

*A PORTRAIT OF THOMAS
GAINSBOROUGH*

THE COURTAULD COLLECTIONS:
CONSERVATION AND ART HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

WORKS FROM THE COURTAULD GALLERY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks go to the following for their invaluable contribution to our research and their generous support throughout the duration of this project:

Dr. Caroline Campbell
Dr. Aviva Burnstock
Graeme Barraclough
Hugh Belsey
Dr. Barnaby Wright
Julia Blanks
Rachel Hewitt
Edgar King
Marcus Risdell
Helen Valentine
Rica Jones
Viola Pemberton-Pigott
Prof. Aileen Ribeiro
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INTRODUCTION

The annual project *Conservation and Art Historical Analysis: Works from the Courtauld Gallery* aims to develop an understanding and insight into paintings from the Gallery collection through means of technical investigation and art historical research, which is carried out alongside the conservation of the work in question. The project involves collaboration between students of the department of easel painting conservation and students undertaking art historical research in the Courtauld Institute of Art. By utilising individual skill sets, pooling knowledge and information, and creating a fluid and discursive dialogue between art historian and conservator a far greater insight into the physical objects is invariably obtained.

The following report will present the findings of one such collaboration: an investigation of an eighteenth-century English portrait entitled *Copy after a self-portrait by Thomas Gainsborough* and attributed to Thomas Gainsborough's nephew, Gainsborough Dupont (**FIG 1**). Prior to the project some doubt had been raised over the security of such an attribution, although these remarks were made on a purely stylistic basis. According to the eminent Gainsborough scholar Hugh Belsey, the face appeared too finely painted to be attributed to Dupont, whose shortcomings are often noted as the distinguishing feature between his work and that of his uncle Thomas Gainsborough.¹ It was therefore the question of authorship that was central to the research undertaken and which will be explored in the following report.

The report will begin, as did the research, with an examination of the painting as a physical object, which was to be taken as the primary source throughout the project. From the observations that superficial examination provided, initial conclusions were expounded and explored through means of a thorough technical analysis of the painting. Through techniques such as x-radiography, infrared-reflectography, cross-sectional analysis and through the greater clarity that the conservation of the painting afforded, it was possible to piece together the material history of the object from conception to completion and provide a more secure attribution supported by the physical evidence accrued. The report will present the evidence found at each stage of examination and analysis, leading towards the hypothesis of four stages of execution involving the hands of both Gainsborough Dupont and his master Thomas Gainsborough R.A. The authors posit that the painting is in fact a self-portrait by Thomas Gainsborough, left unfinished at the time of his death in 1788, that was subsequently finished by Gainsborough Dupont in the manner of Gainsborough's final self-portrait of 1787. The work thus represents a fascinating insight into the works of both master and apprentice and plausibly encourages a reassessment of the clear-cut distinction between the two hands.

¹ Personal communication between Hugh Belsey and Dr. Caroline Campbell at the Courtauld Gallery, London, 29th March 2011.

PORTRAIT OF THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH: THE OBJECT AND ITS PHYSICAL HISTORY

A gift of Samuel Courtauld to the Courtauld Collection in 1932, the painting in question (**FIG 1**) depicts the eighteenth-century painter Thomas Gainsborough, one of the most renowned figures in the history of British art. Painted in oil on a medium weight, plain-weave canvas, the painting measures 76.3cm by 63.3cm, its slight deviation from the eighteenth-century standard canvas size of 25 by 30 inches,² explicable by the fact that the canvas was trimmed and lined by a Mr Beck and Mr Dyer in 1895 (**FIG 3**). The work is undated, though as its initial title suggests (*Copy after a self-portrait by Thomas Gainsborough*) it appears to have some correlation to the *Self Portrait* by Thomas Gainsborough in the collection of the Royal Academy that was executed in 1787, shortly before Gainsborough's death in 1788.³

Given that the painting was to provide the central foundation for the research it was important to establish the effect that age and intervention had had on the painting in order to better appreciate intentions and effects of the original appearance of the work. The painting appeared in remarkably good condition though a surface examination of the painting revealed a number of campaigns of restoration that were impacting on one's ability to fully appreciate the painting as conceived. Under ultra-violet light, the painting could be seen to have a number of layers of patchily applied varnish (**FIG 5**), the unevenness of which was both the result of a brushy application of excessive varnish – as evidenced by the drip marks down the right hand side of the painting – as well as partial cleaning campaigns during which the discoloured varnish has been removed from the area of the sitter alone as a quick method of 'freshening up' the painting. Further restoration was evident in a number of campaigns of retouching identified across the painting. Covering a sizeable portion of the background was a large-scale glazy retouching, pigmented with red earth and carbon black pigments to create a warm, translucent glaze that could be seen pooled in the drying cracks (**FIG 20**). This was likely applied during the aforementioned campaign of lining and varnishing of 1895, an equivalent retouching material found on other paintings treated by Mr Dyer,⁴ and was presumably intended to unify the background which had been visually disrupted by the pale underlayer showing in areas of drying cracks, to which the retouching was localised. Additional retouching was identified in the face and collar of the sitter covering age cracks (**FIG 21**), wide-

² L. Carlyle, *The Artist's Assistant: Oil Painting Instruction Manuals and Handbooks in Britain 1800-1900 With Reference to Selected Eighteenth-century Sources*, (London, 2001), pp. 447-449.

³ An image is provided courtesy of the Royal Academy of Arts at: http://www.racollection.org.uk/ixbin/indexplus?_IXSESSION_=i12LDzbeKXJ&_IXSR=&_IXACTION_=display&_MREF_=20048&_IXSP_=1&_IXFPFX_=templates/full/&_IXSPFX_=templates/full/

⁴ Identified on Joshua Reynolds', *Cupid and Psyche*, 1789, during conservation treatment undertaken by Graeme Barraclough, Chief Conservator at the Courtauld Gallery, confirmed by personal communication, March 2012.

scale small retouchings across the face and background (**FIG 22**), and the remnants of retouchings in the green coat of the sitter.

Although the original remained in good condition, it was clear from the evidence of surface microscopy that the layers of discoloured varnish and retouchings were visually disfiguring and therefore the decision was made to remove these superficial layers. The treatment was undertaken concurrently with the research presented in this report, and proved remarkable in its transformation of the appearance of the painting. Seen mid-treatment (**FIG 6**) it is clear that the face, which formerly appeared flat and rather subdued, was rather young and fresh, the soft, plump, fleshy face subtly modelled with delicate pastel tones around the bright eyes. Furthermore, the removal of the indiscriminating brown retouching in the background revealed a far more sketchily painted background with rapid brushwork blocking in the muted colours. It was thus with the benefit of the conservation treatment that better informed inferences could be made regarding the style and handling of the painting, which first prompted the most recent query of attribution.

Tracing the history and provenance of the painting, documentary evidence revealed that the current attribution was a product of a reassessment of the painting around the mid-twentieth century. It was clear that the painting had in fact for a long time been considered to be the work of Thomas Gainsborough. From the earliest documentation of 1838 it was recorded as being a self-portrait by Thomas Gainsborough, an attribution that was maintained once it passed into the collection of the Sharpe family, relatives of Thomas Gainsborough, and thereafter into the collection of Samuel Courtauld whose mother was a descendent of the Sharpes.⁵ During this time the painting was loaned for a number of prominent exhibitions including the National Portrait Exhibition of 1867, the label of which survives on the reverse of the painting's stretcher (**FIG 4**) and the exhibition at Highgate in 1907 where it was exhibited together with the Gainsborough's portrait of Mrs Gainsborough (**FIG 24**) to which it was believed to be a pendant pair. However, by the time of a report dated February 13 1933, noting the markings on the reverse of the painting, the painting had been demoted to 'school of Thomas Gainsborough' and an erroneous note, undated, informs that the painting was considered 'now Dupont'. In response to a loan request for a Gainsborough painting on 14 February 1949, the enquirers were informed that unfortunately the 'self portrait is only a Gainsborough Dupont version', confirming that by this time the attribution to Dupont had been firmly establish, though on what basis is unknown.⁶

⁵ Curatorial documents relating to the *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

⁶ Ibid.

ESTABLISHING THE TWO PROTAGONISTS: GAINSBOROUGH AND DUPONT

The only recorded apprentice of Thomas Gainsborough was his nephew Gainsborough Dupont. He was the son of Gainsborough's eldest sister Sarah and Philipp Dupont, a house carpenter. In 1772, he became in the age of 18 apprenticed to his uncle. Mainly working as an engraver of Gainsborough's portraits during the latter's lifetime, Dupont would always be in the shadow of the famous master, never entirely overcoming the reputation of being a hard-working, but mediocre copyist. The character of the relationship between the two is questionable, because little evidence is recorded. Dupont died young, in 1797 at the age of 42, and left nothing written. Apart from some complaints about the adolescent apprentice in his letters and the fact that Gainsborough left his nephew almost no money in his will, no meaningful statements appear to exist. Following Gainsborough's death in 1788, Dupont started his own career as a portrait painter and became economically quite successful. His greatest admirer was probably King George III who remarked to Benjamin West "that He thought Gainsborough Dupont's portrait of him[self] was the best likeness that had been painted".⁷

Unfortunately one cannot distinguish between Gainsborough and Gainsborough Dupont through means of technical analysis alone given that Dupont worked as Gainsborough's studio assistant for the most part of his life and thus adopted Gainsborough's methods. Indeed it was to this end that Dupont thrived in later years, acclaimed for his ability to replicate the technique of Gainsborough. Furthermore separating the two artists on basis of painting materials is impossible, the artists sharing the same studio, working alongside each other on paintings such as the portrait of Queen Charlotte, and Dupont even inheriting his masters materials following Gainsborough's death in 1787.

In terms of the materials of the paint layers therefore one cannot say Gainsborough, or Dupont, but merely that the paint bears witness to the materials used by these two artists as opposed to another hand. Close examination and analysis of Gainsborough's paint mixtures in other works has enabled the identification of three main characteristics, consistent also in this painting as evidenced in the example of the green jacket. The first distinguishing feature is the large size of many of the pigment particles, as seen under the microscope (**FIG 19**). Secondly, the choice of a large proportion of translucent pigments for most of his mixtures, as is evident in the cross section which exhibits chunky particles of Prussian blue, earth and lake pigments (**FIG 18**). And finally rather than submerging these large, bright, particles in the opaque matrix which the average admixture of lead white would provide, Gainsborough uses translucent materials such as ground glass or the semi-translucent calcite, allowing light to penetrate the paint film and illuminate the translucent pigments contained within. Samples taken evidence many transparent inclusions, which corroborate this description, though further analysis is required to characterise the specific material.

⁷J. Hayes, 'The Trinity House Group Portrait', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 106, No. 34, (1964).

"COPY AFTER": EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE 1787 GAINSBOROUGH SELF-PORTRAIT

The Courtauld painting was initially said to be a copy of the well-known self-portrait by Thomas Gainsborough R.A., which was presented by Gainsborough's daughter to the Royal Academy of Arts in 1808 where it remains to this day (hereafter referred to as the Royal Academy self-portrait). Gainsborough began this portrait in 1787 for his friend Karl Friedrich Abel who, however, died before it was finished. In a letter from 15th of June 1788, less than 2 months before his death, Gainsborough instructed:

It is my strict charge that after my decease no plaster cast, model, or likeness whatever be permitted to be taken: But that if Mr. Sharp, who engraved Mr. Hunter's print, should choose to make a print from the $\frac{3}{4}$ sketch, which I intended for Mr. Abel, painted by myself, I give free consent.⁸

As a consequence, the painting was often copied, although it was Francesco Bartolozzi rather than 'Mr Sharp' that was the first to make an engraving after the self-portrait in 1798. It is plausible that the Courtauld painting was one of the many copies made after Gainsborough's death, executed by the painter best positioned to execute such a work, Gainsborough's nephew and apprentice, Gainsborough Dupont.

Despite the differing proportions of the two paintings (the head of the sitter in the Courtauld painting positioned higher within the oval frame and the body thus elongated), posture and costume are obviously based upon those in Royal Academy self-portrait. In both versions, Gainsborough is shown in a half-length, positioned within an oval. He is wearing a green frock coat and an orange striped waistcoat falling open to reveal a large neckcloth and turns his proper right shoulder towards the viewer. That it is the Royal Academy painting that is the 'original version', can be verified by the colours and brushmarks, which have been replicated in the Courtauld painting. However, the hand of the Courtauld painting appears to lack the draughtsmanship and understanding of form evident in the 1787 self-portrait. This observation not only supports the preposition that the drapery of the Courtauld painting was executed after that of the 1787 portrait, but also evidences the work of a different hand.

Given the clear attempt to replicate the costume and pose of the Royal Academy portrait, it is all the more astonishing that the Courtauld painting clearly differs from the model regarding the face of the sitter. At first glance it becomes obvious that the age of the sitter is not the same as of Gainsborough in the Royal Academy portrait. The appearance of the Gainsborough as captured in the late 1780's is altogether more gaunt, the features sharper and the expression clearly sceptical, far from the plump face and soft gaze that is captured in the Courtauld painting. Characteristically, Gainsborough looks in the Royal Academy portrait with sharp eyes that gaze slightly scathingly out to the sitter's right left, as is captured with due attention in all the engravings after the painting, whereas in the Courtauld painting his eyes meet frontally those of the beholder. This Gainsborough instead resembles closer the likeness that Johan Zoffany made from Gainsborough in the

⁸ M. Woodall (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, (London, 1963), p.173.

early 1770's.⁹ Both portraits show the soft skin and the slight double chin of the sitter in his 40's; also the dark circles around the eyes of the hard-working painter appear in both versions.

Disparity in the faces of the Courtauld and Royal Academy portraits exists not only in the character but also in the handling and execution. Dupont apparently did not try to copy the loose brushwork and the virtuous colouring of the late Gainsborough, something Dupont is known to have done, especially in the later phase of his career.¹⁰ On the contrary, the face of the Courtauld version is painted with a variety of small brush strokes in many carefully balanced colours. This peculiar touch reminds one not of Dupont but of Gainsborough himself. The very thin grey lines reinforcing the eyelids and wrinkles reappear for instance in Gainsborough's portrait of Mrs. Gainsborough ca. (1779), bought by Samuel Courtauld as the pendant to the painting in question (**FIG 25**). Dupont, however, tended to paint faces with much wider strokes, which usually give them an uneven complexion. Eyes are often modelled with rosy strokes framing the eye and plain grey shadows beneath.¹¹ Having had the opportunity to examine the main body of Dupont's portraiture in the course of this research project, it was possible to draw the conclusion that Dupont never painted a face equal in quality to Gainsborough's face in the Courtauld version either before or thereafter. However, other parts of the head, namely the hair and the lips are conversely stylistically close to Dupont's painting technique. In his portrait of the actor James Middleton the same characteristic mix of brown on grey and fleshy colours in order to create the 'salt and pepper' effect of the hair can be found. Additionally the handling of the upper lip, stiffly outlined in an unnaturally reappears in Middleton's portrait, though in the Courtauld painting, the continuation of this paint stroke over a crack indicates it was a later addition to the face (**FIG 23**).

Bringing together the difference in age and the unequal quality of the face, in most parts of an extremely skilful hand, in others congruent with Dupont's handling, the labelling as a 'Copy after' Gainsborough's self-portrait of 1787, the attribution to Dupont and the dating after the death of Gainsborough seems implausible. The disparity is irreconcilable, and yet the costume and pose is so closely based upon the Royal Academy portrait that it is impossible to deny a certain connection. It was obvious from such observations that the painting did not come about by means of a simple linear progression from conception to completion, but rather the execution was interrupted, ideas were changed and plausibly different hands were responsible for its inconsistent appearance.

⁹ An image is provided by H. Belsey, *Gainsborough's family*, (Sudbury, 1988), fig. 13.

¹⁰ The best example is offered by the series of portraits of the actors of the Covent Garden Theatre, which are today predominantly housed in the Garrick Club. Cf. J. Hayes, 'Thomas Harris, Gainsborough Dupont and the Theatrical Gallery at Belmont', *The Connoisseur*, Vol. 169, (1968).

¹¹ A characteristic portrait is that of James Middleton, today located in the picture gallery of the Garrick Club.

BENEATH THE SURFACE: TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

In order to pursue further the conclusions it was possible to draw from a surface examination of the painting with comparison to other works by both Dupont and Gainsborough, it was important to explore the physical nature of the painting itself. Given the lack of secure information regarding the attribution of the work it was hoped that a thorough technical examination of the physical object might reveal crucial evidence for or against the conclusions that had been drawn thus far.

One of the first forms of examination undertaken was to x-ray the painting, creating an image that maps the density of material in the painting structure. (**FIG 9**). Immediately suspicions were confirmed that the painting was not simply a straight-forward copy of Gainsborough's 1787 self-portrait as had been intimated by a comparison of the two paintings. The x-radiograph clearly revealed a number of significant pentimenti, notably a change in hairstyle, in the stock and neckcloth and in the presence of a dense lead-white-containing flurry of virtuosic brushstrokes in what may be interpreted as a shirt sleeve ruffle, which would indicate that the sitter originally had his proper right arm raised in the manner of Gainsborough's *Portrait of an Unknown Man* of the mid 1750s (**FIG 10**). The number of changes and their significance show the inception of this painting to be rather dramatically different to the finished appearance the viewer is now presented with. Thus it may be surmised that the painting was not initially conceived as an imitation of Gainsborough's 1787 self-portrait but markedly different in pose and costume.

However, the x-ray also drew attention to another feature of the painting, which appeared conversely to agree with supposed imitative nature of the painting. Around the periphery one can see small pinholes evenly spaced around the edge of the canvas that penetrate through the lead white containing ground, though when viewed under the microscope they do not appear to penetrate the upper paint layers (**FIGS 11 & 12**). When connected across the painting, they form a grid system that could plausibly be explained as an artist having divided the primed canvas up in this manner in order to copy or transfer an image in the same vein as a fresco painter might grid up his wall to enlarge and transfer from a design (**FIG 13**). Essentially x-radiography revealed a painting that showed evidence both for a slavish copy and for original artistic creativity, a combination that was not immediately easy to reconcile.

In the same vein, examining the painting under infra red also provided a slightly confusing illumination (**FIG 14**). That there had been a change in the pose of the sitter was certainly substantiated, the infrared-reflectography making obvious the extension of the proper left arm, which was confirmed to be the sleeve of the green jacket through close examination under the microscope (**FIG 19**). There is also an indication of a change to the proper right arm with a strong diagonal shadow, painted over in the final appearance of the painting.

On closer inspection, the infrared-reflectogram also provided evidence of some sketchy drawing lines executed in a carbon containing medium, their fluid brush

nature likely indicating painted lines as opposed to graphite or another dry medium (**FIG 15**). With those around the face it is often hard to distinguish an initial sketch and reinforcing lines, for example the lines that define the edge of the cheek. However, some lines are not visible in the final appearance of the works, notably strong fluid strokes in the lower part of the composition that indicate the shape of the oval (**FIG 16**). A common factor to all these lines is their sureness and confidence. There is no indication of a 'working out' of the composition on the canvas itself, but rather these appear to be rather cursory guide lines that might indicate a sure confidence in the artist's own ability or equally a straight forward copy from a predetermined composition. These painted lines appear not to relate to the final composition but rather the initial composition. Although we could say we have a reasonable certainty that the painting did not begin as a copy of the Royal Academy self-portrait of 1787, the assured nature of the underdrawing could still potentially indicate a copy of a different portrait. The painted lines indicate a sleeve ruffle in a different position, the underdrawing indicating a pose whereby the left arm is raised with hand tucked into the jacket. It seems the pose and costume were initially conceived in a similar style to that of Gainsborough's *Portrait of Samuel Foote*, c. 1772, though the flurry of impasto, lead white containing paint noted in the x-radiograph does not correspond and thus it is likely that there has been multiple stages of alterations.

From the technical evidence thus far, it was therefore reasonable to assume that the painting consists of an initial composition, perhaps unfinished that subsequently underwent a number of changes before being brought to a level of finish in an emulation of the Royal Academy self-portrait. A plausible hypothesis reached in discussion with Hugh Belsey, was that the Courtauld painting was perhaps an unfinished Gainsborough self-portrait (accounting for the finesse and handling of the face), that following Gainsborough's death in August 1788, was brought to completion by Gainsborough Dupont with the addition of the costume and hair found in the 1787 Royal Academy portrait (accounting for the lesser quality of draughtsmanship and the Dupont-esque handling noted in these passages). Due to the pre-existing, raised position of the head, which would appear far more compositionally balanced with the addition of an arm as in the initial composition, the body of the sitter has had to be elongated from the Royal Academy painting source in order to compensate for the greater space assigned to it. This expansion may perhaps provide the explanation for the 'gridding up' of the canvas noted earlier. It is unlikely that Gainsborough himself would compromise the credibility of the body for the sake of a close copy of his own work and it thus appears to have been executed by an artist either lacking the inventiveness to alter the body in a way so that it might better fill the space available, or simply eager to emulate the precise appearance of the Royal Academy self-portrait.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES: EVIDENCE OF THE WORKING METHODS OF GAINSBOROUGH

Although the distinction between the hand of Gainsborough and Dupont largely relies on stylistic analysis, as previously explained, in order to verify the plausibility of the underlying composition being attributed as unfinished self-portrait by Gainsborough, it was important to explore the level of consistency with the known working method and materials of Thomas Gainsborough, as described by his contemporaries and as evidenced in his portrait paintings.

In terms of the construction of a portrait, in Gainsborough's own words it was likeness that was 'the principal beauty and intention'.¹² Ozias Humphrey, describing Gainsborough's painting technique in the early 1760s, records his method of working to this end, in a very subdued light, either by candlelight or a 'kind of darkened Twilight' enabling him to depict 'the masses and general forms of his models with the utmost exactness'.¹³ The general forms would be marked out with 'dead colour', in the instance of Gainsborough's *Countess Howe*, painted circa 1764, in a grey underpaint over the red ground.¹⁴ Although not providing conclusive evidence, such a grey underlayer was similarly found in the Courtauld painting. Sample 1 taken from a damage in the collar of the green coat evidences a warm grey layer applied directly to the commercially-prepared ground layer and beneath the subsequent layers of green paint that models the drapery (**FIG 17**). Despite the presence of this underlayer found only in this single sample, the good condition of the work did not facilitate many sample sites and the only other sample taken from the face and body of the sitter did not include the lower layers of the painting. Thus, although the sample is not conclusive, there is at least a suggestion that a similar grey 'dead colour' was used to sketch the general forms.

Gainsborough's manner of oil painting, as employed in these initial layers of the composition, particularly in the costume and backgrounds of his portraits, has a certain affinity to the traditional watercolour technique of applying thin translucent washes over a light-coloured ground. His daughter Margaret recalled that her father works with very dilute paint, describing how 'his colours were very liquid and if he did not hold the palette right would run over'.¹⁵ The paint was presumably diluted with oil of turpentine, mentioned in painting literature of the time as a suitable thinner for oil-paint, for example in Robert Dossie's treatise of 1758, which also refers to it as of assistance in hastening drying.¹⁶ As a result of the evaporation of the solvent during the drying of the diluted oil paint film, fairly broad shrinkage cracks may often be found in the thinly painted background elements of Gainsborough's works, as evident in the sky of *Dr Schomberg*, the

¹² Postscript to a letter addressed to Lord Dartmouth and dated Bath 13 April 1771, published in J. Hayes (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, (New Haven and London, 2001), p. 90.

¹³ O. Humphry, MS, Royal Academy, London.

¹⁴ R. Jones, 'The development of the portrait of Countess Howe', p. 37.

¹⁵ W.T. Whitley, *Thomas Gainsborough*, Smith, Elder & Co, (London, 1915), p. 81.

¹⁶ R. Dossie, *The Handmaid to the Arts*, Vol. 1, J. Nourse, (London, 1758), p. 151.

pronounced drying cracks around the sitters head revealing the light-coloured ground beneath. Given the evidence of transmitted light, suggesting the thinness of the paint film, (**FIG 8**) it is plausible that the drying cracks evident in the background of the Courtauld painting are also the result of this drying process.

Additionally the working method of describing the 'masses and general forms' is corroborated by the fact that the 'masses' worked up at this stage can be seen as emphasised in the x-ray (**FIG 9**) in the same vein as in Gainsborough's portrait of the *Earl of Howe*, painted around 1764, a dense lead white containing paint used to emphasize the intended highlights of the facial features.¹⁷ John Thomas Smith (1766-1833), who, as a young man, visited Gainsborough on several occasions, noted these initial stages as executed 'with pencils on sticks full six feet in length'.¹⁸ These brushes were hogshair fitches, stiff enough to leave their mark in the poppy oil (generally agreed to be the least colour changing of the drying oils) that Gainsborough chose over his usual linseed oil for the passages of pure white, due to a concern over the yellowing of his paint medium in the lighter colour.¹⁹ Although the binding media of the Courtauld painting has not undergone organic analysis, it is interesting to note the texture of the dense lead white 'masses' that remains evident on the surface of the work, despite the application of subsequent layers, the wide textured strokes perhaps suggesting the combination of hogshair fitches and poppy oil bound lead white paint has been employed here too.

As Ozias continues 'Having thus settled the Ground Work of his Portraits he let in (of necessity) more light for the finishing of them' working the faces up to a high degree of finish as is evident in the finely modelled face seen in the Courtauld painting.²⁰ The face of Thomas Gainsborough has been subtly modelled with fine brush strokes describing the gentle modulations of the soft, plump flesh and the eye sockets have been created with a range of pastel tones of pink, purple and yellow, blended proportionately to describe the highlights and the grey shadows beneath the eyes. As previously noted, a similar modelling can be noted in Gainsborough's portrait of *Margaret Gainsborough, née Burr* of 1778, the fine grey wrinkles that allude to her age, created by a similar network of fine pastel brushwork. Both of these paintings also evidence Gainsborough's tendency to absolute likeness without flattering omissions, Ozias Humphrey stating that 'exact resemblance in his portraits was Mr Gainsborough's constant aim'.²¹

Gainsborough's method of working up his faces to such a high degree of finish was identified by the public at large as a display of artistic skill to be praised in proportion to its evidence. Indeed many critics recognised Gainsborough's

¹⁷ R. Jones, 'The development of the portrait of Countess Howe' in A. French (ed.), *The Earl and Countess Howe by Gainsborough, a bicentenary exhibition*, (English Heritage, 1988), p. 40.

¹⁸ . Hayes (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, (New Haven and London, 2001), p. 5.

¹⁹ D. Bomford, A. Roy & D. Sanders, 'Gainsborough's 'Dr Ralph Schomberg'', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, Vol. 12, (London, 1988), p.48.

²⁰ O. Humphry, MS, Royal Academy, London.

²¹ O. Humphry, MS, Royal Academy, London.

remarkable skill as displayed in the finish of his faces, but also would complain that the 'subordinate drapery parts appeared unfinished and, as one such critic wrote in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1778, Gainsborough seemed only to have taken trouble with the heads.²² These methods and this order of execution may explain the disparity between the face and costume of Gainsborough in the Courtauld portrait. The stage at which an unfinished portrait by Gainsborough may have been left, akin to numerous other examples positively attributed, was at this point of the process; the face highly worked up whilst the rest remained as cursory forms. In order to 'finish' such a portrait therefore, the body was required to be worked up, agreeing with the blockier and broader handling of the costume that sits slightly at odds with the finesse of the paint and on stylistic grounds appears to evidence another hand.

From this stage Gainsborough is known to have worked to complete the figure and background.²³ Though the '*scratches and marks*' that form the final surface of the costume and background of Gainsborough's finished portraits may at close quarters appear less deliberate and skilled than the highly finished faces, Gainsborough was extremely proud of these finishing touches and their power of exciting wonder, for as Reynolds uncharacteristically admired, though on close observation they may seem meaningless, with distance they '*by a kind of magic assume form*'.²⁴

Comparing the final surface of the costume in the Courtauld painting, to that of Gainsborough's last self-portrait of 1787, upon which it is clearly based a number of distinctions may be made with regards to this transmutation of meaningless matter into meaningful form, the hand of the Courtauld painting appearing to lack the draughtsmanship and understanding of form evident in the 1787 self-portrait. To take but one example, whereas Gainsborough catches the shimmer of the edge of the thin ruffled neckcloth through a single stroke of white paint, turning the brush as he paints to create a swelling and tapering line, the artist of the Courtauld painting in pursuit of the same expressive style has instead attempted to enforce the edge of the linen ruffle by a rapidly executed stroke of brown-black paint (FIG?). However, rather than distinguishing the neckcloth from the striped waistcoat as intended, this mark instead completely obscures the legibility of the three-dimensional form. Thus although the artist who executed these final stages evidently adopts Gainsborough's manner of painting in his completion of the costume, with the loose handling of a stiff brush, in comparison to that of the Royal Academy portrait on which it was based, one might reasonably conclude that it falls short of the meaningful form Gainsborough achieves; it lacks that little bit of 'magic'.

²² Critic in the *Morning Chronicle* reviewing Gainsborough's paintings in the 1778 exhibition, quoted in Whitley 1915, p.156.

²³ R. Jones, 'The development of the portrait of Countess Howe', p. 39.

²⁴ J. Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. R. Wark, (London, 1966), p. 220.

THE QUESTION OF DATING

The aforementioned observations of the younger, fresher faced appearance of the sitter in comparison to the Royal Academy self-portrait seems to intimate that the unfinished Gainsborough self-portrait, to which campaign the face belongs, was executed prior to 1787. Given the closer resemblance to Johan Zoffany's portrait of Thomas Gainsborough executed in 1772, this date may be taken as a plausible suggestion, based on stylistic evidence alone. However there were further salient features that may offer a more secure dating to the unfinished portrait that lies beneath the later alterations.

With regards to materials and techniques the preparation of the canvas is of particular significance in considering a terminus post quem for the early stages of execution of this work as Gainsborough's choice of ground systematically alters throughout his career as a result of his geographical location. The earliest paintings from Gainsborough's London period are generally painted on a beige ground, sometimes covered by a warm wash or more often on a cool grey ground in the manner of the Dutch landscape painters that he admired and copied, for example *Gainsborough's Forest* of 1748, on a steely grey ground and *Mr and Mrs Andrews* c. 1748-9 where the beige-grey ground has been left exposed in the area of Mrs. Andrew's lap that remains unfinished. However, by the early 1750s Gainsborough had changed to varying shades of red grounds such as the pinkish red ground that is evident in the unfinished sketches of his two daughters, believed to be of the late 1750s. These coloured grounds can be found under almost all of his Bath period pictures, with the exception of the occasional landscape from the late 1760s onwards, including *Going to Market*, for which he reverts to a pale grey or white ground. From the time of his return to London in the summer of 1774 until the end of his life Gainsborough's grounds are invariably either pale grey or beige, occasionally modified with a warm pinkish wash or a cool grey. It is possible that once he had moved back to London, he would have had access to suppliers of ready-prepared canvases and therefore adapted his painting to the conventional pale ground, but that during his years in Ipswich and Bath he may have been priming his own canvases and thus adapted his colour to suit his purpose.²⁵

The Courtauld painting has been executed on a fine plain weave canvas to which has been applied a single, even layer of priming seen in cross section (**FIG 17**). This preparatory layer has been identified by energy dispersive x-ray spectroscopy, EDX, as a mixture of lead white and calcium carbonate, probably bound in oil although the medium has not been analysed. It is also possible to visually identify a very small proportion of iron oxide earth pigments and carbon black, which has resulted in a pale beige tonality. Considered in light of the standard canvas size of 30x25 inches, the primed canvas is likely to have been a standard commercial product. In light of the pale beige commercial priming evident on this painting, it may therefore be established that the first stage of the painting was likely initiated following Gainsborough's return to London in 1774.

²⁵ R. Jones, 'The development of the portrait of Countess Howe', p. 41.

The second means by which it may be possible to date the unfinished portrait is by reconstruction of the costume through the evidence provided by technical analysis of the work. Gainsborough's interest in likenesses extended not merely to accurate portraiture, but to painting his sitters in contemporary dress, scathing of the practise of classicising people in Van Dyck dress or with the air of the antique 'like Scaramouches'.²⁶ Indeed, Gainsborough's concern with contemporary fashion can be seen in his alteration of *The Linley Sisters* painted c. 1771-72 though reworked in 1785. The X-radiograph of this painting, which displays the reworking, evidences a preoccupation with keeping the fashions displayed up to date; the hairline lowered, the ear covered with a lock of hair, the waistline of Elizabeth's gown made higher by the addition of a fringed belt and the simplification and shortening of the frothy sleeve all in-keeping with the progression of fashions in the decade between painting campaigns.²⁷ By dating the costume of the unfinished portrait therefore, a likely date may be proposed for execution.

By means of x-radiography, infrared-reflectography, cross section analysis and mere observation of the surface, several statements can be made regarding Gainsborough's dress in the first stages of execution. Gainsborough wears in the painting's current appearance a green frock coat with two buttons visible (one suggested just to the right of the base of the neckcloth) and an orange striped waistcoat falling open to reveal a large, predominantly white neckcloth tied in a bow. He seems to wear his natural hair falling slightly over the front. All this refers to the Gainsborough self-portrait from 1787. Through a combination of the x-ray and infrared images obtained, it is possible to produce a plausible recreation of the initial costume design (**FIG 26**) in which the sitter wears a formal coat, which appears to be collarless, beneath which a waistcoat can be seen. Around the sitter's neck is worn a stock (a stiffened piece of linen folded to make a band and buckled behind at the back of the neck) which leaves the shirt-front uncovered revealing the modest shirt ruffle. The costume recreated adhering as close as possible to the technical evidence of the painting, closely resembles that of *Samuel Foote*, a portrait of the early 1770s, whose pose is also noted as comparable. Contrary to the depiction now evident, the sitter did not wear his natural hair lightly powdered as in the 1787 self-portrait, but rather the hair swept back from the high forehead with two rolls of hair curling inwards at the side, shows the sitter to be wearing a tye-wig. In this way the initial rendering appears similar to the sketch of Gainsborough by Johan Zoffany, executed in 1772, not only in age but also in fashion.

²⁶ H. Glanville, 'Gainsborough as Artist and Artisan', *A Nest of Nightingales: Thomas Gainsborough The Linley Sisters*, (Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1988), p.17.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 18.

FOUR STAGES OF EXECUTION:

The physical evidence provided by the investigation, both technical and art historical, of the Courtauld portrait of Thomas Gainsborough, was complex and often difficult to consolidate into a single course of execution. However, as the painting's secrets slowly revealed themselves, so too did a plausible path emerge that might explain the painting's evolution from conception to completion. The hypothesis that amounted proposes four individual stages of execution.

STAGE ONE

A head and body was blocked out onto a commercially primed canvas, the general 'masses and forms' of the face modelled as was Gainsborough's method for capturing the sitter's likeness. It is likely Gainsborough would have used two mirrors to capture his own likeness with the same scrutiny he studied others.

Given the ground composition, this portrait was begun after Gainsborough returned to London in 1774, though the suggestion that it was executed not long after, within the 1770s is corroborated by the face of the sitter who appears to be a man of around the age of Gainsborough at this time – mid 40s. This move to London would also provide a possible explanation for the execution of a self-portrait. Relocating in a new setting necessitated re-establishing himself and his artistic business, and therefore an artist might take the time to produce a current self-portrait as an advertisement of his technical ability. Such a project was perhaps abandoned on the uptake of new clientele to focus on the profitable commissions they afforded.

STAGE TWO

At some point during the process it appears that the canvas was raised, incorporating a section of unprimed canvas within the picture plane, following which the feigned oval was added (**FIG 27**). Given the consistency of the preparatory underdrawing in the oval and the left arm of the sitter, which was subsequently painted out, it is reasonable to conclude that at this stage the pose of the sitter was something in line with that seen in the portrait of *Samuel Foote*. That this was completed relatively soon after the commencement of this portrait is implied by the dating of this stage of the costume to the early 1770s.²⁸

A similar anomaly of the inclusion of unprimed canvas, found in Dupont's painting of William Thomas Lewis in the National Portrait Gallery, was there explained as the unprimed selvage edge having been opened out and flattened during relining after which it formed the lower area of the painting, roughly one inch into the picture plane.²⁹ However evidence against this explanation for our portrait is provided by the continuation of the small puncture holes around the perimeter of the canvas into the unprimed section of canvas. As we suggest that these holes may be connected to the Dupont stage of execution, the canvas would have had to

²⁸ Personal communication with Aileen Ribiero, Professor Emeritus of Dress, Courtauld Institute of Art, May 2012.

²⁹ NPG Examination Report, William Thomas Lewis by Gainsborough Dupont, August 5, 1994, Cat. Nr. 5148, Archive of the National Portrait Gallery.

have been shifted prior to his alterations. Evidence is further provided by the canvas distortion evident around three sides of the canvas. Stretching the canvas and securing at intervals with tacks to the stretcher or strainer leads to a distortion in the weave of the canvas along the periphery, termed cusping. This is then imprinted in the ground and paint layers. Although this distortion appears even along the sides of the canvas, indicating a minimal amount of the picture plane was lost when the painting was cut down during lining, a huge disparity can be seen at the top and bottom. Along the bottom edge one can see the full extent of the cusping and the tack holes of the original tacking margin before the canvas was restretched, which have been subsequently filled, but along the top no cusping is evident. If we were to propose the original position of the canvas based on an even cusping along all four edges one can see that the position of the oval would be extremely strangely placed, hence the proposition that it was added after the canvas position was altered.

STAGE THREE

The painting was presumably discarded at some point, likely with the face highly worked but the body remaining in the preliminary stages as evidenced by the state of the proper left arm, in which a reserve has been left for the shirt cuff without any positive application of paint. The painting appears to have then been reworked further at a later stage, at which point the second cuff, executed in a dense lead white containing paint, as seen in the x-ray (**FIG 9**), was added. Whether further changes were implemented at this stage is uncertain but it appears the body remained in a state of unfinish.

These multiple stages of reworking which we attribute to Gainsborough may be contextualised with two main observations. Firstly, Gainsborough can often be seen to change, modify and develop his ideas and numerous examples of his works may be cited in which the paintings are filled with pentimenti and signs of re-working. In the portrait of the *Countess of Howe* for instance, it was not until an advanced stage, the portrait nearing completion, that Gainsborough began the radical re-working of the composition, leaving the face and head barely changed (with the exception of minor adjustments to the hat) but leaving hardly anything from the shoulders downwards untouched.³⁰ The painting *Coastal Scene with Shipping, Figure and Cottage* is further proof of this tendency, the first use of the canvas being an unfinished landscape which was then inverted and formed an early conversation piece of the late 1740s/early 1750s and later, between 1788 and 1840, altered by another hand to become a full landscape.³¹ Secondly, one must take into account the greater freedom afforded by this painting as a self-portrait. Without the demands of a patron to meet and with no specified levels of finish to be achieved, Gainsborough had complete flexibility for experimentation such as repositioning a canvas, or marking in a cuff when considering an alternative pose. Furthermore without a deadline to meet, it is a painting that

³⁰ R. Jones, 'The development of the portrait of Countess Howe', p. 39.

³¹ R. Jones, J. Townsend, E. Einberg & H. Belsey, 'A Lost early conversation piece by Thomas Gainsborough', in *Studying Old Master Paintings – Technology and Practice: The National Gallery Technical Bulletin 30th Anniversary Conference Postprints*, (London, 2009), pp. 194-200.

would remain in the artist's studio, discarded when commissions were plentiful and picked up when business was slower and time could be expended on the less immediately profitable task of a self-portrait.

STAGE FOUR

Following Gainsborough's portrait of 1787, and likely following his death in 1788, the portrait was altered by Gainsborough Dupont with the addition of the drapery seen in the self portrait of 1787 at the Royal Academy. The drapery has had to be elongated to fit the raised head position of the Courtauld portrait and in order to copy and extend the forms in this manner it appears that Dupont squared up the canvas by means of a grid system, evidenced by the small puncture holes penetrating the ground and paint layers around the periphery of the canvas (**FIG 13**). The continuation of these small puncture holes into the unprimed section of canvas attributed to Dupont's later contribution to the painting, provides further evidence that the positional change of the canvas occurred prior to this stage.

FINISHING TOUCHES: ATTRIBUTING THE FINAL REWORKING TO GAINSBOROUGH DUPONT

Many paintings by Gainsborough were altered by him or by others after their completion.³² Gainsborough Dupont was best placed to do so. As son of Gainsborough's eldest sister Sarah he became in 1772 the only studio assistant Gainsborough ever had in the age of 18. He worked principally as an engraver of his uncle's works and began about a year after his death to set himself up as a portrait painter. There are only few records of much works in oil he accomplished during his apprenticeship. Dupont is certainly known to have painted the draperies together with his uncle for the full-length of Queen Charlotte in only a single night, to have been responsible for painting a dog in a Gainsborough painting – a rather prestigious subject and important element – only shortly after he became apprenticed, and to have copied landscapes after Gainsborough.³³ It seems unlikely, though, that Dupont did not also learn to paint portraits in oil under Gainsborough's tutelage, given that Gainsborough was primarily renowned for his portraiture. In the course of the research several undated portraits in oil that appeared to be by Dupont after Gainsborough were noted encountered, for instance a whole series of portraits of the Prime Minister William Pitt. Dupont, in any case, was known for his ability to render good likenesses and had much training in copying his uncle's portraits in engravings.³⁴ To this day, many of Gainsborough's paintings are not definitively attributed, and it seems almost always an attribution to his nephew is in debate.

After Gainsborough's death, Dupont took over the uncle's painting rooms at Schomberg House and continued in business there until 1793. It was only when Mrs Gainsborough moved to Sloane Street that Dupont moved away.³⁵ In the studio a multitude of Gainsborough's unfinished paintings, among them many portraits, remained. In the sales catalogue of the studio sale organised in 1797 after Dupont's early death, 33 portraits are listed which are attributed to Thomas Gainsborough and 9 unnamed.³⁶ Even amongst the unnamed at least one has since been attributed, upon good evidence, to Gainsborough: a portrait of Mr. Quin.³⁷ It is easy to imagine that one of these originally was an unfinished portrait, which

³² The portrait of Mrs Samuel Kilderbee from about 1757 is only one example of many portraits by Gainsborough, which were altered at a later stage both by Gainsborough and other painters. Cf. J. Hayes, *Gainsborough – Paintings and Drawings*, (London, 1975), pl. 37, p. 217.

³³ J. Hayes, *The landscape paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, (Ithaca, 1982), p. 188.

³⁴ Cf. J. Hayes, 'The Trinity House Group Portrait', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 106 (1964).

³⁵ J. Hayes, *The landscape paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, (Ithaca, 1982), p. 187

³⁶ Christie, Sharp and Harper, *A Catalogue of a valuable Collection of Pictures, Drawings, Copper Plates, &c. The Property, and principally the Works of the esteemed and excellent Artist Mr. Gainsborough Dupont, dec.*, April 10, 1797, NPG034441b, Archive of the National Portrait Gallery.

³⁷ An image is provided here:

<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/405949/james-quin-1693-1766>

Dupont subsequently completed in the style and manner that Gainsborough had begun.

With regards to family portraits this is all the more plausible given the vogue for portrait sets in the later eighteenth-century. Certainly it would not have been the only portrait Dupont copied after Gainsborough's portraits of the family. In the sales catalogue of Dupont's nephew Richard Gainsborough Dupont, recording a sale held in 1874, can be found next to a list of four family portraits by Gainsborough, three family portraits listed by Dupont after Gainsborough.³⁸ These are a portrait of one of the two Miss Gainsborough (14 in. by 17 in. upright), a portrait of Humphrey Gainsborough (24.5 in. by 29 in. upright) and a copy of a sketch painted by Gainsborough in blue pencil (14.5 in. by 16.1 in. upright).³⁹

A later alteration of Gainsborough's self-portrait by Dupont would also be in accordance with the provenance of the Courtauld version. The portrait is first mentioned in a sale organized by Richard Lane on 7th of July 1838 where it was bought in.⁴⁰ Richard Lane was the second son of Sophia Lane, a cousin of Mary and Margaret Gainsborough and executor of Margaret's will. In 1841, the Courtauld version was finally sold to William Sharpe together with two portraits of Margaret Burr, and one each of the brothers Humphrey Gainsborough and John Gainsborough. The Gainsborough family was large and obviously many family members held some portraits of their relatives. Dupont's version of the self-portrait is likely to have been kept in a close family context, especially after the original had been given away in 1808 by Margaret Gainsborough to the Royal Academy. The Sharpe family showed the portrait of Gainsborough and the one of Mrs. Gainsborough until today in the Courtauld Gallery as pendants.⁴¹ Samuel Courtauld, the son of Mrs. Sharpe, bought the two paintings in 1932 for the Gallery. From a note in the object file, which is copied from notes by Mrs. Sharpe, it becomes clear that the Sharpes paid for all five portraits 100 pounds. The portrait of John Gainsborough, however, later was sold, being "a poor piece". The Courtauld version of the Gainsborough self-portrait was regarded as by Gainsborough himself until 1933, when it became attributed to Dupont whilst in the collection of the Courtauld Gallery. There are, however, no records of the reasons for the re-attribution.

In light of such context, Dupont is likely to have had good "external" reasons for finishing Gainsborough's self-portrait. Within the family context, certainly, but also amongst friends and admirers of Gainsborough, there was a strong interest in

³⁸ The recorded portraits by Gainsborough show his brother John, two times his brother-in-law Philipp Dupont and once himself. Cf. Wheeler, Westoby, *Ancient and Modern Pictures, Engravings, Drawings, Silver Plate, Books, &c. of Richard Gainsborough Dupont, Esq. Deceased*, May 29, 1874, NPG034441b, Archive of the National Portrait Gallery.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ E. Waterhouse, *Gainsborough*, (London, 1958), p.69.

⁴¹ They were shown as pendants both at the Loan Exhibition at Highgate in 1907 organized by D. Carol Thomson and at the National Portrait Exhibition of the South Kensington Museum in 1867.

the possession of an authentic portrait of the deceased or even of a complete set of the members of the Gainsborough family. Moreover, also a relevant “internal” reason may be supposed – Dupont, standing for the first time on his own feet, might simply have wanted to demonstrate to himself his ability to complete the self-image of his master in a technique and in a style characteristic of both apprentice and master.

A FRUITFUL COLLABORATION: CONCLUDING REMARKS

The evidence presented as a result of this research project has led to the reattribution of this former 'copy after a Gainsborough self portrait of 1787' as an unfinished self portrait by Thomas Gainsborough executed upon or soon after his return to London in 1774 and which, remaining in his studio, was reworked a number of times by Gainsborough himself. Following his death in 1788, its final reworking can be attributed to Gainsborough Dupont, whose completion of the costume and hair was modelled on Gainsborough's self-portrait of 1787. The strength of the evidence here presented is a testament to the achievements of this interdisciplinary collaboration; the authors are in absolute agreement that such a comprehensive hypothesis, combining the technical evidence of the physical work of art with relevant historical and contextual research, could not have been reached individually. As a result of the findings of this project, discussions have ensued regarding the exhibition of the painting, possibly alongside other examples of Gainsborough's self-portraits, including the Royal Academy painting of 1787. Though the painting had remained in storage for many years since being dismissed as 'only a Gainsborough Dupont version', the complex evolution of the painting has renewed the interest of art historians, curators and conservators alike.

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Photographs taken by Alysia Sawicka unless otherwise stated

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- FIGURE 02** Before treatment photograph of the verso of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*.
- FIGURE 03** Photograph detail of restorer's label situated on the reverse of the loose lining, stapled across the back of the frame. Paper label with ink inscription reading '1895. Mr Gainsborough. New Canvases & Varnished by Mr Dyer & Mr Beck'.
- FIGURE 04** Photograph detail of exhibition label on reverse of the stretcher. Printed label with details completed in ink reading 'NATIONAL PORTRAIT EXHIBITION, Number on List: 1, Portrait of: Gainsborough (By Gainsbor'), Name and Address of Owner} Wm Sharpe Esq. 1 Highbury Terrace Islington, N.B. – This label is to be affixed to the back of the frame (not the canvas) of the painting'.
- FIGURE 05** Before treatment photograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* taken under ultraviolet light.
- FIGURE 06** Photograph detail of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* taken during treatment, illustrating the visual effect of the removal of the layers of discoloured varnish.
- FIGURE 07** Photograph detail of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* taken after varnish removal.
- FIGURE 08** Photograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* taken with transmitted light.
- FIGURE 09** X-Radiograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*.
- FIGURE 10** Overlay of photograph and x-radiograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* with artistic pentimenti indicated.
- FIGURE 11** X-Radiograph detail of small holes seen evenly spaced around the perimeter of the canvas.
- FIGURE 12** Photomicrograph illustrating the small holes visible on the surface of the painting.

- FIGURE 13** X-Radiograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* with proposed grid system superimposed. Once connected the small holes form a grid, plausibly a method of marking out the canvas in order to copy a composition. Holes situated along the bottom of the canvas where they continue into the unprimed canvas are less evident in the x-radiograph.
- FIGURE 14** Infrared-Reflectogram of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*
- FIGURE 15** Infrared-Reflectogram of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* with underdrawing indicated.
- FIGURE 16** Infrared-Reflectogram detail of the proper left arm of the sitter, subsequently painted out, illustrating the underdrawing around the wrist and the oval framing device.
- FIGURE 17** Cross Section Sample 1 taken from an area of light green paint in the collar of the sitter. The sample shows evidence of a pale beige priming layer, a warm grey underlayer and two layers of green paint separated by organic interlayers.
- FIGURE 18** Cross Section Sample 2 taken from an area of dark green paint in the coat of the sitter. The sample shows evidence of large particles of glassy and transparent pigments including a lake pigment and Prussian Blue.
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- FIGURE 20** Photomicrograph from an area of drying cracks along the left edge of the painting, illustrating a pigmented resinous material pooled in the drying cracks, identified as a glazy retouching applied over the background.
- FIGURE 21** Photomicrograph of retouching over age crack in the face of the sitter.
- FIGURE 22** Photomicrograph of retouching in the sleeve of the green coat, the campaign distinguishable by the characteristic fine, parallel strokes of paint.
- FIGURE 23** Photomicrograph of reinforcement of the upper lip, the paint stroke continuing over a crack that had formed previously, indication that the reinforcement was a later addition and not contemporary to the painting of the face.

- FIGURE 24** *Mrs Gainsborough, née Margaret Burr*, Thomas Gainsborough, c.1778, Oil on Canvas, 766mm x 638mm, The Courtauld Gallery, London.
(Photograph courtesy of the Courtauld Gallery, London)
- FIGURE 25** Photograph details of the faces portrayed in *Mrs Gainsborough, née Margaret Burr* and *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*.
(Photograph of the former courtesy of the Courtauld Gallery, London)
- FIGURE 26** Diagram suggesting the initial conception of costume and pose, connected to the earliest stages of painting. The proposed costume was constructed on the basis of evidence provided by both the x-radiograph and the infrared-reflectogram, together with the superficial observations made.
- FIGURE 27** Diagram suggesting the repositioning of the canvas to incorporate the previous tacking margin into the picture plane. The position of the oval suggests that this element may have been added after the canvas was repositioned in this manner.

ILLUSTRATIONS



FIG 1 - Before treatment photograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*, formerly attributed to Gainsborough Dupont, Oil on Canvas, 763mm x 633mm, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

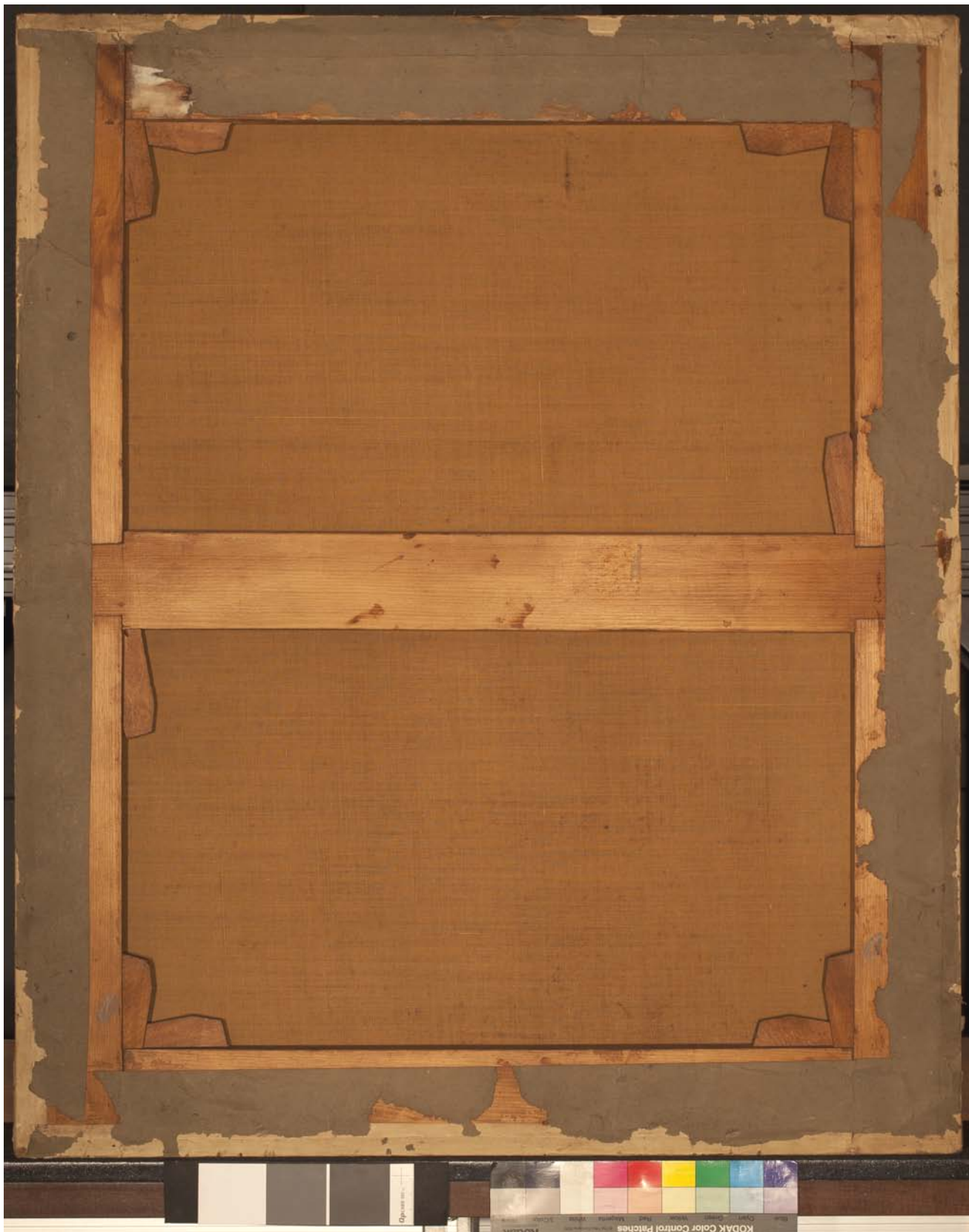


FIG 2 – Before treatment photograph of the verso of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*.

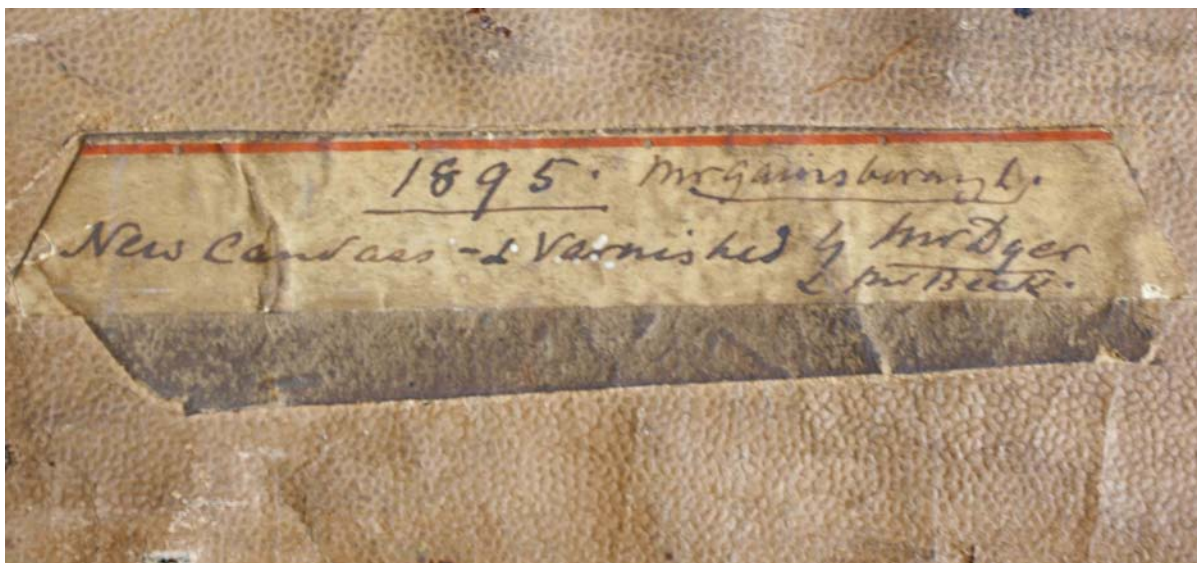


FIG 3 – Photograph detail of restorer's label situated on the reverse of the loose lining, stapled across the back of the frame. Paper label with ink inscription reading '1895. Mr Gainsborough. New Canvases & Varnished by Mr Dyer & Mr Beck'.



FIG 4 – Photograph detail of exhibition label on reverse of the stretcher. Printed label with details completed in ink reading 'NATIONAL PORTRAIT EXHIBITION, Number on List: 1, Portrait of: Gainsborough (By Gainsbor)', Name and Address of Owner} Wm Sharpe Esq. 1 Highbury Terrace Islington, N.B. – This label is to be affixed to the back of the frame (not the canvas) of the painting'.



FIG 5 - Before treatment photograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* taken under ultraviolet light.



FIG 6 – Photograph detail of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* taken during treatment, illustrating the visual effect of the removal of the layers of discoloured varnish.



FIG 7 – Photograph detail of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* taken after varnish removal.

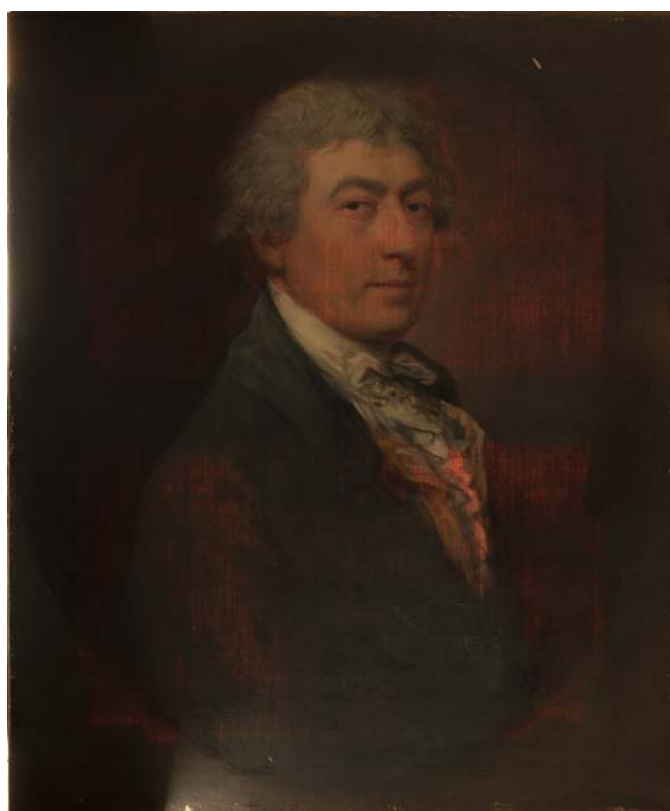


FIG 8 – Photograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* taken with transmitted light.

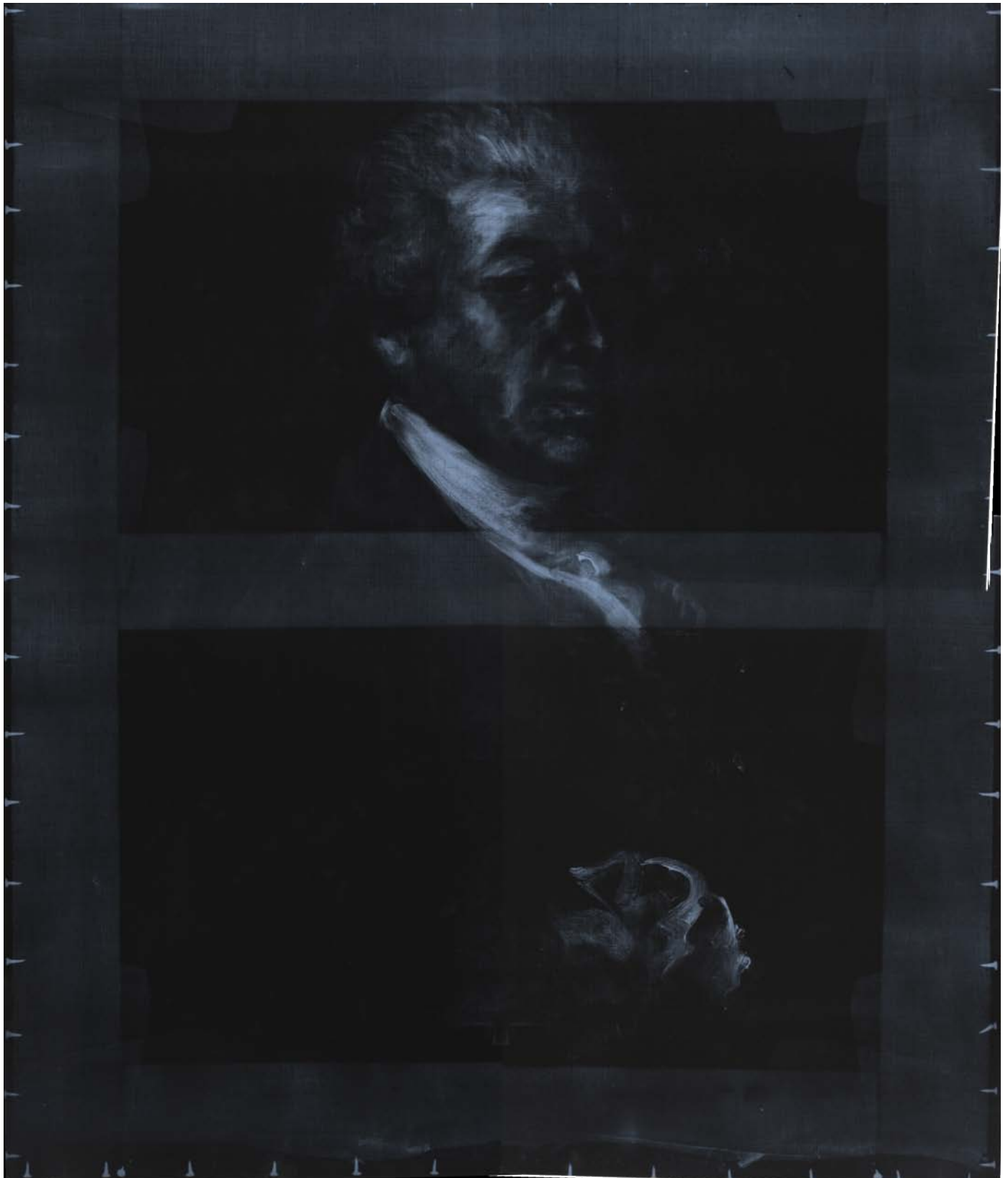


FIG 9 – X-Radiograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*.



FIG 10 – Overlay of photograph and x-radiograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* with artistic pentimenti indicated in green.

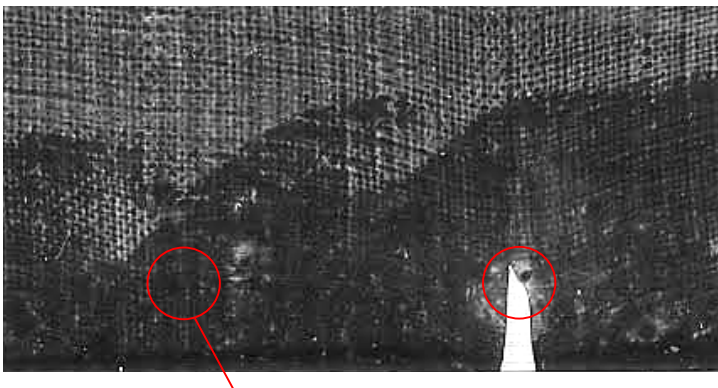


FIG 11 – X-Radiograph detail of small holes seen evenly spaced around the perimeter of the canvas.

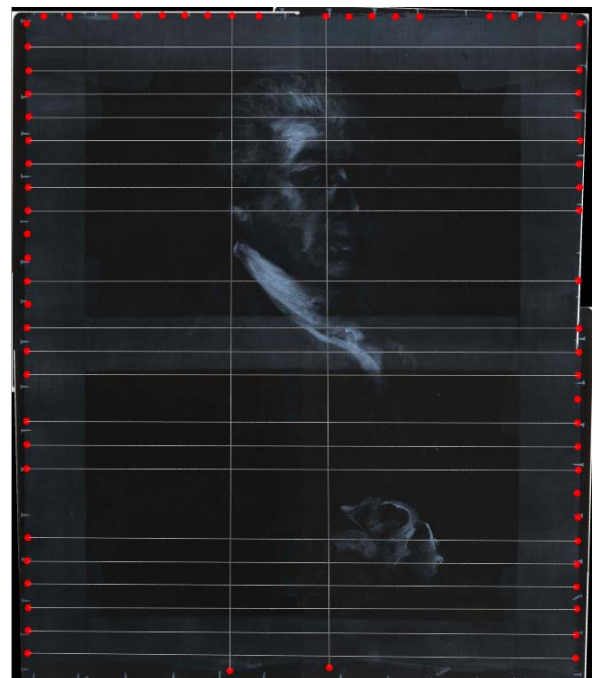
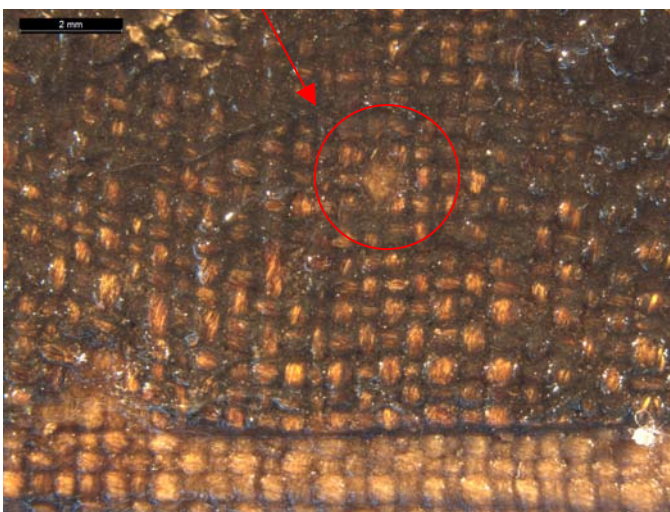


FIG 13 – X-Radiograph of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* with proposed grid system superimposed. Once connected the small holes form a grid, plausibly a method of marking out the canvas in order to copy a composition. Holes situated along the bottom of the canvas where they continue into the unprimed canvas are less evident in the x-radiograph.

FIG 12 – Photomicrograph illustrating the small holes visible on the surface of the painting.

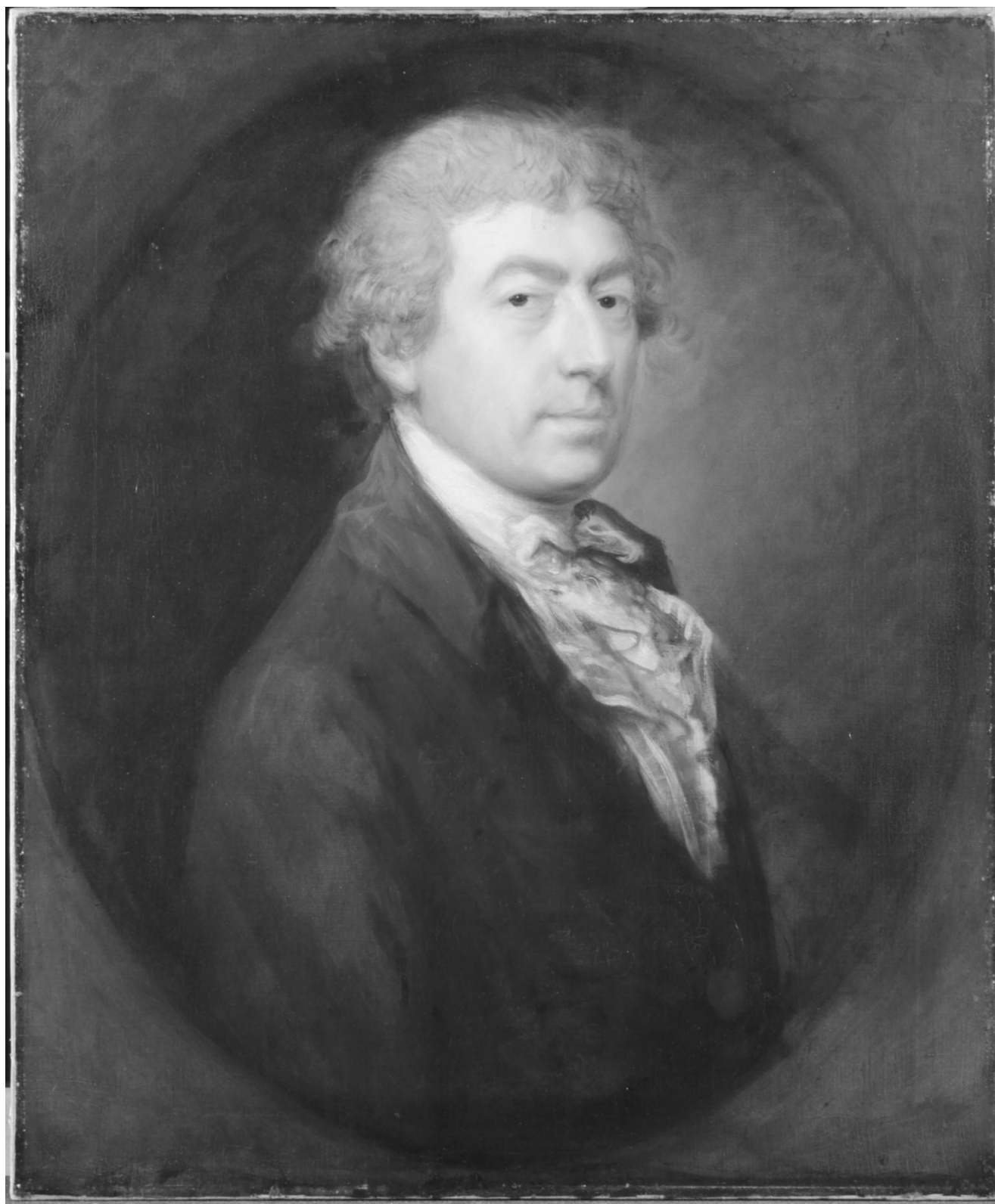


FIG 14 – Infrared-Reflectogram of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*.

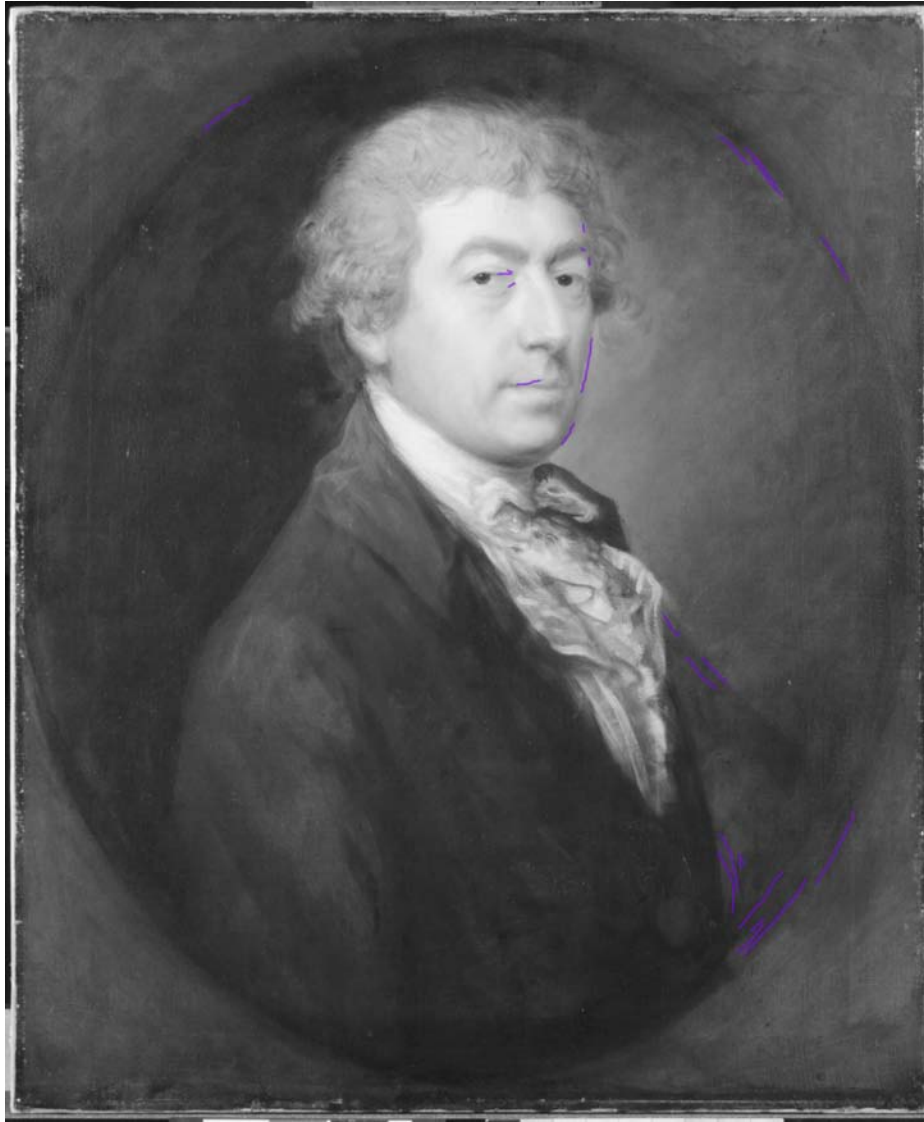


FIG 15 – Infrared-Reflectogram of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough* with underdrawing indicated in purple.

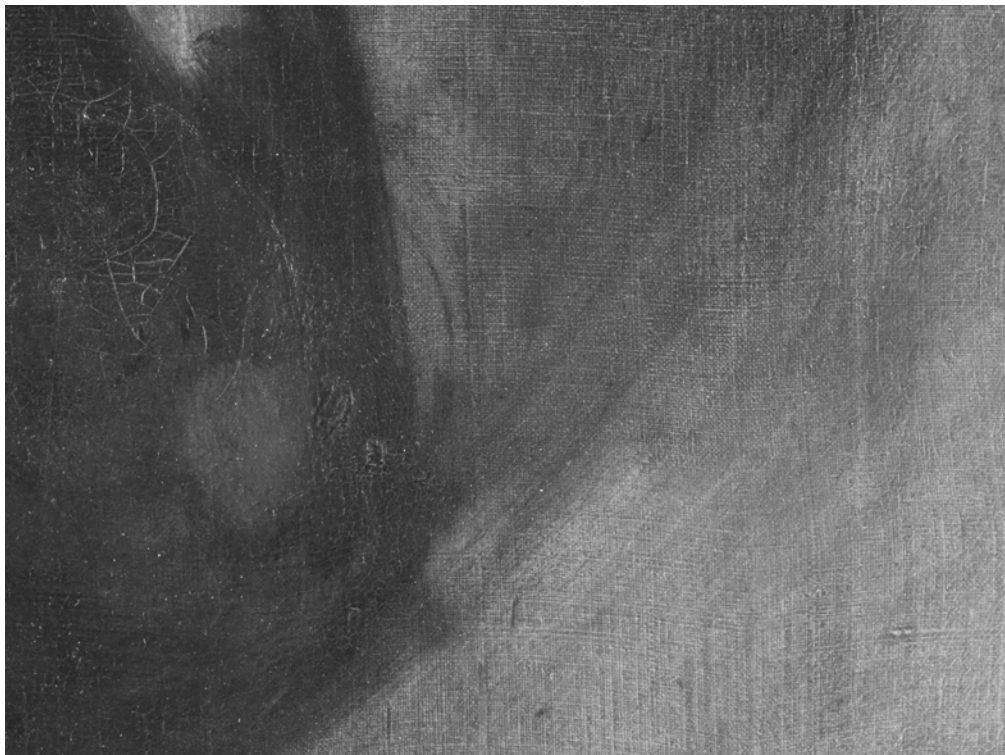


FIG 16 – Infrared-Reflectogram detail of the proper left arm of the sitter, subsequently painted out, illustrating the underdrawing around the wrist and the oval framing device.

FIG 17 – Cross Section Sample 1 taken from an area of light green paint in the collar of the sitter. The sample shows evidence of a pale beige priming layer, a warm grey underlayer and two layers of green paint separated by organic interlayers.

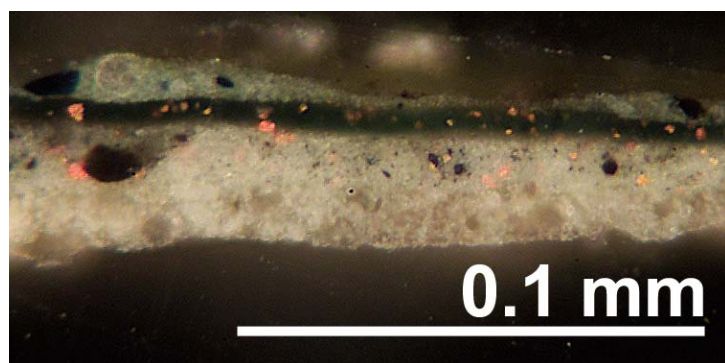


FIG 17a – Sample 1 photographed in normal light at 320x magnification.

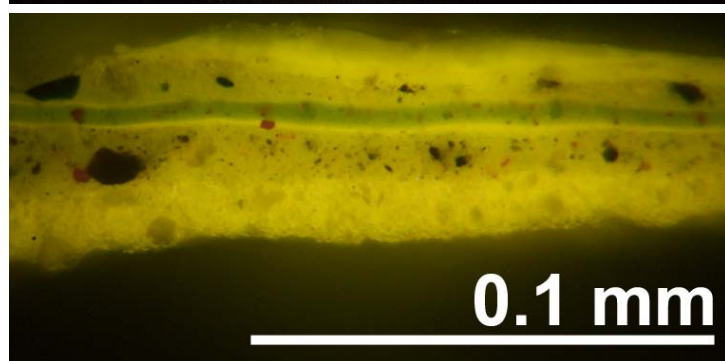


FIG 17b – Sample 1 photographed in ultraviolet light at 320x magnification.

FIG 18 – Cross Section Sample 2 taken from an area of dark green paint in the coat of the sitter. The sample shows evidence of large particles of glassy and transparent pigments including a lake pigment and Prussian Blue.

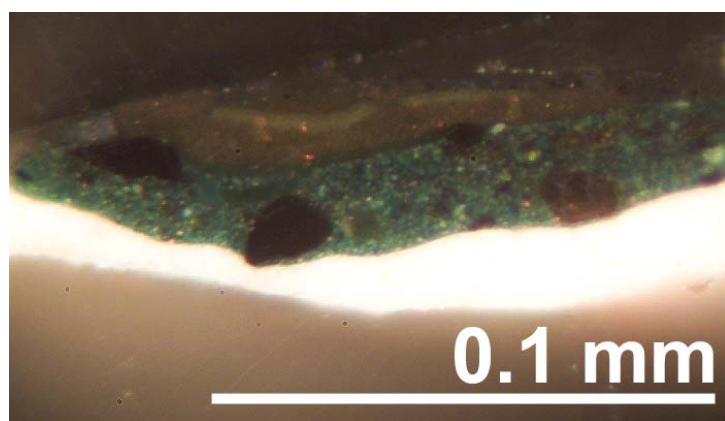


FIG 18a – Sample 2 photographed in normal light at 320x magnification.

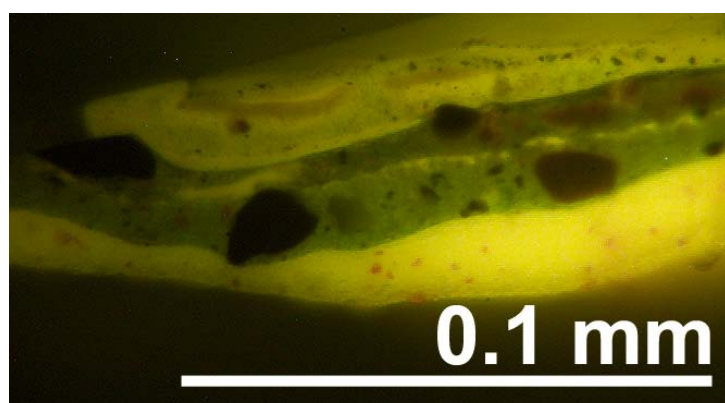


FIG 18b – Sample 2 photographed in ultraviolet light at 320x magnification.

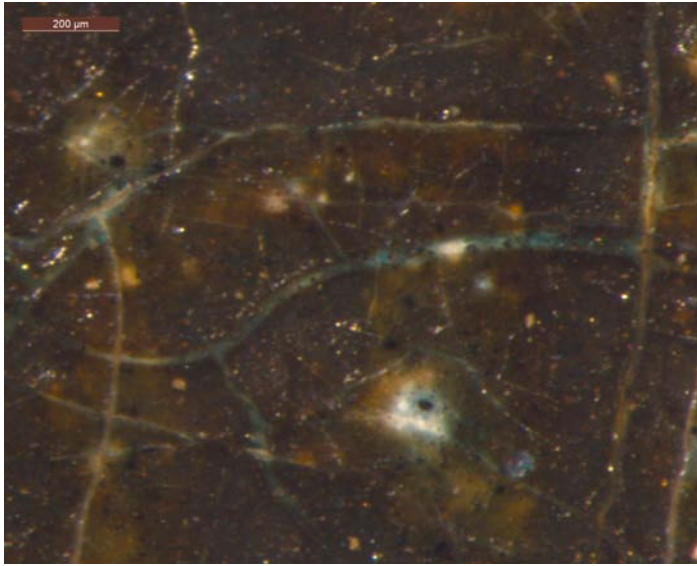


FIG 19 – Photomicrograph of the sitter's proper left sleeve, subsequently painted out, showing large pigment particles in the layer of blue/green paint beneath.

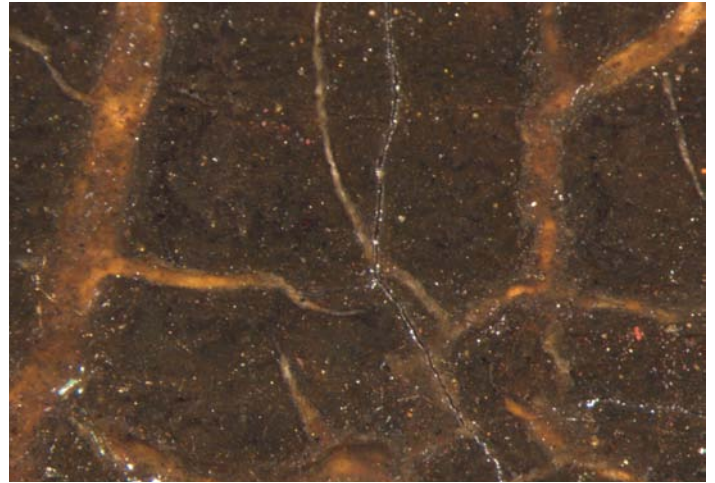


FIG 20 – Photomicrograph from an area of drying cracks along the left edge of the painting, illustrating a pigmented resinous material pooled in the drying cracks, identified as a glazy retouching applied over the background.



FIG 21 – Photomicrograph of retouching over age crack in the face of the sitter.

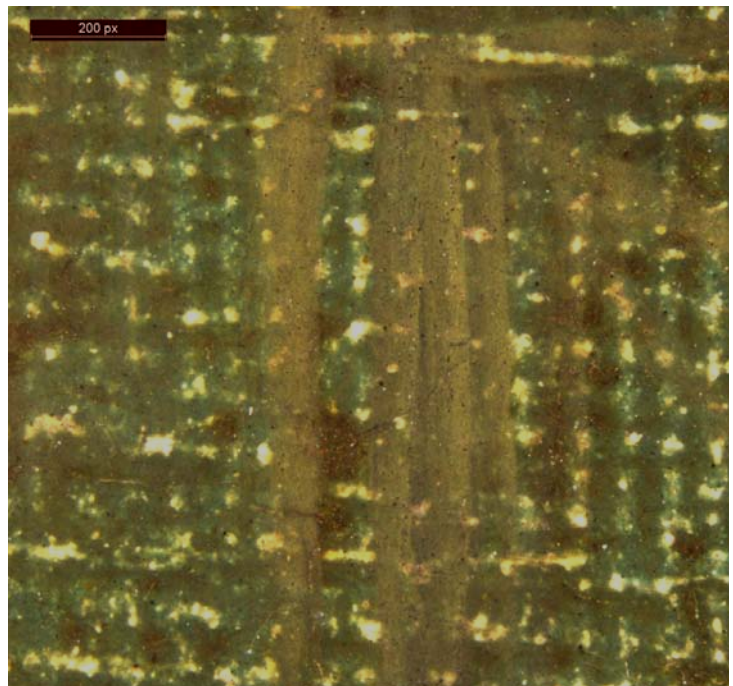


FIG 22 – Photomicrograph of retouching in the sleeve of the green coat, the campaign distinguishable by the characteristic fine, parallel strokes of paint.

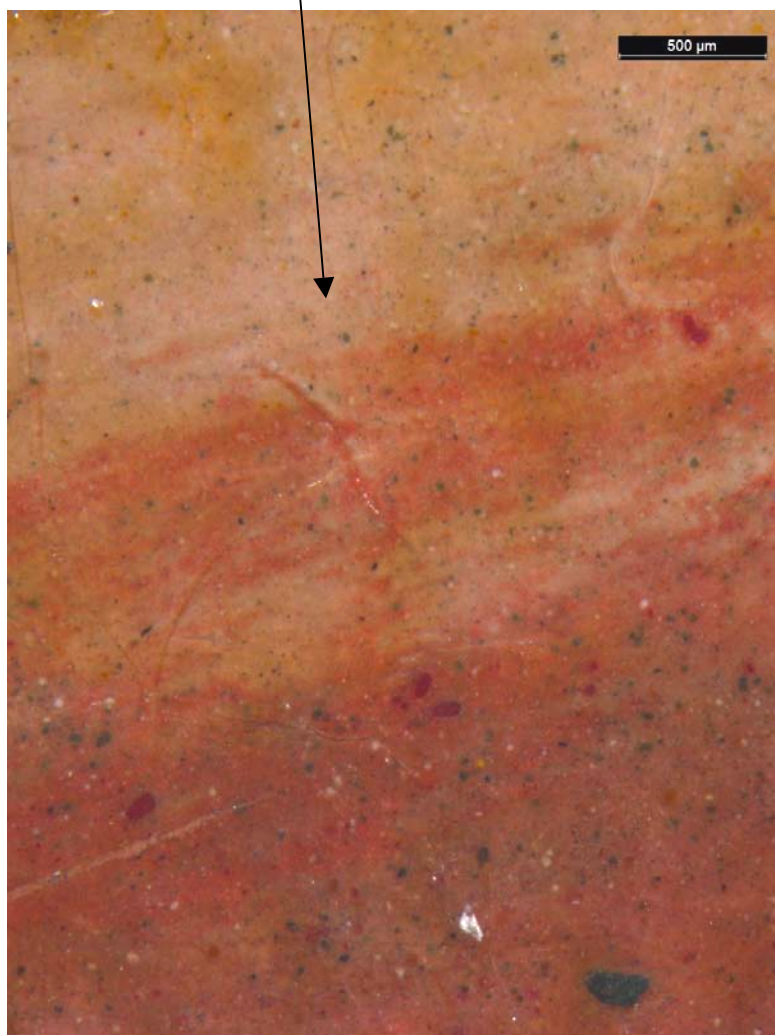


FIG 23 – Photomicrograph of reinforcement of the upper lip, the paint stroke continuing over a crack that had formed previously, indication that the reinforcement was a later addition and not contemporary to the painting of the face.



FIG 24 – *Mrs Gainsborough, née Margaret Burr*, Thomas Gainsborough, c.1778, Oil on Canvas, 766mm x 638mm, The Courtauld Gallery, London.
(Photograph courtesy of the Courtauld Gallery, London).

FIG 25 – Photograph details of the faces portrayed in *Mrs Gainsborough, née Margaret Burr* and *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*.
(Photograph of the former courtesy of the Courtauld Gallery, London).



FIG 25a – Photograph detail of the face of *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*.



FIG 25b – Photograph detail of the face of *Mrs Gainsborough, née Margaret Burr*.

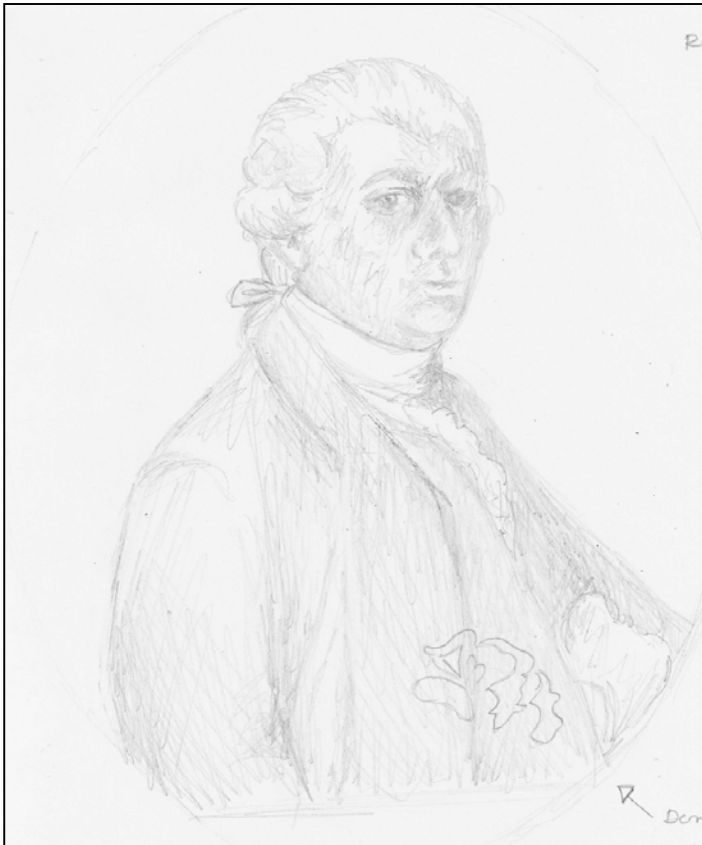


FIG 26 – Diagram suggesting the initial conception of costume and pose, connected to the earliest stages of painting. The proposed costume was constructed on the basis of evidence provided by both the x-radiograph and the infrared-reflectogram, together with the superficial observations made.



FIG 27 – Diagram suggesting the repositioning of the canvas to incorporate the previous tacking margin into the picture plane. The position of the oval suggests that this element may have been added after the canvas was repositioned in this manner.

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