

August 18, 1976

K1650; Fine Art; painting

Title: Portrait of Martin Luther

**Materials****Dimensions****Condition before treatment****SUPPORT**

The work is on an oak panel. Dimensions:

(h) 16.1/8"/40.9cm

(w) 10.11/16"/27.2cm

(t) 3/8"-1/4" (centre being thicker than edges)

The panel is plain-sawn with the grain running vertical to the composition. It is made up of a single piece and the edges have been cut in 1/4" along all edges, presumably to fit a frame rebate. The reverse of the panel is rough and crudely finished.

Because of the instability of a plain-sawn panel there is a tendency for it to warp convexly. There is also a slight butterfly warp from corner to opposite corner. This has caused a split to develop extending 7.1/4" up into the composition from the bottom edge and there is also a neighbouring crack c.2.3/4" long in the same location. These cracks are still superficial and are not visible from the reverse, although they have already caused cracking in both ground and paint film (see diagrams of cross-section of warp [attached to Multimedia module]).

Labels attached to reverse:

2 labels from Nottingham Castle Museum as lent by Duke of Newcastle 1897.

1 label identifying the work as by Cranach, of Luther.

Inventory number in red paint on reverse.

GROUND

Fairly thick white chalk ground (c.5mm) coming to within 1/4" of all edges. Slightly chipped especially along lower edge. Excellent adherence to panel support, but very cracked and crazed owing to the movement of the wood substrate.

PAINT FILM

Probably an oil/resin medium.

Smoothly painted throughout with plenty of medium. Green of background painted in by artist after completion of sitter's portrait. Signed with monogram and dated 1525 (centre right edge).

As for ground - much cracked owing to movement of wood. There is slight raised-edge crackle along lines of splits mentioned above (see photo) but as yet no paint losses associated with damage.

Under UV illumination many retouchings are visible in all areas, mostly along cracks.

SURFACE FILM

Several brushed layers of natural resin varnish, thickly applied, with very shiny surface.

Undamaged but extremely yellowed. Slight surface dirt.

FRAME

The work has an oak frame of simple moulding which has been enclosed in a shadow box with Perspex glazing. The panel is secured in its frame by means of pins and brown paper tape and the frame is held into the shadow box by means of a hardboard backboard screwed to the shadow box (see diagram) [diagram attached to Multimedia module].

The shadow box, constructed of 1/2" timber, is not strong enough to take the screws holding the backboard, and the board has a tendency to split and tear away from the screws. It is recommended that a new shadow box be constructed: internal dimensions 39cm x 52.7cm.

The work was examined on this occasion with a view to loan to National Portrait Gallery, London. It was considered suitable for loan provided a new shadow box was provided.

Treatment proposal

Proposal by:

Estimated hours:

Date of proposal:

