

LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER AND STUDIO
MARTIN LUTHER
310906

NONIE TASKER
PAINTINGS CONSERVATION
12 KINNERTON YARD
LONDON SW1X 8EB

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**PRE TREATMENT CONDITION REPORT AND
TREATMENT REPORT**

ARTIST	Cranach the Elder, Lucas and Studio
TITLE	<i>Portrait of Martin Luther.</i>
SIGNATURE	Signed and dated upper left with the artist's device of a winged serpent with upright wings and facing right below the date, "1526".
MEDIA	Oil and tempera on panel (untested)
DIMENSIONS	19.6 x 14.2 cm 7 ²³ / ₃₂ x 5 ⁹ / ₁₆ inches
COLLECTION	Grosvenor Collection, inv. no. 310906
PHOTOGRAPHY	Before, during and after treatment, digital, NT. After cleaning, before retouching, colour print, Todd White, 10.2.15. AC&R, colour print, Todd White, 8.9.15

**CONDITION REPORT
DECEMBER 2014**

SUPPORT

The original panel support has been thinned to about 1mm and has been adhered to an auxiliary support consisting of plywood. The structure is approximately 10 mm thick. It has a slight convex warp, diagonally, across the grain but appears stable. There are several cracks visible in the paint but it is not possible to ascertain whether they involve the support. However, the edges of the fractures in the paint pitch inwards suggesting that the paint has collapsed because of worm channels in the support.

LABELS AND INSCRIPTIONS

Verso:

- Small, circular, white label, upper left, hand written in ink, “HAB
E (?)
118^B“¹
- Small, circular, white, printed label, upper right, “MAGNIAC
COLLECTION” printed in the round and “37” hand written in the centre.
- Papier maché gilded plate, printed in black, “MARTIN LUTHER”

GROUND AND PAINT LAYERS

Both ground and paint layers appear to be in good condition. There are several fractures in the ground and paint layers involving losses:

- Three vertical, parallel cracks, ranging from 3 to 4cm long in the upper right hand corner
- A fourth crack, 1.3cm in from the right edge, runs for 11cm.
- One crack, 2.3cm in from the right edge, in the middle third, runs 2.5cm.
- Three cracks, in the lower third, right corner, running 2, 2.3 and 3.1cm.
- Three cracks, 6 to 7cm in from the left edge, in the lower eighth, 1, 3.5 and 1.3cm.

These cracks are mostly likely associated with woodworm channels, which have undermined the structure of the panel. There are a couple of small losses to paint and ground that appear to be worm exit holes. There is no evidence of live woodworm. Some abrasion is evident in the sitter’s robes.

There is discoloured retouching on the cracks, although the long crack on the right hand side is not retouched. There is much discoloured retouching scattered through out the background and in Luther’s robes. There is retouching around all four edges extending the image.

INSCRIPTIONS

- Top left hand corner, painted with a brush, the artist’s device of a winged serpent with upright wings, facing right, below the date, “1526”.

SURFACE LAYERS

There is a considerable amount of surface dirt with dark brown spots scattered over the surface of the varnish.

The varnish is thick, matt and very discoloured with thicker concentrations in the left and right bottom corners. There are remnants of older varnish in crusty patches in background and robes. The degraded varnish obscures the detail and definition particularly in the black robes.

¹ Horace Buttery label.

FRAME AND FRAMING

The painting is in an ebony frame with an outer ripple moulding and a water gilded inner slip.

There are some damages and restoration to the gilding but it is visually acceptable. The top two joints are open and are mobile. There are some areas of separation between the runs of the ripple moulding and the flat, visible on the verso, on the left and right members. The rebate on the right side has become detached. When viewed from the verso, there are two holes in the centre of the lower member and two in the top. Those in the top member have caused a fracture, which shows on the recto in the area of the printed script. The painting is held in the frame with 8 small brass clips. The screws holding them are no longer firmly in the timber.

LABELS AND INSCRIPTIONS

Verso:

- Small, rectangular, white label,² left member, upper, hand written in ink, “HAB
E
118^A”
- Rectangular, self adhesive, white label, top member, right, “52/67”

Recto:

- Top member, hand written in gold paint, “Martin Luther”.
- Bottom member, hand written in gold paint, “Cranach”.
- Bottom member of gilded slip, hand written in black paint, “64”.

The framed painting is displayed within a larger, glazed frame along with *Portrait of Caterina Luther*, 310907 and *Portrait of Philip Melanchthon*, 310908 both by Lucas Cranach the Elder and Studio. The painting is held in the larger frame with screws through a backboard in the large frame and into the back of the plywood secondary support.

TREATMENT REPORT APRIL 2015.

CLEANING

The painting was surface cleaned with deionised water containing a very small percentage of ammonia.

The thick top layers of varnish and much retouching were removed with Industrial Methylated Spirits (IMS). Older layers were more difficult to remove but were gradually reduced with IMS and ammonia, approximately one drop in 20 ml of IMS.

² Horace Buttery label.

With the removal of the layers of degraded varnish, clarity and subtle distinctions in the sitter's robes became apparent.

RESTORATION

To achieve adequate saturate two layers of dammar varnish³ were brushed onto the surface with a week between layers.

Losses to the paint and ground were filled with a mixture of calcium carbonate, gelatine and a little linseed stand oil and these fills sealed and toned with dry pigments ground in Paraloid B72⁴ in preparation for retouching. Retouching was carried out with dry pigments bound in egg tempera and dry pigments ground in MS2A varnish⁵. With the removal of the repaint around the edges, the original ground and the ends of brushstrokes were revealed. These areas were not retouched as they provide evidence of the artist's working method.

FINAL VARNISH

Final varnish layers were sprayed and consisted of MS2A in Stoddards Solvent with additions of Shellsol A100 and Shellsol D40, the final layer containing a little Cosmoloid H80 wax.

FRAME AND FRAMING

The label in the top left hand corner on the verso was removed to repair the corner joins. After restoration of the frame the label was mounted on acid free tissue and board with fish glue. It was then glued with fish glue to the lower member of the frame.

The frame was cleaned. The top two corner joins were cleaned and re joined and the losses in the gilding restored.

The frame was obviously made after the edges of the painting had been retouched in a previous restoration. With the re establishment of the original extent of the painting, areas of the ground showed when it was in the frame. The decision was made to add a 2.5mm, gilded slip to cover the unpainted areas. The frame was restored and adapted by Janusz Chyrowski⁶.

The rebate was lined with gummed paper tape. Balsa wood was shaped to position the painting in the frame. The holes in the frame for the screws had become enlarged. They were plugged and the 8 existing brass clips were re used to hold the painting in the frame.

The glass in the shadow box frame, which holds the three paintings, was replaced with Tru View Optium 3 mm low reflect acrylic. Together with the addition of the slip this necessitated an increase in the depth of the shadow box. Therefore, the sides

³ Natural dammar resin, 30g in 60g of white spirit and 5ml of xylene

⁴ Ethyl methacrylate methyl acrylate resin, approximately 15% in xylene.

⁵ Reduced cyclic ketone (methylcyclohexanone) in Stoddards Solvent.

⁶ Janusz Chyrowski. Tel: 0781 5465726. Email: janroski@yahoo.com. See separate report.

of the shadow box were replaced with new pieces of wood covered in new velvet. The velvet was also replaced on the backing board. This work was carried out by Simon Bobak⁷.

The painting was replaced in the larger frame with the other two paintings by the original method which consisted of screws through the back board of the shadow box and into the two outer members of the cradle.

⁷ Simon Bobak, 153a Ebury St, SW1. Tel: 0207 7307874.