

Report on a technical study of a painting: *Treaty of Cambrai? (Allegory on the Paix des Dames of 1529)*, 16<sup>th</sup> century



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**Methods of examination used in this study:** the owner requested an interpretation of an X-radiograph taken in the early 1980s. Photographic images of the positive inverted image of several X-ray plates were supplied by the owner. These images were scanned, digitised and inverted to convert them to resemble standard X ray images. A composite of the converted plates was made (see figures 1 and 2), that is not complete as areas of the images supplied were missing. This formed the basis for interpretation of the X radiograph discussed below. Note that the painting itself was not examined as part of this report, and that limits the inferences that can be made based on a photograph of the front of the painting.

## Results

The painting, whose dimensions are 99 cm in height and 46 in width, is on wooden panel painted with a vertical grain orientation.

A partial X-radiograph consisting of five plates was taken in the early 1980s (see figure 1). The plates are of low contrast and do not cover the whole surface of the painting, leaving several gaps (see figure 2). In addition, the top edges of the two upper plates were overexposed, thus making it impossible to interpret the X-radiograph of the uppermost area of the panel.

The converted X-radiograph shows losses to the paint and to the ground layers and a vertical damage running through the group of figures on the left, extending across the entire length of the panel. Some of these losses have been filled with an X-ray absorbent material and appear light, while others, such as those in the landscape visible through the right arch, or those in the lower portion of the painting, have been filled with an X-ray transparent material and appear dark in contrast with the original paint and the ground that contain a proportion of lead white pigment.

The X-radiograph shows pronounced vertical contrast that is probably due to the application of paint on the reverse of the panel, applied in broad vertical brushstrokes - however the panel itself was not examined as part of this study and this would need to be confirmed.

Faint horizontal brush marks are visible across the picture plane in the X-radiograph, especially on the left hand side, which are probably related to the application of the ground.

The X-radiograph showed that a reserve was left for the figures in the foreground and that the paint used for the tiled floor partially covers the reserve for the proper left foot of the figure wearing

orange stockings. A minor adjustment to the position of this figure's proper left hand fingers is also visible, as well as an adjustment to the design of the red cloak worn by the figure on the left, in the area of the shoulders.

The shape of the right side of the capital of the central column and the shape of its basement indicate that this was originally painted as two coupled columns, which were subsequently changed into a single wide column.

Infrared reflectography of the panel carried out by Tager Stonor Richardson in 2014 showed a shadow running vertically through the central area of the composition.<sup>1</sup> This was interpreted as a possible area of restoration, possibly related to the presence of a board join. The X-radiograph did not make it possible to establish whether the panel is composed of one or multiple boards. However, it did not show large areas of restoration in the central area of the panel.

The infrared image of the panel also showed a rectangular dark shape to the left of the basement, a retouched area that was interpreted as related to damage possibly due to the presence a dowel. However, the X-radiograph did not show the presence of any elements for connecting boards.

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<sup>1</sup> See report by Tager Stonor Richardson, pag. 11.

## X-radiography



Figure 1: digital composite of the X-ray plates.



Figure 2: digital overlay of the X-ray plates on the visible light image of the painting.

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