

Portrait of a Lady, 1608 Jacobean oil painting attributed to Robert Peake the Elder.



Painting Pairs Report: Art History and Technical Study

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Introduction to the project

The purpose of this project is to unite two methods of investigation, traditional and technical art history. Our principal concerns for this project were with the attribution, provenance and identity of *Portrait of a Lady* (1608), which has been closely associated with Robert Peake the Elder. The research that we have conducted as part of this project has and continues to feed into the treatment decisions undertaken by Alice at the Conservation and Technology Department.

During this project, we wanted to find answers to two key questions: whether the materials and techniques evident in this portrait indicated the involvement of a specific artist or workshop, and what was the identity of the sitter in this portrait. While we were not able to provide conclusive answers to these questions, we have identified the sitter's status and come closer to attributing an artist to this portrait. This report aims to disseminate the research and findings we achieved within the scope of this collaborative project. We hoped to further the art historical and technical research that has already been undertaken about this period of history and the practice of artists that were prominent in Britain at this time.

Introduction to the Object





Portrait of a Lady, 1608.

Figure 1.1 Front (Unframed)

Figure 1.2 Back (Unframed)

The painting *Portrait of a Lady* (1608) is oil on canvas measuring 53.5 cm in height, 43.5cm in width and 1.7cm in depth. It is a head and shoulders portrait of an unknown sitter wearing a richly decorated dress and lace ruff. The sitter is depicted at a slight angle with her gaze directed to meet the viewer.

The inscription on the top right-hand corner of the portrait records the date of the painting as 1608 and states the age of the sitter as 24. The painting is on loan to the 'Painting Pairs' scheme from a private collector. The painting is stamped on the reverse 'Elizabeth of Bohemea, Daughter of James I, Jansen', however, it is unlikely that either of these attributions is correct. The owner of this painting bought it in 1997 from Robin Bridge through Christie's Auction House, having looked after the portrait for some years on behalf of Robin Bridge. Neither Christie's nor the National Portrait Gallery were able to identify either the painter or the sitter. We have attempted to trace the provenance back further.

Whilst in the current owner's possession, a photograph of the painting was seen by the art historian Roy Strong who believed the painting to be by Robert Peake the Elder. He based his conclusion on a stylistic analysis of the painting and

its inscription. Strong has previously used the inscriptions on other works to attribute them to Robert Peake, as discussed in his book *The English Icon*.¹ Some artworks were falsely attributed to Peake based on stylistic comparisons of their inscriptions as it was subsequently proven that some of these artworks post-dated Peake's death. The style of the inscription does not definitively link this portrait to Robert Peake, however, the costume of the sitter suggests that a date of 1608 is correct.

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¹ Roy Strong, *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean portraiture* (London, 1969); See also Roy C. Strong, , 'Elizabethan Painting: An Approach Through Inscriptions - 1: Robert Peake the Elder' *The Burlington Magazine, Vol. 105, No. 719* (Feb., 1963), pp. 53-57

Art Historical Context

The inscription and style of the painting, coupled with Roy Strong's attribution of the portrait to Robert Peake, all suggest that the picture was produced in England in the early Jacobean period.

English painting in the late Elizabethan period differed significantly from contemporary painting on the continent. The significant English artists of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period such as Nicholas Hilliard and George Gower were not influenced by Renaissance Italy, and the influence of French art on their styles was minor. Roy Strong has described these artists as 'descendants of the Bedford Book of Hours', part of the 'cultural milieu of the late Elizabethan Court which revelled in neo-medievalism.' English painters had abandoned Flemish realism in favour of a more expressionless 'aristocratic, courtly style.'²

The end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century was a period of transition, not just for the monarchy, but for artistic practice as well. The late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods saw a change in the style and format of portraits and a diversification of the audience for them.

The arrival of Netherlandish artists such as Marcus Gheeraerts brought about a change in the style of portraits in this period. Gheeraerts, Queen Anne of Denmark's favourite painter, was able to merge Flemish painting style with the aristocratic 'courtly fantasy' of late Elizabethan England, creating figures who for the first time really 'stood in space', if not moving in it. ³

From the 1590s full-length format became the favoured form for portrait painting. Full-length portraits had become increasingly popular, coinciding with the growing use of canvas rather than panel which made it easier to produce paintings of this size. However, head and shoulder and half-length images were not uncommon.⁴

The clientele for portrait painting was also changing during this period. Full-length portraits were no longer reserved for royalty, and now depicted less

² Roy Strong, *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean portraiture* (London, 1969), p. 14, 16.

³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴ Cooper, Tarnya, foreword by Antonia Fraser, *A Guide to Tudor and Jacobean portraits,* (London, 2008), p. 12.

important sitters.⁵ By the second half of the sixteenth century, the clientele for portrait painting had expanded and now included a wide range of citizens such as merchants, artists, writers and professional men. Portraits would hang in homes, universities or places of business as well as palaces and ancestral seats.⁶

As we shall discuss later in this report, it is important to recognise that the fundamental purpose of portraiture in this period was to record and capture the status and likeness of a sitter. From the 1590s onwards there is evidence that more sitters wanted their portraits to convey human emotion rather than hierarchy or symbolism, however, it would be wrong to overstress this development. Portraiture in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century acted predominantly as a visual record, or in some cases as an allegory or *memento mori*.⁷

Identifying the hand of a specific artist in the first decade of the seventeenth century can be difficult. This is due to the stylistic overlap of different schools of painting and different artists and the widespread use of workshop practice in this period. In the first half of the sixteenth century, it is easier to recognise native and Anglo-Netherlandish workshop practice, but by the 1610s, these two styles had blended, making distinctions between the two less clear. Robert Peake was part of a group of English and Anglo-Netherlandish artists during this period who had overlapping styles. These include John de Critz, Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, William Larkin and Isaac Oliver. Whilst their styles have certain idiosyncrasies, the similarity of some of their works in this period makes it difficult to attribute works to specific painters.

Identifying the hand of a specific painter is further complicated by workshop practice. Portrait painting was a trade like any other and involved the widespread use of assistants in workshops. It is difficult to ascertain which parts of a

⁵ 'The Turn of the Sixteenth Century' in Karen Hearn (ed.), *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England*, *1530-1630* (London, 1995), p. 171.

⁶ Cooper, A Guide to Tudor and Jacobean portraits, pp. 8-12.

⁷ Strong, *English Icon*, p. 29,36.

⁸ Caroline Rae, 'Marcus Gheeraerts, John de Critz, Robert Peake and William Larkin A comparative study' in Tarnya Cooper, Aviva Burnstock, Maurice Howard, Edward Town (eds.) *Painting in Britain, 1500-1630: production, influences, and patronage* (Oxford, 2015), p. 171,174,175,177.

⁹ Catharine MacLeod, 'Robert Peake: technical evidence and patronage' (Conference Paper, *Tudor and Jacobean Painting: Production, Influences and Patronage*) 13/4/11 Posted by National Portrait Gallery https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SR-uQ0rxeAU (accessed 22/12/17)

portrait were painted by the master of a workshop.¹⁰ There is evidence of multiple hands in some of the portraits analysed by the "Making Art in Tudor Britain" project, indicating the prevalence of workshop practice at this time. The fashion for larger full-length pictures likely led to an increase in workshop practice.¹¹

There is much still to uncover about this period, and the question of authorship can be particularly complicated when analysing paintings from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Very few paintings have been signed and it can be difficult to link styles to specific artists. We are still unsure how workshops operated and where responsibility lay for the different aspects involved in making a portrait. We do not know how much control a master had over the techniques used by his assistants such as the mixing of pigments. Some have suggested that the idea of authorship in this period may need to be rethought or may, in fact, be redundant as it is difficult to attribute specific portraits from this period to the hand of one specific artist.

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¹⁰ Caroline Rae, *Anglo-Netherlandish workshop practice from the 1580s to the early 1600s with a focus on the works of John de Critz the Elder and Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger* (Courtauld Institute of Art, 2016) p. 239, 243.

¹¹ 'The Turn of the Sixteenth Century' p.171; Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen portrait: portrait painting and the urban elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales* (New Haven; London, 2012) p.21.

¹² Rae, Anglo-Netherlandish workshop practice p. 239,243.

¹³ MacLeod, 'Robert Peake: technical evidence and patronage'

Biography of Robert Peake

Robert Peake the Elder (c. 1551–1619) was a prominent native English painter in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period. Born in 1551, Peake was apprenticed in London to a goldsmith but spent most of his life as a painter.¹⁴ The earliest account we have of Peake's activity dates from 1576 where he is recorded as working as a painter for the Office of the Revels. It is unclear when he began to focus on portrait painting, but one of the earliest portraits attributed to him is that of an unknown military commander, signed and dated by Peake in 1593, although there is evidence that he was already well-known among a fashionable clientele in London by this date.¹⁵

In 1607 Peake was made serjeant painter to the Jacobean Court alongside John de Critz. Peake seems to have formed a relationship with the Stuart royal children during this period, painting numerous paintings of Prince Henry, Prince Charles (later Charles I) and Princess Elizabeth. Whilst many historians have suggested that he was the personal painter to Prince Henry, no documentary evidence for this exists.¹⁶

As well as producing portraits for the royal family, serjeant painters were responsible for decoration in the palaces, royal houses and the great wardrobe as well as numerous other duties including the painting and gilding of ships, barges, wagons, tents, pavilions and the decoration for the Offices of the Revels. ¹⁷ Peake would have required a large workforce to deal with these tasks. Recent examinations of Peake's work have shown that he likely had a large and busy workshop practice and thus much of his artistic output would have been collaborated on with his assistants. ¹⁸

¹⁴ MacLeod, 'Robert Peake: technical evidence and patronage'; Hearn, Karen, 'Peake, Robert (c1551-1619)' (3 January 2008) in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*

¹⁵ Philip Mould & Company Website, http://philipmould.com/browse-artists/robert-peake

¹⁶ MacLeod, 'Robert Peake: technical evidence and patronage'

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Identification of the sitter

Unfortunately, we have not been able to identify the sitter in *Portrait of a Lady* (1608). However, we have been able to ascertain the social status of our sitter and dismiss the attribution stamped on the lining of the picture. The stamp on the lining of the verso of *Portrait of a Lady* (1608), which identifies the sitter as 'Queen of Bohemea, Daughter of James Ist', seems inaccurate. This opinion was shared by Roy Strong when he saw an image of the painting.

Elizabeth Stuart was born in 1596. According to the date of this painting, 1608, Elizabeth would have been only 12 years old, whereas our sitter looks and is stated to be twice that age. ¹⁹ Comparisons of our picture to known likenesses of Elizabeth of Bohemia, (Figs. 1.1 and 1.2) further highlight the inaccuracy of this identification.



Fig. 1.3: Princess Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia and Electress Palatine by Robert Peake the Elder, c.1610 Oil on Canvas. National Portrait Gallery



Fig. 1.4: Princess Elizabeth, (159601662), Later Queen of Bohemia, by Robert Peake the Elder c.1606

Oil on Canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art,

¹⁹ Ronald G. Asch 'Elizabeth, Princess [Elizabeth Stuart] (1596–1662)' (26 May 2016) in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*

Many images of Elizabeth of Bohemia from this period show her as fair-haired and have significant facial dissimilarities to our picture. Furthermore, contemporary reports of Elizabeth describe her as being fair-haired.²⁰ It seems unlikely that our sitter, with dark hair and eyes, is Elizabeth of Bohemia. *Portrait of a Lady* was relined much later in the painting's material history, further calling the accuracy of the canvas stamp into question. While the identification of the sitter is not seem accurate, it is not surprising as many of the unknown sitters in portraits from this period are often misidentified as Anne of Denmark or Elizabeth of Bohemia.

The word 'Jansen' is also stamped onto the verso of our canvas. It is likely that this stamp refers to Cornelius Janssen or Johnson, a painter during the Stuart reign. This seems to be an inaccurate attribution as Janssen would have likely been too young to paint this picture, as he was born in 1593, making him 15 in 1608.²¹ The inaccuracy of this attribution supports the inaccuracy of the identification of the sitter as Elizabeth of Bohemia.

Several factors have prevented us from successfully identifying our sitter. Whilst the dress seems to be in good condition, the paint in the sitter's face has been compromised. The face has been highly repainted, especially around the ear and jawline. Due to this extensive reworking of the image, we cannot be sure that this is how our original sitter looked, making comparisons with portraits of other women of a similar age and from a similar period unreliable. Furthermore, there are no heraldic or dynastic symbols in this portrait, neither in the background nor worked into the costume's embroidery or jewellery, which could identify our sitter or her family.

Being unable to identify a sitter in a portrait of this period is not unusual. This is mainly because of the purpose of portraiture in this period. Compared to clothing, jewellery, tapestries or decorative objects in this period, portraits were relatively inexpensive to commission.²² Painters were craftsmen rather than fine artists and portraits were not appreciated as much for their artistic value as for their ability to record the likeness and status of the sitter at a specific time, for example at their marriage. The use of inscriptions, as seen in our picture, highlights the documentary

²⁰ With thanks to Anne Reynolds for her consultation over the identity of our sitter in relation to Elizabeth of Bohemia.

²¹ Karen Hearn, 'Johnson, Cornelius [Cornelius Jansen, Janssen, or Jonson van Ceulen] (bap. 1593, d. 1661)' (23 September 2004) in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* ²² Cooper, A guide to Tudor and Jacobean Portraits, p. 10; Cooper, Citizen portrait, p. 21.

nature of portraits at this time. ²³ Personal portraits of private individuals held little intrinsic or financial value themselves after the life of the sitter and were rarely saleable items. As a result, many portraits have not survived to the present day and those that have, that have not passed through a family or institution, can often have little information attached to them.²⁴

Although we have been unable to identify the sitter of our painting, we have been able to ascertain her status. Whilst the face of our unknown woman is clearly overworked, her dress is of high quality and therefore comparisons between her costume and her contemporaries' is a valuable avenue of enquiry. Tarnya Cooper has commented that it is possible to date a portrait within five to ten years of its creation by analysing the costume of the sitter as wealthy sitters liked to be painted in their most fashionable outfits and fashions changed quickly at this time. ²⁵ By researching our sitter's costume and comparing her outfit to contemporary images, we can confirm that our sitter was a wealthy, aristocratic woman.

Our sitter is not wearing the most elaborate court dress, but her outfit and jewellery are expensive and fashionable. Our sitter is wearing a satin weave silk gown or bodice, which has been slashed and pinked using an awl. We can determine that it is silk satin from the range of tones in the dress.²⁶ She wears two 'bands' (separate starched collars) on a piccadil or supporter. These appear to have been made out of fine cut-work lace. She has a sheer veil wrapped over the bands which has been secured with golden rosettes of silk ribbon.

Her costume and style of dress are accurate for the period. The round neckline and open band (ruff) with full sleeves at the shoulders are characteristic of the early Jacobean period, as is her high hairstyle that was influenced by the

²³ Charlotte Boland, Tarnya Cooper, *The Real Tudors: Kings and Queens Rediscovered* (London, 2014) p. 8, 13; Cooper, *Citizen portrait* p. 15.

²⁴ Cooper, Citizen Portrait p. 12, 26,27.

²⁵ Cooper, A guide to Tudor and Jacobean Portraits p. 14.

²⁶ Anna Reynolds, *In Fine Style: The Art of Tudor and Stuart Fashion* (London, 2013) p.149.



Figure 1.5: Portrait of Anne Vavasour c.1605. Attributed to John de Critz. Armourer's Hall



Figure 1.6: Anne of Denmark, 1574-1619. C.1605 Associated with John de Critz. Oil on panel National Maritime Museum



Figure 1.7: Portrait of a Woman c. 1605-10 Oil on panel, British School Royal Collection Trust

fashion for elongated female figures at this time. The coordination of rosettes and ribbons is also typical of this period. ²⁷ Her hair is crested with silk ribbons, possibly attached to bodkins or hairpins – a fashionable hair accessory favoured by Anne of Denmark.²⁸

Our sitter's costume and hairstyle are in keeping with portraits of other aristocratic women of this period. In fig. 1.5 we see Anne Vavasour, Maid of Honour to Elizabeth I, in a portrait painted circa 1605 with similar bows adorning her hair and dress, as well as puff sleeves and a standing open band ruff. The rounded neck, decorative bows and high hairstyle can also be seen in Figure 1.6 and 1.7 of Anne of Denmark and Portrait of a Woman, once thought to be Anne of Denmark.

The costume and hairstyle of our sitter share several similarities with that of a portrait of Elizabeth D'Oyley (1608) by Robert Peake (figure 1.8). Elizabeth D'Oyley was the daughter of Edmund D'Oyley of Shotesham, Norfolk, and Catherine Neville.²⁹As part of this research project, Alice was fortunate enough to visit the Strangers' Hall Museum in Norwich, with the purpose of seeing this portrait. Although slightly larger and painted on panel, this portrait was of interest to us as we believe it

²⁷ Roy Strong, *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy: pageantry, painting, iconography, Vol. 3 Jacobean and Caroline* (Woodbridge, 1998) p. 22; Reynolds, *In Fine Style* p. 48.

²⁸ Hazel Forsyth, London's lost jewels: the Cheapside hoard (London, 2013) p. 61.

²⁹ Information provided by Strangers Hall Museum

to bear many comparable stylistic features to *Portrait of a Lady* such as the shape and style of the lace, the pearls and lack of knot holding them together, the lack of earring and the sitter's pose.



Figure 1.8: Elizabeth D'Oyley, c1608 By Robert Peake. Oil on Panel Norfolk Museums Service

Not only did this portrait help to confirm the date of our portrait and status of our sitter, it also helped us draw further comparisons between our portrait and those painted by Robert Peake.

The costume of our sitter indicates that she was a wealthy individual. Silk satin was one of the most highly valued and expensive materials to make clothes from at this time, and it was used in this image for both her dress and in her accessories. Our sitter's dress is not embroidered, but instead slashed and pinked, a less expensive means of decoration. Her dress is perhaps not her best court dress, but is fashionable and expensive nonetheless. Pinking involved stamping patterns into fabric with small heated metal tools, whilst slashing involved making a small cut in the fabric through which you could see the fabric layer beneath. Both techniques indicated the wearer's wealth as they showed off excess fabric and the owner's willingness to potentially destroy clothes when decorating them.

³⁰Reynolds, *In Fine Style* p. 149

³¹ Reynolds, *In Fine Style* p. 171-172; Eleri Lynn, *Tudor Fashion* (New Haven; London, 2017) p.31, 33



Figure 1.9: Costume of Sir Rowland Cotton of Alkington Hall.

Victoria and Albert Museum ³²



Figure 1.10: Sir Rowland Cotton (18581-1634) of Alkington Hall, Whitechurch, and Bellaport Hall, Shropshire, 1618 by Paul Van Somer Oil on Panel Weiss Gallery

An example of a slashed silk costume survives at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Figure 1.9).³³ This costume was worn by Sir Rowland Cotton of Alkington Hall, Whitechurch and Bellaport Hall in Shropshire in his portrait by Paul Van Somer dated 1618 (figure 1.10).

The jewellery worn by our sitter further confirms her status as an aristocratic woman. She is adorned with several pieces of jewellery, including a pearl necklace, pearl brooches that fasten the silk ribbons to her dress, a pearl encrusted armband, and a bejewelled head pendant.

The head pendant is made up of a point-cut diamond, four lozenge-cut red stones (possibly rubies, pink sapphires or spinels) with four pearls and four drop pearls. Although seemingly simple, the head pendant is of the very latest fashion. The diamond appears black in this image, but this was common and is a result of the close setting and coloured foil on which diamonds were often mounted.³⁴ As gem

³² Image sourced from *Courting Favour: From Elizabeth I to James I Tudor and Jacobean Court Portrait*, 1560-1625 (June, 2017)

³³ Courting Favour: From Elizabeth I to James I Tudor and Jacobean Court Portrait, 1560-1625 (June, 2017)

https://issuu.com/theweissgallery/docs/_22courting_favour_-_from_elizabeth

³⁴ Reynolds, *In Fine Style* p. 73; Forsyth, *London's lost jewels* p. 160.

cutting improved in this period, simpler geometric styles of jewellery came to be preferred, and size and gem quality became more important.³⁵ What may at first seem a simple design might in fact be an example of sophisticated craftsmanship and quality.³⁶ The jewellery in *Portrait of a Woman*, once thought to be of Anne of Denmark (fig. 1.7), is of a similar, less ornate design.

There are many pearls in the jewellery worn by our sitter. There are nineteen pearls on the brooches pinned to the rosettes on her gown, forty-eight visible pearls on her armband, eight pearls in her headpiece and a long string of pearls around her neck (at least eighty pearls are visible in the necklace). Pearls were expensive and were imported from abroad from places such as the South Indies, the South China Sea, Borneo and Sri Lanka, among other areas.³⁷

The most unusual piece of jewellery worn by our lady is her armband, although its depiction is not unprecedented in portraiture. A similar piece can be seen in a painting of Lady Eleanor Herbert, daughter of the Duke of Northumberland (fig. 1.11).



Figure 1.11: Lady Eleanor Percy, later Lady Powis (1582/3-1650) Unknown Artist, 1595 Powis Castle & Garden, National Trust

³⁵ Reynolds, *In Fine Style* p. 74; Forsyth, *London's lost jewels* p. 188.

³⁶ With thanks to Sue North for her consultation on the jewellery in this image.

³⁷ Forsyth, *London's lost jewels* pp. 124-125.

The looping of chains and necklaces around the body was very popular in this period. It was so popular that one seventeenth-century commentator remarked that people would 'rather wear a base metal counterfeit worth 8 pence than be seen unchained.'38

It is difficult to assess the contemporary value of our sitter's jewellery and thus form a stronger idea of her personal or family wealth. We cannot accurately identify the quality of the stones and pearls in the jewellery of our sitter from this portrait. Furthermore, it is difficult to ascertain general prices of similar jewellery from contemporary documents. Aside from the Cheapside hoard, a cache of Elizabethan and Stuart jewellery discovered and excavated in London in 1912, there is very little jewellery extant from this date and documents such as inventories from the period which might give an indication of price are not always reliable.³⁹

³⁸ Forsyth, *London's lost jewels,* p. 151.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 148-149, 150-151, 209-210.

Conservation History and Condition

The painting arrived in the department structurally sound, with an aesthetic impetus for treatment. The material history and condition of a painting can be examined through various means. Observing our painting with a strong raking light reveals an overall age craquelure, which although slightly raised, is not actively flaking.



Figure 2.1 Raking light top



Figure 2.3 Before treatment UV



Figure 2.2 Raking light left

The painting has been lined and the two raking light images above (figure 2.1 and 2.2) serve to illustrate how the painting retains adequate tension with no planar deformations. These images also highlight the variation in material handling of the paint and brushstroke texture.

It is clear the aesthetic of the painting has been compromised by the over-strengthening of the facial features. The UV photograph shows a greenish fluorescence that is suggestive of an aged natural resin varnish. Figure 2.3 also indicates the most recent campaign of retouching, which is above the

uppermost layer of varnish and corresponds to the dark passages in this photograph. This most recent campaign can also be easily identified with a strong natural light. It is largely localized to the hair and background.

Micrographs of the uppermost campaign of retouching

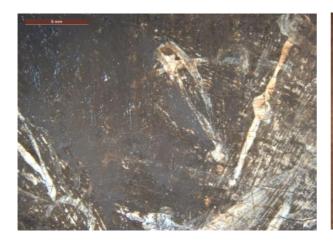


Figure 2.4 Overpaint covering original lace



Figure 2.5 Overpaint on the cheek, clearly covering cracks



Figure 2.6 Overpaint on the chest, obscuring the age crack network



Figure 2.7 Thick red overpaint covering cracks, applied to strengthen the lips

These micrographs illustrate how this retouching campaign has been broadly and indiscriminately applied, covering original paint passages such as the lace. It is unsympathetic to the quality of the original paint layers, thick, opaque and covers cracks.

Arguably the most disfiguring overpaint is the facial strengthening that appears to have been applied directly onto the original paint layer. Microscopy suggests at least one older, more wholesale campaign of retouching which is

underneath the upper varnish and not immediately apparent with UV Light. This overpaint contains gritty black particles, is comparatively transparent and can be observed sitting in and above cracks. In comparison, the original paint is smoother and contains fine brightly coloured particles. The older campaign has been applied to soften the visual effects of cracks such as on the chest, and to strengthen features as well as shadows on the face and pearls.

Micrographs of an older campaign of overpaint



Figure 2.8 Overpaint to strengthen the highlight and shadow of the pearls

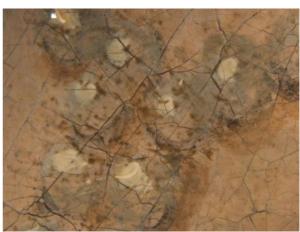


Figure 2.9 Gritty dark particles in the shadow passages of overpaint.

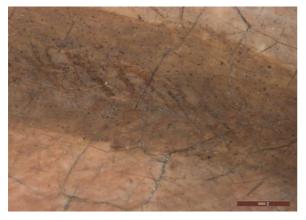


Figure 2.10 Eyebrow strengthening with finer hatched overpaint on top

These photomicrographs of lower repaint passages, which obscuring cracks in the chest, show the strengthening of the pearls. These display a gritty black shadow and the strengthening on the eyebrow which has a finely hatched overpaint.

These restoration campaigns are obscuring the condition of the original paint, which is most likely heavily abraded and damaged.



Figure 2.11 Infrared Reflectogram taken on a digital camera with a CCD sensor



Figure 2.12 Infrared Reflectogram taken on a OSIRIS camera with an InGas sensor

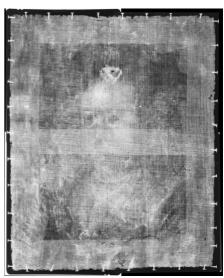


Figure 2.13 x-ray

Imaging of the painting with both infrared reflectography and x-radiography helped gain a more holistic understanding of the condition of the original paint.. Figures 2.11 and 2.12 support the understanding of reinforcement in the face and areas of overpaint such as the cheek. The x-ray image indicates various small losses and damages that have been filled with an x-ray absorbing material, most likely lead white. Furthermore, the cusping evident on the left and lower edge indicates that the canvas has most likely has not been cut down, that is the format never changed.

While the results of the x-ray and Infrared examination makes clear that this painting is damaged and aged, there are nevertheless are well-preserved paint passages. The jewelery, dress and inscription all appear to be good quality surviving original paint, largely free from retouching. Both figures 2.14 and 2.15 also illustrate the very systematic paint application employed to describe the jewels.

Well preserved paint passages

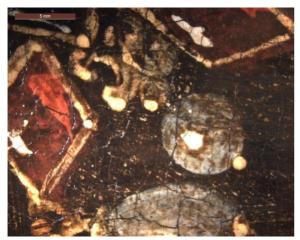


Figure 2.14 Detail of Jewel in the hair



Figure 2.15 Detail of decorative dress ²² embellishment

Materials and Techniques

Peake is often regarded as a Jacobean portraitist as his most prominent works are indeed portraits which were created under the reign of James I. However, his largest output was most likely decorative and associated with his responsibility as Serjeant painter. Peake's training and the majority of his career happened during the Elizabethan period. Furthermore, technical analysis of Peake's works firmly place Peake within an Elizabethan framework. This further adds to the complexity of understanding and placing an artwork within this context, as while this portrait is dated 1608, Peake may well have employed characteristics of an earlier date and style.

Through the National Portrait Gallery's *Making Art in Tudor Britain* project, several traits discovered through technical study have come to been as characteristic of Peake's style, and subsequently as markers for Peake's involvement or authorship, some of which we expected to uncover through the technical study of *Portrait of a Lady*. However, not all characteristic markers for Peake's involvement are applicable to *Portrait of a Lady*, again furthering one's challenge of understanding Peake's involvement in this portrait.

For instance, in the painting of *Prince Henry (figure 3.1)*, Peake applied a layer of silver leaf underneath a red lake glaze in the curtain. This was a highly unusual approach for both this period and for a fabric support.

For several works such as *Princess Elizabeth, Henry Prince of Wales* and *Sir Charles Cornwallis*, it has been discovered Peake used a very high-quality grade smalt, often in areas of non-blue passages, where the use of such a costly material is not immediately apparent and is obscured in admixture. Why use such high-quality pigments in this way – were patrons aware of such costly materials and could their use perhaps relate to an Elizabethan emphasis on wealth and status?

Material handling

Peake's composition tends to be typically Elizabethan – portraits and full lengths depicting rather static figures, frequently with a flattened modelling of the face. Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 are three examples of key works attributed to Peake.

Key works attributed to Peake



Figure 3.1 Henry Prince of Wales



Figure 3.2 Unknown Military Commander



Figure 3.3 Prince Charles Duke of York

Peake's technique is understood to be very systematic, works were quickly and economically painted, and they display characteristically showy and mimetic effects of the drapery. Most distinctive are the metallic effects used to describe fabrics or curtains, which are made through a series of parallel hatching. Arguably the handling of highlights in *Portrait of a Lady* is comparable to those found in known works by Peake such as the royal portraits.



Figure 3.4 Detail of highlights on the dress (Portrait of a Lady)



Figure 3.5 Detail of highlights (Princess Elizabeth, NPG)



Figure 3.6 Detail of highlights (Princess Elizabeth National Portrait



Figure 3.7 Detail of wet-in-wet application in the dress.



Figure 3.8 Detail of fine brush strokes describing the delicate pattern of lace.

The paint has been delicately applied with a range of brushes and an accomplished technique. Details such as the lace and highlights on the yellow ribbons have been applied with a very fine brush over dry paint, whereas passages of paint in the dress exhibit a wet-in-wet technique with a comparatively broader brush. Figures 3.7 and 3.8 are examples of the wet-in-wet broader painting employed to describe the dress details. Fine brushwork used to describe the lace.

Comparison of Lace



Figure 3.9 Detail of fine brush strokes describing the lace (Sir Charles Cornwallis)

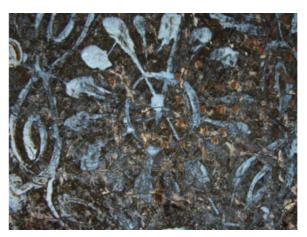


Figure 3.10 Detail of fine brush strokes describing the lace (Elizabeth of Bohemia).

Comparison of decorative details



Figure 3.11 Detail of Jewels (Henry Prince of Wales)



Figure 3.12 Detail of Jewels (Elizabeth of Bohemia)

Proper Left eye details



Figure 3.13 (Princess Elizabeth NPG)

Figure 3.14 (Portrait of a Lady)

Figure 3.15 (Henry Prince of Wales NPG)

Comparison of the eyes raises questions about workshop involvement as one would expect to find blue pigment in the whites of the eyes, which technical examination and microscopy however did not discover. This perhaps indicates that the flesh paint is not by Peake's hand. But as already stated above, attribution to works of this period is challenging because of workshop practice.

Technical Examination

Artists during this period had very similar, systematic approaches to paint application. Therefore, when considering attribution, one must seek the subtle nuances and idiosyncrasies that have become associated with particular individuals, both with regard to style and paint handling.

Canvas paintings from this period were typically sized with animal glue and then coated with a double ground (of some form). Larkin is known for his elaborate layering system (7-8 layers) and consistently painted on a white ground, perhaps in favour of its optical quality's. John de Critz's paintings typically have an initial offwhite chalk layer, followed by a thick grey layer, often containing lead white and carbon black.

Peake however consistently and rather uniquely painted on coloured double grounds, typically consisting of a mixture of pigments such as a translucent yellow, orange or red with a pale grey/occasionally cream on top. His grounds also commonly incorporated quartz. All three paintings in the National Portrait Gallery, London, that were examined by the Making Art in Tudor Britain project have a similar double ground with a pigmented darker brown lower layer and a warm grey on top (typically a lead white-based imprimatura with some black mixed in).

Cross-sections



Figure 4.1: Cross- section taken from an area of grey dress (normal light)

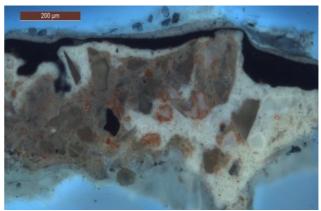


Figure 4.2: Cross-section taken from an area of grey dress (UV light)

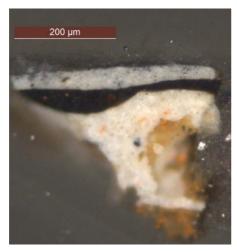


Figure 4.3: Cross Section taken from an area of grey dress (normal light)

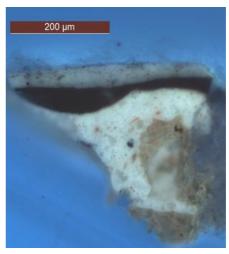


Figure 4.4: Cross Section taken from an area of grey dress (UV light)

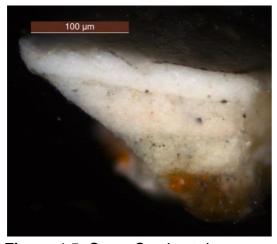


Figure 4.5: Cross Section taken from an area of proper left eye (Normal light)

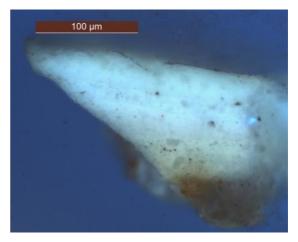


Figure 4.6: Cross Section taken from an area of proper left eye (UV light)

Three cross-sections taken from different areas of *Portrait of a Lady* show a thick ground comprised of a warm layer beneath an upper grey/cream-coloured layer (figs. 4.1 - 4.6). Elemental analysis conducted on the lower layers indicates the presence of lead, which suggests that they are compromised largely of red lead, which seem consistent with other grounds by Peake.

Peake is described as employing a "relatively unsophisticated system of modelling, simplified and idealised features" cupid bow lips and almond-shaped eyes, with a pictorial emphasis on decorative detail rather than idealised likeness.

Peake tends to apply a flat flesh-coloured 'carnation' of uniform thickness that serves as a mid-tone and is painted over the entire surface of the face, with shading applied above. The x-ray suggests that this same method, associated with Peake, was used in the construction of the face (figure 4.7): the shape of the face was first blocked in, most likely with a paint mixture containing lead white. A cross-section taken from the proper left eye (Figure 4.5) also shows this layer structure of a clear lower warm layer followed by warm cream, the flesh coloured carnation with the whites of the eye uppermost.

The x-Ray indicates various small damages, most notably a loss in the forehead that has been filled with a lead-containing material



Figure 4.7 Detail of x-ray (Portrait of a Lady)



Figure 4.8 IR detail (Portrait of a Lady)

Both the IR photographs of *Portrait of a Lady* (figure 2.11 and 2.12) indicate no visible under-drawing, although this is not particularly unusual for works on canvas of this period nor for Peake. Indeed, a lack of under-drawing distinguishes Peake's technique from that of his contemporaries such as Marcus Gheerearts (figure 4.11 and 4.12).



Figure 4.9 Infrared reflectogram detail of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex c 1597 by Marcus Gheeraerts. Oil on canvas.



Figure 4.10 Infrared reflectogram detail of Henry Prince of Wales,c. 1603 attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts (NPG), oil on canvas

Pigment Identification

Microscopic examination of certain areas such as that of the jewels provided some indications of pigment mixtures. For instance, figs. 5.1 and 5.2 are photomicrographs of a yellow highlight on a dress decoration and appears to be lead-tin yellow, mixed with lead white and a red pigment.

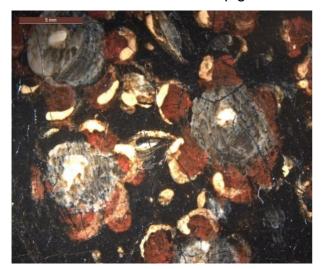


Figure 5.1 decorative detail in the dress with yellow highlights



Figure 5.2 decorative detail in the dress with yellow highlights

Visual identification was then supported through elemental analysis of a cross-section (figure 5.3) from a yellow highlight of a decorative detail in the dress. EDX⁴⁰ detected tin in the yellow highlight, confirming that such details have been painted with lead tin yellow.

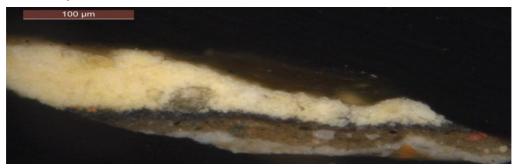


Figure 5.3 Cross-section taken from a decorative detail in the dress with a yellow highlight.

The inscription, although of a similar tonal value and also well preserved, appears under high magnification to have a different pigment morphology to the jewel detail. XRF⁴¹ conducted on the inscription detected iron and lead, which suggests that the inscription consists of yellow ochre, lead white and black. Although inscriptions from this period are slightly problematic as association based on stylistic grounds has subsequently proved fallible, technical analysis of other works by Peake and contemporaries have revealed comparable uses of such pigment mixtures.

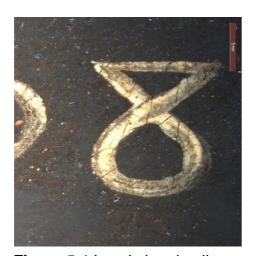


Figure 5.4 Inscription detail



Figure 5.5 Inscription at higher magnification

⁴⁰ Scanning Electron Microscope with Energy Dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (SEM-EDX) is a form of elemental analysis allowing chemical characterisation of a paint sample (which is not destroyed in the process).

⁴¹ X-ray florescence is a non-destructive analytical technique which analyses the X-ray fluorescence of a material to determine the elemental composition within a given sample.

In sum, the Pigments identified, using a combination of microscopy and inorganic elemental analysis, are:

lead white,
red lead,
red lake,
vermilion,
lead tin yellow,
yellow ochre,
black,
iron oxide earth pigments.

The pigments identified within this painting are consistent with Peake's palette and that of contemporary painters of the seventeenth century.

Painting Provenance

We have researched the provenance of our picture and whilst we cannot make any solid conclusions about its history, we can make some interesting speculations.

The current owner of this picture purchased it from Robin Bridge, still living, who in turn inherited it from his aunt Sylvia Bridge. Through Silvia Bridge and her husband Lionel Moore Bridge, Robin Bridge can trace his ancestry back to John Bridge (1755-1834).⁴²

John Bridge was part of the business, Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, which held the royal warrant as goldsmiths and silversmiths to George III, George IV, William IV and briefly Queen Victoria. He was exceedingly wealthy with a fine collection of pictures, prints and decorative art objects. On his death, he left a sizeable fortune, which was distributed among his relatives as detailed in his fifty-page handwritten will. He left his pictures, plates, statues, and household furniture to his nephews.⁴³

Having read the wills of John Bridge and his descendants, leading up to Robin Bridge, we have unfortunately not found any specific reference to this painting, or in fact any painting, as when items such as pictures or decorative arts are mentioned, it is often generally. However, it is not unlikely that our picture may have been in the possession of John Bridge at one time.

An extract from an issue of the magazine Country Life from 1911, in which one of John Bridge's descendants advertised the sale of "Very Interesting and Valuable works of art collected by J Bridge and J Gawler Bridge", gives an idea of the range of his art collection. Among numerous other objects, it lists "Thirty-five miniatures by and after Cosway, Bone, Petitot, Muss, Zincke, Peter Lely and Spicer" and "Oil Painting and Engravings including examples of Kneller, Angelica Kauffmann, Rubens and Lely." A portrait such as ours, especially one thought to be by Robert Peake, or inaccurately, by Cornelius Jansen, would not be out of place in

⁴² See Appendices for Family Tree

⁴³ Tobin, Sophia, 'Portrait of a Goldsmith' in *The Goldsmiths Review* (accessed via website of Phillip Mould)

http://philipmould.com/application/files/6814/7031/2175/Jackson_John_Bridge_Goldsmiths_Aug_3.pd f; 'Bridge, John (1755-1834) (23 Spetember 2004) in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online;* Will of John Bridge, Jeweller of Ludgate Hill, City of London (1834)

⁴⁴ 'Waring & Gillow' Supplement to the Country Life p. xviii (9/9/1911)

such a collection. It is likely that John Bridge was aware of the value of images from the early Jacobean period. George IV acquired objects d'art from Rundell Bridge & Rundell as well as decorative art, including a miniature of Henry Prince of Wales by Isaac Oliver, a contemporary of Peake.⁴⁵ Perhaps we could speculate that John Bridge bought our portrait due to the fine jewellery that our sitter is wearing.

At this time we cannot make any concrete claims linking our picture with John Bridge, but this would be an avenue for further research.

⁴⁵ Christopher Hartop, Royal Goldsmiths: The Art of Rundell & Bridge 1797-1843; foreword by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales; introduction by Phillipa Glaville; essays by Diana Scarisbrick, David Watman, Charles Truman and Matthe Winterbottom (Cambridge, 2005) pp. 96-97.

Conservation Treatment Summary

Portrait of a Lady from 1608 was brought to the attention of the Conservation and Technology Department with the primary concerns regarding the clearly strengthened facial features that most likely were added at a later point in the work's material history. Other disfiguring retouching is largely localized to the hair and background and belongs to a later campaign. It appears is disturbing when the painting is viewed under a strong light. The painting is structurally sound and has been lined. . Consequently, the primary focus of this treatment will be aesthetic. Treatment commenced with an initial surface cleaning of the front and back, using a soft brush, feather and museum vacuum to clear the surface of loose particulate dust and dirt. Various tests for an aqueous surface cleaning were conducted, finding saliva cleared with de-ionised water the most effective method. Once further dirt was removed using this method, varnish removal tests were conducted to ascertain various solubility parameters between original paint layers, varnish and various retouching campaigns. The testing stage was very lengthy, as even after a combination of technical examination and microscopy the extent and condition of surviving original paint remained unclear. I tested the solubility of the overpaint with a range of free solvents and it became clear that it would not be possible to remove the varnish and upper retouching without committing to removing also the lower, older campaign of strengthening. The resulting decision to remove the varnish and



Figure 6.1 Overall photograph after varnish removal using IMS

as much of the various campaigns of overpaint as possible was reached in consultation with the owner. (see figure 6.1 for the current stage of cleaning, after varnish and upper overpaint have been removed). This image shows the portrait during treatment, with the varnish and upper retouching removed, but before pursuing removing further overpaint. Once a satisfactory stage of overpaint removal is reached, the portrait will be re-varnished, filled and retouched to an appropriate and more sympathetic level.

Conclusions and Possibilities for Further Research

Our research, as part of the 'Painting Pairs' project, has helped to date and more closely attribute *Portrait of a Lady* by an unknown artist. The costume and accessories of our sitter have allowed us to confirm the date of the painting as 1608 and the status of our sitter as a fashionable aristocrat.

The pigments identified in the portrait are consistent with the period and the technique of Robert Peake. There are several indications of a specific style and paint application that also implicate the involvement of Peake: for example, the presence of a coloured double ground, the lack of under-drawing, the suggestion of a flesh coloured carnation and the characteristic metallic highlights.

There are still avenues for further research on this portrait. The provenance of the painting is not complete and further research into the Bridge family could allow us to trace this painting further back in its material history. John Bridge stated in his will that an inventory of his possessions should be drawn up. Were this document to be found, it could provide insight into the identity of the unknown woman. It could be possible that this portrait is one of a pair, depicting a husband and wife. Continued comparison and investigation into technical evidence of Peake's materials and technique would also be a fruitful area of research.

There is a great deal more to learn about workshop practice in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period. It is likely that several hands were involved in the creation of Peake's artworks, and it would be interesting to further research the relationship between artist and assistant in workshops at this time.

We hope that our research can add to and further the current understanding of Peake's methods, techniques and workshop practice.

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National Portrait Gallery

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Powis Castle & Garden, National Trust

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