

**NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
PAINTING CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT**

EXAMINATION REPORT AND TREATMENT PROPOSAL 21 October 2005

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

This painting was examined in 1989 and the attached 1989 report should be read in conjunction with the information presented herein.

The painting was executed on a single piece of linden¹ with a vertical grain. It is in plane and cradled on the verso. The cradle has six fixed vertical members and four moveable horizontal bars. The horizontal bar at the bottom of the piece does not move, and is probably held in place with paint. The entire back surface of the painting and cradle is painted first with a metallic layer, possibly a moisture barrier, and then a black layer over top of that. The panel is approximately a quarter of an inch thick and has been visibly planed down. Woodworm channels are visible on the back of the panel.

The paint layer appears to be in decent condition regarding the figure. The background is visually obscured and it is difficult to tell what condition it may be in. There is a distinct ridge to the prince's left between his hair and the black background. The background appears a milkier, slightly lighter, more opaque black than the more greenish hue seen between the painted strands of hair. It is possible that the background is overpainted or covered by a pigmented varnish. The varnish is very thick in this area, and there are deep cracks throughout which do not follow the grain of the wood and look like traction cracks, but appear to only be in the varnish layer. The black background fluoresces darker in ultraviolet (UV)

¹ See conservation file: Report on the dendrochronological analysis of the panel "Prince of Saxonia" (L. Cranach the elder) 1947.6.1 by Dr. Peter Klein, Hamburg 80, 29.09.1987.

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light than the greenish tint of the sitter. The background fluorescence matches the retouching in a crack down the right side of the sitter's face. The strange background appearance may be an indication of problems regarding the paint film, such as abrasion.

The overall appearance of the varnish is a cloudy wiped surface with some glossy spots scattered throughout. It is also very thick and under microscopic examination appears to be slightly reticulated. It is possible that there are multiple varnish layers due to the difference in fluorescence between the portrait and the background.

TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Carry out sampling and analysis as necessary to aid in the treatment and to better understand the artist's materials and techniques. This should be done in the background black area in order to determine if there is a restoration layer or pigmented varnish obscuring an abraded surface.
2. Remove discolored and disfiguring varnish and inpainting.
3. Consolidate any loose paint using materials as stable and reversible as possible.
4. Check structural condition of panel. Make sure all horizontal members of cradle are mobile, if they are tight, they should be waxed so that they slide more easily.
5. Apply protective coating of stable, reversible varnish.
6. Inpaint losses as necessary using stable, reversible materials.
7. Apply final surface coating of stable reversible varnish.

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Submitted by:

03. Nov. 2005
Date

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Painting Conservation Intern

Approved by:

Nov. 3, '05
Date

Sarah L. Fisher
Sarah L. Fisher
Head of Painting Conservation

11/2/05
Date

Ross Merrill
Ross Merrill
Chief of Conservation

"I have carefully examined the painting with the conservator and agreed to the treatment described above"

14. XI. 05
Date

John Hand
John Hand
Curator of Early Netherlandish and German Painting

14 Nov 05
Date

Alan Shestack
Alan Shestack
Deputy Director and Chief Curator

11-14-05
Date

Earl A. Powell III
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Director

Approved by:
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