

Compton Verney, Job No. 20180709

Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Hercules and Antaeus*, about 1530, oil on panel, 26.5 x 17.5 cm (CVCSC:0381.N)

The reflectogram did not reveal any distinct, carbon-based underdrawing. The black background and Cranach's linear, painted outlining of features could act to mask any fine drawing but the relative transparency of much of the wrestling figures suggests an infrared transparent medium, such as red paint or red chalk, may have been employed. The National Gallery, London, identified 'red outlines' on their Lucas Cranach the Elder's *Charity* (mid 1530s-1540s)¹, which may explain why little underdrawing is visible in infrared. And it is interesting to note that this composition shares the same featureless, dark background with pebbled floor. 'Red lines appearing to perform the role of underdrawing' were also identified on the National Gallery's *Primitive People* (1527-30)² and *Cupid Complaining to Venus* (1526-7)³. The red material was described as a liquid medium but it was not possible to identify it⁴. Similarly, Heydenreich mentions Cranach's use of 'finely pointed red chalk' as a medium for underdrawing identified through microscopic examination⁵.

The composition was clearly highly planned, with the background brought around careful reserves for the figures, which would suggest that it had been underdrawn. And no significant pentimenti are apparent confirming this certainty in the planning process. Notably, very little drawing was identified in infrared on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (ca. 1530), which Ainsworth describes as 'employing the typical systematic methods used by the artist, which were designed to facilitate rapid manufacture and ease of reproduction'⁶. Nor was any carbon-based underdrawing identified on the Met's *Venus and Cupid* (ca. 1525-27)⁷, another small panel with a plain, dark background and stony floor.

The reflectogram also gives some information about the condition of the picture with isolated losses registering as pale. The winged serpent signature, done in a yellow paint over the dark background, appears slightly reinforced in parts in the reflectogram but this should be checked against the painting. This panel does not seem to fit into the

¹ See Susan Foister, 'Lucas Cranach the Elder, Charity' published online 2015, from 'The German Paintings before 1800' www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/lucas-cranach-the-elder-charity p3.

² See Susan Foister, 'Lucas Cranach the Elder, Primitive People' published online 2015, from 'The German Paintings before 1800' London, forthcoming www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/lucas-cranach-the-elder-primitive-people p3.

³ See Susan Foister, 'Lucas Cranach the Elder, Cupid complaining to Venus' published online 2015, from 'The German Paintings before 1800', London: forthcoming www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/lucas-cranach-the-elder-cupid-complaining-to-venus p4.

⁴ See Susan Foister, 'Lucas Cranach the Elder, Cupid complaining to Venus' published online 2015, from 'The German Paintings before 1800', London: forthcoming www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/lucas-cranach-the-elder-cupid-complaining-to-venus p4.

⁵ Gunnar Heydenreich, *Lucas Cranach the Elder: Painting Materials, Techniques and Workshop Practice*, Chicago University Press (2014), p106.

⁶ Maryan Wynn Ainsworth & Joshua P. Waterman, *German Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1350-1600*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, New York, (2013), Catalogue entry no. 13, p63.

⁷ Maryan Wynn Ainsworth & Joshua P. Waterman, *German Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1350-1600*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, New York, (2013), Catalogue entry no. 10, p51.

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standard panel formats listed by Heydenreich for the period between 1520 and 1535⁸ but it may have been cut down a little since no *barb* edges are present. It would be interesting to compare the size with other works of mythological subjects to see it might have been part of a series.

Bibliography

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Gunnar Heydenreich, '... that you paint with wonderful speed: Virtuosity and Efficiency in the Artistic Practice of Lucas Cranach the Elder' in Bodo Brinkmann (Ed.), *Cranach*, Royal Academy of Arts, (2008).

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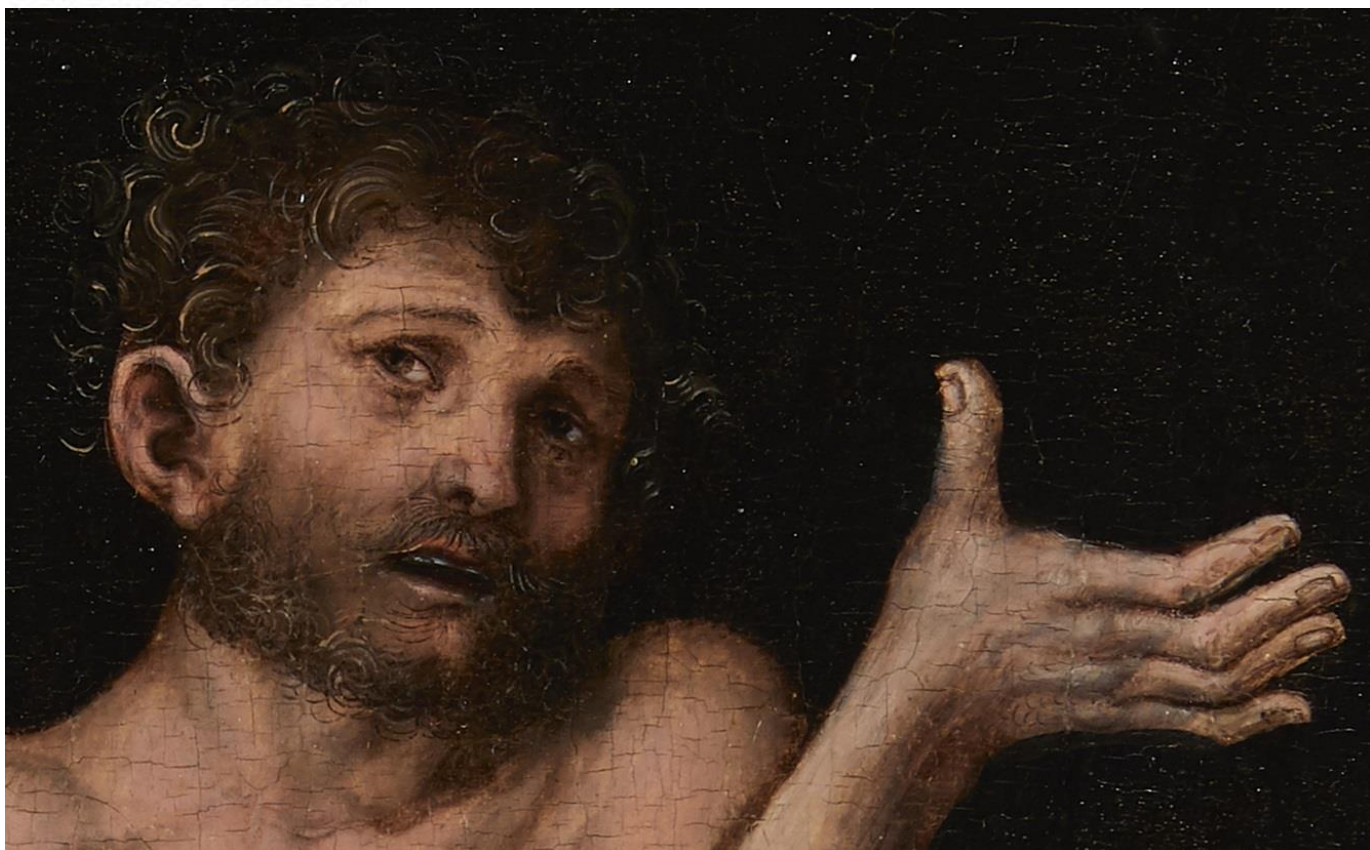
Gunnar Heydenreich, 'Artistic exchange and experimental variation: studies in the workshop practice of Lucas Cranach the Elder' in Volume 43, 1998 - Issue sup1: Contributions to the Dublin Congress, *Painting Techniques, History, Materials and Studio Practice*, 7-11 September 1998.

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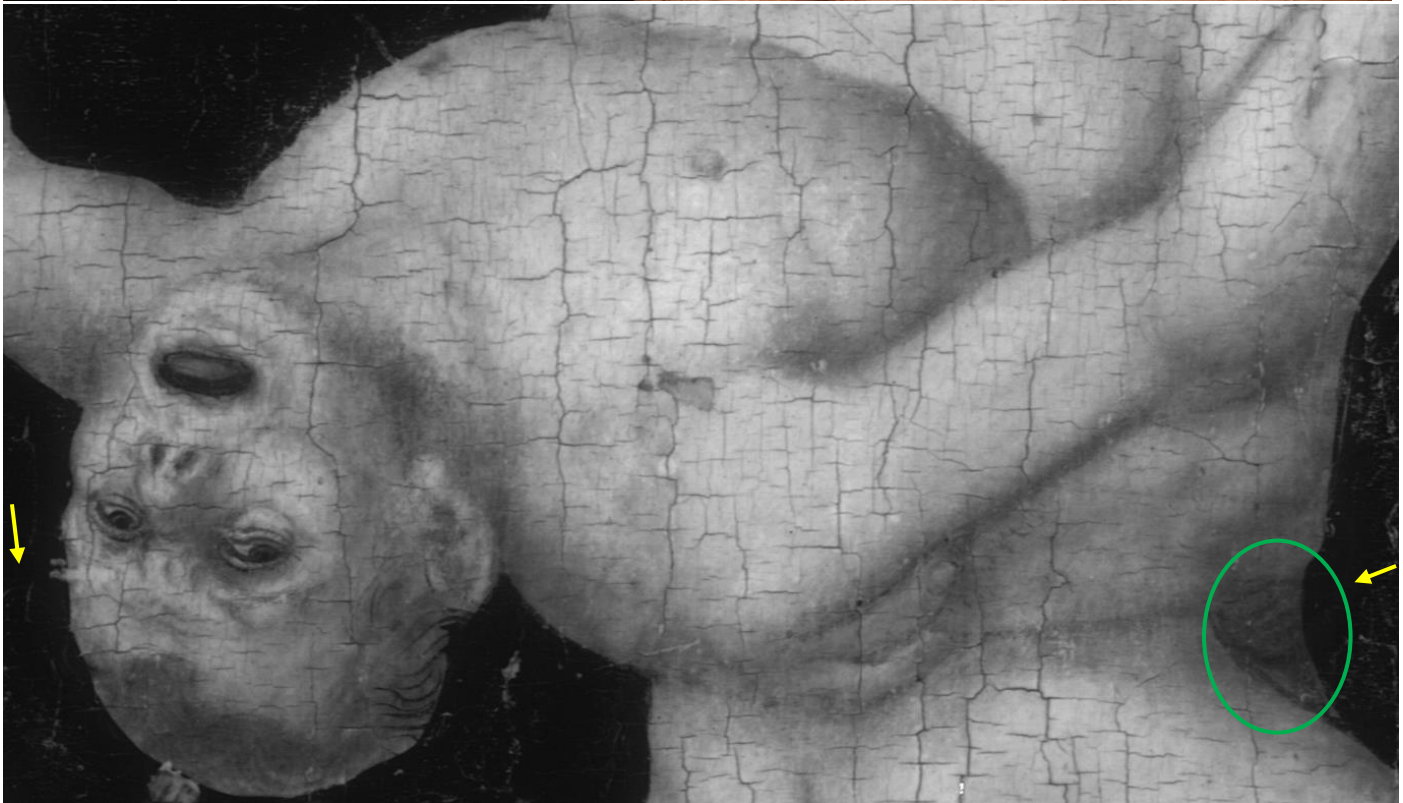
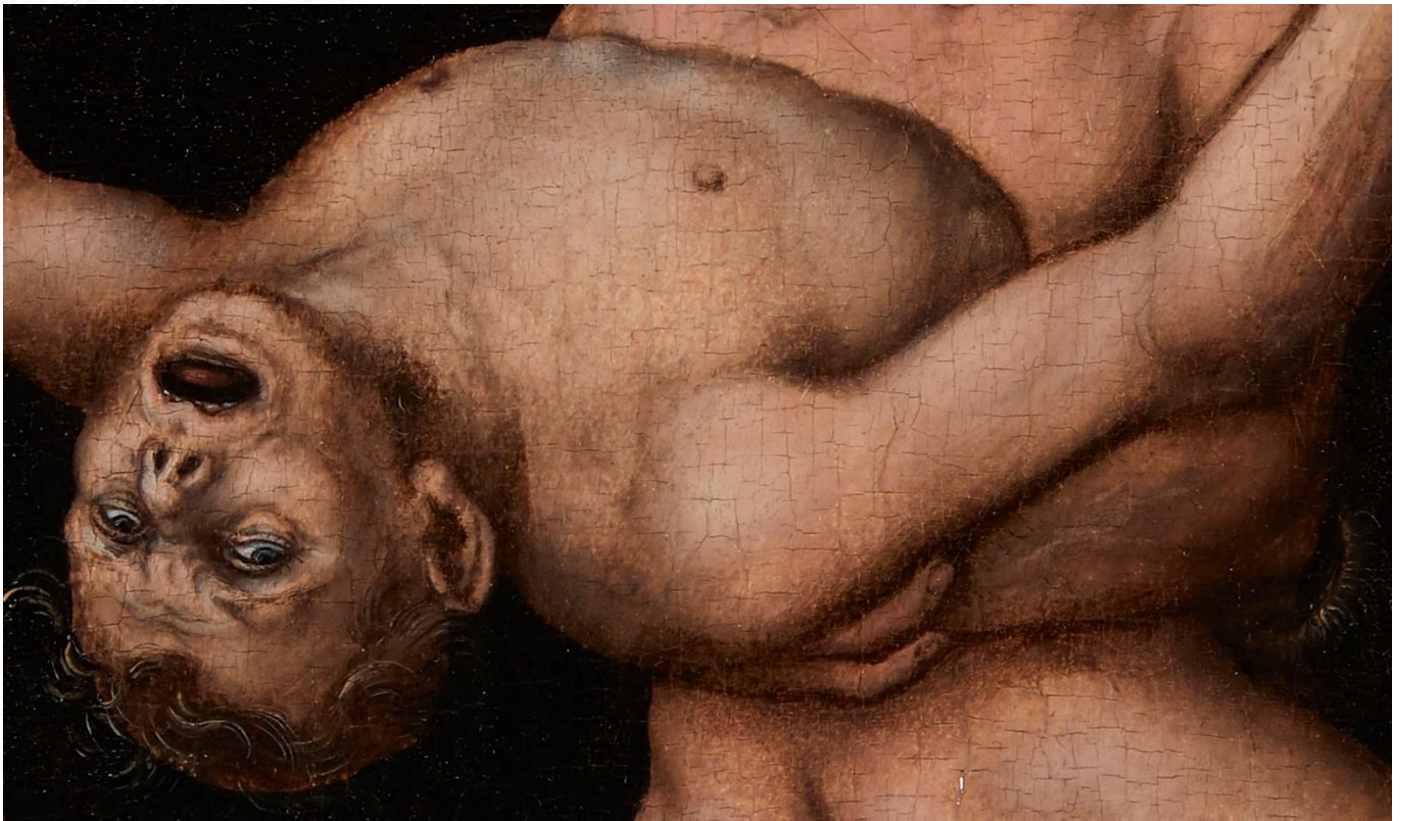
⁸ Gunnar Heydenreich, 'Artistic exchange and experimental variation: studies in the workshop practice of Lucas Cranach the Elder' in Volume 43, 1998 - Issue sup1: Contributions to the Dublin Congress, *Painting Techniques, History, Materials and Studio Practice*, 7-11 September 1998, p106.

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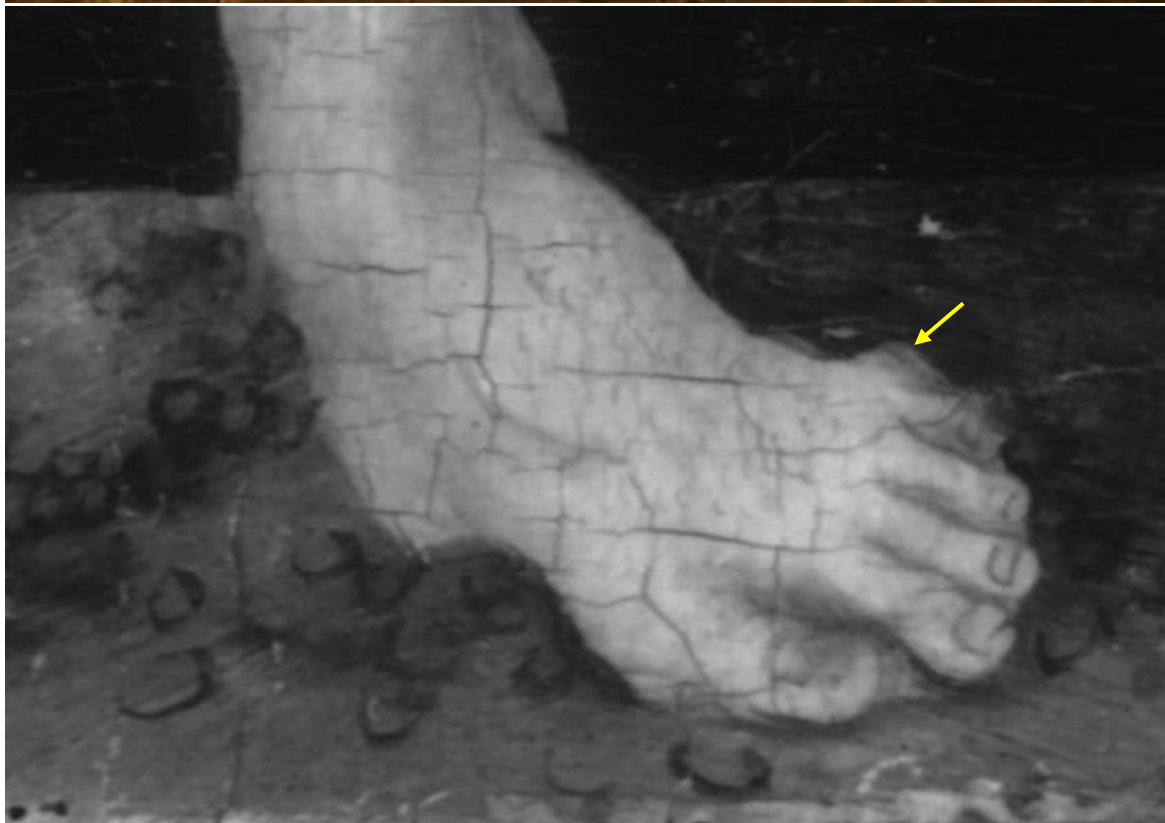
IRR detail of Hercules showing a possible drawing line in the hand (red) but no distinct carbon-based underdrawing that can be distinguished from the paint. The figure is carefully outlined by the dark, background paint with the hair painted out over the background at a later stage (yellow). Losses show as white.

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IRR detail of Antaeus showing an absence of carbon-based underdrawing along the contours of the overlapping figures. Some hatching type marks are, however, apparent beneath Hercules animal skin (green) – although this could be considered the underpaint. Again, the background is carefully brought around the figures and the hair and animal skin painted at a later stage (yellow).

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IRR detail of Hercules's left foot showing the careful reserve in the pebbled floor. The bold loops denoting the stones appear to be executed in paint and the fine lines of the toes appear to correspond to the painted outlines. A small pentimento is apparent in the contour of the little toe (yellow).

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IRR detail of Hercules's right foot, again, showing the careful reserve in the pebbled floor with the dark shadow painted around the foot (green). Once more, the bold loops denoting the stones appear to be executed in paint and the fine lines of the toes seem to correspond to the painted outlines. A small pentimento is apparent in the contour of the heel (yellow) and the brushy background encroaches on the reserve for the foreground (blue).