

LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER AND STUDIO  
CATERINA LUTHER  
310907

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 Caterina Luther.</i>
SIGNATURE	Signed and dated upper right with the artist's device of a winged serpent with upright wings and facing right above the date, "1526".
MEDIA	Oil and tempera on panel (untested)
DIMENSIONS	19.5 x 14.2 cm 7 <sup>21</sup> / <sub>32</sub> x 5 <sup>9</sup> / <sub>16</sub> inches
COLLECTION	Grosvenor Collection, inv. no. 310907
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 panel has been thinned to approximately 1mm and adhered to a piece of hardboard with additional strips of hardboard around the edges. There is a fracture running the full length of the painting that most likely involves a split in the original support, however, there is no mobility and the support is stable. The shorter fractures appear to have been caused by past woodworm activity in the support. There is no evidence of active woodworm.

**LABELS AND INSCRIPTIONS**

- A gilded papier maché plaque, with black letters, "CATARINA LUTHER'S WIFE"

## GROUND AND PAINT LAYERS

Generally, the ground and paint layers are in very good condition with some abrasion in the sitter's black costume and a small loss in the first number of the date below the artist's monogram.

There is a series of vertical ruptures in the ground and paint layers.

- Vertical crack, 2.5cm in from the left, starting 1.6cm from top edge, 3.2 long with an horizontal crack extending 1.4 cm to the left
- Vertical crack, 5.5 cm in from the left edge, extending the full length of the panel.
- Vertical crack, 11.5 from the left edge, starting 6.3cm from the top, extending 5.7 with a 6mm crack parallel at the end.
- Vertical crack, 9.3 in from left edge, starting 2cm from top edge and extending 3.8cm and a further crack 1cm long below.
- 9.7 in from left edge, beginning 10.7cm from top edge, extending 3cm and a 1.5cm horizontal crack emanating from the top of the vertical crack.
- 11.6cm in from the left edge, starting 4cm down from top edge and extending 14.7cm.
- 1.4cm in from the left edge, beginning at the bottom edge and extending 2.2cm.
- 7.5cm in from the left edge, starting at the bottom edge and extending 4.7cm.
- 10cm in from the left edge, extending 2cm.
- 11cm in from the left edge, starting at the bottom edge and extending 4.8cm.

These fractures are most likely related to woodworm damage in the support. Retouching on the cracks and small losses is matt, discoloured and some areas are flaking. The painting is retouched around the edges, in areas, to extend the image.

## INSCRIPTIONS

### Recto

- Top left hand corner, painted with a brush, "Catharina à" with tiny remnants extending to the right and then below. It does not appear to be contemporary with the painting.
- Top right corner, painted with a brush, the artist's device of a winged serpent with upright wings and facing right above the date, "1526". The date is indistinct as there is a loss in the lower half of the first number.

## SURFACE LAYERS

There is a moderate amount of surface dirt with spots of a dark brown substance. There is much watercolour retouching, particularly on the sitter's bodice, which is on top of the varnish.

There is a thin, matt, poorly saturating, slightly discoloured top layer of varnish with residues of yellow, older varnish below.

## FRAME AND FRAMING

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

All four mitred joins at the corners have failed and are held together by pieces of L shaped canvas glued to the verso. There are losses in the gilding on the slip, mainly on the bottom and right member, which are visually disturbing. The joins at the corners have been retouched with gold paint. There are four holes in the centre of the bottom member and three in the top member on the verso.

The painting is held in the frame with 8 brass clips.

## LABELS AND INSCRIPTIONS

Recto:

- Top member, hand written in gold paint, "M. Luther Wife".
- Bottom member, hand written in gold paint, "Cranach".
- Bottom member of gilded slip, hand written in black paint, "65".

The framed painting is displayed within a larger, glazed frame along with *Portrait of Martin Luther*, 310906 and *Portrait of Philip Melancthon*, 310908 both by Lucas Cranach the Elder and Studio. The painting is attached to a backboard in the larger frame with screws through the backboard into the strips of hard board on the back of the secondary support.

## TREATMENT REPORT APRIL 2015.

## CLEANING

The painting was surface cleaned with deionised water containing a very small percentage of ammonia. This removed much watercolour retouching as well as surface dirt and accretions on top of the varnish.

The top varnish layer was removed with mixtures of Industrial Methylated Spirits (IMS) and White Spirit. Older layers were removed with IMS and IMS with small additions of ammonia, approximately one drop in 20 ml of IMS. With the varnish removed it could be seen that the paint layers are in very good condition and a clear differential gloss was visible with the grey sleeves more glossy than the black cuffs and bodice.

## RESTORATION

The blue background was quite difficult to saturate with the initial brush varnish. For this reason dammar varnish<sup>1</sup> was chosen for its ability to better saturate the paint. Two layers were brushed onto the painting with one week between each layer.

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 B72<sup>2</sup> in preparation for retouching. Retouching was carried out with dry pigments bound in egg tempera and dry pigments ground in MS2A varnish<sup>3</sup>. 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 frame was cleaned. The four corner joins were taken apart, cleaned and re glued 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 paint, 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 Chyrowski<sup>4</sup>.

The rebate was lined with 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, which holds the three paintings, was replaced with Tru View Optium 3 mm low reflect acrylic. Together with the slip this required an increase in the depth of the shadow box. Therefore, the sides 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 Bobak<sup>5</sup>.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> Natural dammar resin, 30g in 60g of white spirit and 5ml of xylene.

<sup>2</sup> Ethyl methacrylate methyl acrylate resin, approximately 15% in xylene.

<sup>3</sup> Reduced cyclic ketone (methylcyclohexanone) in Stoddards Solvent.

<sup>4</sup> Janusz Chyrowski. Tel: 0781 5465726. Email: [janroski@yahoo.com](mailto:janroski@yahoo.com). See separate report.

<sup>5</sup> Simon Bobak, 153a Ebury St, SW1. Tel: 0207 7307874.