

Lucas Cranach

"Hunting near Hartenfels Castle"

CMA 1958.425

oil on panel (transferred from wood to wood-veneered honeycomb panel)

Dimensions: H. 116.3 W. 170.2

Distinguishing marks: signed in lower right on boat with a winged serpent and dated 1540; inventory number, lower right, 1577

Condition Summary:

The transferred painting is in secure condition, although there are some areas of tented texture in the paint. The varnish is significantly discolored yellow, distorting the overall tonality of the composition. Additionally, it is marred by drips and splatters and is coated with a matte surface accumulation.

SUPPORT

Construction: The paint and ground layers have been transferred to a new panel support consisting of a 1/2" thick honeycomb core veneered with a 1/8" thick layer of pressed wood toward the face and 1/8" thick layer of mahogany on the reverse. The ground has been adhered to the pressed wood veneer with rabbit skin glue. The reverse side was sealed with varnish and wax. A cradle consisting of nine horizontal glued members and twelve vertical sliding members is attached to the reverse. This transfer treatment was carried out in 1959 by William Suhr. A radiograph of the lower right corner of the painting reveals the honeycomb support structure.

A record photograph of a detail of the reverse of the original wood panel taken before the transfer confirms the insect damaged condition of the wood. It appears to have been either beech or linden or walnut. Several knots were present and the original chiselmarks were evident.

Condition: The support is in stable condition and completely planar.

PAINT/GROUND LAYERS

Construction: There is a white ground layer estimated to be chalk. Because of the transfer and the loss of the extreme margins, there are no details about its application to describe. The 1959 treatment notes also state that the ground layer was thinned during the transfer process.

Some fine black line preliminary drawing is detectable under the figures and architecture when viewed with infrared reflectography.

Glazes in oil paint were laid in to form the undertone for the landscape. A light yellowish brown toning is evident, followed by glazes of darker brown and green for the terrain and grey wash for the water. Locally-applied opaque touches of color define the details of foliage and other vegetation. The figures appear to have been painted over the completed landscape including the blades of grass. The weapons and the antlers of the stags, in particular, clearly overlap the grass blades.

Condition: The ground layer is in stable condition. The paint layers are also secure, although there are areas of horizontal tenting in the upper center and upper right regions. These deformities appear to be consolidated by the adhesive used in the transfer.

There is a network of crackle with related low cupping throughout the paint. The degree of cupping has been minimized by the transfer treatment, but is still prominent in the upper right corner. The paint is in generally very good condition, with some minor abrasion in some of the thinly-painted passages, such as the grey washes in the water. Losses are comparatively minimal for a panel painting of this size. Most of the paint loss is concentrated along the edges of the composition. A larger area of margin loss occurs along the middle right near the grouping of figures. These have been restored. Other significant restored paint losses are at H.49 W.19 cm from the lower right: H.75 W.53 cm from the lower right.

VARNISH

An older natural resin varnish was removed and replaced with dammar in 1998. Retouches were carried out using PVA medium.