

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation

TITLE: *Summer Night*

MUSEUM No.: 2518.1967

ARTIST: Augusto Giacometti

DATE: 1917

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 26 ½ x 15 ¾ in

SIGNATURE: Lower, left recto: "Augusto Giacometti" in red paint (partially covered by black overpaint); upper, right verso: "Augusto Giocometti 1917" in orangish brown paint, and "Sommer nacht" below in dark brown paint.

EXAMINED BY: Laura Richter Le, Graduate Conservation Intern

DATE OF EXAMINATION: January 2, 2024

PURPOSE OF TREATMENT: This treatment was carried out in preparation for a loan to Switzerland. Treatment was limited to two days and prioritized stabilization.

PROVENANCE

Mrs. Bertram Smith fund. Acquired December 13, 1967.
Purchased from Galerie Beyeler, Basel.

DESCRIPTION

The painting is executed on a very fine and tightly woven, plain weave canvas. It is stretched on a four-member wooden stretcher with mortise and tenon joints and mitered corners. All four corners have two keys waxed in place.

There is an off-white ground that extends to the tacking margins, which possibly was commercially applied. The paint is estimated to be oil. It is applied in thin washes followed by thick impasto strokes that have been scraped with a palette knife. The red color is translucent and fluoresces a bright peach under UV light.

There is a thinly applied surface coating. This coating fluoresces with a slight green hue under UV light, indicating that it might be a natural resin.

TREATMENT HISTORY

In 1972, the painting was keyed out and the keys waxed. Unstable paint was consolidated with Jade 403 (PVAC), PVOH was fed into cracks, and losses were filled and inpainted with Magna colors. It was also noted that the painting was not dry enough to varnish. Later that year, several chips of impasto had been lost and were inpainted. In 1973, more interlayer cleavage appeared and these passages were consolidated with Jade 403.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation

There is a photograph dated 11/11/96 of a sheet of glassine stuck to the paint surface, and a note that it was returning from loan to Mexico City and was damaged. The details of its removal are unknown.

In 1998, Bonnie Rimer examined the work, noting the recurring problem with paint delamination and recommending it be treated overall with a consolidant. She also noted that the paint was very pliable and recommended against the use of heat. Solvent tests revealed that the surface coating swelled with many solvents and that some colors were sensitive to isopropanol, benzine, xylene and acetone. The coating swelled with water, but the paint did not appear to be water soluble.

Later that year, Anne Carter treated the painting. At the time, the orange and yellow areas contained the greatest instability, with the paint lifting from the ground. Warm 10% gelatin in DI water with a few drops of ethanol was applied across the surface, drying under pressure using the Mitka suction table. In some areas (notably the orange), the lifting paint needed additional pressure to lay flat and was treated locally with gelatin and a heat spatula. The surface was also cleaned with saliva at this time and losses inpainted with watercolor. It was also recommended that the work not travel in the future.

Finally, in 1998, three samples of the coating and one sample of the black paint were taken, found on slides stored in the conservation science records. No analysis from these samples has been found.

CONDITION

The canvas is slightly slack on the stretcher. There is adhesive residue on the canvas verso near the center from a past label. The canvas also has a quilted pattern visible on the verso that corresponds with areas of tenting cracks in the paint.

The stretcher has several splinters along the screw holes for the backing board. It is otherwise in good condition. The tape around the tacking margins is lifting at the corners. In these lifted areas, the tape has left behind a thick, sticky black residue, indicating that removing the tape would require solvents. Because of this and time constraints, it was decided to set the tape back in place rather than remove it from all four edges. On the top right tacking edge, there is a bump in the tape from a protruding nail below (see images).

The paint has an extensive craquelure pattern, portions of which are unstable. The dark teal/black paint most extensively contains points of interlayer cleavage between the paint and ground layers. Past condition reports have noted the greatest instability in the orange and yellow areas. However, these treatments appear to have effectively stabilized these passages, as little to no lifting of unstable cracks were observed.

There are matte spots and mismatched inpainting found across the painting. These correspond to areas that appear dark under UV examination (see image below). Some are past repairs that have become matte over time and/or poorly matched in color hue. Others (such as the large matte spots in the purple color) might have been applied by the artist on top of the surface coating.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation

Finally, there are three losses: the two largest of which are on the lower edge and extend to the ground, and one on the upper left edge where the raw canvas is exposed and has begun to fray (see condition map and detail images below).

TREATMENT PROPOSAL

- 1) Clean verso with a brush and sponges.
- 2) Consolidate unstable and lifting cracks.
- 3) Fill and inpaint losses.
- 4) Set down lifting tape with heat or an adhesive.

TREATMENT

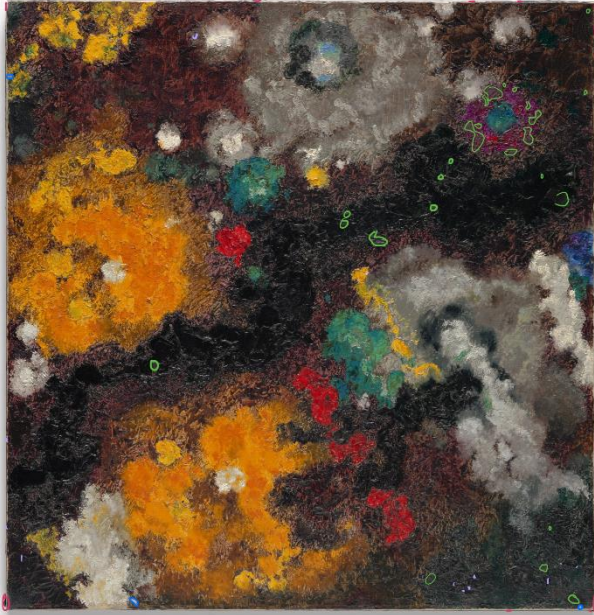
- 1) Fragile and lifting cracks were consolidated with Lascaux medium for consolidation.
- 2) The verso was cleaned with a nylon brush and cosmetic sponges.
- 3) The three losses (two on the lower edge and one on the upper left edge) were filled with modostuc and inpainted with Qor colors. Aquazol 200 15% in DI water was added to the Qor colors to increase the gloss and match the surrounding paint surface.
- 4) Lifting masking tape from the tacking margin was set down with Lascaux medium for consolidation and a heat spatula.
- 5) Splinters in the stretcher were set down with fish glue.
- 6) A polyester batting insert was adhered to the coroplast backing using Velcro. The backing was re-attached using previous screw holes, but replacing the screws with shorter ones (since the previous ones had caused splinters in the stretcher).

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation

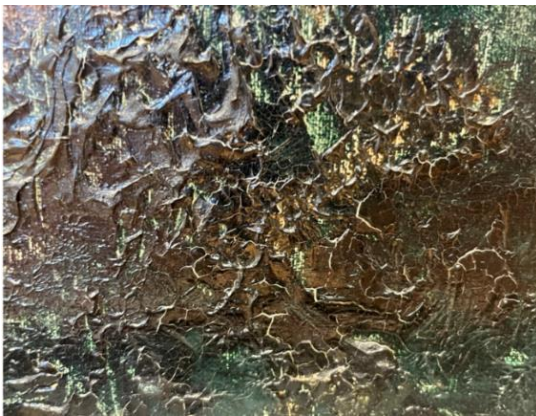
IMAGES

Condition:



■ LOSSES ■ LIFTING/FRAGILE CRACKS
■ MATTE SURFACE ■ LIFTING TAPE

Condition Map



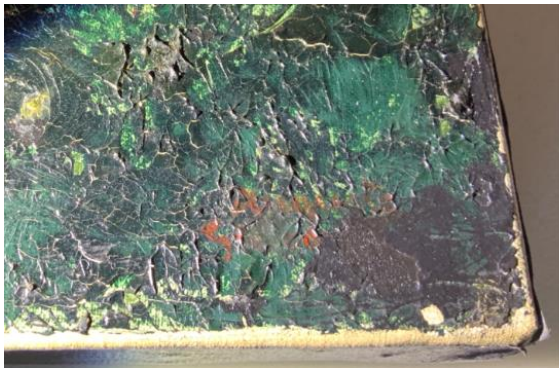
Areas of interlayer cleavage and unstable cracks.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation



Lifting tape on the tacking margin.



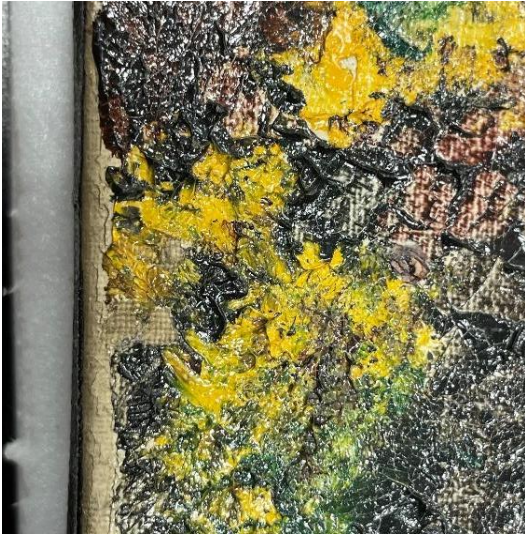
Artist's signature in the lower, right corner, partially covered by overpaint; loss on lower edge. Left: normal light, right: UV light.



Loss, left side of lower edge.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation



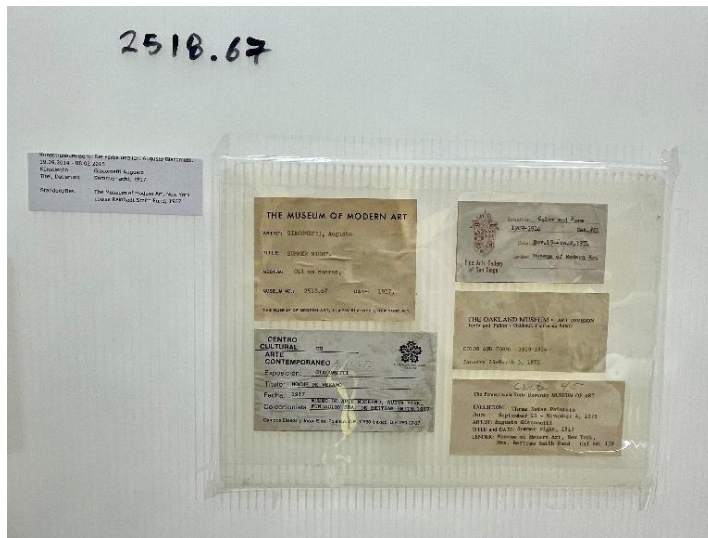
Loss on upper right edge.



Bump in tape on top right from nail below.

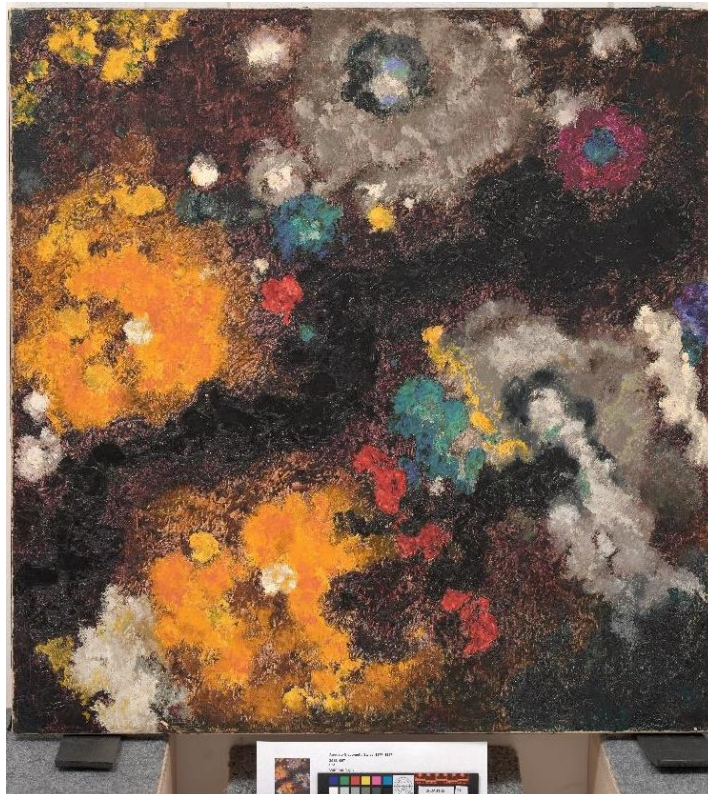
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation



Backing board labels

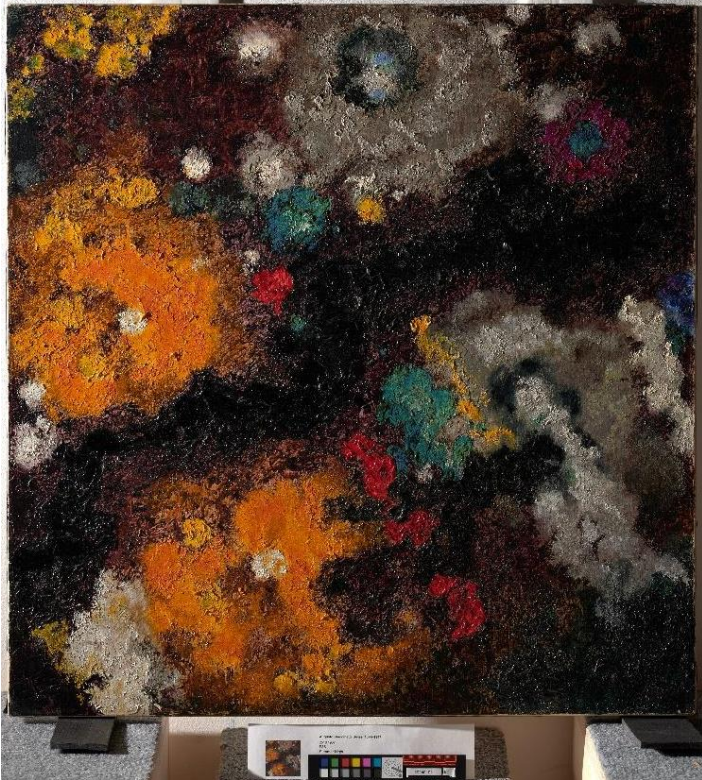
Before Treatment:



Normal Light

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation



Raking Light

During Treatment:



Filling and inpainting loss, lower right

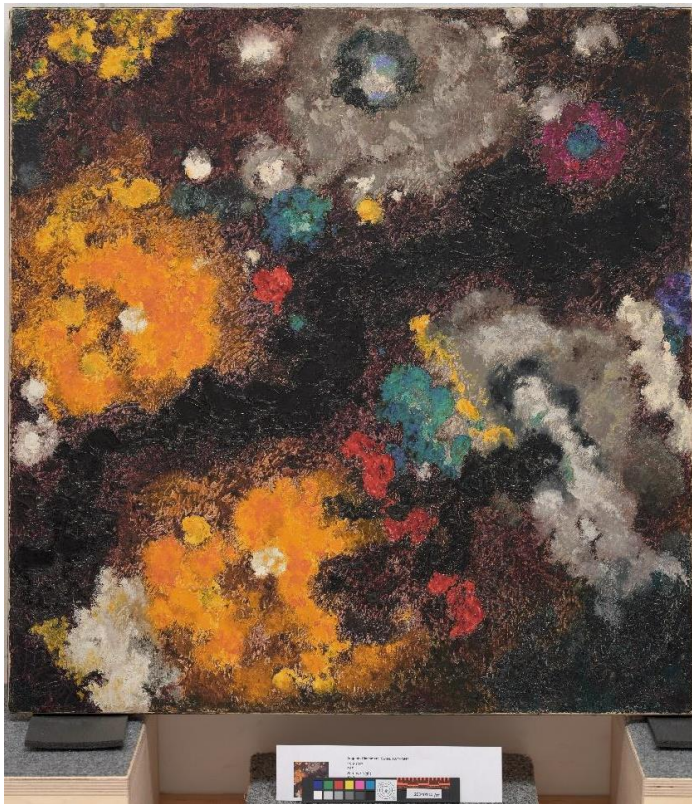
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation



Filling and inpainting loss, lower left

After Treatment:



Normal Light

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The David Booth Department of Conservation



Ultraviolet Light