

## The Courtauld Institute of Art



### **Painting Pairs: Art History and Technical Study**

*Interior Scene*, by an unknown artist (after Harold Gilman)

Chloé D'Hondt, MA History of Art

Luz Vanasco, Postgraduate Diploma in the Conservation of Easel Paintings

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## Introduction to the project<sup>1</sup>

The following report presents the findings of the collaborative research project ‘Painting Pairs: Art History and Technical Study’, organised annually by The Courtauld Institute of Art’s Department of Conservation and Technology and the Courtauld Gallery. By pairing art history and easel painting conservation students, the project combines technical study with art historical research to provide a multifaceted approach to the study of easel paintings, using the knowledge and individual skill sets of each collaborator.

The object of study is an undated, anonymous, privately owned painting titled *Interior Scene* (fig. 1). This painting on canvas shows similarities with two paintings by English post-Impressionist painter Harold Gilman (d. 1919): *In the Nursery*, dating from around 1908, and *Grace Canedy*, painted circa 1904 (figs. 13, 18). The aim of our research was to understand the relationship between the three paintings and shed light on the attribution and dating of *Interior Scene*.

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Dr Karen Serres, Prof Aviva Burnstock, and Dr Pia Gottschaller for giving us the opportunity to investigate *Interior Scene* in depth. We would also like to acknowledge the owner of the painting, Silvia Amato, and Pippa Balch for their gracious support, and extend our gratitude to Tate scientists Dr Bronwyn Ormsby and Dr Judith Lee, whose help has been crucial to the completion of our research.

## ***Interior Scene*: introductory remarks**

At 45.5cm by 35.5cm, *Interior Scene* is, like Harold Gilman's *In the Nursery*, a small-scale composition organised around a fireplace mounted by a golden-framed mirror. *In the Nursery* depicts Grace, Gilman's first wife, tending to the fire, and their daughter and maid at a table in the Edwardian drawing room of Snargate Rectory, Gilman's parents' home in Kent.<sup>2</sup>

*Interior Scene* is seemingly set in the same room, though the room is less ornately decorated, and the palette used by the painter is different. For example, there are no wallpaper motifs, fewer paintings hang on the walls, and the furniture and mirror's frame have been simplified.

However, the biggest difference between the two pictures lies in the representation of the figures. In *Interior Scene*, two female figures are depicted, instead of three. The first sits pensively in profile at a table which extends out of the composition, thus placing the painter and viewer at the other end, in an effect which can also be found in *In the Nursery*. The other figure tends to the fire with her back turned to the painter like Grace in *In the Nursery*.

Neither figure engages with the painter or with each other, and the composition appears closed. Indeed, the mirror shows that the door of the room is shut, creating a sense of isolation between the figures and the viewer, who is thus relegated to a voyeuristic position.

Moreover, the pose of the sitter of *Interior Scene* is reminiscent of a portrait of Grace Canedy, Gilman's first wife, and the two figures show similar proportions. The palette employed to depict the two sitters is almost identical and they wear similar garments. Therefore, due to the similarities in composition between *Interior Scene* and several early paintings by Harold

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<sup>2</sup> Sotheby's, 'In the Nursery, Sanargate Rectory', sales record, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/modern-post-war-british-art-l17143/lot.112.html> (accessed 1 December 2018).

Gilman, it was decided to research Gilman's life and early career to understand the stylistic and material features expected to be found in an authentic Gilman painting, and see if they were present in *Interior Scene*.

## Harold Gilman

Harold Gilman was an English painter who is best known as one of the founding members of the Camden Town Group, alongside fifteen other artists.<sup>3</sup> Gilman was born on 11 February 1876 in Somerset and started his artistic practice at fifteen whilst bed-ridden following a hip injury. He studied at Oxford in 1894, at the Hastings School of Art in 1896, and between 1897 and 1901 at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, after which he spent a year in Spain to practise his skills by reproducing paintings by Goya and Velazquez. There, he met his first wife, American painter Grace Canedy, and the newlyweds returned to England in late 1902. Gilman was introduced to painter Walter Sickert in 1907, which led to the formation of the Fitzroy Street Group, an exhibition society that promoted contemporary artists by opening their shared studio on Saturday afternoons.<sup>4</sup>

At this point, which corresponds to the time *Grade Canedy* and *In the Nursery* were painted, Gilman's primary artistic influence was James McNeill Whistler.<sup>5</sup> Art historian Wendy Baron has highlighted the 'delicacy of handling of early pictures', the 'mathematical precision with which Gilman constructed his pictures', and his friend Louis Fergusson described his work as

'very intimate – very smoothly painted – without impasto – without excrescences.

Degas, who disliked anything growing out of a canvas [...] would have passed his hand over the surface with entire satisfaction. The attitudes of the people

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<sup>3</sup> Wendy Baron and Lin Barton. 'The Camden Town Group', *Oxford Art Online* (Oxford, 2003), DOI: 10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T013413, (accessed 1 December 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Helena Bonett, 'Harold Gilman 1876-1919', in *The Camden Town Group in Context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/harold-gilman-r1105360> (accessed 1 December 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Bonett 2012.

represented at their domestic avocations were gravely rendered in an illumination both subtle and subdued; the tones harmonized with impeccable taste.’<sup>6</sup>

Gilman painted with small brushstrokes, over long periods of time and was noted for his meticulousness.<sup>7</sup> He painted mostly interior scenes, many of which were inspired by his family life. His aim was to represent his usually female sitters in deep thought, constructing intimate images that make the viewer empathise with the sitter.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, he did not like representing figures in motion and used the depiction of hands as an expressive tool. These scenes became a recurring motif throughout the whole span of his career.<sup>9</sup>

Gilman was greatly influenced by Roger Fry’s exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* in 1910, which contributed to a change in this early painting style. He displayed a growing interest in the works of Cézanne, Gauguin, and most importantly van Gogh, and started using brighter colours and thick impasto, thus shifting away from the smooth surfaces that characterised his early paintings.<sup>10</sup> The Camden Town Group was founded around this time in 1911, but it dissolved in 1913 after three exhibitions at the Carfax Gallery.<sup>11</sup> This was the time of the strengthening of Gilman’s bond with fellow painter Charles Ginner and the two started describing themselves as ‘Neo-realists.’<sup>12</sup> ‘Neo-realism’ was defined by Ginner as the creation of art ‘out of continued intercourse with nature,’ a result from the painter’s ‘desire to

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<sup>6</sup> Wendy Baron, ‘London. Harold Gilman at the Royal Academy’, *The Burlington Magazine* 124, no. 948 (1982), p. 182; Wendy Baron, ‘Gilman in Context’, in *Harold Gilman: Beyond Camden Town*, ed. Neil Walker, exhibition catalogue, Djanogly Gallery (Nottingham, 2018), p. 12; Louis F. Fergusson, ‘Harold Gilman’, in *Harold Gilman: An Appreciation*, ed. Wyndham Lewis (London, 1919), pp. 19-20.

<sup>7</sup> Tate, ‘Harold Gilman, Edwardian Interior (c. 1907)’, catalogue entry, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/harold-gilman-edwardian-interior-r1139025> (accessed 2 December 2018).

<sup>8</sup> *The Camden Town Group: Centenary Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, Fine Art Society (London, 2011), p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> *Harold Gilman 1876-1919*, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain (London, 1981), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Helena Bonett, ‘Harold Gilman 1876-1919’, in *The Camden Town Group in Context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/harold-gilman-r1105360> (accessed 1 December 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Wendy Baron and Lin Barton. ‘The Camden Town Group’, *Oxford Art Online* (Oxford, 2003), DOI: 10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T013413, (accessed 1 December 2018).

<sup>12</sup> *The Camden Town Group: Centenary Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, Fine Art Society (London, 2011), p. 62.

express those emotions awakened in him by Nature and Life around him.’ Opposed to ‘careless’ painting, it promoted a vision of the painter as a good craftsman, and respect for his tools and medium as a way for him to ‘reveal himself,’ which can be considered the thread unifying Gilman’s various stylistic developments.<sup>13</sup>

With Ginner, Gilman founded the Cumberland Market Group in 1914 and an art school in Soho in 1916. Gilman died on 12 February 1919, during the Spanish influenza epidemic, which put a premature end to his career.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Catalogue of an exhibition of paintings by Harold Gilman and Charles Ginner*, exhibition catalogue, Goupil Gallery (London, 1914), p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Helena Bonett, ‘Harold Gilman 1876-1919’, in *The Camden Town Group in Context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/harold-gilman-r1105360> (accessed 1 December 2018).

## Comparative visual analysis

This section aims to compare the stylistic elements which have been noted above as characteristic of Gilman's work, to the features of *Interior Scene*.

The looseness of the composition of *Interior Scene* differs from the compositional tightness of *In the Nursery* and other early paintings such as *French Interior* (fig. 16). Indeed, the empty space left on the right-hand side of the picture breaks the sense of balance of the composition, creating an open, asymmetrical space that is strikingly at odds with Gilman's 'mathematical precision'. The placement of the fireplace on the same plane as the rest of the room also enhances an impression of compositional flatness. Furthermore, the representation of some shadows is inaccurate, such as that of the frame on the left of the fireplace, which complicates the identification of the provenance of light in the picture. However, the great accuracy of the depiction of shadows in *In the Nursery* indicates a source of light coming from the left. In addition to these surprising imprecisions, the lack of depiction of mirror reflections for the objects sitting on the mantelpiece of *Interior Scene*, and the absence of one of the feet of the empty chair on the left-hand side of the fireplace, are unthinkable in a finished composition by Harold Gilman, who has been described as a perfectionist '[hating] [...] the incompletely resolved.'<sup>15</sup>

Another stylistic difference lies in the representational absence of hands, when their depiction has been noted above as particularly characteristic of Gilman's approach to his sitters. In *In*

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<sup>15</sup> *Harold Gilman 1876-1919*, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain (London, 1981), p. 3.

*the Nursery*, both the child's and the nurse's hands are visibly active in the foreground. In *Interior Scene*, however, only the hand of the woman tending to the fire is visible and has been greatly simplified. The figure sitting at the table in the foreground hides her hands underneath the table, thus also differing from *Grace Canedy*, where the way hands have been depicted seems central to Grace's characterisation. Additionally, it could prove useful to compare the treatment of skin texture and facial expressiveness between the two paintings. However, the overcleaned paint layers of the sitter's face in *Interior Scene* during a previous conservation treatment prevent such comparison.

Finally, the construction of the surface of *Interior Scene* does not correspond to Gilman's practice. Firstly, *Interior Scene* does not display Gilman's interest in the depiction of wall decoration, an interest that is visible in *In the Nursery* with its ornate wallpaper, also represented in *Edwardian Interior*, and in later compositions such as *An Eating House* (figs. 13, 17, 15). Secondly, the texture of the paint on the plain wall, which can be studied with raking light, is at odds with Gilman's technique as noted above (fig. 3). The quick, long, vertical brushstrokes do not match the '[manifest] insistence on the surface of his [Gilman's] work,' in Wendy Baron's description.<sup>16</sup> As it has been noted that 'no other painter took his job so seriously and constructed so diligently his pictures, or was so careful in the construction and finishing of his paintings', the surface texture of *Interior Scene* excludes the possibility of Gilman's authorship.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Wendy Baron, 'Gilman in Context', in *Harold Gilman: Beyond Camden Town*, ed. Neil Walker, exhibition catalogue, Djanogly Gallery (Nottingham, 2018), p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Authors' translation. 'Aucun autre peintre ne prit sa profession plus au sérieux, ne composa, ne construisit ses tableaux avec autant de diligence ni ne prit autant de soins à s'assurer de la construction et de la finition de ses œuvres', Christophe Duvivier et Pierre Ickowics, *Lucien Pissarro et le postimpressionnisme anglais : Harold Gilman, Spencer F. Gore, Lucien Pissarro et Walter R. Sickert*, exhibition catalogue, Musée de Pontoise (Pontoise, 1998), p. 55.

Thus, *Interior Scene* shows a more simplified, but also more careless composition than *In the Nursery* and *Grace Canedy*, and displays neither the stylistic characteristics of a finished Gilman nor his approach to figural representation. However, the compositional similarities suggest that the artist responsible for *Interior Scene* was able to extensively study the other paintings. The following section will examine if this conclusion matches with the technical analysis of the materials and techniques employed by Gilman and by the author of *Interior Scene*.

## Materials and Technique

### Harold Gilman

Two early works by Gilman were studied at Tate<sup>18</sup>, *Edwardian Interior* (c.1907) and *French Interior* (c.1907). The results of this technical analysis provided important information about his painting technique and allow comparison with *Interior Scene*, whose subject matter and palette is related to Gilman's earlier works (figs. 16, 17).

*Edwardian Interior* is painted onto a fine plain-weave canvas, stretched on a four-member stretcher. It seems to lack a size layer and has a single ground layer, composed of lead white, kaolin, chalk and traces of extender, which penetrates through the canvas weave in some areas. The priming was probably applied to the canvas before stretching. Both the type of canvas and the preparation of this painting are consistent with all other Gilman's paintings in Tate's collection.<sup>19</sup> The artists of the Fitzroy Street and then Camden Town Groups shared a devotion to continental European art, especially from France, but employed different painting methods or were in different stages of their artistic development. However, one common technical feature was their reliance on colourmen's shops for the purchase of materials and

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<sup>18</sup> Sarah Morgan et al. 'Canvas and Its Preparation in Early Twentieth-Century British Paintings', in *The Camden Town Group in context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/sarah-morgan-joyce-h-townsend-stephen-hackney-and-roy-perry-canvas-and-its-preparation-in-r1104353> (accessed 10 December 2018);

Hackney, Stephen. 'The Evolution of Painting Technique among Camden Town Group Artists', in *The Camden Town Group in context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/stephen-hackney-the-evolution-of-painting-technique-among-camden-town-group-artists-r1104377> (accessed 1 December 2018)

<sup>19</sup> Morgan, et al. 2018.

equipment. This was not the case for Gilman, and no colourmen stamps have been found in his works so far. Thus, it is likely that he prepared the canvases himself.<sup>20</sup>

*French Interior* is technically similar to *Edwardian Interior* but shows a progression in technical development. This painting was probably painted before being stretched and it does have a proteinaceous size layer under a similar single ground layer, which also penetrated to the back of the canvas. The composition of this ground layer made it absorbent, which facilitated drying and gives the illusion of it having been painted *alla prima*. On top of the ground is an initial tonal underpainting applied in thin washes, followed by the paint layers, and finally the details were applied with fluent strokes of medium-rich paint that flowed easily across the fine-textured canvas.<sup>21</sup>

In later years there is a clear transition from this early fluidity and smooth surfaces to a more rigorous patterning achieved by loading a small brush with full-bodied paint and by working in dabs and short strokes, in an Impressionist technique. After breaking with Sickert in 1914, Gilman started including dark lines to delimit areas of the composition and also avoided the use of earth colours in favour of whites and blacks, to modify the hues of vibrant pigments. However, his choice of canvas and preparatory materials is similar to those found in earlier works.<sup>22</sup>

Another characteristic that Gilman shared with his colleagues of the Fitzroy Street and Camden Town Groups was the importance they placed on their drawing practice, as well as

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<sup>20</sup> Hackney, Stephen. 'The Evolution of Painting Technique among Camden Town Group Artists', in *The Camden Town Group in context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/stephen-hackney-the-evolution-of-painting-technique-among-camden-town-group-artists-r1104377> (accessed 1 December 2018)

<sup>21</sup> Sarah Morgan et al. 'Canvas and Its Preparation in Early Twentieth-Century British Paintings', in *The Camden Town Group in context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/sarah-morgan-joyce-h-townsend-stephen-hackney-and-roy-perry-canvas-and-its-preparation-in-r1104353> (accessed 10 December 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Hackney 2012.

the small scale of their paintings. Indeed, Gilman studied at the Slade School of Fine Art where drawing was a central aspect of artistic practice, and this importance was also recognised by Sickert. His drawing process as an essential tool for the creation of the painting was adopted and adapted by the rest of the group. Small-scale sketching helped maintain accuracy regarding proportions by allowing to draw on the scale perceived by the naked eye. The drawing could then be made proportionally larger on a bigger canvas by squaring-up with a grid.<sup>23</sup> Gilman adhered to the general principles of Sickert's procedure. His small-scale paintings tend to be transfers from very detailed and annotated drawings. Grids can be seen with the naked eye in some of his paintings, with one of the two versions of *An Eating House* (c. 1913-14) as the most extreme example (fig. 15). The case of *An Eating House* also demonstrates that Gilman not only worked with preparatory drawings, but also sometimes did two versions of the same subject. This could also have been the case for *In the Nursery* and *Interior Scene*. This hypothesis will be further explored in the following section.

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<sup>23</sup> Alistair Smith. 'Walter Sickert's Drawing Practice and the Camden Town Ethos', in *The Camden Town Group in context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/alister-smith-walter-sickerts-drawing-practice-and-the-camden-town-ethos-r1104369>, (accessed 10 December 2018).

## ***Interior Scene* vs. Harold Gilman**

### **Support**

The stretcher to which the painting is attached is composed of four wooden, bevelled members with double mortise and tenon joins (fig. 2). The stretcher measures 45.5cm by 35.5cm.

The primary support is a plain weave canvas, probably linen. It is attached to the stretcher with tacks along the side edges. As there are no signs of a previous stretching, the painting is unlined and paint covers the tacks, this is presumably its original attachment.

A stencil mark on the verso of the support indicates that it is a Winsor & Newton canvas called 'National Canvas N° 1' (fig. 9). As explained above, Gilman's work is remarkable for its technical consistency and he probably bought canvases on a roll, rather than already stretched.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the stamp found on *Interior Scene* could not be matched with any others found in Winsor & Newton databases from the period in which the painting must have been painted if done by Harold Gilman, that is between circa 1907 and his death in 1919 (fig.10).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Sarah Morgan et al. 'Canvas and Its Preparation in Early Twentieth-Century British Paintings', in *The Camden Town Group in context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/sarah-morgan-joyce-h-townsend-stephen-hackney-and-roy-perry-canvas-and-its-preparation-in-r1104353> (accessed 10 December 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Alec Cobbe, 'Colourmen's canvas stamps as an aid to dating paintings: a classification of Winsor and Newton canvas stamps from 1839-1920', *Studies in Conservation* 21, no. 2 (1976), pp. 85-94, DOI: 10.1179/sic.1976.015, (accessed 10 December 2018).

Interestingly, the same National Canvas No. 1 stamp has been found on post-Second World War paintings by artists such as Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon.<sup>2627</sup> During the Second World War, artists' canvases were in short supply because the fabric was required for the war effort. Winsor & Newton were directly affected by this shortage, and while in the 1938 catalogue they still listed 38 types of canvases, by 1944 they listed only three: one was a cotton canvas and the other two were made from Belgian flax woven in Ulster, Ireland, sold under the name of 'National Canvas', No.1 and No. 2,<sup>28</sup> and were described as follows:

'National Canvas. Pure Flax. The Government has made available a special allocation of flax yarns for the preparation of two good quality canvases for the use of British Artists. National Canvas No. 1, a substantial cloth of pure flax with medium grain; this should prove suitable for most artists' needs. National Canvas No. 2 of same quality as No. 1 but woven more openly to give a more decided tooth.'<sup>29</sup>

The then British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, himself an artist, received a complaint about the shortage of canvases from another artist still actively painting despite the war<sup>30</sup>. This led to a meeting and negotiation between the Ministry of Supply and the British Artists' Colour Manufacturers Association (BACMA) with the purpose of providing a larger quantity of canvases for artistic purposes. The result was that two linen weaves, number 1 and number 2, were going to be woven in Ulster specifically for artists' use.<sup>31</sup> As the stencil mark found on the canvas of the painting under discussion here is so directly associated to the Second

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<sup>26</sup> National Portrait Gallery. British artists' suppliers, 1650-1950 – W. DOI:

<https://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/directory-of-suppliers/w/> (accessed 10 December 2018).

<sup>27</sup> National Gallery of Victoria. DOI: <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/3761/> (accessed 10 December 2018).

<sup>28</sup> Alexander W. Katlan, 'History of fabric supports', *Conservation of Easel Paintings*, eds. Joyce Hill Stoner and Rebecca Anne Rushfield (Abingdon-on-Thames, 2013), p. 144.

<sup>29</sup> Rosamond D. Harley, 'Artists' prepared canvases from Winsor & Newton 1928-1951', *Studies in Conservation* 32, no. 2 (1987), pp. 77-85, DOI: 10.1179/sic1987.32.2.77 (accessed 10 December 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Harley 1987.

<sup>31</sup> Harley 1987.

World War, we can propose a provisional date for this painting, to sometime after 1944, i.e. at least 25 years after Harold Gilman's death.

## **Ground**

The canvas of the painting was probably commercially prepared by Winsor & Newton as can be inferred by the stencil mark on the verso and also by the appearance of the ground on the tacking margins. Medium analysis with Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), elemental analysis with X-ray fluorescence (XRF), and Image Scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (SEM-EDX) identified this layer as an oil, chalk and lead white ground.

Therefore, not only is the stencil mark inconsistent with Gilman's life dates, but the pre-primed canvas is also inconsistent with his painting technique. Moreover, as will be shown below, *Interior Scene* was not painted onto this pre-primed ground, but on top of a white acrylic interlayer, which was applied on top of another painting. Repurposing painted canvases in such a manner would be very unusual in Gilman's oeuvre because absorbency and texture of the ground were key elements of his practice. Thus this shows that the painter of *Interior Scene* had no clear intention to reproduce neither structure nor the composition of Gilman's paintings.

## **Underdrawing**

No underdrawing has been detected with infrared reflectography, or at least none made with an IR absorbent material such as carbon black or charcoal (fig.6). As explained above,

Gilman's academic training at the Slade School of Art as well as Sickert's influence taught him the paramount importance of drawing. As stated above, there is evidence of grids and underdrawings in many of Gilman's paintings and sometimes he also made two versions of the same scene (figs.14, 15). This was first thought to be the case between *Interior Scene* and the 1908 Gilman's painting *In the Nursery*. However, the results put forward in this section show that the only real link between both paintings seems to be the subject matter and not the time period, materials or technique.

### **Paint layers**

Examination of the paint surface with raking light showed that some of the texture of the paint surface does not correspond with the visible composition (figs. 3,4). X-radiography confirmed the presence of a landscape underneath that seems to represent the reflection of a landscape on a water surface (fig. 7).

As can be seen in cross-sections, the landscape painting was repurposed through the application of a white paint layer to the entire the surface, presumably in preparation for painting *Interior Scene* (fig.20). The materiality of both paintings is very different. While the landscape was painted with drying oil, medium analysis with FTIR revealed that the binder of the top paint layers is an acrylic emulsion p(EA-MMA) copolymer. These acrylic layers are very flexible, rubbery and peel off very easily from the oil painting underneath.<sup>32</sup> The paint layers have no cracks but pinholes and burst air bubbles throughout the surface, probably

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<sup>32</sup> The presence of an oil-acrylic interface and the presence of zinc soaps may both contribute toward the observed delamination. (Lee & Ormsby Tate FTIR report, 2019).

caused by some additive in the acrylic formulation and/or from the paint having been mixed vigorously on the palette (fig.11).<sup>33</sup>

Artistic acrylic paints were initially solvent-based, with the first water-based versions, called emulsions, becoming available in the US in the mid-1950s.<sup>34</sup> The binder used in our painting consists of a copolymer of ethyl acrylate and methyl methacrylate, which was the binder in the majority of early acrylics. Since the late 1980s, most acrylic formulations changed the combination of copolymers from the softer ethyl acrylate to n-butyl acrylate.<sup>35</sup> However, some brands like Talens still produce the p(EA-MMA) copolymer, so *Interior Scene* could have been painted even after the nineteen-eighties.<sup>36</sup>

Regarding pigments, SEM-EDX analysis identified elements that suggest that iron oxides, cadmium yellow, titanium white, and barium sulphate are present in the acrylic paint that corresponds to the white interlayer and *Interior Scene*. Titanium white is a 20<sup>th</sup> c. industrial product and was not commercially available as an artist pigment before the nineteen-twenties, during Gilman's lifetime. It was first introduced to Britain in 1921 and colourmen such as Winsor & Newton started selling it after 1928.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the presence of titanium would also be inconsistent with Gilman's palette. On the other hand, microscopy and elemental

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<sup>33</sup> Antifoam additives are known to produce film defects in acrylic paints. See: Elizabeth Jablonski, et al., 'Conservation Concerns for Acrylic Emulsion Paints: A Literature Review', *Tate Papers* 2 (2004), p. 4, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/02/conservation-concerns-for-acrylic-emulsion-paints-literature-review>

<sup>34</sup> Jo Crook and Tom Learner. *The Impact of Modern Paints* (London, 2000), pp. 24-31.

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Jablonski, et al., 'Conservation Concerns for Acrylic Emulsion Paints: A Literature Review', *Tate Papers* 2 (2004), p. 2, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/02/conservation-concerns-for-acrylic-emulsion-paints-literature-review>, (accessed 10 April 2019).; Tom Learner, 'Modern Paints', in *Conservation of Easel Paintings*, eds. Joyce Hill Stoner and Rebecca Anne Rushfield (Abingdon-on-Thames, 2013), p. 247.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Wilneff, et al. 'Spectroscopic techniques and the conservation of artists' acrylic emulsion paints', *Heritage Science* 2, no. 1 (2014), DOI: 10.1186/s40494-014-0025-y, (accessed 10 April 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Marilyn Laver, 'Titanium Dioxide Whites', in *Artists' pigments. A handbook of their history and characteristics*, vol. 3, ed. Elisabeth West Fitzhugh, (Washington, 1997), pp. 295-343.

analysis done on the paint layers of the landscape indicate the presence of cobalt blue, zinc white, and a few particles of emerald green (figs. 20, 21).

## Varnish

There are two layers of varnish on the painting (fig.21). The lower one is transparent, has been applied evenly to the surface of the painting, and strongly fluoresces blue under U.V. (fig. 5).<sup>38</sup> The upper coating, which also fluoresces blue, is pigmented with iron oxides and silica, and the medium has been identified with FTIR as either an oil-modified alkyd or an alkyd-urethane resin. Oil-modified alkyds are polyesters that have been modified by adding significant amounts of oil to make them more flexible, with the advantage of drying more quickly than oils. They were first produced for the paint industries in 1927, but in the UK, they did not become commercially available until the mid-1950s. Even though they were a huge success in the house-paint market, just a few artists' colourmen produced it.<sup>39</sup> Alkyd-urethane resin is also an industrial resin and only very rarely found in artworks and is as inconsistent with Gilman's practice as oil-modified alkyds.<sup>40</sup>

This intentionally coloured coating is dark brown and was applied when the painting was framed, as can be seen along the edges where there is no coating (fig.1).<sup>41</sup> The layer is very uneven, thus its gloss and thickness vary depending on the area. It also has many protrusions on the surface. As it is very distracting, and negatively affects the reading of the painting,

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<sup>38</sup> It was not possible to identify this thinly applied clear surface coating with FTIR, as sampling removed both upper coating and particles of underlying acrylic paint that dominated the spectrum.

<sup>39</sup> Crook, Jo and Tom Learner. *The Impact of Modern Paints* (London, 2000), pp.14-21.

<sup>40</sup> Pia Gottschaller, 'Making Art Concrete', in *Making Art Concrete. Works from Argentina and Brazil in the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros*, eds. Pia Gottschaller, et al., (Los Angeles, 2017), p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> The same fluorescence appears on the edges of the frame rebate, suggesting that the current frame was the one present when the painting was varnished.

several conservators have tried to remove this layer without success, and some tests actually removed and abraded original paint (fig.12). The difficulty of removing this layer is related to the very soluble acrylic emulsion paint underneath, combined with the fact that both the oil-modified alkyd or the alkyd-urethane resin are insoluble in solvents deemed safe to use for varnish removal.

Gilman's paintings are usually unvarnished as he admired and tried to reproduce the raw and unfinished appearance of Post-Impressionist paintings. As a younger artist he was probably not very adept at handling painting *alla prima* and sometimes applied a localized varnish in order to seal and saturate earlier work before proceeding.<sup>42</sup> Most of his paintings were probably varnished by owners or during later conservation treatments. No known Gilman paintings were varnished with a coating similar to that of *Interior Scene*. It was therefore probably applied to change the finish of the painting, rather than to imitate Gilman's painting practices.

## Frame

The frame of the painting consists of four wooden carved members. It has a very rustic finish and it could have been re-purposed, suggested by the fact that the bars are joined by metal plates and screws, without a continuity of the carved decoration pattern. Under U.V. illumination a strong fluorescence can be seen on the inner edges of the frame rebate, suggesting that this frame was used when the pigmented coating was applied to *Interior Scene* (fig. 8).

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<sup>42</sup> Stephen Hackney, 'The Evolution of Painting Technique among Camden Town Group Artists', in *The Camden Town Group in context*, eds. Helena Bonett, et al. (London, 2012), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/stephen-hackney-the-evolution-of-painting-technique-among-camden-town-group-artists-r1104377>, (accessed 1 December 2018).

To the reverse of the frame is a paper label adhered, but unfortunately the most crucial information, such as the author of the painting and the date, are missing due to its bad condition. However, the label seems to refer to a work titled *Reflections*, perhaps alluding to the painting underneath *Interior Scene*, which seems to depict the reflection of a landscape on water. On the left-hand side of the label the letters 'BRIT' are legible, possibly indicating a British provenance.

The label also indicates the price £110.10.0, thus in pounds, shillings and pence. Therefore, a work titled *Reflections* was probably sold in this frame sometime before 15 February 1971, known as Decimal Day, when British price denominations were changed to pounds and pence only.<sup>43</sup> To conclude, it is possible that the label refers to either *Interior Scene*, or as suggested by the fragmentary nature of the label and the material state of the frame, to the landscape underneath, or to another lost painting altogether. Unfortunately, no other firm conclusions can be reached at this point.

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<sup>43</sup> This sum was worth around £1,600 in 1970, allowing for inflation.

## Possibilities for the provenance of *Interior Scene*

The combined results of technical analysis and art historical research allow the conclusion that *Interior Scene* was not executed by Harold Gilman. To further determine the provenance of the painting, the exhibition histories of *In the Nursery* and *Grace Canedy* were investigated to understand when the painter of *Interior Scene* could have accessed them and replicated them in their own composition. Indeed, as *In the Nursery* was in the private collection of Lord and Lady Walston until 2003, and *Grace Canedy* has been kept at Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums since 1957, the geographic distance between the two pictures makes it most plausible that the painter of *Interior Scene* accessed them during a temporary exhibition.<sup>44</sup>

Researching the exhibition history of the two paintings proved a problematic enterprise. Many exhibition catalogues do not contain reproductions of exhibits, and certain paintings are exhibited under different titles depending on the exhibition, or under titles identical to other pictures. Thus, many works entitled *Interior Scene*, *Interior*, or *Portrait of a lady*, which could either be *In the Nursery* or *Grace Canedy*, were encountered in several unillustrated catalogues, without any provenance information.<sup>45</sup> It is therefore possible that the two paintings were exhibited at times which are not listed below (figs. 18-19).

*In the Nursery* was bought by Lord and Lady Walston from Gilman's estate in 1955, but had perhaps already been exhibited by London art gallery Arthur Tooth and Sons in 1934 under

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<sup>44</sup> Sotheby's, 'In the Nursery, Sanargate Rectory', sales record, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/modern-post-war-british-art-117143/lot.112.html> (accessed 1 December 2018); Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums, 'Grace Canedy, the artist's first wife', catalogue entry, <http://www.aagm.co.uk/thecollections/objects/object/Grace-Canedy-the-artists-first-wife> (accessed 3 February 2019).

<sup>45</sup> For example, in all the exhibitions listed below, *In the Nursery* was shown under the title *Interior*, and was only identifiable thanks to reproductions and ownership history.

the title *Nurse and Baby*.<sup>46</sup> In 1969, it was exhibited as *Interior* in Colchester, Oxford and Sheffield as part of a touring Arts Council exhibition.<sup>47</sup> *In the Nursery* was shown again in 1981, also in an Arts Council touring exhibition in Stoke-on-Trent, York, Birmingham and London.<sup>48</sup> It was last exhibited by Christie's in London in 1988.<sup>49</sup>

*Grace Canedy* arrived in the collections of the Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums from Gilman's estate, too, and was shown in a temporary exhibition for the first time during the 1981 touring exhibition as *Portrait of a seated lady*.<sup>50</sup> That both *In the Nursery* and *Grace Canedy* were exhibited together is significant, as it indicates when the painter of *Interior Scene* could have accessed the two pictures at once. Finally, *Grace Canedy* was included in the 1998 'An Ordinary Life: Camden Town Painters' exhibition in Aberdeen.

In addition to the possibilities mapped out above, it is possible that the painter of *Interior Scene* gained access to *In the Nursery* in Lord Walston's private collection and maybe to Grace's portrait in Aberdeen. They could also have accessed the paintings in a copy of the 1981 Arts Council exhibition catalogue, but both propositions significantly expand the time-span during which *Interior Scene* could have been composed, and are impossible to verify (fig. 19). Moreover, the materials used suggest that it is unlikely *Interior Scene* was painted before the mid-fifties, when both paintings were still owned by Gilman's family members.

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<sup>46</sup> *Harold Gilman 1876-1919*, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain (London, 1981), pp. 24-25.

<sup>47</sup> *Harold Gilman 1876-1919*, exhibition catalogue, Minories Art Gallery (Colchester, 1969), cat. no. 10.

<sup>48</sup> *Harold Gilman 1876-1919*, Arts Council of Great Britain 1981, pp. 24-25.

<sup>49</sup> Wendy Baron, *The Painters of Camden Town, 1905-1920*, exhibition catalogue, Christie's (London, 1988), p. 59.

<sup>50</sup> *Harold Gilman 1876-1919*, Arts Council of Great Britain 1981, pp. 40-41.

Given the compositional features of *Interior Scene*, and the material evidence gathered from the painting, the 1981 Arts Council exhibition appears the most likely occasion when the painter of *Interior Scene* could have encountered the two pictures by Gilman. Their identity remains however a mystery. Nonetheless, the fact that they combined two compositions by Gilman indicates that they engaged closely with his early work. It is interesting that the two figures in *Interior Scene* are both depictions of Grace Canedy. This shows that the painter was probably not seeking to recreate a coherent meaning behind the representation of the figures. Thus, composing *Interior Scene* was perhaps an attempt at practising their painting skills.

## Conclusion

Our cross-disciplinary approach was crucial in allowing to determine that *Interior Scene* was composed sometime after the 1950s, and maybe in the early 1980s, by a painter who, inspired by Gilman's work, decided to reproduce and combine several of his compositions to create their own 'Gilman.' Indeed, the conclusion of the stylistic and technical analyses and the lack of a signature preclude the possibility of *Interior Scene* being a forgery. Thus, we propose that it was most likely the work of an amateur as part of their personal practice.

The study of *Interior Scene* proved a challenge. Whilst the relationship between the landscape and the interior scene has not yet been determined, and full information regarding the painting's provenance and ownership history and its frame is still missing, we hope to have shown in this essay the complementarity of technical analysis and art historical methods in the research of the painting's origins. We found that our independent findings nearly always overlapped in their conclusions, and this proved a fascinating and stimulating impetus for research throughout the duration of the project. It is our hope that this example will encourage further collaboration between our fields.

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## Illustrations

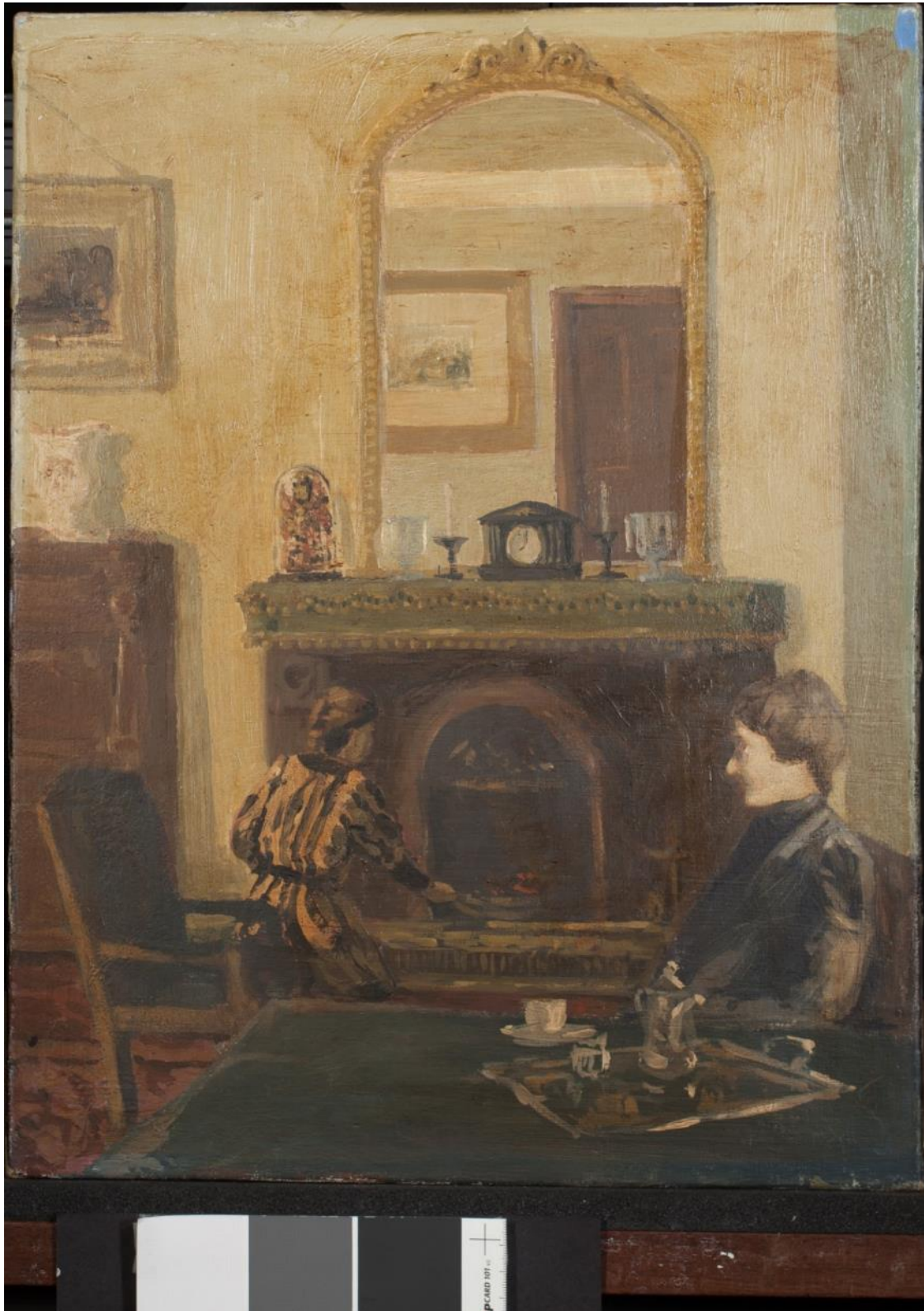


Fig. 1 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*. Recto, reflective light.



Fig. 2 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*. Verso, reflective light.

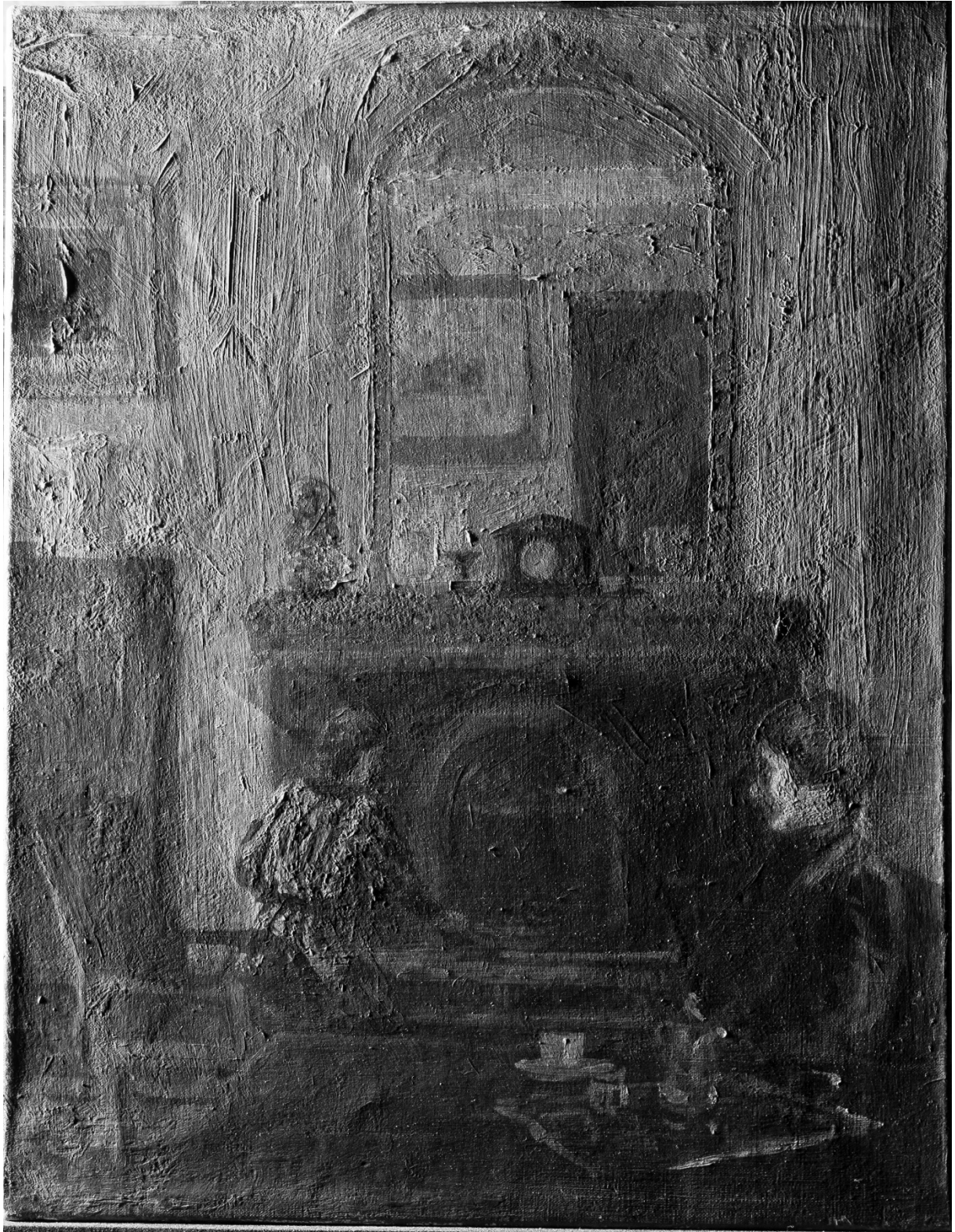


Fig. 3 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*. Raking light from the left.



Fig. 4 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*. Raking light from the top.



Fig. 5 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*. U.V. fluorescence.



Fig. 6 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*. I.R. Reflectography with Osiris Camera (InGaAs ~950-1700 nm).



Fig. 7 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*. X-Radiography.



Fig. 8 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*, detail of frame and label under U.V.

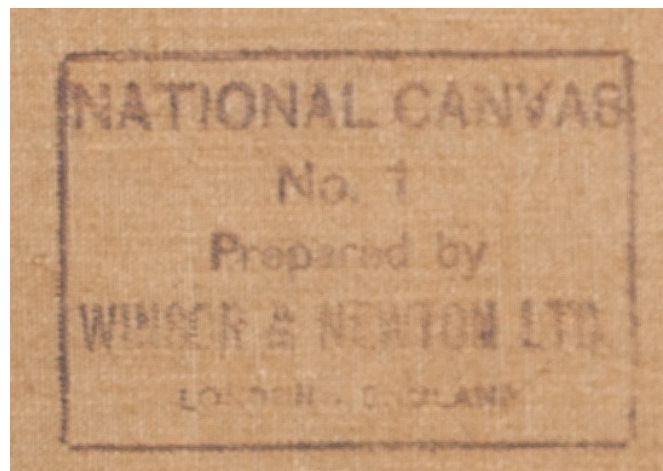


Fig. 9 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*, detail of stamp on the back of the canvas.

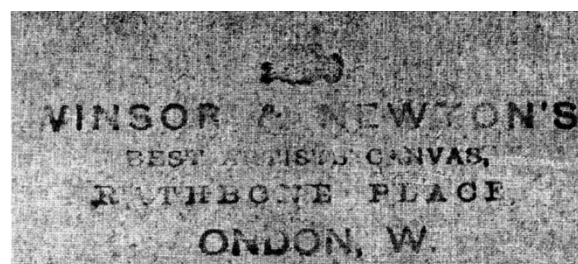


Fig. 10 – Example of Winsor & Newton stamp dating from Gilman's lifetime.

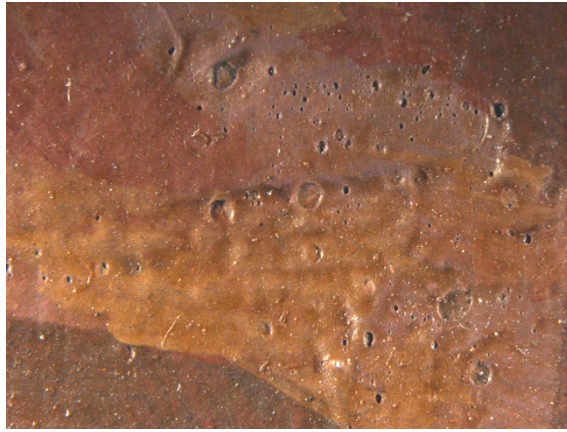


Fig. 11 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*, photomicrograph of the surface.

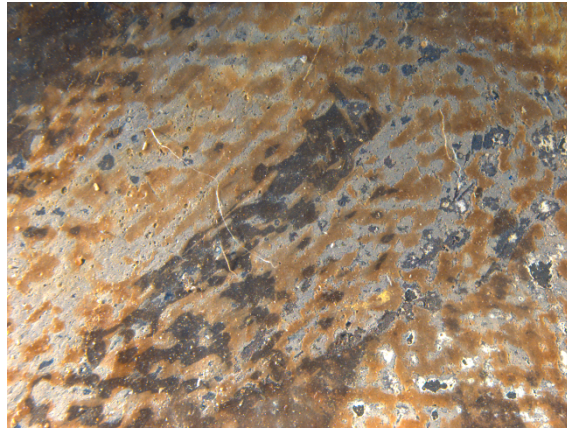


Fig. 12 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*, photomicrograph of previous cleaning test.



Fig. 13 – Harold Gilman, *In the Nursery*, circa 1908, oil on canvas, 54 x 44 cm. Private collection. Photo: Sotheby's.



Fig. 14 – Harold Gilman, *An Eating House*, detail, circa 1913-14, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Private collection. Photo credit: Art UK.

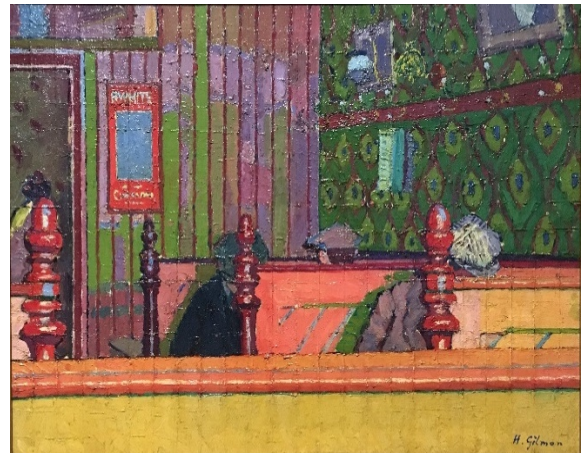


Fig. 15 – Left: Harold Gilman, *An Eating House*, circa 1914, oil on canvas, 72.7 x 91.4 cm. Museums Sheffield, Sheffield; Right: Harold Gilman, *An Eating House*, circa 1913-14, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Private collection. Photo: Art UK.



Fig. 16 – Harold Gilman, *French Interior*, circa 1907, oil on canvas, 62.2 x 51.4 cm. Tate, London. Photo: Tate.

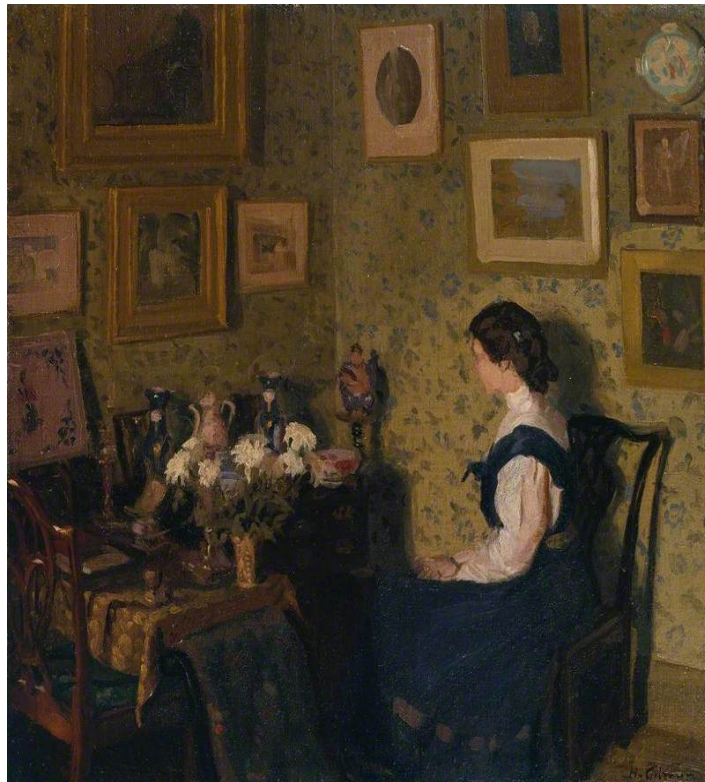


Fig. 17 – Harold Gilman, *Edwardian Interior*, circa 1907, oil on canvas, 53 x 54 cm. Tate, London. Photo: Tate.



Fig. 18 – Harold Gilman, Grace Canedy, circa 1904, oil on canvas, 54 x 55 cm. Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums, Aberdeen. Photo: Aberdeen, Art Gallery & Museum.



**\*8 Interior 1908?**  
 Oil 27×23½ (68·5×59·1)  
 Stamped signature lr  
 Exh: Tooth, 1934 (2?); Colchester, 1969 (10, repr.)  
 Prov: The artist's family; acquired by the present owners, 1955  
 Lent by Lord and Lady Walston

Fig. 19 – Reproductions and labels in the catalogue of the exhibition 'Harold Gilman 1876-1919, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1981.



**\*4 Portrait of a Lady 1905?**  
 Oil  $21\frac{3}{8} \times 21\frac{3}{8}$  (54.3 x 54.3)  
 Stamped signature lr  
 Lit: Aberdeen Art Gallery, *Annual Report*, 1957  
 (repr.); Aberdeen Art Gallery, *Permanent  
 Collection Catalogue*, 1968, p.51  
 Prov: Sylvia Gilman; Barbara Duce; to present  
 owner, 1957 (purchased Murray Fund)  
 Lent by Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

Fig. 19 – Reproductions and labels in the catalogue of the exhibition ‘Harold Gilman 1876-1919, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1981.

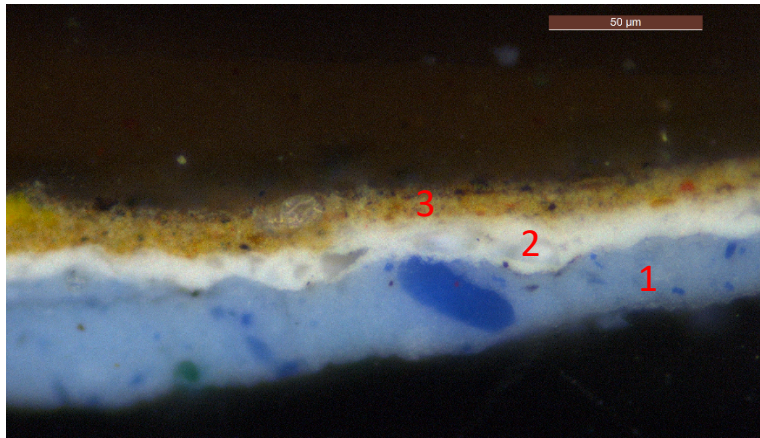


Fig. 20 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*, cross-section taken from the background. Reflective light.

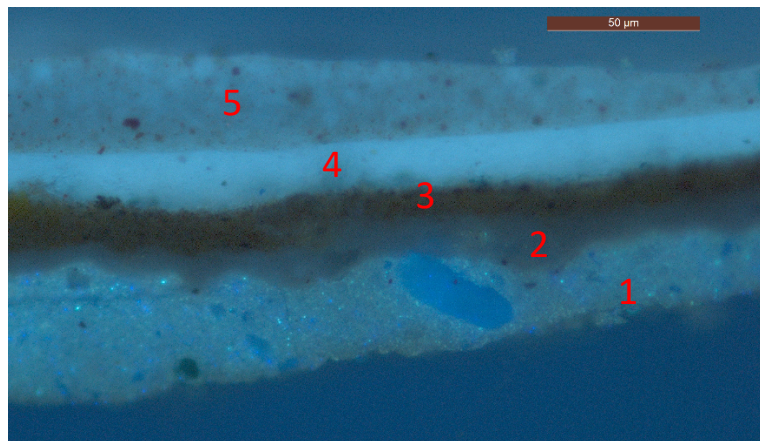


Fig. 21 – Anonymous, *Interior Scene*, cross-section taken from the background. U.V. fluorescence.

- 1) Blue from sky in landscape underneath : SEM-EDX: cobalt blue, emerald green, and zinc white. FTIR : Drying oil
- 2) White interlayer : SEM-EDX : titanium white, barium sulphate, and silica. FTIR: acrylic emulsion p(EA/MMA)
- 3) Interior Scene paint from wall : XRF and SEM-EDX : cadmium yellow, iron oxides. FTIR : acrylic emulsion p(EA/MMA)
- 4) Clear varnish layer
- 5) Pigmented coating : SEM-EDX: iron oxides. FTIR : oil modified alkyd or alkyd-urtehane resin.