

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
PAINTING CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

EXAMINATION SUMMARY

January 6, 1989

Lucas Cranach the Elder
Princess of Saxony
oil (est.) on panel
1947.6.2, Ralph and Mary Booth Collection

DIMENSIONS: H.: 43.4. (17 1/8")
W.: 34.3 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 fleshtones have been built up thinly still taking advantage of the ground to provide depth, the garments and hair are much more thickly and opaquely painted. The red garment consists of an opaque orange underpainting which has the shadows built up over it in dark transparent colors. The decoration in the dress and highlights in the hair and necklace are the final touches of paint. These have been brushed on dryly and thickly.

The condition of the paint is reasonably good. There is a good deal of thin retouching in the face, which because it is among the most thinly applied passages, is also the most abraded. There are some retouched losses along the hairline as well as other scattered loss over the painting. U.V. shows the extent of the retouching adequately.

I.R. reflectography shows little evidence of underdrawing. The X-radiographs show no significant artists changes.

CONSTRUCTION

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. Besides the panel on which the original painting was applied, there are additional borders attached on the left and right edges which are approximately 3/8 inch wide. These are retouched over to match the surrounding paint. The wood in these additions appears to be oak. On the reverse of the panel a cradle has been applied; it consists of five fixed vertical members and four sliding horizontal members. The wood in the cradle also appears to be oak.

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The varnish is a relatively thick layer of Natural Resin. The greenish fluorescence under Ultraviolet light indicates this type of resin. There is an area in the lower right which fluoresces less than the rest of the painting, indicating that some of the varnish was removed in this area.

CONDITION

The support is in good condition in spite of extensive worm tunnelling on the reverse. It appears stable and adequately strong.

The paint layer is also in reasonably good condition. The majority of the retouches can be clearly seen by viewing the painting under U.V. light. The face is somewhat abraded with a good deal of thin retouching in the shadows, particularly along the neckline. There are a number of retouched losses found in the hair at the hairline as well. Scattered throughout the bodice are a number of thin retouchings covering tiny shallow losses and abrasions. The additions along the edge are retouched as well as a good deal of frame abrasion at the bottom edge.

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:

JAN 31, 1989
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March 27, 1989
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