacroix;

"Cold exactitude is not art."<sup>15</sup>

"It is not the goal of the artist to reproduce objects exactly."<sup>16</sup>

" After all, what is the supreme goal of all art if it is not the effect ?"<sup>17</sup>

7. The effect the Neo-Impressionists are aiming for and which is assured by the division, is a maximum of light, colour and harmony. Therefore their technique would seem to be especially suited to large scale decorative compositions. This is the way in which some of the painters have applied it. But, excluded from official commissions, and not having walls to decorate, they wait for the time when they will be permitted to realize great projects that they dream of.

From the viewing distance implicit in such great works, the facture will disappear and the separated elements will combine into brilliantly coloured lights. The divided touches will become as invisible as Delacroix's hatching in his decorations of the Gallery of Apollo or the Senate Library.

Whereas the divided touches are startling when seen from too close a distance, time will quickly make them disappear. In several years the impasto will diminish, the colours will blend into one another and the painting will only be too unified.

Rembrandt said, " Painting should not be sniffed".<sup>18</sup> In order to listen to a symphony one does not sit amongst the brass instruments but in the place where the sounds of the various instruments blend in the way the composer intended.<sup>19</sup> Only then may one take pleasure analysing the score note by note in order to study the work of orchestration.

In much the same way one must first view a divided painting from far enough away that the whole ensemble is

seen. Then it may be studied closer up in order to examine interplays of colour, but only if such technical details are of interest.

If Delacroix had only had the resources of the division he would have overcome all the difficulties of his decorations of the Salon de la Paix, in the Hôtel de Ville. The surfaces he was to cover were dark, and he never succeeded in making them luminous. In his Journal he regretted not being able to reproduce the brilliance of his sketches on such a large scale although he tried several times.

In Amiens there are four admirable compositions by Puvis de Chavannes: The Flag Bearer, Woman crying over the remains of her house, Woman Spinning and The Reaper placed on the panels facing War and Peace.<sup>20</sup> They are made invisible by the daylight that comes in from the neighbouring windows.

Given the same circumstances, it is certain that a divided wall decoration would create coloured tints that would overcome the problem of too much light from the neighbouring windows.<sup>21</sup>

Even small Neo-Impressionist paintings may be done as wall decorations. They are neither studies nor easel paintings but, as Felix Fénéon wrote, they are;

" Exemplary specimens of an art of great decorative potential, that sacrifices anecdote to arabesque, nomenclature to synthesis, transience to permanence, and that replaces nature's precarious reality, which finally lost its attraction, with an authentic reality."<sup>22</sup>

These paintings that restore the light to the walls of our modern apartments, that insert pure colours into rhythmic lines, that have the charm of Oriental carpets, mosaics and tapestries , are they not decorations as well ?



## CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF THE THREE CONTRIBUTIONS

So many sentences--but it was necessary to present all the evidence in order to prove the legitimacy of Neo-Impressionism by establishing its background and contribution---now to condense them in this table.

GOAL

DELACROIX

IMPRESSIONISM

NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

To give colour as much brilliance as possible.

METHODS

1. Palette made up of pure colours and low-key colours.

2. Mixture on the palette and optical mixture.

3. Hatching.

4. Methodical and scientific technique.

1. Palette made up solely of pure colours close to those of solar spectrum.

2. Mixture on the palette and optical mixture.

3. Comma-shaped or sweeping strokes.

4. Technique based on instinct and inspiration.

DELACROIX

IMPRESSIONISM

1. Same palette as Impressionism.
2. Optical mixture.
3. Divided touch.
4. Methodical and scientific technique.

## NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

RESULTS

## DELACROIX

By giving up all flat tints and using gradation, contrast and optical mixture, he succeeds in obtaining from the partially low-key elements he uses, the maximum brilliance of which the harmony is guaranteed by the systematic application of the laws that govern colour.

## IMPRESSIONISM

By using only pure colours on their palettes, they obtain a much more luminous and colourful result than Delacroix but diminish the brilliance by pigmentary and impure mixtures. They limit their harmony by applying colour theory infrequently and improperly.

## NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

By suppressing all impure mixtures, by the exclusive use of optical mixture of pure colours, by a methodical division and observation of colour theory, they guarantee themselves a maximum amount of luminosity, colour and harmony that had never previously been obtained.

## CHAPTER 7

EVIDENCE

1. The technique of division was started by the Neo-Impressionists and as we have shown, was the natural progression from Impressionism. As we have seen in the beginning of this study in numerous quotations, the division was clearly anticipated and almost totally formulated by Delacroix. But there were also others who foresaw what the contribution of the divided touch of pure elements would offer to art.

Here is Charles Blanc, who had already pointed out the benefits of a scientific technique based on contrast and optical mixture like the division. In his Grammaire des arts du dessin he demonstrates that in order to give more brilliance to colour, one must avoid spreading it out flatly. He also advises using colours as the Orientals do, precisely conforming to the method of the Neo-Impressionists.

" Whenever the Orientals, who are excellent colourists, have to represent a unified surface, they do not hesitate to make the colour vibrate by placing tone upon tone."<sup>1</sup>

Further on, he [Blanc] cites a portion of a study by M.A. de Beaumont that appeared in the Revue des deux mondes, in order to show the strength and attraction of a colour fragmented to infinity. This quote clearly shows that the Neo-Impressionist technique and the richest colour traditions of the Orientals have much in common.

" The more intense a colour is, the more the Orientals make it glitter in order to give it more nuance and in-

tensity and to prevent dryness and monotony. In other words the aim is to produce a vibration without which a colour is as unacceptable to our eyes as a sound would be for our ears in the same condition."<sup>2</sup>

Yet, so many people prefer flat and smooth paintings that it would seem as though the eyes are less discriminating than the ears.

2. The testimony of John Ruskin, the didactic aesthete and adept critic is even more positive. Let us first quote from his Elements of Drawing, a work that every artist should be familiar with, translated for the first time into French by the Neo-Impressionist painter H.-E. Cross.<sup>3</sup>

" I have a profound dislike of anything like habit of hand."<sup>4</sup>

Delacroix had said:

" What must be avoided is the infernal convenience of the brush."<sup>5</sup>

Would not the divided touch of the Neo-Impressionists, please both masters because it is placed simply on the canvas without virtuosity or sleight of hand ?

Ruskin then shows that a colour cannot be beautiful unless it is carefully gradated and he indicates the importance of this often neglected procedure.

" You will find in practice, that brilliancy of hue, vigour of light, and even the aspect of transparency in

shade, are essentially dependent on this character alone; hardness, coldness, and opacity resulting far more from equality of colour than from nature of colour." <sup>6</sup>

" It is not indeed physically impossible to meet with an ungradated piece of colour, but it is so supremely improbable, that you had better get into the habit of asking yourself invariably, when you are going to copy a tint--- not" is it gradated? " but " Which way is that gradated?" and at least in ninety-nine out of a hundred instances, you will be able to answer decisively after a careful glance, though the gradation may have been so subtle that you did not see it at first. And it does not matter how small a touch of colour may be, though not larger than the smallest pin's head, if one part of it is not darker than the rest, it is a bad touch; for it is not merely because the natural fact is so, that your colour should be gradated; the preciousness and pleasantness of the colour itself depends more on this than on any other of its qualities, for gradation is to colours just what curvature is to lines, both being felt to be beautiful by the pure instinct of every human mind, and both, considered as types, expressing the law of gradual change and progress in the human soul itself. What the difference is in mere beauty between a gradated and ungradated colour, may be seen easily by laying an even tint of rose-colour on paper, and putting a rose leaf beside it. The victorious beauty of the rose as

compared with other flowers, depends wholly on the delicacy and quantity of its colour gradations, all other flowers being less rich in gradation, not having so many folds of leaf; or less tender, being patched and veined instead of flushed."<sup>7</sup>

Then Ruskin adds that Turner, in his passion for colours, did not neglect to use this method of improving his tints:

" You will not, in Turner's largest oil pictures, perhaps six or seven feet long by four or five high, find one spot of colour as large as a grain of wheat ungradated."<sup>8</sup>

Are not the Neo-Impressionists, whose paintings are divided to an infinite degree, certainly the most faithful observers of this important factor of beauty: gradation, without which there is no beautiful colour ?

Having pointed out the importance of gradation, Ruskin advises the painter to study it in nature where he will constantly find its harmonious traces.

" No colour exists in Nature under ordinary circumstances without gradation. If you do not see this, it is the fault of your inexperience: you will see it in due time, if you practise enough. But, in general you may see it at once."<sup>9</sup>

In addition, he clearly shows the means of obtaining a good gradation on a canvas and the advantage of using such a method as opposed to using a flat tint:

" Lay the subduing tints on in small touches."<sup>10</sup>

" If a colour is to be darkened by superimposed portions

of another, it is, in many cases, better to lay the uppermost colour in rather vigorous small touches, like finely chopped straw, over the under one, than to lay it on as a tint, for two reasons: the first, that the play of the two colours together is pleasant to the eye; the second, that much expression of form may be got by wise administration of the upper dark touches."<sup>11</sup>

This method," small touches, like finely chopped straw", is it not exactly the same one used by the Neo-Impressionists ?

But better yet, he wants those small fragmented touches in integrated colours:

" Practise the production of mixed tints by interlaced touches of the pure colours out of which they are formed, and use the process at the parts of your sketches where you wish to get rich and luscious effects."<sup>12</sup>

Divided touches of pure colours: the Neo-Impressionists' contribution exactly.

" The best colour we reach is got by stippling ."<sup>13</sup>  
Here, the literal translation of stippling is pointillage, and it is no accident that Ruskin uses this word. He devotes an entire chapter to this facture that he particularly recommends. It is entitled Breaking one colour in small points through or over one another.<sup>14</sup>

" This is the most important of all processes in good modern oil and water-colour painting."<sup>15</sup>

"In distant effects of rich subject, wood or rippled water, or broken clouds, much may be done by touches or crumbling dashes of rather dry colour, with other colours

afterwards put cunningly into the interstices. The more you practise this, when the subject evidently calls for it, the more your eye will enjoy the higher qualities of colour. The process is, in fact, the carrying out of the principle of separate colours to the utmost possible refinement; using atoms of colour in juxtaposition, instead of large spaces. And note, in filling up minute interstices of this kind, that is you want the colour you fill them with to show brightly, it is better to put a rather positive point of it, with a little white left beside of around it in the interstice, than to put a pale tint of the colour over the whole interstice, than to put a pale tint of the colour over the whole interstice. Yellow or orange will hardly show, if pale, in small spaces; but they will show brightly in firm touches, however small, with white besides them."<sup>16</sup>

3. We again find these precious arguments in favour of the Neo-Impressionist technique in a study of Ruskin by M. Robert de la Sizeranne, published in the Revue des deux mondes that quotes or summarizes the opinions of the aesthetician.<sup>17</sup>

The Neo-Impressionists rid themselves of all sombre or dull colours; Ruskin says:

" Enough with the grey, black, brown, and all those tar-like mixtures of the mid-century French landscape artists ! They seem to see Nature in a black mirror ! Each colour must be darkened with its own tint, simply reinforced and not by mixture with a dark colour."<sup>18</sup>

The Neo-Impressionists are against any mixture on the palette, Ruskin says:



" You must keep your palette clean so that the pure tint can clearly be seen and so that you will not be inclined to mix them."<sup>19</sup>

" No more mixture on the palette than on the canvas; the two colours may be mixed together, if one insists, but not excessively."<sup>20</sup>

Do not the Neo-Impressionists' paintings look like mosaics ?

Ruskin said:

" One must consider Nature purely, like a mosaic of different colours that must be imitated one by one with great simplicity."<sup>21</sup>

" Should we be making frescoes ?, yes and better still mosaics ! "<sup>22</sup>

And the following cannot but be encouraging to the Neo-Impressionists, who have adopted a facture that does not at all depend upon skill of the hand:

" Yet, in this meticulous system of drawing, conscientious and well-defined lines, matt colours that are separate from one another and laboriously placed point by point in definite strokes, what role do the size of the facture, sensual fluidity of the touch, virtuosity of the hand and the freedom of the paintbrush play ? None, because they should not play any role. The virtuoso is a Pharisee who is only pleased with himself and not with beauty. He is an equilibrist who juggles with his ochres, ultramarines and vermillions, instead of inducing them to tribute before unequalled nature and the endless sky. He says: 'Look at how skilful I am, see how supple I am, look at my handi-

work ! He does not say: ' See how beautiful it [Nature] is and how superior it is to all our poor human artifices ! " 23

Do not these lines seem to be the best response to critics of the Neo-Impressionists who find their facture too discreet and impersonal ? The following precepts are so clearly Neo-Impressionist that they could have been written by an adept of division:

" Lay the bright colours by small points on or in the interstices of the others and carry out the principle of separate colours to the utmost possible refinement, using atoms of colour in juxtaposition, instead of large spaces. Finally, when you have time, rather than mixing anything make frequent memoranda of the variegations in flowers, the foxgloves for example and the calceolarias. Practice the production of mixed tints by interlaced touches of the pure colours out of which they are formed."<sup>24</sup>

This application of small points of pure colours to form mixed tints that Ruskin advocates is very close to the Neo-Impressionists' technique. The resemblance is so obvious that the writer of the Revue des deux mondes goes on to call pointillism what, had he been more precise, he would have called Neo-Impressionism:

" Isn't this a prophecy of pointillism we find here as early as 1856 ? It is indeed. "<sup>25</sup>

Is it not surprising to find that the stippling recommended by the English aesthete as being the best method of ensuring splendour and harmony of colour is the same as

the divided touch that shocks so many French critics ?

4. We will close this chapter with several passages from the work of an American scholar, O.N. Rood: Modern Chromatics.<sup>26</sup> This book was written, in the words of the author; " for the general or artistic reader" <sup>27</sup>, as if either of them were going worry about such problems !

It will be seen that Rood also recommends gradation, optical mixture and the divided touch, and he is surprised that so many people are unaware of their benefits.

" One of the most important characteristics of colour in nature is the endless, almost infinite gradations which always accompany it. It is impossible to escape from the delicate changes which the colour of all natural objects undergoes, owing to the way light strikes them, without taking all the precautions necessary for an experiment in a physical laboratory. Even if the surface employed be white and flat, still some portions of it are sure to be more highly illuminated than others, and hence to appear a little more yellowish or less greyish; and, besides this source of change, it is receiving coloured light from all coloured objects near it, and reflecting it variously from its different portions.

If a painter represents a sheet of paper in a picture by a uniform white or grey patch, it will seem quite wrong, and can not be made to look right till it is covered by delicate gradations of light and shade and colour. We are in the habit of thinking of a sheet of paper as being

quite uniform in tint, and yet instantly reject as insufficient such a representation of it. In this matter our unconscious education is enormously in advance of our conscious; our memory of sensations is immense, our recollections of the causes that produce them utterly insignificant; and we do not remember the causes mainly because we never knew them. It is one of the tasks of the artist to ascertain the causes that give rise to the highly complex sensations which he experiences, even in so simple a case as that just considered."<sup>28</sup>

" All the great colourists have been deeply permeated by a sentiment of this kind, and their works, when viewed from the intended distance, are tremulous with changing tints-- with tints that literally seem to change under the eye, so that it is often impossible for the copyist to say exactly what they are, his mixture never seeming to be quite right, alter them as he will. Among modern landscape paintings, those of Turner are famous for their endless quality of gradation, and the same is true even of his water-colour drawings."<sup>29</sup>

" There is, however, another lower degree of gradation which has a peculiar charm of its own, and is very precious in art and nature. The effect referred to takes place when different colours are placed side by side in lines or dots, and then viewed at such a distance that the blending is more or less accomplished by the eye of the beholder. Under these circumstances the tints mix on the retina, and produce new colours. This communicates a soft

and peculiar brilliancy to the surface, and gives it a certain appearance of transparency; we seem to see into it and below it."<sup>30</sup>

" At the right distance adjacent tints blend, and what near at hand seemed a mass of purposeless daubs becomes an effective picture. This same method of mixing colours on retina of the observer is also used more or less in oil painting with excellent effect; it lends to them a magical charm, the tints seeming purer and more varying; the very fact that the appearance of the painting changes somewhat according as the observer advances or retires from it being an advantage, communicating to it, as we might say, a certain kind of life. Oil paintings in which this principle is not employed labour under one quite demonstrable disadvantage: as the observer retires adjacent tints blend, whether it was the intention of the artist or not; and if this has not been calculated for, a new and inferior effect is pretty sure to be produced. In water-colour drawings the same mode of working is constantly employed under the form of stippling, more or less formal; and with its aid certain results of transparency and richness can be attained, which otherwise would be out of the reach of the artist. If the stippling is formal and quite evident, it is apt to give a mechanical look to a drawing, which is not particularly pleasant; but properly used, it has great value, and readily lends itself to the expansion of form."<sup>31</sup>

" In cashmere shawls the same principle is developed and pushed to a great extent, and much of their beauty is dependent on it."<sup>32</sup>

Thus, a painter such as Delacroix, an aesthete such as Ruskin and a scholar such as Rood foresaw or pointed out the different procedures that make up the innovative contribution of the Neo-Impressionists. They even seemed to particularly recommend the one aspect of their technique that is the most controversial today, the one that is considered the most objectionable: the use of touches of pure colours.

## CHAPTER 8

THE EDUCATION OF THE EYE

One advance per generation.

The controversial painters are educators.

Obstacles the colourists must overcome.

Through lack of instruction the public

is insensitive to harmony and

fears beautiful colour.

It is the brilliance and not the facture  
of the Neo-Impressionists that is shocking.

1. Why is it then that division encounters so much hostility when it has more advantages than other techniques? It is because in France everyone rebels against all innovations in art. The public is not only insensitive but hostile to colour. ( We have only to look at our national guide the Joanne, which, instead of simply informing, feels the need to incite the tourists to laugh and misunderstand the remarkable colours of the Turners in the South Kensington Museum.)<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, there are two main objections to Neo-Impressionist art : first, it is an innovation and secondly, paintings executed with this technique are unusually brilliant.

It would be useless to cite here the list of all the innovative painters that were misunderstood in this century and then had their personal vision accepted later. These injustices, battles and victories make up the history of art.

Any innovation is opposed in the beginning then slowly one gets used to it, then it becomes accepted. The aim of the once-shocking facture becomes gradually apparent. The colour that provoked criticism at first now seems powerful and

harmonious.

The involuntary education of the public and critics takes place until they begin to see things in reality as the innovators intended them. His formula, once ridiculed by everyone, becomes the public's criterion. The original efforts the painter makes will be jeered at until the day he too will succeed. Each generation realizes its error too late and repeats it.

Around 1850, the following was written about Corot's paintings. Yes, even mild Corot offended the public at the time.

" How can M. Corot actually see nature as he represents her for us ?..It is useless for M. Corot to impose his method of painting trees, they are not trees but smoke ! Personally, during our walks we have never seen trees that looked like M. Corot's ! " <sup>2</sup>

Twenty-two years later after Corot had become accepted the critics used him to criticize Monet.

" Monet sees everything in blue ! Blue land, blue grass, blue trees. Corot's beautiful trees, full of mystery and poetry, here is what has been done to you ! You have been dipped into a tub of washerwoman's bluing ! " <sup>3</sup>

A same generation cannot make the necessary effort twice to assimilate a new way of seeing.

Delacroix's detractors were forced to give in to his admirers. But the latter group did not understand the colourists who succeeded him, the Impressionists. They [the Impressionists] triumphed in their turn, and today the collectors of



Monet, Pissarro, Renoir and Guillaumin have abused their reputation for having good taste which their choice gave them, in order to criticize Neo-Impressionism.

It takes more than a quarter of a century for an artistic evolution to become accepted. Delacroix fought from 1830 to 1863; Jongkind and the Impressionists from 1860 to 1890. Around 1886 Neo-Impressionism appeared, developing naturally from prior research. We should expect, according to what we have stated, several more years of battles and work before Neo-Impressionism's contribution is recognized.

Sometimes the financial interest combines with ignorance to hamper an innovative and controversial movement. Gustave Geffroy summarizes the problem in the following words:

" The well-established producers and all those who live off their successful production form an association, whether unspoken or admitted, against the art of tomorrow." <sup>4</sup>

2. It is when a new movement goes towards colour and light in particular that it runs up against protests. Changes in the subject matter of a painting, like variations in literary style, are easily accepted by the same people who obstinately opposed the slightest new brilliance of colour.

The deformations of the Rose-Croix group <sup>5</sup> certainly do not provoke as much ridicule as M. Monet's blue trains or M. Cross' violet trees. It is rare that a statue of drawing makes the incomprehending public angry whereas boldness in colour always does so.

Any frank and pure colour shocks. Only flat, smooth muted and dull paintings are accepted. If half a figure is covered with brown or bitumen under the pretext of being shadow the public accepts it immediately but blue and violet would be rejected. And yet, shadows always contain the blue or violet that the public is so repelled by and not the mud-like tints that it accepts.

The science of optics would prove this. There is an easy and simple science of colour that everyone should learn and which would avoid many uninformed judgments. It could be summarized in ten lines that could be taught to primary school children in the first hour of the first lesson of the very first drawing course.

Charles Blanc deplores the great ignorance of the public - and in reference to Delacroix says:

" Many people assume that the use of colour is a pure gift from heaven and that it has incommunicable principles. This is wrong: the use of colour can be taught like music. From the beginning of time the Orientals have known the laws and transmitted them from generation to generation until our time.

" We can produce competent and skilful musicians by teaching them counterpoint, in the same way we can produce painters who do not make mistakes in harmony by teaching them the phenomenon of simultaneous perception of colour."<sup>6</sup>

" The foundations of colour have not been analysed and taught in our schools because in France it is considered

useless to study the laws of colour, as the current saying goes, 'one becomes a draughtsman, but one is born a colourist.'"<sup>7</sup>

"The secrets of using colour ! Why must the principles that every artist should know and that should be taught to everyone be secrets ?"<sup>8</sup>

The laws of colour can be learned in a few hours. They may be found in two pages of Chevreul and Rood. Once the eye is guided by them, it is only a matter of self-improvement. However, since Charles Blanc's time the situation has barely changed. No effort has been made to develop this special education. Chevreul's disks, the amusing use of which could help us show so many eyes what they do not perceive and teach them to see, have not been adopted by primary schools yet, in spite of many efforts which the scientist made to achieve this.

It is the simple science of contrast which forms the solid foundation of Neo-Impressionism: Without it, there can be no beautiful lines or perfect colours. If we take into account the services this knowledge can render the artist each day, by guiding and strengthening his inspiration, then we would be hard-pressed to find how it might cause him any harm.

In the preface of his book, Rood underlines the importance of such knowledge:

".. I will add that it has been my endeavour also, to present in a simple and comprehensible manner the underlying facts upon which the artistic use of colour necess-

arily depends. The possession of these facts will not enable people to become artists; but it may to some extent prevent ordinary persons, critics, and even painters, from talking and writing about colour in a loose, inaccurate, and not always rational manner. More than this is true: a real knowledge of elementary facts often serves to warn students of the presence of difficulties that are insurmountable, or, when they are already in trouble, points out to them its probable nature; in short, a certain amount of rudimentary information tends to save useless labour."<sup>9</sup>

Being a colourist is not a simple matter of placing reds, greens and yellows next to one another, without any rules nor proportions. A colourist must know how to place his colours in order and to sacrifice some in order to improve others. Noise and music are not synonymous. To juxtapose colours, no matter how intense they may be, without observing contrast is like filling in a child's colouring book and it is not the role of a colourist.

3. One of the major criticisms levelled at Neo-Impressionists is that they are too scientific to be artists. The critics say that they are too involved in their research to be able to express their sensations freely. Our reply is that any Oriental weaver knows as much as they do. The theory they are reproached for studying is not at all complicated. The Neo-Impressionists are not excessively scientific. But, not to know the laws of contrast is to be too ignorant.

Why should the knowledge of these rules of beauty dead-  
en the artists' sensations ? A musician, knowing that the  
ratio  $3/2$  is a ratio of harmony, and a painter, knowing that  
orange with green and violet make a dark combination, are  
not less likely to become moved and move us. Théophile Syl-  
vestre said:

" This almost mathematical knowledge does not make his  
works lifeless but on the contrary enhances their pre-  
cision and stability."<sup>10</sup>

The Neo-Impressionists are not slaves to science. They  
use it the way they wish according to their inspiration,  
they put what they know to work in order to obtain what they  
want. How can we reproach young painters for studying such  
an essential part of their art when even a genius like Dela-  
croix forced himself to use these laws of colour and benefit  
from them ? This is how Charles Blanc acknowledged it in  
this note:

" It is because he first knew the laws of colour intuit-  
ively and then studied them in great depth, that Eugène  
Delacroix became one of the greatest colourist of modern  
times."<sup>11</sup>

4. The public cares more about the subject of a painting  
than its harmony. Ernest Chesneau comments on this in this  
note:

" The most gifted members of the public at exhibitions  
do not seem to realize that it is necessary to cultivate  
one's senses in order to fully enjoy the intellectual  
pleasures for which the senses are mere organs no doubt

but essential organs. What is not realized is that one must possess the correct way of looking at things in order to understand and judge--by that I mean appreciate--painting, sculpture, or architecture, just as one must have a good ear to appreciate music.

If we continue our analogy, which is not unfounded, we might add that the eye, along with the ear, even if naturally gifted, must be trained progressively in order to comprehend all the intricacies of the art of sounds and the art of colours."<sup>12</sup>

Even so, the majority of painters are insensitive to the charms of line and colour. Rare is the artist who believes, as Ruskin does, that, " Gradation is to colours as curvature is to lines."<sup>13</sup>, and as Delacroix; " There are some lines that are monsters, two parallels."<sup>14</sup> The painters of our time have other concerns than these principles of beauty. There is perhaps one painter out of a hundred who goes to the trouble of studying this fundamental aspect of his art. Gavarni says, in speaking of the master's painting :

" It is like the daubing found on folding screens .. It resembles an old paint rag and wall paper. And there are people who dare to tell the bourgeois about the supernaturalism of such works! We have truly sunk to the bottom of language and are witnessing the floundering of colour ; " <sup>15</sup>

The Goncourt brothers wrote:

" Delacroix was denied the supreme quality of colourists; harmony."<sup>16</sup>

Actually, most critics, because of their lack of technical knowledge, are incapable of discerning the agreement of two tints or the disagreement of two lines. They judge paintings mostly by subject, trend or genre without really paying attention to the actual "paint".

Critics write literature about paintings but not art criticism. We cite Delacroix's note; "Oculos habent e non vident [They have eyes but do not see] which signifies: Good judges of painting are rare".<sup>17</sup> He also said, "For over thirty years I have thrown to the lions."<sup>18</sup> He had suffered enough from the ignorance of the public and the critics to fully realize the difficulties encountered by a colourist. In his Journal he writes:

"I know very well that the quality of being a colourist is more troublesome than advisable.. One needs more active senses and a greater sensitivity in order to distinguish mistakes, discords or incorrect use of lines and colours."<sup>19</sup>

On the same subject, he wrote to Baudelaire, (October 8th, 1861):

" These mysterious effects of line and colour that, unfortunately!, only a few followers appreciate... That musical and arabesque aspect does not exist for many people. They look at a painting in the same way the English look at a land when they are travelling."<sup>20</sup>

Surely this dislike or indifference towards colour which Delacroix had to contend with during his lifetime is still Present. It seems as though not much attention is paid to his work. Let us compare the public's cold reaction to

Delacroix's exhibition at the Ecole des Beaux-arts to the enthusiasm for Bastien-Lepage whose exhibition opened at the same time nearby at the Hôtel de Chimay.<sup>21</sup> Never, while standing for a long time in front of the wall paintings in the Chapelle des Saints-Anges of Saint-Sulpice, have we ever been disturbed by a visitor.

Eugène Véron, Delacroix's biographer, noted this persistent neglect:

" Can we conclude that the crowds that rush to Delacroix's exhibitions have finally understood his genius ? We need only compare the visitors' reserve and uneasy silence in front of Delacroix's paintings with the women's bird-like cries of admiration in the Salon or exhibitions at the sight of a painting by one of the so-called masters of the current French school. There we find sincere and frank admiration. Have such reactions ever been witnessed at Delacroix's exhibitions ? It is not at all surprising. The opposite would be surprising."<sup>22</sup>

5. What so many people objected to in Delacroix's paintings was not so much the frenzy of his Romanticism but his hatching and intense colour. What was shocking about the Impressionists was the novelty of their comma-shaped strokes and their colour. With the Neo-Impressionists the startling aspect was not so much the division of the touch but the unusual brilliance of their paintings.

To give a better illustration of this, we will cite the following example. Henri Martin's<sup>23</sup> paintings, whose facture



is directly taken from Neo-Impressionism, appeal to the public, critics, municipal authorities and the State. In his paintings the point does not shock. What is more, it is useless --therefore an obstacle--because from dull, grey, low-key colours he does not receive the benefits of luminosity and colour which would outweigh the possible difficulties of the technique. His version of pointillism is accepted at the Luxembourg and the Hôtel de Ville, while Seurat, who founded the division and painted so many great and majestic works, is virtually unknown, ( At least in France, because the Germans, always better informed, have purchased his Models and other important paintings that will some day be exhibited in the Berlin museum).<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps with the help of time the public will complete its instruction. Let us hope that they will then be more sensitive to harmony and appreciate the strength of a colour. Perhaps then they will calmly appreciate beauty and will realize that the most vivid colours a painter possesses are weak compared to those of nature.

At least considerable progress has been made by the Impressionist masters. Those who were shocked or who objected to their paintings initially now realize that the Monets and Pissarros are in perfect harmony with the paintings of Delacroix, Corot, Rousseau and Jongkind from whom they have developed. Likewise, perhaps some day the public will realize that the Neo-Impressionists are the current representatives of the colourist movement, as Delacroix and the Impressionists were before them in their own time.

What other painters could more rightly claim to represent these two movements? Not the painters who paint in black, white or grey; not those whose colour looks like "a pile of rotting vegetables" described by Ruskin as the supreme degree of ugliness in colour<sup>25</sup>, and not those who paint in flat tints. This is because these techniques are not related to the principles advocated by the masters that the Neo-Impressionists follow.

Perhaps it is easy to paint more luminously than the Neo-Impressionists, but this leads to discoloration. And it may be easy to paint more colourfully but that leads to darkening. Their colour is located in the middle of the radius on a chromatic circle that goes from the centre, which is white, to the circumference which is black. This position guarantees the painter a maximum amount of saturation, of strength and of beauty of colour.<sup>26</sup>

The day will come when it will be discovered how to derive more benefits from the colours currently available to painters. Perhaps better materials or new techniques will be discovered, for example the direct fixation of light rays onto sensitive surfaces. But, it must be stated that it was the Neo-Impressionists who knew how to obtain the most luminous and colourful results from the resources currently available. Next to one of their paintings, despite any other criticisms, any painting however great its artistic qualities might be would appear dark or discoloured. Of course, we do not want to make the talent of a painter depend more or less on the luminosity and use of colour of his paintings. We know that

masterpieces can be created using only black and white and that one can paint colourfully and luminously in a mediocre way. But, if the pursuit of colour is not all that constitutes art, then is it not at least one of the most important aspects ? Is not an artist someone who strives to create unity in variety through rhythm of tints and tones, and who puts his knowledge at the service of his sensations ?

6. Recalling Delacroix's adage, "Cowardly painting is the painting of someone who lacks courage", the Neo-Impressionists can be proud of their austere and simple painting. And if, better than technique, it is passion that makes artists they can feel confident; they have the productive passion of light, of colour and of harmony.

At least they will not have redone what had already been done before them; they will have had the dubious honour of producing a new style, of expression a personal ideal.

They may evolve, but always keeping the basis of purity and of contrast the importance and charm of which they have understood too well to ever relinquish. Gradually rid of the obstacles of the beginning, the division, which has enabled them to express their dreams of colour, becomes more flexible and expands, promising even more fruitful resources.

And if, amongst them, the artist has not yet emerged who by his genius will know how to win acceptance of this technique, at least they will have simplified his task. This triumphant colourist has only now to appear; his palette has already been prepared for him.

1899. Paris, Saint-Tropez

FOOTNOTES TO TRANSLATION

FootnotesChapter 1

<sup>1</sup>This is clearly in reference to Charles Henry's theories see Introduction, pp.36-39.

<sup>2</sup>Eugène Delacroix, Journal:1822-1863. Signac used the first 1893-95 edition edited by Paul Flat and René Piot. I give references for the date of the entry and page references from the most recent French edition, Librairie Plon,1980. Collection Les Mémoires, ed. André Joubin. In this way the reader can confirm the entries in whichever edition he has available. In my English version, I have translated Signac's quotes as he has presented them. In the notes I reproduce the original French version as well as comments regarding the context of the quotes and/or any omissions made by Signac.

<sup>3</sup>"L'ennemi de toute peinture est le gris." Delacroix, Journal,op.cit.,p.611; Jan 15,1857, also found in Ibid,p.316; undated 1852.

<sup>4</sup>"Bannir toutes les couleurs terreuses." Loc.cit.

<sup>5</sup>This quotation was taken from the following passage:  
" Pour repeindre le bras de la Minerve: sur l'ancien fond couleur de chair, marqué les ombres avec laque et laque jaune très solidement empâtée : peut-être un peu de terre verte dedans.- Teintes de vert et de violet mises crûment ça et là dans la clair sans le mêler, mais suivant la place: ces teintes d'une valeur assez foncée, pour faire le bord de l'ombre." Ibid.,p.277-8; May 5,1851.

<sup>6</sup>This quotation comes from a long passage on how to produce various colour effects. The sentence comes from the following :

"... Pour ne pas le faire trop rouge, préparer avec terre d'ombre, vert emeraude, cobalt, et passer le vermillon par-dessus; et mieux que vermillon, brun rouge qui fait moins ardent; ce ton est le plus sanguine possible pour une ombre intense réunissant merveilleusement le vert et le violet ;

"mais il est indispensable de passer l'un après l'autre, et non pas de les mêler sur la palette." Ibid., p.320; Jan 15, 1853.

7 "... Il est bon que les touches ne soient pas matériellement fondues; elles se fondent naturellement à une distance voulue par la loi sympathique qui les a associées. La couleur obtient ainsi plus d'énergie et de fraîcheur." Charles Baudelaire, "Salon de 1859", article first published in a collection of art criticism entitled l'Art Romantique, Paris, 1885 which Signac used. Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Claude Fichois, Bruges, Gallimard, Editions de la Pléiade, 1961. In this instance, pp.1042-3.

8 "Constable dit que la supériorité du vert de ses prairies tient à ce qu'il est composé d'une multitude de verts différents. Ce qui donne le défaut d'intensité et de vie à la verdure du commun des paysagistes, c'est qu'ils font ordinairement d'une teinte uniforme. Ce qu'il dit ici du vert des prairies, peut s'appliquer à tous les autres tons." Delacroix, Journal, op. cit., p.881; Sept. 23, 1846 ( Supplement to Journal).

9 "Hier en travaillant l'enfant qui est près de la femme de gauche dans l'Orphée, je me souvins de ces petites touches multipliées faites avec le pinceau et comme dans une miniature, dans la Vierge de Raphaël, que j'ai vue rue Grange-Batelière..." Ibid., p.139; March 5, 1847.

10 "... tâcher de voir au Musée les grandes gouaches de Corrège: je crois qu'elles sont faites à très petites touches." Loc. cit.

11 "On voit dans les tableaux de Van Dyck ( je ne parle pas de ses portraits) qu'il n'avait pas toujours la hardiesse nécessaire pour revenir vivement et avec inspiration sur cette préparation où la demi-teinte domine un peu trop. Il faut à la fois concilier ce que Mme Cavé me disait de la couleur couleur et de la lumière lumière. Faire trop dominer la lumière et la largeur des plans conduit à l'absence des demi-teintes et par conséquent à la décoloration; l'abus contraire nuit surtout dans les grandes compositions destinées à être vues de loin, comme les plafonds, etc. Dans cette dernière peinture Paul Veronese emporte sur Rubens par la simplicité des localités et la largeur de la lumière. ( Se rappeler la Suzanne et les vieillards du Musée, qui est une leçon à méditer.) Pour ne point paraître décolorée avec une lumière aussi large, il faut que la teinte locale de Paul Veronese soit très montée de ton." Delacroix, Journal , op.cit., p.268; Sept. 29, 1850. I reproduce this passage in its entirety as Signac has borrowed from it for the next three quotations as well.

12 Loc.cit., Signac simply omitted Delacroix's reference to Mme Cavé who according to Joubin's notes was the widow of a painter named Clément Boulanger then married François Cavé, head of the Beaux-Arts division of the Ministry of the Interior. p.119, note 2.

13 loc.cit.

14 ibid.

15 " Ma palette fraîchement arrangée et brillante du contraste des couleurs suffit pour allumer mon enthousiasme." From this original sentence Signac has taken the tiny fragment, "Ma palette brillante du contraste des couleurs."

<sup>15</sup> cont. This comes from a passage in which Delacroix returns to the perpetual question of which medium suits him best: painting or writing. He concludes by saying that perhaps if he persisted at writing he would have the same sort of enthusiasm when he saw writing materials as when he saw his painting materials. Signac has taken a fragment that expresses the idea of observing contrasts, which changes the meaning somewhat. Ibid., p.253; July 21, 1850.

<sup>16</sup> "Loi générale: plus d'opposition, plus d'éclat." This sentence fragment comes from a passage on the effects on the sunset. Delacroix has noticed the contrast that is more marked between the dark, grey clouds and the bright yellow orange sky. Ibid., p.269; Nov.13, 1850

<sup>17</sup> Unidentified note.

<sup>18</sup> " Bien que ce soit contre la loi qui veut les luisants froids, en les mettant jaunes sur des tons de chair violets, le contraste fait que l'effet est produit." In this passage Delacroix is referring to an experiment he made while working on the figures in the Hôtel de Ville in which he put Naples yellow highlights on reddish and purplish flesh tones. He also refers to Rubens's Kermesse. Delacroix, Journal, op.cit. , p.796; Jan. 5, 1861.

<sup>19</sup> " Quand sur le bord d'un plan que vous avez bien établi vous avez un peu plus de clair qu'au centre, vous prononcez d'autant plus son méplat ou sa saillie. (C'est là surtout le secret de modelé. ( Il s'ensuit qu'avec très peu de choses on peut modeler)!" Ibid., p.867, Undated album ( Supplement to Journal). Signac's omissions within parentheses. This passage refers to how to produce a contour, not with black, but by using half-tints.



<sup>20</sup>"Des trois couleurs primitives, se forment les trois binaires. Si au ton binaire vous ajoutez le ton primitif qui lui est opposé, vous l'annihilez, c'est-à-dire vous en produisez la demi-teinte nécessaire. Ainsi, ajouter du noir n'est pas ajouter de la demi-teinte, c'est salir le ton dont la demi-teinte véritable se trouve dans le ton opposé que nous avons dit. De là, les ombres vertes dans le rouge. La tête des deux petits paysans. Celui qui était le plus sanguin et le plus rouge, des ombres vertes." Delacroix as quoted by Alfred Robaut and Ernest Chesneau, l'Oeuvre complet de Eugène Delacroix Paris, Charavary Frères Editeurs, 1885, p.387. This is in reference to the painting Muly-Abd-el Rahaman ( 1845 ). Robaut is citing Delacroix's notes from an album page from the painter's trip to Morocco. First there is a list of clothing with Arab names. Then on the same page a triangle of primary and secondary colours with the above notes. Françoise Cachin in her edition of D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, Paris, Hermann, 1978, maintains that Signac must have consulted this notebook at the Musée Condé at Chantilly since it was not published until 1913. This is certainly possible, but Signac might well have taken the quotation from Robaut since according to Cachin, it was one of his sources. The meaning of the passage is primarily that it is preferable to change colours with half-tints rather than by adding black.

<sup>21</sup>"Dans Véronèse, le linge, froid dans l'ombre, chaud dans le clair." These notes are taken from Delacroix's notes on his Salon du Roi mural. Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.837, undated notebook, (Supplement to Journal).

<sup>22</sup>Unidentified note.

<sup>23</sup>"C'était au soleil couchant: les tons de chrome, de laque les plus éclatants du côté du clair, et les ombres bleues et froides outre mesure." Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.269; Nov. 3, 1850. Signac somewhat modified this quote which comes from just before the passage cited in note 16. However Delacroix does mention the law of opposition as being responsible for the brilliance.

<sup>24</sup>Unidentified note.

<sup>25</sup>"J'ai observé la même chose avant-hier sur la place Saint-Sulpice, où un polisson était monté sur les statues de la fontaine au soleil: l'orangé mat dans les clairs les violets les plus vifs pour le passage de l'ombre qui s'opposaient au sol.." Journal, op.cit., p.591; Sept 7, 1856. Signac took a sentence fragment from the above passage in which Delacroix is referring to how flesh tones are varied in colour as compared to inert matter and how flesh only has its true colour in the outdoors as opposed to inside a studio. Signac appears to have taken the sentence fragment that appealed to him and consequently changed the meaning of the sentence. He probably would not have wanted to advocate working only outdoors.

<sup>26</sup>" Reflets: Tout reflet participe du vert; tout bord de l'ombre, du violet." Ibid., p.610; Jan. 13, 1857. This comes from Delacroix's notes for his prospective " Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts". Signac modified it somewhat.

<sup>27</sup>"Le terreux et l'olive ont tellement dominé leur couleur, que la nature est discordante à leurs yeux, avec ses tons vifs et hardis." Ibid., p.816; undated notes, according to Joubin, 1829 ( Supplement to Journal). This certainly would have appealed to Signac in the light of criticism of Neo-Impressionists.

<sup>28</sup>"... la peinture paraîtra presque toujours plus grise qu'elle n'est, par la position oblique sous le jour."

Ibid., p.316; undated 1852. This sentence comes immediately after the sentence already cited in note 3. Delacroix is referring to a painting hanging on a wall when the light in that position makes it appear greyer than it is, therefore the painter must compensate for it by using more brilliant colour.

<sup>29</sup>"Il paraîtra ce qu'il est effectivement: terreux, morne, et sans vie.-- Tu es terre et tu redeviens terre."

Ibid., p.691; Nov.13, 1857. This extract comes from a large entry concerning the brilliance of Rubens' and Titian's flesh tones which Delacroix felt must have been mixed from the most brilliant colours. He goes on to compare them with David. He implies that if you compare David to Rubens and Titian, the former will appear somber.

<sup>30</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>31</sup>The actual quote was: " Il faut de toute nécessité, que la demi-teinte, dans le tableau, c'est-à-dire tous les tons en général soient outrés." As seen in note 28, this is in reference to the problem of paintings losing colour when hung and receiving light; thus the tones should be exaggerated.

<sup>32</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.90-91; July 20, 1824. " La grande affaire, c'est d'éviter cette infernale commodité de la brosse. Rends plutôt la matière difficile à travailler comme du marbre: ce serait tout à fait neuf.- Rendre la matière rebelle pour la vaincre avec patience."

This is the young Delacroix writing to himself to be patient, persevere and be diligent.

34 "Les jeunes gens ne sont entichés que de l'adresse de la main. Il n'y a peut-être pas de plus grand empêchement à toute espèce de véritable progrès que cette manie universelle à laquelle nous avons tout sacrifié."

Delacroix-Baudelaire, Lettres de Eugène Delacroix, Paris, Burty, 1880, t.11, p.211.

35 ( Dans des objets où l'on sacrifie au style avant tout), le beau pinceau libre et fier de Vanloo ne mène qu'à des à peu près: le style ne peut résulter que d'une grande recherche." Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.139; March 5, 1847. According to Joubin in his notes to Delacroix's Journal, the painter groups all 18th century painters together under the word " les Vanloo" in reference to the large family of Flemish painters who worked in France, Jean Baptiste, Carle, Louis and Michel van Loo were the most famous.

36 Since the next eight quotations are from Delacroix's passage on the brushstroke or the " Touch", I will reproduce most of the original passage from which Signac has taken the quotations but changed the sequence.

" Touche. Beaucoup de maîtres ont évité de la faire sentir, pensant sans doute se rapprocher de la nature qui effectivement n'en présente pas. La touche est un moyen comme un autre de contribuer à rendre la pensée dans la peinture . Sans doute une peinture peut-être très belle sans montrer la touche, mais il est puéril de penser qu'on se rapproche de l'effet de la nature en ceci: autant vaudrait-il faire sur son tableau de véritables reliefs colorés, sous prétexte que les corps sont saillants!

Il'y a dans tous les arts des moyens d'exécution adoptés et convenus, et on n'est qu'un connaisseur imparfait quand on ne sait pas lire dans ses indications de la pensée, la preuve, c'est que le vulgaire préfère à tous les

36<sup>cont.</sup>

"autres les tableaux les plus lisses et les moins touchés et les préfère à cause de cela. Tout dépend au reste, dans l'ouvrage d'un véritable maître, de la distance commandée pour regarder son tableau. A une certaine distance la touche se fond dans l'ensemble, mais elle donne à la peinture un accent que le fondu des teintes ne peut produire...

...Que dira-t-on des maîtres qui prononcent sèchement les contours tout en s'abstenant de la touche? Il n'y a pas plus de contours qu'il n'y a de touches dans la nature. Il faut toujours en revenir à des moyens convenus dans chaque art, qui sont le langage de cet art...  
... Si l'on se prévaut de l'absence de touche de certains tableaux de grands maîtres, il ne faut pas oublier que le temps amortit la touche...

... Beaucoup de ces peintres qui évitent la touche avec le plus grand soin, sous prétexte qu'elle n'est pas dans la nature, exagèrent le contour qui ne s'y trouve pas d'avantage." Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., pp.611-

613; Jan 13, 1857 ( Essais d'un Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts).

<sup>37</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>38</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>39</sup> loc.cit. This note is probably in reference to Ingres.

<sup>40</sup> loc.cit.

<sup>41</sup> loc.cit..

<sup>42</sup> "Le temps redonne à l'ouvrage, en effaçant les touchés aussi bien les premières que les dernières, son ensemble définitif." Unidentified note, probably an altered citation from Delacroix.

<sup>43</sup> Journal, op.cit., p.612-13; Jan. 13, 1857. See note 35.

<sup>44</sup> "L'influence des lignes principales est immense dans une composition." Ibid., p.121; Jan. 25, 1847. This quotation begins a Journal entry in which Delacroix compares two hunting scenes by Rubens and how the one is made more effective by its composition and lines.

<sup>45</sup> "Lu, en déjeunant, l'article de Peisse qui examine en gros le Salon et qui recherche la tendance des arts à présent. Il la trouve très justement dans le pittorresque, qu'il croit une tendance inférieure. Oui, s'il n'est question que de faire de l'effet aux yeux par un arrangement de lignes et de couleurs, autant vaudrait dire: arabesque..." Ibid., p.348; May 20, 1853. Signac has only taken a segment of a sentence from this passage.

<sup>46</sup> "En tout objet la première chose à saisir pour le rendre avec le dessin, c'est le contraste des lignes principales". Ibid., p.866; undated notebook. (Supplement to Journal). Delacroix discusses the merits of "la justesse de l'oeil" in this passage. He cites Wilkie as having this quality. He writes that an artist needs to know the lines by heart, and not concentrate on details but on the ensemble. Signac simply uses this to support Neo-Impressionist line theory.

<sup>47</sup> "Admirable balancement des lignes dans Raphaël!" Ibid., p.136; Feb. 26, 1847. Delacroix attributes Raphael's success to this quality.

<sup>48</sup> "Une ligne seule n'a pas de signification; il en faut une seconde pour lui donner de l'expression. Grande loi. Exemple: Dans les accords de la musique une note n'a pas d'expression, deux ensemble font un tout, exprimant une

48 cont.

"idée." Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.866; undated. ( Supplement to Journal). Signac altered his version somewhat and by doing so obscured the meaning.

49 " La composition offre à peu près la disposition d'une croix de Saint-André..." Ibid., p.121; Jan. 25, 1847. The end of this sentence was: " with a hippopotamus in the middle". This comes from the same passage as note 44 in which Delacroix compares the two hunting scenes of Rubens. Signac probably chose this sentence because it deals with lines and composition.

50 "(mais) si, à une composition déjà intéressante par le choix du sujet, vous ajoutez une disposition de lignes qui augmente l'impression ..." Ibid., p.348; May 20, 1853. This sentence comes immediately after the quotation in note 45. The end was:

"... un clair-obscur saisissant pour l'imagination, une couleur adaptée aux caractères, vous avez résolu un problème plus difficile, et encore une fois vous êtes supérieur: c'est l'harmonie et ses combinaisons adaptées à un chant unique."

Here Signac has only chosen the segment of the passage that speaks of lines, further on he quotes the entire sentence.

51 " La ligne droite n'est nulle part dans la nature." Ibid., p.309; Sept. 20, 1852. In this Journal entry with the heading " sur l'architecture", Delacroix discusses how man as an architect does not directly imitate nature but modifies and beautifies his habitat whereas animals simply rely on their instinct.

52 "Jamais de parallèles dans la nature, soit droites, soit courbes." Ibid., p.867; undated. ( Supplement to Journal ).

53. " Il y a des lignes qui sont des monstres: la droite, la serpentine régulière, surtout deux parallèles."

loc. cit.

54. Once again, this is clearly in reference to Henry's theories, op.cit.

55. Unidentified note.

56. " La couleur n'est rien, si elle n'est pas convenable au sujet et si elle n'augmente pas l'effet du tableau par l'imagination." Journal, op. cit., p.318; Jan.2, 1853.

57. Ibid., pp.348-49; May 20, 1853. See note 50 for reproduction of original. In this instance Signac includes it in its entirety.

58. "... Une conception, devenue composition, a besoin de se mouvoir dans un milieu qui lui soit particulier. Il y a évidemment un ton particulier attribué à une partie quelconque qui devient clef et qui gouverne les autres. Tout le monde sait que le jaune, l'orange, le rouge, inspirent et représentent des idées de joie, de richesse, de gloire et d'amour." Baudelaire, " L'Oeuvre et la Vie d'Eugène Delacroix", first printed in L'Opinion Nationale in 1863, later appeared in Curiosités esthétiques, 1868, and Signac consulted it in l'Art Romantique, 1885, op. cit. It may be found in Oeuvres Complètes, op.cit., p.1120.

59. " Je vois dans les peintres des prosateurs et des poètes; la rime(,) les entrave(s), le tour indispensable aux vers et qui leur donnent tant de vigueur est l'analogie de la symmétrie cachée, du balancement ( savant) en même temps et inspiré qui règle les rencontres ou l'écartment des lignes, les taches, leur rappel de couleur ( ce thème est facile à démontrer,) seulement, il faut des organes



59 cont.

" plus actifs et une sensibilité plus grande pour distinguer la faute, la discordance, le faux rapport dans les lignes et des couleurs ( que pour s'apercevoir qu'une rime est inexacte et l'hémistiche gauchement ou mal suspendu)." Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.163, Sept.19th, 1847. The parentheses indicate Signac's omissions. In this passage Delacroix is comparing the two mediums of painting and writing and comes to the conclusion that it is more difficult to distinguish visual errors of line and colour in painting than it is to detect errors in the style of poetry. Signac, by omitting the last sentence and several punctuation marks, has changed the meaning from a comparison to a proclamation worthy of a Neo-Impressionist; that it is necessary to have greater sensitivity in general and that one needs a system of restraint. I have translated Signac's version in order to give the sense he gave. For example; Signac's version: rhyme restrains versus the original: rhyme, restraints.

60 Delacroix as quoted by Baudelaire in " L'Oeuvre et la vie d'Eugène Delacroix", op.cit., Baudelaire Oeuvres Complètes, op.cit., p.1119. The "nature is but a dictionary" quotation is famous. Once again, from a Neo-Impressionist standpoint nature is but a dictionary to be consulted, as opposed to the Impressionist who attempts to copy everything as he sees it.

61 "... d'ailleurs la Nature est loin d'être toujours intéressante au point de vue de l'effet de l'ensemble. Si chaque détail offre une perfection ( que j'appellerai inimitable, en revanche) la réunion de ces détails présente rarement un effet équivalent à celui qui reste dans l'ouvrage d'un grand artiste ( du sentiment de l'ensemble et de la composition." Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.366; Oct. 12, 1853. The parentheses indicate Signac's omissions. This complements the previous citation.

62 "L'art du coloriste tient évidemment par de certains

62<sup>cont.</sup>

"côtés aux mathématiques et à la musique." Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, op. cit., p.1120-21. This was a popular theory in Signac's time as well. Signac used frequent musical references in his writing and during a short period, in his paintings. Charles Henry wrote on the connections between music, colours, and mathematics.

63," Science: de la nécessité pour l'artiste d'être savant. Comment cette science peut s'acquérir indépendamment de la pratique ordinaire." Delacroix, Journal, op. cit., p.616, Jan. 13, 1857.

64," Ce qui donne tant de finesse et d'éclat à la peinture sur papier blanc, c'est sans doute cette transparence qui tient à la nature essentiellement blanche du papier... (l'éclat des Van Eyck et ensuite des Rubens tient beaucoup sans doute au blanc de leurs panneaux) Il est probable que les premiers Vénitiens peignèrent sur des fonds très blancs." Ibid., p.165; Oct. 5, 1847.

65,"Cadre, bordure:--- Il peuvent influencer en bien ou en mal sur l'effet du tableau. L'or prodigué de nos jours. Leur forme par rapport au caractère du tableau."

66 Unidentified note.

67," Faire à Saint-Sulpice des cadres de marbre blanc autour des tableaux (... ensuite cadres de marbre rouge ou vert, comme dans la chapelle de la Vierge, et le fond du tout en pierre avec ornements en pierre, et imitant l'or, comme les cuivres dorés de la même chapelle.) Si on pouvait faire des cadres en stuc blanc." Journal, op.cit., p.221; Feb. 4, 1857. Signac simply took the first and the last sentence of the paragraph. As Joubin's note points out, the existing

67cont.  
frames are an imitation gold trompe-l'oeil so the painter must have changed his mind. For Signac's purposes, this quotation supports the Neo-Impressionist practice of including a white or a complementary-coloured frame rather than gold. Seurat first used this device in 1885.

68 Baudelaire, L'Art Romantique, op.cit. , Oeuvres Complètes, op.cit., p.1119. The sentence immediately preceding the citation:

" Il n'avait pas besoin, certes, d'activer le feu de son imagination, toujours incandescente; mais il trouvait toujours la journée trop courte pour étudier les moyens d'expression." Then Baudelaire elaborates on the painter's colour research, his conversations with colour theorists, and compares him to Leonardo da Vinci as an experimenter.

69 " Pour le dire en passant, je n'ai jamais vu de palette aussi minutieusement et aussi délicatement préparée que celle de Delacroix: Cela ressemblait à un bouquet de fleurs savamment assorties." Ibid., p.1120.  
Signac merely took the last sentence. He must have appreciated the similarity of this description to the Neo-Impressionist palette.

70 " Cette couleur est d'un science incomparable, il n'y a pas une seule faute, (--et néanmoins, ce ne sont que tours de force--tours de force invisibles à l'oeil inattentif, car l'harmonie est sourde et profonde:) La couleur, loin de perdre son originalité cruelle dans cette science nouvelle et plus complète, est toujours sanguinaire et terrible. Cette prépondération du vert et du rouge plaît à notre âme." Baudelaire, " Salon de 1845" in Curiosités Esthétiques, op.cit., p.7; Oeuvres Complètes, op.cit., p.816.

<sup>71</sup>Idem., "Salon de 1846" in Curiosités Esthétiques, op.cit., p.7; Oeuvres Complètes, op.cit., p.881.

"On trouve dans la couleur l'harmonie, la mélodie et le contre-point."

<sup>72</sup>Charles Blanc, Grammaire des arts du dessin, 2<sup>e</sup> ed., Paris, 1870, p.602-7. Blanc, during his first term as director of the Beaux-Arts, ( see Introduction, pp.34-6.) was responsible for Delacroix being chosen to decorate the Saint-Sulpice.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p.607 and 613.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p.611.

<sup>75</sup>Ernest Chesneau, Introduction to l'Oeuvre complet d'Eugène Delacroix by Robaut, Paris, 1885, p.xx.

The exact quotation was as follows:

"(D'un seul coup d'oeil) il avait surpris un des plus grands secrets de la puissance de Constable, secret qui ne s'enseigne pas dans les écoles et que trop de professeurs ignorent eux-mêmes: c'est que, dans la nature, une teinte qui semble uniforme est formée de la réunion d'une foule de teintes diverses, perceptibles seulement pour l'oeil qui sait voir."

Signac's version was slightly modified in this instance.

"..Il avait surpris un des secrets que l'on n'enseigne pas dans les écoles.." Later he reproduced the entire passage. See Chapter 2, note 2.

<sup>72</sup>Théophile Silvestre, Les Artistes Français, Paris, 1878, p. 41. Silvestre made a copy of Delacroix's Journal in 1853, at the painter's request and after his death went to copy the master's other agendas, see Joubin, p.5, notes to Journal, op.cit.

77 Translator's note: the word in French is Chronomètre so I have translated it as "chronometer" rather than interpreting it to be chromomètre, an instrument for measuring degrees of colour.

78 Silvestre, Les Artistes Français, op.cit., p.42.

79 loc.cit.

80 loc.cit.

81 Eugène Véron, Eugène Delacroix, Paris, 1887, p.125. Véron (1796-1867) was a childhood friend of Delacroix's . He wrote Les Mémoires d'un Bourgeois de Paris ,1853-1855 for which Delacroix provided notes. See Joubin's notes to Delacroix's Journal, pp.359.

82 Ibid., pp.125-6.

83 Ibid., p.128.

84 "Ce tableau n'en est pas un, c'est une vraie tartouillade." Moniteur Universel, May 18, 1822. ( E. Delécluze) Etienne-Jean Delécluze ( 1781-1863) was originally a painter who studied with David, and received a medal at the Salon of 1808. Later he turned to art criticism and became the defender of the academic tradition. Thus his attack on Delacroix's Dante and Virgil of 1822, which was cited by Tourneux in Eugène Delacroix, Paris, Librairie Renourd, 1886, was in defense of the school of David. See Joubin's notes to Delacroix's Journal, op.cit., p.325.

85 Paul Landon ( C.P. ), Annales du Musée et de l'Ecole moderne des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1828, I, p.87. Landon (1760-1826) was a painter and author of numerous articles on museums and artists. Delacroix mentions him in his Journal, op.cit., p.446; Aug.1, 1854.

<sup>86</sup>"D" ( unidentified author)Observateur des Beaux-arts,  
May 8, 1828.

" C'est plutôt la bonne volonté que le talent qui manque à M. Delacroix; il ne compte comme progrès que ceux qu'il fait dans le mauvais goût et l'extravagance."

<sup>87</sup>loc.cit. Scheffer, Henri ( 1798-1862)was a student at Guérin's atelier along with Delacroix. He was known for his historical and genre paintings. Champmartin, Charles-Henri Callande de (1792-1883) was also at the atelier. He was particularly known for his portraits, he painted one of Delacroix in 1840.

<sup>88</sup>Journal des artistes et des amateurs ,1829.

<sup>89</sup>Anonymous commentator, Journal des artistes, Oct. 20, 1844. Also cited in Tourneux, Eugène Delacroix, op.cit.

<sup>90</sup>Le Constitutionnel , April 11, 1844. This anonymous article also concerned the Pièta.

<sup>91</sup>Anonymous, Journal des Artistes, Oct. 20, 1844. This reflected Signac's concern for Neo-Impressionists' receiving commissions to do murals.

<sup>92</sup>Alfred Nettement, Poètes et artistes contemporains, Paris, 1862. The comparison with Chapelain's Pucelle refers to an immense epic poem written over a period of thirty years in the 17th century which was a resounding failure and ridiculed by the critics of the day including Boileau.

Footnotes to Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>Guérin, Pierre Narcisse (1774-1833) was a follower of David. Delacroix's uncle Riesener introduced his nephew to Guérin who had a studio. Delacroix was to meet many of his life-long painter friends in this studio.

<sup>2</sup>This anecdote about the modification of the Massacre of Chios after seeing Constable's work was first related and published by Frederic Villot in the Revue Universelle des arts, t.IV, 1856, p.209-305. Delacroix does mention Constable in his Journal and on two occasions he mentions the Massacre of Chios as well. ( Nov.10, 1823 and June 20, 1824. These comments are quoted by Signac, see footnotes for this Chapter nos.4 and 6.

<sup>3</sup>Chesneau, introduction to L'Oeuvre complet d'Eugène Delacroix, op.cit., Signac has already quoted this in Chapter 1, note 75, however in this instance he has reproduced the entire quotation.

<sup>4</sup>" Vu les Constable. ( C'était trop de choses dans un jour). Ce Constable me fait grand bien." Delacroix, Journal, op. cit., p.88; June 19, 1824. The parenthese indicate Signac's omissions.

<sup>5</sup>"Ce jour, j'ai été voir Regnier chez qui j'ai revu une esquisse de Constable: admirable chose et incroyable!" Ibid., p.41; Nov. 9, 1823.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.881; Sept. 23, (1846). ( Supplement to Journal). Signac has quoted this in Chapter 1, footnote 8.

<sup>7</sup>Delacroix, letter published by Théophile Silvestre in Les Artistes Français, p.87. Gericault, Théodore ( 1791-1824) first studied with Vernet then with Guérin. He was a great influence on the younger painter as can be seen in his

<sup>7</sup> cont. Raft of the Medusa, 1819, Louvre, for which Delacroix posed. Delacroix regarded him very highly and was saddened at his death. See Delacroix, Journal, op. cit., p. 50; Jan. 27, 1824.

<sup>8</sup> Gérard, Baron François ( 1770-1837) was first a pupil of David and later a rival. He was famous for superficial portraits. Girodet, Anne-Louis ( 1767-1824) was also a pupil of David and he won the prix de Rome in 1789. Later David was to disapprove of him and Gérard because of their tendency towards Romanticism. Lethière, ( 1760-1832 ) was another minor student of David's.

<sup>9</sup> Prud'hon, Pierre Paul ( 1758-1823) first worked as an engraver in 1780. In 1784 he won the Prix de Rome. He later was the drawing master to both of Napoleon's empresses. Delacroix was to write an article on him that appeared in the Revue des deux mondes, Dec. 1st, 1846. See Joubin's notes to Delacroix's Journal, page 127, note 4. Gros, Baron Antoine Jean ( 1771-1835) was another pupil of David in 1785. His most famous work is the Pest House of Jaffa ( 1804, Louvre) in which Napoleon is depicted almost as a saint. This tendency away from Classicism made him a pre-Romantic painter, although he remained friends with David.

<sup>10</sup> Fielding, Thales and Newton were English painters who lived near Delacroix. Delacroix met them through his friend Soulier ( who had spent his childhood in England).

<sup>11</sup> Bonington, Richard Parkes ( 1801/2-28) was an English landscape painter who was trained in France. He was a student of Gros in 1818. He returned to England in 1825 and 1827. He also did genre paintings and occasionally portraits including one of his friend, Delacroix.



<sup>12</sup>Turner, Joseph (1775-1851), for information on Signac and Turner see Introduction, pp. 44-5. Delacroix recalled meeting Turner for the first time in his Journal, (op. cit., p. 504; March 24, 1855) when he had lived on Quai Voltaire (1829-1835) and that: " Il me fit une médiocre impression: il avait l'air d'un fermier anglais, habit noir, assez grossier, gros souliers et mine dure et froide."

On another occasion Delacroix wrote that all the great English artists, including Lawrence, Turner and Reynolds were: " entachés d'exagération, particulièrement dans l'effet, qui empêche de les classer parmi les grands maîtres." Journal, op. cit., p. 762; Feb. 8, 1860. Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) and David Wilkie (1785-1841) were primarily known for their portraiture and genre painting. Although it is undeniable that Delacroix was interested in English painting, Signac has perhaps over-emphasized their influence on Delacroix.

<sup>13</sup>Théophile Silvestre, Les Artistes Français, p. 41. Signac omitted Silvestre's reservations: " Il s'était mis en tête ( à tort ou à raison),...

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>15</sup>" Observez, (je vous prie) que la couleur générale des tableaux de Delacroix participe aussi de la couleur propre aux paysages et aux intérieurs orientaux." Baudelaire, L'Art Romantique, op. cit., p. 29; Oeuvres Complètes, op. cit., p. 1132. The remainder of the passage describes how Delacroix's colour gives the sensation of an " intertropical" country or a huge diffusion of light.

<sup>16</sup>Bourgeois,

<sup>17</sup>Cited by Blanc, Les Artistes de Mon Temps, Paris, 1876, p. 77.

<sup>18</sup> Adolphe Thiers, "Salon de 1822" in Collection des articles illustrés du Constitutionnel, Paris, 1822. Baudelaire quotes this article in his "Salon of 1846", Oeuvres Complètes, op.cit., p.885. The original sentence was:

"Le pinceau est large et ferme, la couleur simple et vigoureuse, quoique un peu crue."

The article was complementary and Baudelaire goes on to say that at the time Thiers' editor must have thought he was insane to defend Delacroix so early in his journalistic career. Signac has simply taken the "un peu crue" segment which makes the statement negative. Thiers (1797-1877) later became president of the republic in 1871.

<sup>19</sup> This quote attributed to Gérard may be found in Baudelaire's "Salon of 1846" (op.cit., p.887), in the following passage:

"Ce fut devant cette peinture, ou quelque temps après devant les Pestiférés de Scio (je mets pestiférés au lieu de massacre, pour expliquer aux critiques étourdis les tons des chairs si souvent reprochés) que Gérard lui-même, qui, à ce qu'il semble, était plus homme d'esprit que peintre s'écria: "un peintre vient de nous être révélé mais c'est un homme qui court sur les toits!"--Pour courir sur les toits, il faut avoir le pied solide et l'oeil illuminé par la lumière intérieure."

Nonetheless in E. Moreau-Nelaton's Delacroix raconté par lui-même, (Paris:1916)p.64 it appears that Gérard actually liked the painting in question. Delacroix himself in his Journal (Aug.19,1824, op.cit., p.91) writes that he was invited to dinner by Gérard and that he received "éloges les plus flatteurs" from him. Signac probably took the quote from Delacroix.

Also, in this instance "courir sur les toits" could very well mean take risks or attract attention which is the general impression Baudelaire has given it when he groups

19 cont.

Thiers and Gérard together as being correct about Delacroix. Signac has interpreted it in a derogatory way.

<sup>20</sup>Attributed to Gros by Charles Blanc, Les Artistes de Mon Temps, op.cit., p.35. Delacroix makes no mention of this in his Journal.

<sup>21</sup>As Cachin points out in her edition of D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, op.cit., p.78, note 17., this passage is closely inspired by Blanc's descriptive analysis of Delacroix's colour in this particular painting. However as she points out in her introduction, this analysis has been contested by Lee Johnson in Delacroix, London, 1963, who maintains that Delacroix's use of Chevreul's theories was exaggerated by Silvestre, Blanc and subsequently Signac.

"It is unfortunate that Blanc's and Signac's analysis of the Femmes d'Alger cannot be taken as reliable evidence that Delacroix was influenced by scientific theory, because both authors falsify the colours to create complementary contrasts where they do not exist." (p.69)

As far to my knowledge, Johnson has not changed his opinion. A careful analysis of the painting in question reveals many elaborate interplays of colour, but as to whether Delacroix was actually applying a system might be conjecture. In view of Signac's prior interpretations of Delacroix, it is altogether possible that he exaggerated the contrasts.

<sup>22</sup>Signac is probably referring to Delacroix's interest in the moral aspect of colour, voiced on several occasions, and in particular during his contact with Baudelaire. On one occasion, in speaking about some murals by Le Sueur (1616-55), painter who imitated Raphaël in later life,

".. Contre l'opinion vulgaire, je dirais que la couleur a une force beaucoup plus mystérieuse et peut-être plus puissante; elle agit pour ainsi dire à notre insu. Je suis convaincu même qu'une grande partie du charme de

22 cont.

"Lesieur est du à sa couleur..." Journal, op.cit., p.279;  
June 6, 1851.

<sup>23</sup>The Death of Pliny and Socrates and his familiar Demon were parts of the decorations of the Palais Bourbon , first commissioned in 1838 and finished in 1847.

Revolutionaries of Tangier, 1838. The reception of Abd-el Rahman, 1845, Toulouse.

<sup>24</sup>Signac knew these works well as can be seen in such sketches after Delacroix as Heliodorus chased from the temple (c.1900) therefore his account of the mural's condition is probably true.

<sup>25</sup>This is in reference to Signac's first visit to Chevreul, the scientist being 97 at the time. Several years later, Signac and Charles Angrand were to visit the elderly scientist again for advice only to discover Chevreul was senile when he told them to visit his pupil Ingres, who had died in 1857. Incident related in Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>26</sup>Attributed to Delacroix by Théophile Silvestre, Les Artistes Français ,op.cit., p.43. Delacroix expressed similar sentiments in his Journal entry for Jan. 13, 1857 ( op.cit, p. 616): ".... Il est peu d'artistes, et je parle de ceux qui méritent véritablement ce nom, qui ne s'aperçoivent, au milieu ou déclin de leur carrière, que le temps leur manque pour apprendre ce qu'ils ignorent.." Signac has already quoted from the beginning of this passage.

<sup>27</sup>" La lumière colorée, qu'il avait obtenue dans les chairs de ses peintures décoratives en les zébrant de vert et de rose décidés ..." was the original French.

27 cont.

Charles Blanc, Grammaire des arts du dessin, Paris, 1870, p. 614. Translator's note: I have translated this as pronounced, presuming this to mean a definite pink.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Blanc cites a similar anecdote in Idem, p. 610.

### Footnotes for Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> Thirty years later Signac was to write a biography of Jongkind, (Jongkind, Paris, Crès, 1927), a painter he held in great esteem. In Signac's own Journal, (op. cit., III, p. 56; May 16, 1899) he speaks about speaking a Jongkind exposition at Durand-Ruel's gallery, and calls him the "precurseur des Monet, Renoir, des Pissarro". Unfortunately this work was unavailable for consultation. See Introduction to this edition, page 51.

<sup>2</sup> Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) and Camille Corot (1796-1875) did indeed have an important role immediately preceding Impressionism primarily because of their portrayal of nature and also modern life. As to their direct influence, let us simply cite Monet painting by Courbet's side at Etretat in 1869. Courbet could be said to be more "Impressionist" when painting by the sea, his palette was lighter and he captured more atmosphere effects. Corot advised Pissarro, Monet and Berthe Morisot. Although Renoir's debt to Delacroix is obvious especially in his later career, the influence of Courbet during his early years cannot be negated as Signac does here.

<sup>3</sup> Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904) remained independent of any one movement although he had contact with many of them. He was mainly known for single and group portraits and

<sup>3</sup> cont.

flower paintings. His Hommage à Delacroix (1864, Paris) included all the artist's admirers grouped around a self-portrait of the master, it was exhibited at the 1864 Salon. His Atelier de Batignolles (1870, Paris, Jeu de Paume) grouped Manet's admirers around him in a similar fashion.

<sup>4</sup> Signac's source is presumably Pissarro. See Introduction p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Jules Laforgue, notebook written around 1881-1882 and first published by Fénéon under the title "Posthumes" in La Revue Blanche, April 15, 1896, p. 248 and later in Mélanges Posthumes, Paris, 1903.

<sup>7</sup> Signac has presumably given 1874 because of the 1st Impressionist exhibition in 1874, however this is not necessarily accurate. Some of all three artists' paintings before 1874 contain no earth colours, for example Monet's Régates à Argenteuil, c. 1872, Paris, Jeu de Paume.

<sup>8</sup> After Pissarro's "defection" from Neo-Impressionist ranks Signac never managed to comprehend or appreciate the older artist's work. Although he maintained contact, Signac especially disliked Pissarro's return to "mud" as he termed it, and considered that Pissarro had lost all the qualities of a colourist. Signac, Journal, op.cit., III, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Signac's note:

"A pigmentary mixture is a mixture of colours/matters, a mixture of coloured substances. An optical mixture is a mixture of colours/lights, for example: the mixture of differently coloured rays of light in the same place on

<sup>9</sup> cont.

a screen. A painter does not paint with light rays, but in much the same way a physicist is able to recreate the phenomenon of optical mixture with the aid of a disk with multi-coloured segments that revolves rapidly, a painter creates the same effect by the juxtaposition of small multi-coloured strokes. The eye will not isolate the coloured segments or strokes whether on a rotating disk or on a canvas seen from a distance. The eye will simply perceive the result of the colour's light-- or in other words, the optical mixture of the colours of the segments or the colours of the strokes."

Translator's note; I have translated the French couleurs-matières into colours: matters for lack of a closer word.

This passage is most probably from Chevreul.

<sup>10</sup> Attributed to Monet by Gustave Geffroy, La Vie Artistique, 3<sup>e</sup> series, Paris, 1894, p.9. The exact quotation was:

" J'aimerais peindre comme l'oiseau chante, aurait dit un jour Claude Monet."

<sup>11</sup> Signac does not identify the source of this quotation.

#### Footnotes for Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> Signac's note: The last Impressionist exhibition included Marie Bracquemond, Mary Cassatt, Degas, Forain, Gauguin, Guillaumin, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, Lucien Pissarro, Odilon Redon, Rouart, Rouart, Schuffenecker, Seurat, Signac, Tillot, Vignon, Zandomenghi. It was held from May 15-June 15 at 1, rue Lafitte.

Footnotes to Chapter Four continued

<sup>2</sup>In addition to La Grande Jatte, ( Chicago, Art Institute) Seurat exhibited five paintings including the Bec du Hoc (1885, London, Tate Gallery, Dorra and Rewald cat. no. 153) Fort Samson (1885, lost during WWII, RD cat. no. 157) , Rade de Grandcamp (1885, New York, Rockefeller Collection, RD cat. no. 154. Signac exhibited 15 works, including his Apprêteuses et Garnisseuses mentioned earlier, several seascapes of Brittany, Passage de Puits-Bertin (1886, New York, MOMA), Gazomètres de Clichy ( 1886, Melbourne, N.G. of Victoria) and others.

<sup>3</sup>Translator's note: I have translated the French " sinon bien acueillis" as " fairly well received", however Signac's version of this is questionable. It would be stretching the truth to say this unless he had specified Fénéon or the relative few who admired the technique from the beginning.

<sup>4</sup>The term chromo-luminarist was most probably found and used for the first time by Fénéon in his review entitled "L'Impressionnisme aux Tuileries" for L'Art Moderne, Sept. 19, 1886 and which appeared the next day in La Vogue. See also Fénéon, Au-delà de l'Impressionnisme, op.cit.

<sup>5</sup>Théodore Duret, Les Peintres Impressionnistes, Paris, 1878, reedited in Critique d'avant-garde, Paris, 1885, p. 68.

" L'impressionniste s'assied au bord d'une rivière.. campe son chevalet, peint ce qu'il a devant lui, sans souci d'arrangement ou de composition et voilà un chef-d'oeuvre."

Signac cites this passage in reference to Monet's Cathedrals and in his opinion , their lack of composition. He begins this quotation with the statement: " Nous ne pouvons plus nous contenter du tableau qui, il y a vingt ans, faisait écrire à Duret--" Journal, op.cit., I, p.122; May 21, 1894.



<sup>6</sup>This is yet another reference to Charles Henry's theories without mentioning Henry himself.

<sup>7</sup>Pissarro was to abandon the movement in 1890, feeling the method placed too many restraints on his spontaneity. Signac never overcame his bitterness over Pissarro's desertion and it is reflected in his own Journal entries in which it is nearly impossible to find a positive remark. On one occasion Signac is asked if he is Pissarro's student, and Signac replied that Pissarro was their student. see Journal , op.cit., III; Dec.25,1898. In this treatise however, Signac manages to be quite diplomatic about Pissarro's departure.

<sup>8</sup>Signac has certainly glossed over the facts here. The fact remains that neither Renoir nor Monet wanted to exhibit with the newcomers which was the cause of a dispute between the painters.

<sup>9</sup>See Introduction to this edition, pp.11-12.

<sup>10</sup>This is probably in reference to, among other things, a famous text on painting by Zambul Zade, a Turkish poet of the late 18th century. This text was passed around in Symbolist circles of the day. Seurat had made his own copy which Signac later kept. Fénéon sent a copy to l'Art Moderne in Brussels who published it under the title "Preceptes" July 10, 1887. Gauguin also had a copy and it was published in his posthumous writings: Avant et Après, Paris, 1923, p.35. Rewald mentions Seurat having Gauguin's copy of this manuscript. ( Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit., pp.98-99.)

<sup>11</sup>Chevreul, Op.cit.

<sup>12</sup>Daniel Humbert de Superville, Essai sur les signes

<sup>12</sup> cont.

inconditionnels de l'art, op.cit. See introduction to this edition, p.39.

<sup>13</sup> O.N. Rood, Modern Chromatics with Applications to Art and Industry, New York, D.Appleton and Co, 1879; 1st British ed; London, C. Kegan and Co, 1879. The French edition was entitled Theorie scientifique des couleurs et leurs applications à l'art et à l'industrie, Paris, German Baillièrè and Cie, 1881.

<sup>14</sup> H. Helmholtz, L'Optique et la peinture published in the same edition as E. Brücke Principes scientifiques des Beaux-arts, Paris, German Baillièrè et Cie, 1878, Bibliothèque scientifique internationale series.

<sup>15</sup> Seurat made an attentive study of Delacroix's work as his notes and sketch show:

" Vu des Convulsionnaires de Tanger. Le drapeau est vert avec une tache rouge au centre(...) Cette petite tête est une merveille. Les ombres et tout le reste, haché et vibrant. Les pommettes, les ombres du turban. C'est l'application la plus stricte des principes scientifiques vus à travers un personnalité."

Although these notes were unpublished when Signac was writing his treatise, he knew them well because Fénéon had them. Rewald, Seurat, op.cit., p.33.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Herbert, Seurat's Drawings, Phaidon Press, 1964.

<sup>17</sup> See introduction to this edition, for a discussion on Signac's version of this point.

<sup>18</sup> J.K. Huysmans, L'Art Moderne, Paris, 1883; reprint edition, L'Art Moderne/Certains, op.cit., p.236.

Signac is referring to Huysmans' review of the Independants'

<sup>18</sup> cont.

1881 exhibition in which he expressed his reservations about a certain pastel of Boulevard Rouchecouart by Pissarro in which:

"...L'oeil de l'artiste n'a plus saisi les dégradations et les nuances, et s'est borné à mettre brutalement en pratique la théorie que la lumière est jaune et l'ombre violette, ce qui fait que tout le boulevard est absolument noyé dans ces deux teintes."

Huysmans mentions Pissarro's new formula several times which might well have led young Signac to such a conclusion.

For example:

" C'est la nouvelle formule, cherchée depuis si longtemps et réalisée en plein..."

<sup>19</sup> See colour chart for reference.

<sup>20</sup> These were Du Soleil au Pont d'Austerlitz, Rue Caulaincourt and two others that were not included in the catalogue probably because they arrived too late. See Cachin's edition of D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme, op.cit., p.112. I have been unable to further identify these paintings.

<sup>21</sup> Hokusai (1760-1849) and Hiroshige (1797-1858) were two Japanese artists who were well known to connoisseurs of Japanese prints in 19th century France. Signac himself admired Japanese art as can be seen in some of his works, such as his portrait of Fénéon. They were particularly admired for their asymmetric compositions and flat bright colours.

<sup>22</sup> Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.163; Sept.19, 1847.  
Already cited above, see Chapter 1, note 58.

Footnotes for Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup>Perhaps Signac meant in an " expressive" way such as the way in which Vincent Van Gogh used the technique with "haloes" around the figures. See Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit., p.36.

<sup>2</sup>Whereas Jongkind's facture might be interpreted in this way, Fantin-Latour's is more doubtful.

<sup>3</sup>I am unable to identify the paintings to which Signac is referring.

<sup>4</sup>Perhaps such works as La Mer Vue des Falaises, Près de Falcamp, 1881, private collection.

<sup>5</sup>Perhaps the Fête Arabe à Alger, 1881, Paris, Jeu de Paume, for example.

<sup>6</sup>This is particularly observable in such works as Le Golfe de Marseille Vu de L'Estaque, 1883-1885, Paris, Jeu de Paume, in which the colour is fragmented and seems to vibrate. Here Cézanne models with colour.

<sup>7</sup>Signac's words here:

" La division, c'est un système complexe d'harmonie", une esthétique plutôt qu'une technique. Le point n'est qu'un moyen." Or as he wrote in his Journal, op.cit., p.267;

April 14, 1897:

"La division est plutôt une philosophie qu'un système."

<sup>8</sup>Jules Christophe, " Seurat", Les Hommes d'Aujourd'hui, no.368, March-April. 1890. Reproduced by Rewald in Seurat, op.cit., p.122.

<sup>9</sup>The critic in question here is probably Geffroy as seen in Signac's Journal, op.cit., pp.125-6; Aug. 6th, 1894.

" Lecomte me rapporte que Geffroy a dit de mon tableau: 'Ah non, on n'a pas des taches comme cela sur la figure !' C'est toujours la même chose; ces critiques ne veulent pas voir le bénéfice de la division et n'en remarquent que le mauvais côté. C'est aussi imbécile que s'ils se plaçaient entre la grosse caisse et le trombone pour entendre une symphonie."

<sup>10</sup>Théodule Ribot ( 1823-1901) may be considered a precursor of Manet because of his thick facture of a predominant black along with bright colours. He painted mainly genre paintings and portraits of common people.

<sup>11</sup>James Abbot Macneil Whistler ( 1834-1903) was born American and then went on to London and Paris. After being refused at the Salon of 1860 he moved to England. Whistler's grey that Signac is referring to, is his predominant off-white seen in many of his works.

<sup>12</sup>Eugène Carrière ( 1849 - 1906) was taken prisoner during the war in 1870 where he saw some of Rubens' work in Dresden which inspired him. His paintings are predominantly brownish mist. He did several famous portraits including Verlaine, 1891, Louvre.

<sup>13</sup>Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.253; July 18, 1850, also p.625; Jan. 25, 1857. This sentence may be found on two occasions in which Delacroix is reflecting on the following sentence from an article by his friend Mme Cavé.

" Dans la peinture et surtout dans le portrait, C'est l'esprit qui parle à l'esprit et non la science qui parle à la science."

Signac has taken an excerpt from Delacroix's observation on

<sup>15</sup> cont.

on the sentence.

" Je me suis dit cent fois que la peinture, matérielle-  
ment parlant, n'était qu'un pont jeté entre l'esprit du  
peintre et celui du spectateur. La froide exactitude  
n'est pas l'art: l'ingénieux artifice quand il plaît  
et qu'il exprime, est l'art tout entier."

<sup>16</sup> Album notes reproduced by E. Hiron, Eugène Delacroix  
sa vie, ses oeuvres, Paris, 1865, p.405.

<sup>17</sup> Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., P.624; Jan. 25, 1857. Acc-  
ording to Joubin's notes Delacroix is citing Byron but  
Signac modified it somewhat; the original French was:

" Il en est de même des poètes comme des tableaux. Ils  
ne doivent pas être trop finis: le grand art est l'effet,  
n'importe comment on le produit."

<sup>18</sup> Signac did not identify the source of this quotation.

<sup>19</sup> Same sentiment as expressed in Signac's Journal passage  
cited above in this chapter, note 49.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Puvis de Chavannes was mentioned on numerous  
occasions by Signac in his Journal. See note 27, Introduction.  
The problem of outside light overpowering a wall decoration  
if painted too low-key was taken up by Signac in his Journal,  
op.cit., pp.35-36; Dec. 16, 1898, with regard to some murals  
by Vuillard. In Signac's opinion they did not create enough  
light.

<sup>21</sup> Signac had to deal with this problem 2 years later when  
he was doing a mural for the City Hall of Asnières, in  
which he had to cut a landscape of the Seine around five  
windows and three vaults. Cachin, notes to D'E.D. au néo-Imp,  
P. 126.

<sup>22</sup>Fénéon, "Signac" in Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui, no.373, 1890, reprinted in Au-delà de l'impressionnisme, op.cit., p.117.

The entire passage is as follows:

" M. Paul Signac put créer les exemplaires spécimens d'un art à grand développement décoratif, qui sacrifie l'anecdote à l'arabesque, la nomenclature à la synthèse, le fugace au permanent, et ( dans les fêtes et prestiges) confère à la nature, que lassait à sa réalité précaire, une authentique réalité."

The parentheses indicate Signac's omission.

#### Footnotes for Chapter Seven

<sup>1</sup>Charles Blanc, Grammaire des arts du dessin, op.cit., p. 613.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Blanc is citing from an article from the Revue des Deux Mondes by Adalbert de Beaumont. I was unable to locate this article or identify its author.

<sup>3</sup>H.E. Cross died in 1910 before finishing this translation. Signac was to complete it during WWI but it remained unpublished. See preface to this translation for more information. Presumably, it was through his friend Cross that Signac came across Ruskin.

<sup>4</sup>John Ruskin, The Elements of Drawing, The Works of John Ruskin, edited by E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, London, Allen and Unwin, 1904. 4th ed., 1st ed.1857, Vol XV, "On Colour", p.147.

<sup>5</sup>Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., pp.91-92; July 20, 1824. Signac has already quoted this, see Chapter 1, note 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ruskin, op cit., p.149.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.147.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.147.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.148.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.152.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.151. ( Ruskin's footnote).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.151.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.152.

<sup>17</sup> Robert de la Sizeranne, " La Religion de la Beauté; une étude sur Ruskin," La Revue des Deux Mondes, March 1, 1897; pp. 169-190. Prior to this, Signac has quoted directly from a French translation of Ruskin, so I have simply gone to the original English version after verifying there were no changes. Now however, Signac's source is Sizeranne's article on Ruskin in which the author either quotes directly, paraphrases or comments on Ruskin. Signac attributes all three to Ruskin in his text. To clarify this Sizeranne's words have been underlined in the text.

<sup>18</sup> Signac attributes this to Ruskin, but this is Sizeranne, op.cit., p.190. Therefore this is my translation from the French.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.192. Same comment as note 18.



<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 279 -80.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 282. Signac has omitted the beginning of the passage: " In fresco-painting, and in scene painting for the theatre, most extensive use is made of this principle.

<sup>32</sup>loc.cit.

Footnotes for Chapter Eight  
The Education of the Eye

<sup>1</sup>Signac is referring to the Guide Joanne to London which was edited by Elisée Reclus in 1860. The commentary on Turner is a quotation from Louis Vardot: " S'il est puéril de lui refuser tout talent (...) il n'est pas moins puéril de porter l'admiration démesurée qu'ont excitée ses bons ouvrages jusqu'aux dernières oeuvres de sa vieillesse où le parti pris dégénère finalement en véritable folie." See Cachin's notes to D'E.D. au néo-impressionnisme, op.cit., p. 143, note 1.

<sup>2</sup>Unidentified quotation.

<sup>3</sup>Unidentified quotation but very similar to J.K. Huysmans remarks on the "indigomanie" that afflicted many of the Impressionists, according to him. L'Art Moderne, op.cit;  
L'Art Moderne/Certains , op.cit.

<sup>4</sup>Gustave Geffroy, La Vie Artistique, op.cit.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.192. Same comment as note 18.

<sup>21</sup>Sizeranne indicates this as being from Ruskin, see Ibid., p.190, but does not identify the quotation, therefore this is my translation from the French.

<sup>22</sup>Sizeranne, op.cit., p.190. Same comment as note 18.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p.193.

<sup>24</sup>Ruskin as cited by Sizeranne, op.cit., p193. It may be found in Ruskin's Elements of Drawing, op;cit., p.152-3.

<sup>25</sup>Sizeranne, op cit., p.194. He continues to say that the new schools of Paris and London may treat Ruskin as old-fashioned but that he had defended several eternal principles before anyone else had; 1. In 1854 Ruskin advocated painting directly from nature, before Realism. 2. Ruskin said that pure colours and extreme tints must be used in Points, and 3. He said that landscapes should be painted from nature, thus pre-dating the practice of Impressionism. However, Sizeranne does not specify where Ruskin has done this. The fact that no information on Sizeranne is available is perhaps indicative of the quality of his scholarship.

<sup>26</sup>O.N. Rood, Théorie Scientifique des couleurs et leurs applications à l'art et à l'industrie, op.cit. This was the French translation used by Signac. I give references for the recent facsimile English edition Modern Chromatics, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., n.d. I am reproducing the original English after verifying there were no major changes.

<sup>27</sup>Rood, Modern Chromatics, op.cit. p.v-vi.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p.276-7.

<sup>5</sup>The Rose-Croix group that Signac is referring to here was a mystical, idealistic, spiritual and religious association founded by one "Sar" Mérodack Josephin Péladin in 1891 and financially assisted by Count Antoine de la Rouchefoucauld, who also had dealings with the Neo-Impressionists. Signac considered this sort of painting unworthy of the name. See Rewald, Le Post-Impressionnisme, op.cit., pp.284,320-21.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Blanc, Les Artistes de Mon Temps: Eugène Delacroix, Paris, 1876, p.62. Almost identical to what is said in his Grammaire des arts du dessin, op.cit., p.602. Signac likes the comparison of colour to music as he writes in his Journal, op.cit., p.101; Aug.25, 1894.

"...Pour moi, un jaune et un bleu sont deux teintes; un bleu foncé et un bleu clair sont deux tons. Do, Ré.. sont des teintes, do dièse, ré bémol sont des tons de do et de ré."

On another occasion Signac compares piano finger exercises to Chevreul's colour wheels to exercise the eyes. (Dec.3, 1894, p.109.)

<sup>7</sup>Charles Blanc, Les Artistes de Mon Temps, p.64.

<sup>8</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>9</sup>O.N. Rood, Modern Chromatics, 1879, Preface, pp.v-vi.

<sup>10</sup>Théophile Silvestre, Les Artistes Français, op.cit., p.41.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Blanc, Grammaire des arts du dessin; op.cit. p.607.

<sup>12</sup> Ernest Chesneau, referring to Delacroix's painting of the chapel of the Saints-Anges at Saint Sulpice, in L'Art, 1882.

<sup>13</sup> J. Ruskin, The Elements of Drawing, " On Colour", p. 147.

<sup>14</sup> Delacroix, Journal , op.cit., p.867; ( Supplement)

<sup>15</sup> Gavarni as quoted by the Goncourt brothers in Gavarni, l'homme et l'oeuvre , (1873), p.362 and 363. In reference to the exhibition of 1855 in which Delacroix exhibited 35 paintings. The original French version uses slightly stronger words:  
 " C'est du barbouillage du paravent... ça tient du torchon -cul et du papier de tenture; puis là-dessus des gens qui viennent parler au bourgeois du supernaturalisme de ça... Nous sommes vraiment dans le Bas-Empire du verbe, dans le pataugement de la couleur."

<sup>16</sup> E. and J. Goncourt La peinture à l'exposition de 1855 ( Paris, 1855), p.38.

<sup>17</sup>Delacroix, Journal . Unidentified quote.

Signac also uses this phrase in his own Journal ( see op.cit. p.109; Dec. 3, 1894) in reference to the teaching of colour in the schools.

<sup>18</sup>This is cited by Tourneux, Eugène Delacroix , Paris: Librairie Renouard, undated p.69, as having been said by Delacroix to Théophile Silvestre at the 1855 exhibition in response to criticism.

<sup>19</sup>Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., pp.604-5; Jan. 15, 1857. This passage was in reference to Ingres and his followers:

" Je sais bien que cette qualité de coloriste est plus fâcheuse que recommandable ( auprès des écoles modernes qui prennent la recherche seule du dessin pour une qualité et qui lui sacrifient tout le reste.)"

Then Signac ends this passage with a quote already cited . ( Journal ,op.citp.163; Sept.19, 1847. Already cited above in Chapter 1, Note 57)

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Letter from Delacroix to Baudelaire, published by Burty, Lettres de Eugène Delacroix ( Paris, 1880), p.269. This letter was in response to a favourable article Baudelaire had written about the decoration at the Chapelle des Saints-Anges (Saint Sulpice). See Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, op. cit. , pp.1108-1109. "Peintures Murales d'Eugène Delacroix à Saint Sulpice." ( First appeared in Revue Fantaisiste in 1861, later reprinted in L'Art Moderne, op.cit. .)

<sup>21</sup>Jules Bastien-Lepage ( 1848-84) was known primarily for portraiture and genre paintings. His style was considered very modernistic by the general public in the 1880's. He was what might be termed a " faux-naturaliste", or a painter who imitated naturalism 20 years after its debuts. I have been unable to identify the exhibition in question.

<sup>22</sup>E. Véron, E. Delacroix, Paris, 1887, p.125.

<sup>23</sup>Henri Martin (1860-1943 ) was an artist who used pointillism without observing the contrast, as Signac stated in his Journal, op.cit., II, p.268; April 22, 1898:

" J'étais désolé des premières salles des Indépendants-- mais franchement celles du Salon sont encore plus navrantes. Henri Martin et Cladel nous ont pillé. Ils passent maintenant pour les inventeurs du 'pointillisme'. Est-ce bien la peine de diviser pour le faire inutilement, avec de la merde, sans bénéfices?"

Martin had received several large commissions for murals which further aggravated Signac.

<sup>24</sup> This is in reference to the Germans buying Seurat's paintings of which Signac notes in his Journal. First he mentions les Poseuses being offered for 880 Fr which he would like to purchase but does not have any place to put it. Then he mentions Meier-Graefe, a German art critic buying Le Chahut , and putting it in a specially designed room by Van de Velde. Dec 29th, 1897, a German collector bought some of Seurat's watercolours from Signac and mentioned an exhibition in Berlin. Signac is impressed by his knowledge of French art. Then on Jan. 2, 1898, op.cit., p.272, he wrote:

" M. Kessler vient de me revoir. Je lui lis une partie de mon manuscrit, et la logique de notre défense semble l'intéresser.--Il vient d'acheter, sur mes conseils, les Poseuses, qu'il a payées 1,200 francs. Voici donc que deux des principales oeuvres de Seurat sont possédées

<sup>24</sup>continued

"par des Allemands.--Ici on ricane; eux ils étudient sérieusement et comprennent.--Les Poseuses chez de Kessler, Le Chahut chez Meier-Graefe! De Kessler espère, d'ici quelques années, pouvoir faire entrer les Poseuses au musée de Berlin."

<sup>25</sup>Unidentified by Signac, but one of his favorite expressions on colour: "tas de légumes pourris".

<sup>26</sup>See Colour chart.

<sup>27</sup>Delacroix, Journal, op.cit., p.43; Dec. 23, 1823.

Signac has taken this sentence from one of Delacroix's early Journal entries in which the young artist is determined to continue painting regardless of his poverty, and painting the way he wants:

" .. Faisons tout avec tranquillité; n'éprouvons d'émotions que devant les beaux ouvrages ou les belles actions. Travaillons avec calme et sans presse. Sitôt que la sueur commence à me gagner et mon sang à s'impatienter, tiens-toi en garde. La peinture lâche est la peinture d'un lâche."

This passage, full of the young Delacroix's noble sentiments, is a very appropriate choice for Signac to close his treatise with. In true propaganda style, D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme ends on a triumphant note.

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(For complete listing see Rewald's Post-Impressionism, op.cit., or Cachin's Paul Signac, op.cit. Works marked with an § were unavailable for consultation.)



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