

Sherman Art Conservation Studio

30 Jerome Drive

Glen Cove, New York 11542

Tel. (516) 671-9435

Painting Title: Self-Portrait
Artist: William Robertson (1857)
Type: Oil on canvas
Measurements: 30" x 25"
Inscriptions: None
Date of Examination: October 11, 1984

State of Conservation

Support: The linen canvas support was previously lined onto another piece of linen with an aqueous adhesive (probably glue). At the present, the lining is in good condition. The painting does sag a bit but this condition can be corrected by keying out the stretcher. The original tacking edges of the canvas were removed during the previous lining. The size of the original painted surface was slightly smaller than the present painted surface as all four sides are overpainted to cover this difference. However, this difference is slight as it amounts to less than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch on each side.

Ground: The ground appears to be a gesso ground which is white in color. There are a few areas of scattered flaking throughout the painting. These areas should be consolidated. There is evidence that the painting was previously damaged along the bottom edge. There are areas of re-done fills, especially in the lower right corner. These areas of damage are hidden by the darkened varnish. There is a slight age-crackle present in the ground. This crackle is not as pronounced as one would expect from a painting this age, but this may be attributed to the lining which has probably kept the painting in a somewhat stable condition,

Paint Film: The oil-based paint film is limited to the areas of the face, hand and background. The rest of the painting is unfinished as much of the pencil underdrawing is visible. Because of this, the painting provides an interesting insight into the working style of the artist. As previously mentioned, there was much damage to the bottom of the painting which has resulted in an almost entire re-painting of the bottom edge. In addition, there is much retouching, and even areas of complete overpainting in

the face, hand and background. From tests done, it appears that some zones under the repainting are in good condition whereas other zones are badly abraded. All of the past repainting was done in a resin-based paint which is now easily soluble in alcohol or acetone. Other than the age crackle, there is a wrinkling of the paint film, especially visible in the upper portion of the painting.

Varnish: The entire painting is covered by a very yellow natural resin which is rather thick and gives the painting an overall gloomy appearance. This varnish is readily soluble in alcohol or acetone and should be removed in order to improve the appearance of the painting. It should be noted that it is impossible to remove the varnish without removing the past repainting. This is because they are both soluble in the same solvents.

Recommended Treatment

note: The removal of the varnish and repainting would reveal a painting abraded in areas with some areas of complete losses. It would then be necessary to reintegrate the abraded areas and losses with selective retouching.

1. Consolidate flaking areas of paint.
2. Remove darkened varnish and past repainting.
3. Fill missing areas of paint.
4. Re-varnish painting.
5. Reintegration of abraded and missing areas.
6. Key-out stretcher to restore proper tension,
7. Apply final spray varnish.

Cost for treatment including all fees for labor, materials, reports, photographic documentation (slides), and taxes: \$600.00