

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
PAINTING CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

EXAMINATION SUMMARY

April 18, 1989

Lucas Cranach the Elder
Prince of Saxony
oil (est.) on panel
1947.6.1, Ralph and Mary Booth collection

DIMENSIONS: H.: 43.7 cm. (17 1/4")
W.: 34.4 cm. (13 1/2")

SUMMARY

The panel is made from a single piece of Linden; scientific analysis has confirmed the identity of this wood. Although dendrochronologic dating was attempted by Dr. Peter Klein, there is no master chronology for Linden wood.

The painting is executed on a thin, white ground. The shirt was built up first with an opaque layer of brown; the shadows were added with transparent dark brown shades and the decoration was placed on top with opaque dabs. The flesh tones were painted with transparent layers of color utilizing the brightness of the ground to provide depth. The red sleeves have a bright orange underlayer over which the shadows were added in dark, transparent colors. The decorations were added on top with salmon colored paint and the whole red area was glazed again to give a softer look to the decoration. The brown cape has the same brown underlayer as the shirt, but it is glazed over several times to add depth and modelling.

The condition of the paint is reasonably good. There is a good deal of thinness in the face and in the areas of shadow beneath the chin. The contour lines around the face have been strengthened. There is a tiny loss at the left top of the head. The shadows in the cape have been re-enforced.

CONSTRUCTION

The painting is executed on a single piece of Linden wood. Scientific analysis has confirmed the identity of this wood. Although dendrochronological dating was attempted by Dr. Peter Klein there is no master chronology for Linden wood. Besides the panel on which the original painting was applied, there are additional borders attached to the left and right edges which are approximately 1 cm. wide. These are retouched to match the surrounding paint. On the reverse of the painting a cradle has been applied; it consists of five fixed vertical members and four sliding horizontal members. The wood on the cradle and the reverse of the painting are painted over with a paint which is absolutely opaque to x-rays; it is possible that this is a lead paint. Because of the presence of this coating, the x-radiographs show no image.

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The varnish is a relatively thick layer of natural resin--its greenish fluorescence under ultraviolet light indicates this type of resin.

CONDITION

The support appears stable but the inability to see into the structure of the panel with x-rays makes it impossible to know if there is any obvious weakness in the panel.

The paint layer is in reasonably good condition. The majority of the retouching can be clearly seen by viewing the painting under U.V. light. There is a good deal of thinness in the face and in the areas of shadows beneath the chin. The contour lines around the face have been strengthened. There is a tiny loss at the left top of the head. The shadows in the cape have been re-inforced.

There is a very fine network of cracks running primarily in the vertical direction corresponding to the orientation of the wood grain.

The varnish is milky and has become somewhat opaque, particularly in the background. The effect is to make the background appear absolutely flat.

Submitted by:

April 18, 1989
Date

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21 April 1989
Date

David Bull
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Approved by:

May 5, 1989
Date

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