



Painting Pairs: Art History and Technical Study

2017-2018

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Attributed to Dora Carrington

Standing Female Nude/ Landscape with Mountain Bridge

c.1910

Courtauld Gallery, London

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The Painting Pairs Project

This report documents the research we have conducted as part of the project *Painting Pairs: Art History and Technical Study*, an annual program encouraging close collaboration between art historians and conservators supported by the Courtauld Gallery, the Department of Conservation and Technology, and the Sackler Research Forum.

In November 2017, we were assigned the Courtauld Gallery's painting *Standing Female Nude/Mountain Landscape with Bridge*, a double-sided painting on canvas attributed to Dora Carrington and dated to c. 1910. Generally, the painting was in good condition, with only minor aesthetic issues; it was evidently covered with particulate surface dirt and dust. The main concerns for the painting were of a structural nature. Employing a multifaceted approach combining technical and visual analysis with art historical research, we have been able to make several important discoveries and observations that, we hope, will form a contribution to scholarship.

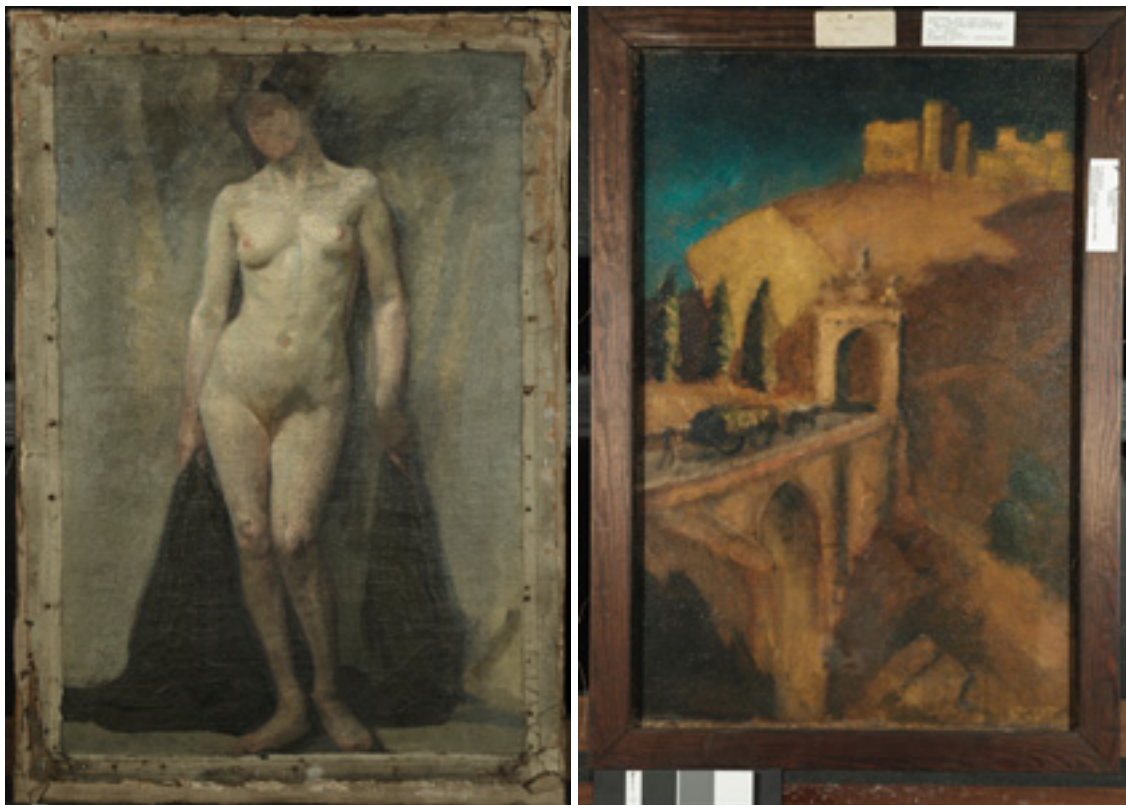


Fig. 1-2 – Attributed to Dora Carrington, *Standing Female Nude/ Landscape with Mountain Bridge*, c. 1910. Oil on canvas, 85 x 60 cm. Courtauld Gallery, London (inv.no. P.1978.XX.52). Image is in normal light, before the painting's treatment.

Introduction

In 1978, the painting *Standing Female Nude/Landscape with Mountain Bridge* attributed to the Bloomsbury artist Dora Carrington (1893-1932) entered the collection of the Courtauld Gallery. On the assigned verso of the canvas, it shows a female nude in full-length. She holds a brown piece of cloth in her hands that is partly draped on the floor behind her (Fig. 1). Strikingly, while her body is clearly depicted, no facial features have been portrayed. The painting has been executed with a select colour-palette, consisting of grey blues, earth browns and mint greens in the shadows, and warm pink and pale flesh tones with highlights in white and light yellow. The other side of the canvas is painted with a landscape scene showing a deep gorge lined with Cyprus trees and surmounted on its far side by a castellated cityscape on the top of a hill (Fig. 2). At the centre of the canvas is a sand-coloured bridge with a stately arch, on which a horse-drawn cart with a man walking behind it travels in the direction of the town in the background, visible against a vibrant blue sky.

Before the painting entered the collection of the Courtauld Gallery in 1978, it belonged to the Courtauld Institute of Art's Department of Conservation and Technology. It was unknown at what moment the painting came to the department, from where, and for what reason. The painting's curatorial files show that it has not been exhibited since its accession to the Courtauld Gallery, nor has anything been published on the painting.

Throughout our research, we have tried to answer the following questions in order to gain a better understanding with regard to the painting's provenance and attribution to Dora Carrington: By whom and when was the painting given to the Department of Conservation and Technology? By whom and why was it attributed to Carrington? Why was it accessioned to the Courtauld Gallery? Can we indeed attribute our painting to Carrington?

Dora Carrington (1893 – 1932)

Dora Carrington was a British painter and designer (Fig. 3-4). Born in Hereford in 1893, she had shown her talent for art already in her youth; from the age of twelve, she consistently won the annual awards for the best school drawings as judged by The Royal Drawing Society of Great Britain and Ireland.¹ In 1910, she moved to London and enrolled in the Department of Fine Arts at the Slade School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture, where she would study until 1914. Donning her characteristic bob hairstyle, she quickly became the star of her year, winning several prizes for figure painting and drawing from life, as well as a competitive scholarship.² She has long been considered an outsider to the Bloomsbury Group, although she lived right at its heart. Only recently have scholars begun to regard her as one of its most interesting and surprising members.³ Indeed, Carrington was friends with the Nash brothers, Mark Gertler, Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf, to name just a few. John Nash instilled Carrington with an interest in wood-engraving, while Gertler's powerful figure paintings influenced her approach to portraiture.⁴ Besides painting, Carrington designed tiles and experimented with painting on glass and tinfoil. Whilst married to Ralph Partridge and having an affair with Gerald Brennan, among others, she was also the companion of the homosexual writer Lytton Strachey (Fig. 5), whom she deeply loved. After his death of cancer in 1932, she was so stricken that she committed suicide, aged thirty-eight.

Although Carrington never stopped working on her paintings and designs, she became increasingly reluctant to submit her work for exhibition and her artistic reputation suffered. As a result of this, she became mainly known for her unconventional relationships after her death. However, interest in her work has increased significantly in the last three decades of the twentieth century. In 1970, her letters were published,⁵ and in 1978, Sir John Rothenstein, former Director of the Tate Gallery, called her 'the most neglected serious painter of her time.'⁶ Her biography was published in 1989 and in 1995 the Barbican Centre organised the

¹ Hill, J. *The Art of Dora Carrington*, London 1994, p. 11.

² Hill 1994, p. 14.

³ Chisholm, A. (ed.) *Carrington's Letters. Dora Carrington: her Art, her Loves, her Friendships*, London 2017, p. xvii.

⁴ Spalding, F. 'Carrington, Dora (de Houghton)', *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*, 2003. Retrieved from *Grove Art Online*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T014425> (accessed 20-5-2018).

⁵ See Garnett, S. (ed) *Carrington: Letters and Extracts from her Diaries*, London 1970.

⁶ Rothenstein, J., 'Foreword', in N. Carrington, *Carrington Paintings, Drawings, and Decorations*, Oxford 1978, p. 14.

first monographic exhibition on her work.⁷ Last year, another book on her letters was published,⁸ and today her works can be found in major collections, such as Tate, the National Portrait Gallery and the National Galleries of Scotland.

⁷ See Gerzina, G. *Carrington: A Life*, New York 1989.

⁸ Chisholm 2017.

Materials, Technique and Condition

The work consists of two paintings on either side of a single canvas support. Both sides are painted with oil. The auxiliary support on which the painting was stretched is not original, which is evident from the discoloured dirt marks and deformations made by the original stretcher that can be seen on the tacking margins of the *Standing Female Nude*, indicating that it was originally stretched on a smaller secondary support. The tacking margins of the painting were previously flattened to enlarge the dimensions of the work, after which the canvas was attached to the front of the non-original stretcher with metal staples. The work was therefore mostly in need of structural conservation. Several aspects needed to be addressed: The tacking margins were at some point strip-lined, but the strip-lining was poorly executed and it did not function to support the canvas structurally at the turn-over edge, where the canvas had become damaged at the corners. Furthermore, multiple tears and holes around and in the tacking margins had been clumsily repaired, likely with a synthetic adhesive (Fig. 6).

From initial investigation and empirical observation, it appeared that the *Standing Female Nude* was likely to be primed with a commercial oil priming. This is indicated by the even distribution of the ground layer and the fact that it extends to three edges of the canvas. There is a selvage at the top. At this point, it was unclear if the *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* was primed as well, since all four edges on this side of the painting show un-primed canvas. The *Landscape* was varnished with a glossy natural resin varnish that fluoresced green in UV light (Fig. 7).⁹ Initial cleaning tests made clear that the varnish has somewhat darkened and that it was also uneven due to earlier cleaning tests. At this preliminary stage, it was unclear whether the *Standing Female Nude* was varnished, but under low magnification there appeared to be a resinous layer that could be identifiable as a varnish, as well as dirt and degraded resin trapped in the impasto paint.

The UV image of the *Standing Female Nude* also proved inconclusive (Fig. 8); the painting fluoresced brightly, probably due to the paint consisting of a large amount of a Zinc (Zn) containing pigment, likely Zinc white. Zinc was indicated in XRF analyses undertaken on the

⁹ UV: Ultra Violet Image.

painting's surface.¹⁰ XRF is a non-destructive form of elemental analyses but it is not spatially resolved. In the case of a double-sided work, this preliminary method therefore proved to be more limiting than on a single sided painting, as findings could be the result of either side. It was thus deemed necessary to take a cross-section of paint samples from both sides of the canvas in order to gain information about any priming and subsequent layers, including varnish layers (Figs. 9-10). Additionally, it was decided to undertake SEM-EDX elemental analyses of the cross-sections to help confirm the presence of elements for pigment identification.¹¹ This information was considered useful in any future treatment of this work and could possibly prove helpful in making an attribution.

Consequently, analysis was undertaken of the two cross-sections. In the UV image of the cross-section of the *Standing Female Nude*, the resinous uppermost layer fluoresced brightly, which confirmed that this side of the canvas had been varnished (Fig. 11). The cross-section of *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* shows the presence of a priming layer with thinly applied paint on top of it (Fig. 9). These thin layers suggest that the work could be a preparatory under-painting.

SEM-EDX analysis of the cross-sections identified the elements lead (Pb) and calcium (Ca), which confirmed that the priming layer of *Standing Female Nude* contains lead and chalk. *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* is probably primed with a commercial mixture of oil, zinc (Zn) and silica (Si). The uneven application of the *Landscape*'s priming layer suggests that it was probably applied by the artist. These identified pigments are typical for an early twentieth century artist's palette. SEM-EDX analysis of the cross-section taken from the grey blue background of the *Nude* confirmed that the paint contains sodium (Na), aluminium (Al), silica (Si) and barium (Ba), suggesting French ultramarine, while the bright green blue sky of the *Landscape* contains chromium (Cr), cobalt (Co), phosphorous (P) and calcium (Ca), suggesting a paint mixture containing viridian, cobalt blue and bone black.

¹⁰ XRF: X-ray Florescence.

¹¹ SEM-EDX: Scanning Electron Microscope- Energy Dispersive X-Ray.

The Painting's Provenance

Archival sources

Our first research question concerned the provenance of the painting: by whom, and when, was it given to the Department of Conservation and Technology? The painting's curatorial file did not hold any answers, nor did its conservation file in the Department of Conservation and Technology's archive. However, in the unfiled part of the archive we found a document that was drafted for 'a visit of the Gulbenkian Foundation Committee of Inquiry into Training in the Conservation of Paintings, June 25th, 1970', which describes the preparations for the commencement of the Conservation course (see Appendix 1). Appendix C of this document consists of a list of paintings that were given to the Department of Conservation and Technology from a variety of places to be used as teaching aids in the conservation course. Strikingly, the fourth painting on the list is described as being made by the artist Dora Carrington, titled 'Nude', and as coming from the 'Slade School'.

Considering that the painting is described as depicting a nude, as well as the fact that there are no records of any other paintings by, or attributed to, Dora Carrington in both the Courtauld Gallery and the Department of Conservation and Technology, it is highly likely that this document refers to our painting. In the line below this entry of a *Nude* by Carrington, quotation marks are used, after which a next painting is mentioned in the following line. While there is a possibility that these quotation marks indicate that there was another painting of a nude by Carrington that was given to the Department, there are again no records or surviving paintings that would support this, and it is more likely that the quotation marks indicate that the reverse of the *Nude* canvas has also been painted, as is indeed the case in the *Standing Female Nude/Landscape with Mountain Bridge*.

This document is thus of crucial importance with regard to the Courtauld Gallery's painting for several reasons. First, it proves that the painting came to the Department of Conservation and Technology before the 25th of June 1970, eight years before it would be accessioned to the Courtauld Gallery. Secondly, the painting was sent from the Slade School of Fine Art, where Carrington had trained as a student. Thirdly, the document shows that when the painting had come from the Slade, it was already attributed to Dora Carrington. Finally, it describes the function of the painting when it arrived in the department: it was to be used for

educational training purposes by students enrolled in the recently started Conservation Course. The latter suggests that the work was not considered to be of museum quality.

Slade Practices

The archival document is, however, not the only link that ties our painting to the Slade School of Fine Art. The Slade was founded in 1871 with the aim of providing progressive art training to students. Its programme was based on the educational system of French academies, which put an emphasis on comprehensive study from life models.¹² From its earliest years, the Slade awarded annual prizes for painting in a range of categories, including figure painting from life and portrait painting, for which students would compete. While not all of the early prize-winning paintings survive, from 1897 the Slade actively started collecting the awarded figure and head paintings prizes.¹³ This was also the year in which standard sizes of twenty by thirty inches were set for paintings in the competition. Offering a unique perspective on British art, these works can today be found in the UCL Art Museum, the art collection of the University College London.¹⁴

While studying at the Slade, Carrington was twice awarded a prize for her paintings: in the academic year of 1911-1912, she won the second prize in the Figure Painting Competition for a *Female Figure Lying on Her Back* (Fig. 12), and in 1912-1913 she was awarded the First Prize Equal for a *Female Nude Standing* (Fig. 13).¹⁵ In that same academic year of 1912-1913, her friend Fanny Fletcher came second with an almost identical composition (Fig. 14).¹⁶ When comparing the Courtauld Gallery's *Standing Female Nude/ Landscape with Mountain Bridge* to these three prize-winning paintings, it becomes evident that all four measure twenty by thirty inches, which was the required size for paintings entering the Figure Painting competition. Moreover, it is clear that our *Nude* shares the same colour palette of browns, ochres, and greys with the other three paintings. The Slade kept their student's colour palettes limited, so that they could learn, and in the case of the prize competitions could demonstrate,

¹² Chambers, E. *Oil Paintings in Public Ownership in London: The Slade School of Fine Art & University College London Art Collections*, London 2005, p. 1.

¹³ Chambers 2005, p. 1.

¹⁴ For an overview of *The Slade School of Fine Art Prize Lists*, see Chambers 2005, pp. 98-105.

¹⁵ Chambers 2005, p. 98.

¹⁶ Fletcher and Carrington were still in touch after their Slade period, which is evident from one of Carrington's letters; see Chisholm 2017, p. 359.

how colours worked together.¹⁷ Thus, both the size and colour palette of the Courtauld Gallery's *Nude* strongly suggest that the work was painted at the Slade. Upon comparison with the prize-winning paintings, however, it becomes evident that our painting seems the result of a timed life-study and it lacks a level of finish, which indicates that it was not intended to enter the prize competition.

Provenance: new questions

This newfound information regarding the painting's Slade provenance raises new questions. While it could potentially strengthen an attribution to Carrington, it also complicates matters if one considers that all students were trained in a teaching environment where these measurements, colour palettes, and techniques were not uniquely used by an individual student.¹⁸ It is thus also a possibility that one artist painted the *Nude*, and another the *Landscape*. Furthermore, if we accept that the *Nude* was painted at the Slade School of Fine Art and the *Landscape* in a later period, it must have left the Slade for a certain amount of time, only to be subsequently returned, after which it would at some point have been given to the Courtauld's Department of Conservation and Technology. While the latter scenario might seem somewhat unlikely, it is not impossible.

So far, no archival evidence as to why or when the painting was given to the Courtauld's Department of Conservation and Technology has surfaced, neither at the archive of the Slade nor in files at the UCL Art Museum. However, while the main part of the UCL Art Museum's Slade Collection consists of prize-winning works by former Slade students, it was not uncommon to add non-prize-winning works to the collection, which were gifted by artists and their families back to the Slade.¹⁹ Additionally, the Slade occasionally gifted non-prize-winning paintings, drawings and prints to conservation departments at other institutions, where they could be used for teaching purposes.²⁰ Unfortunately, these gifts were never systematically documented.

¹⁷ Correspondence with Helen Downes, former Paul Mellon Research Fellow at the UCL Art Museum; e-mail of 12 May 2018. We are very grateful to Helen for her thoughts and input.

¹⁸ In conversation with Emma Chambers, curator at Tate, at 12 April 2018. We are very grateful to Emma's helpful insights in discussing these questions with us.

¹⁹ In conversation with Andrea Fredricksen, curator at the UCL Art Museum, on 4 May 2018. We are very grateful to Andrea for generously sharing her time and knowledge with us, and showing us the prize-winning nudes by Carrington from the UCL Art Museum's collection.

²⁰ In conversation with Andrea Fredricksen, 4 May 2018.

While it remains unclear when the painting was given to the Department of Conservation and Technology, there are two events that might explain why it was accessioned to the Courtauld Gallery in 1978. The first occurred in 1976, when the UCL Art Museum commissioned the Department of Conservation and Technology to make an X-ray of Carrington's *Female Figure Lying on her Back* from their collection, for which she was awarded the second prize in the Figure Painting Competition of 1911-1912 (Fig. 15).²¹ The second event was the publication in 1978 of the book *Carrington: Paintings, Drawings, and Decorations* by Noel Carrington, the late artist's brother. It is possible that these instances of renewed interest in Dora Carrington's work lead to the realisation that the *Standing Female Nude/Landscape with Mountain Bridge* (which was already attributed to Carrington) should be part of a museum collection rather than being used as a teaching aid, after which it was accessioned from the collection of the Department of Conservation and Technology to the collection of the Courtauld Gallery.

²¹ The X-ray is kept in the X-ray archives of the Department of Conservation and Technology at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Curiously, no mention of this commission can be found in the curatorial and conservation files of the painting at the UCL Art Museum.

Location of the Landscape

Having established the fact that the *Nude* was painted at the Slade School of Fine Art, the next line of inquiry concerned the identification of the landscape scene on the reverse of the painting. Considering that locating a seemingly Mediterranean landscape with a bridge is rather like looking for a needle in the haystack, our research focussed on Spain, knowing that Carrington visited the country and most notably Andalusia multiple times.

Having looked through books and digital databases, we came across an image of an etching by the American artist Joseph Pennell (1860-1926), who taught at the Slade at the end of the nineteenth century. It had been put up for auction on the website iCollector in 2003, but had failed to sell.²² The etching, which shows a landscape that is very similar to that on our painting, is titled 'Bridge at Alhambra', a location in the city of Granada in the south of Spain (Fig. 16). However, our research showed that there are no surviving bridges in the landscape near the Alhambra that resemble the one in our painting, indicating that the location in the etching's title could be wrong. Broadening our research, we serendipitously came across an image of the Roman Alcantara bridge over the river Tagus in Toledo, a city in central Spain (Fig. 17). Indeed, the similarities of the arch on the bridge and the buildings on the hill behind it are so close to the scene depicted in our painting that the location must be the same (Fig. 18).

Naturally, the question that follows is if Dora Carrington ever visited Toledo. After consulting the letters that she wrote during her trip to Spain in 1919, it became clear that she indeed visited the Spanish town. On 15 April 1919, she wrote to Lytton Strachey: 'Tomorrow I hope to go to the Prado all the morning by myself, and on Thursday to Toledo for the day [...]'.²³ After she had returned to England, she wrote to Mark Gertler about how much she enjoyed her trip: 'One comes back so full of enthusiasm about Spain [...]! I have seen sights one hardly dreamt of [...], and those El Grecos at Madrid and Toledo [...]'.²⁴ It is thus clear that the localisation of the landscape upholds a connection to Carrington. If the painting is indeed by her hand, it is likely that she made sketches of the Alcantara bridge while in Toledo, which

²² iCollector, the European and American Art Sale, 10 June 2003, lot 213; see http://www.icollector.com/JOSEPH-PENNELL-THE-ALHAMBRA-BRIDGE-SPAIN_i835935 (accessed 20-5-2018).

²³ Chisholm 2017, p. 118.

²⁴ Chisholm 2017, p. 118.

she would then have worked out into a preliminary painting in her studio upon her return to England.

Carrington: Technique and Practice

Having established the painting's Slade provenance and the location of the *Landscape*, both of which fit into the narrative of Carrington, we will now consider our painting in relation to Carrington's artistic practices.

Reuse of materials

A very interesting aspect of the painting from the Courtauld Gallery is that both sides of the canvas have been painted on, which was probably done by an artist trying to make the most out of an expensive material. The work shows evidence of multiple sets of empty tack holes, indicating that it has been re-stretched several times in the past (Fig. 6). This is possibly due to it having been taken off the original stretcher, reversed and re-used.

It was not uncommon for Carrington to re-use her canvases, as can also be deduced from the previously discussed X-ray of Carrington's 1912 *Female Figure Lying on her Back* in the collection of the UCL Art Museum (Fig. 15), which shows that Carrington painted her composition over another nude painting. Unfortunately, this X-ray remains the only evidence to date of any technical analysis carried out on a work by Carrington to our knowledge.

According to art historian and Carrington specialist Jane Hill, this reuse of canvas was not a singular occurrence: 'Very little of Carrington's early work has survived from the years leading up to and during the Slade. Because Carrington struggled to pay Percy Young's bill for materials, it was inevitable that she would re-use canvases rather than buy new ones'.²⁵

Furthermore, we unearthed some evidential information from her younger brother Noel Carrington in the conservation files on paintings by Carrington in Tate Britain. In these files, we found correspondence between the conservator Peter Booth with Noel Carrington about Dora Carrington's painting technique. Noel wrote: 'On her death, many canvases we stored in her studio, still in rolls.'²⁶ The notion that Carrington had canvases stored in rolls could suggest that she may have taken paintings off their stretchers to re-use her secondary supports.

²⁵ Jane Hill, *The Art of Dora Carrington*, London 1994, p. 37.

²⁶ Noel Carrington, Dora's younger brother, to Tate conservator Peter Booth, 1987 (Tate Archive, files To4945 & A22446).

Use of Grid Lines

Whilst undertaking infrared reflectography of the *Landscape* (Fig. 19), we discovered that painting's artist made use of diagonal gridlines, likely to transfer or up-scale the image from an initial sketch. These gridlines are made in a carbon-containing material, which absorbs in the Infrared Charged Coupled Device adapted image and therefore appears black. An example survives in which Carrington has made use of similar diagonal lines to scale up or transfer: the watercolour *Lytton in his library, Tidmarsh* of c. 1922 which was made in preparation for a woodcut (Fig. 20). We also believe that she kept a sketchbook of her travels in Spain and that she made sketches in situ, from which she could work later in her studio at home; it is likely that she used gridlines to transfer her initial sketches onto the canvas. Her brother Noel wrote again about described her technique of working out her initial sketches made in situ in the studio this process: 'She usually painted in her studio from drawings done on the spot.'²⁷

²⁷ Noel Carrington to Tate conservator Peter Booth, 1987 (Tate Archive, files To4945 and A22446).

Carrington: Comparison with other paintings

Carrington was a very diverse artist. Throughout her regrettably short career, she experimented with numerous different techniques and materials in order to express her own unique view of the world, and often depicted landscapes, portraits, and animals. Her work had an imaginative sense of exuberance and overtones of the fantastical. Building from her training in academic painting, drawing and sculpture (in which she excelled), she grew to explore many media including design, illustration, printing and collage, and thus worked with a wide range of materials including canvas, wood, glass, and ceramics.²⁸ In order to gain a better understanding of the double-sided painting in question, it is important to examine *the Nude* in comparison to the two surviving female nude paintings from Carrington's Slade period, *Female Figure Lying on Her Back* from 1912 (Fig. 12) and her *Female Figure Standing* from 1913 (Fig. 13), and to consider the *Landscape* in comparison with four surviving landscapes Carrington painted in the years around 1919, the year in which she visited Spain: *Spanish Landscape with Mountains*, c. 1924 (Fig. 21), *Larrau Snowscape*, 1922 (Fig. 22), *Mountain Church in Larrau*, c. 1922 (Fig. 23), and *Farm at Watendlath*, c. 1921 (Fig. 24).

It is important to consider the finish of our double-sided work when comparing it to other paintings by Carrington's hand. It is highly likely that our paintings are not fully resolved in terms of finish. The *Nude* is a life study from observation and although it was likely completed, inherently would be the product of haste, considering the constraint of a set timed life class. The landscape is painted in a free manner and in thin layers. This suggests that the landscape could possibly be a preparatory under painting. The likely intention was to build up the painting with subsequent layers of paint and glaze coatings, but for an unknown reason it was left at this initial stage.

Evidence uncovered during research into Carrington's painting techniques revealed that during her time in Spain she experimented with a new approach to landscape painting, by working in glazes. Carrington wrote in a letter to Gerald Brenan: 'A new plan, an entire under painting in brilliant colours, over which I shall glaze green and more transparent colours.'²⁹ In her book on Carrington, Jane Hill elaborated on this technique: 'Glazing could be superb, but

²⁸ For examples of her works, see among others the illustrations in Hill 1994 and Chilsholm 2007.

²⁹ Carrington 1978, p. 60.

was an elaborate working process and also unpredictable [...] with glazing the build-up of layers [...] meant that the finished work was the result of several paintings. It could take months to complete because each layer needed to be fairly dry before it could be worked over.³⁰

Landscape Compositions

The Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* is thinly painted with the priming showing through in several areas at the edges of forms such as between the hill and the sky. The paint is applied with broad and expressive brushwork that accurately and sensitively depicts the depth of the field. Interestingly, the *Landscape* is painted in a portrait format with the vanishing point placed at the centre of the composition. This leads the eye firstly to the foreground and then upward, rising through the meandering paths and rolling hills towards the sky. The four previously mentioned landscapes by Carrington share this vertical portrait presentation. The employment of a vertical portrait format for the depiction of a landscape, rather than selecting the traditional horizontal presentation, seems an unusual choice and can be considered a differentiating characteristic of Carrington's practice.

Landscape with Mountain Bridge and Carrington's four landscapes have a midway vanishing point, encouraging the viewer to navigate through painted scenery as though on a journey (Fig. 2; Figs. 20-24). The sky in the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape* occupies the very top quadrant of the composition. It has a vibrant palette: warm yellows, browns, peachy creams and oranges, contrasting with the dark and lime green in the foliage and the bright blue of the sky. Similarly, in the other four landscapes by Carrington the sky inhabits the uppermost section of the composition (Fig. 25a-e), and all four share a bright and vibrant palette. Noteworthy is the similarity in hues upon comparing the *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* and the Tate's *Spanish Landscape with Mountains* (Fig.2; Fig. 20).

Compositional elements of hills or mountains with humble buildings are common in both the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape* and each of Carrington's four landscapes. All the landscapes include small figures within the scene, which are very simply painted (Fig. 26a-d). These compositional motifs emphasise the vastness of the landscape in contrast with the minute human form at work. However, the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape*'s depiction of a small

³⁰ Jane Hill, *The Art of Dora Carrington*, London 1995, p. 87.

figure also includes a horse-drawn cart. Carrington's *Spanish Landscape with Mountains* in Tate Britain also includes the representation of horses. Carrington's portrayal of foliage is often simple and spherical in its rendering of form and volume, and tends to have strong contrasts of shadow between light and dark. The trees and foliage in the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape* are executed in similar vein (Fig. 27a-b).

Nude Compositions

It is difficult to attribute a work of a nude painted from life made at the Slade to a specific artist, since all students were trained in the same teaching environment and thus employed similar methods, techniques and materials. However, even at this early stage individual style could be distinguished. It can be argued that by this period Carrington was in the process of developing her own personal style. This becomes especially evident when one compares the nude paintings from her Slade period (Figs. 12-13) with nude paintings made by her contemporaries at the Slade (Figs. 28a-c), which each clearly showcase an individual artistic style.

The *Nude* is made with a heavy bodied paint and executed with skilful and confident brushwork, which is expressively applied to create an almost sculptural rendering of form. The brushstrokes move around the forms of the figure to create a sense of volume, weight and balance, as well as evoking a soft and velvety skin texture. There is a mix of slight impasto in the flesh of the figure and smoother flatter areas in the background and drapery. In comparing the *Nude* from the collection of the Courtauld Gallery (Fig. 1) with Carrington's *Female Figure Lying on Her Back* (Fig. 12), it can be observed that the latter also utilizes sculptural brushwork to describe the forms. Additionally, it shares a variation of impasto with smoother regions, culminating in a comparable textural paint quality.

An examination of the build-up of colours of the Courtauld Gallery's *Nude* reveals that the feet, arms and face of the figure have a warmer pink flesh tone compared to the rest of the body. Blues, greys and mint green hues are employed in the shadows and creamy yellows and white in the highlights. Additionally, there is an occasional warm red brush stroke at the very edges between forms. In contrast, the painting's background is dark, which emphasises the figure. There is a strong similarity in the use and application of colour between the Courtauld Gallery's *Nude* and Carrington's *Female Figure Lying on Her Back*, as the latter shows a very similar handling of brushwork, texture, and colour palette. The artist of the Courtauld

Gallery's *Nude* employed a simple blocking out of form, which lacks in detail but still conveys an anatomically accurate depiction. This blocking out of form is especially evident in the figure's feet (Fig. 29a-c). Upon examining this to the feet that Carrington painted in her nudes, it becomes evident that she also employed the technique of blocking out of forms in this manner.

Furthermore, in the Courtauld Gallery's *Nude* the figure's facial features are absent, which could possibly be a result of the time restrictions of the figure painting from life.

Alternatively, however, it could suggest that the artist intended to convey psychological overtones by exploring ideas concerning identity and gender. It is interesting to note that the faces in the nudes painted by Carrington are both obscured.

While the evidence from the comparisons made here is by no means conclusive for an attribution of the Courtauld Gallery's painting to Carrington, it does show that it cannot be eliminated.

Framing and display

Throughout our research and the conservation treatment, it has been important to recognise the dual nature of this work of art.³¹ This has led to the consideration of a number of curatorial options for display and storage. Along with curators Dr Barnaby Wright and Dr Karen Serres of the Courtauld Gallery, it was decided that it is not appropriate to deem either the *Standing Female Nude* or the *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* as the painting's primary side; both have artistic value and any framing would have to acknowledge this fact by making both sides accessible.

The choice was made to employ an auxiliary support that can tension both sides of the canvas centrally from the edges, so that the painting can easily be turned around within its frame for alternate display. Furthermore, designs are being made for a frame that can be glazed on both sides, so that the frame can be hung on the wall both ways, which would protect but not obscure both sides. This would also allow for viewing both sides of the canvas at the same time, which would require a frame that can be placed on a plinth.

³¹ Rheeston, M. *CIA-2509 Conservation Report*, The Conservation and Technology Department, The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2018.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have summarised the findings from our research. Through combining material examination, technical analysis and art historical research methods, we have attempted to answer the question if the Courtauld Gallery's painting can be attributed to Dora Carrington or not, and if there is information concerning its provenance. A document from the Department of Conservation and Technology's archive, as well as the painting's size, colour palette, and subject of a nude figure, affirm that our work can clearly be tied to the Slade School of Fine Art. Since the *Standing Female Nude* must have been made at the Slade during an artist's early training indicates it is likely that this was painted prior to the landscape. Moreover, the physical evidence the canvas was removed, re-stretched and reused first, supports the notion of the Nude having been painted.

Answering the question of an attribution to Carrington with certainty is challenging. However, while our findings are ultimately inconclusive, they all fit perfectly within her artistic and biographical narrative. We have shown that Carrington studied at the Slade, re-used her canvases, used grids to transfer her designs, and painted nudes during her Slade period that show visual similarities with our *Standing Female Nude*. Additionally, she has travelled to Toledo in Spain, and painted pictures of landscapes that show visual similarities with our *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* - all features that are in accordance with our painting. We have found no conclusive evidence that the paintings are *not* by Carrington.

We thus recommend that the attribution to Carrington is kept. However, we propose to change the title of the landscape to *Alcantara Bridge in Toledo*, and the dates from c. 1910 to 1910-1914 for the *Nude*, and to c. 1919 for the *Landscape*.

We hope that we have created a foundation for future research that might be carried out with regard to these questions. Further technical analysis of Carrington's works will be crucial for comparison, as well as further archival research, in order to locate her sketchbooks from her time in Spain and to find out why the painting was given back to the Slade, when it was exactly given to the Courtauld, and by whom it was attributed to Carrington and why.

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Image is in normal light, before the painting's treatment.

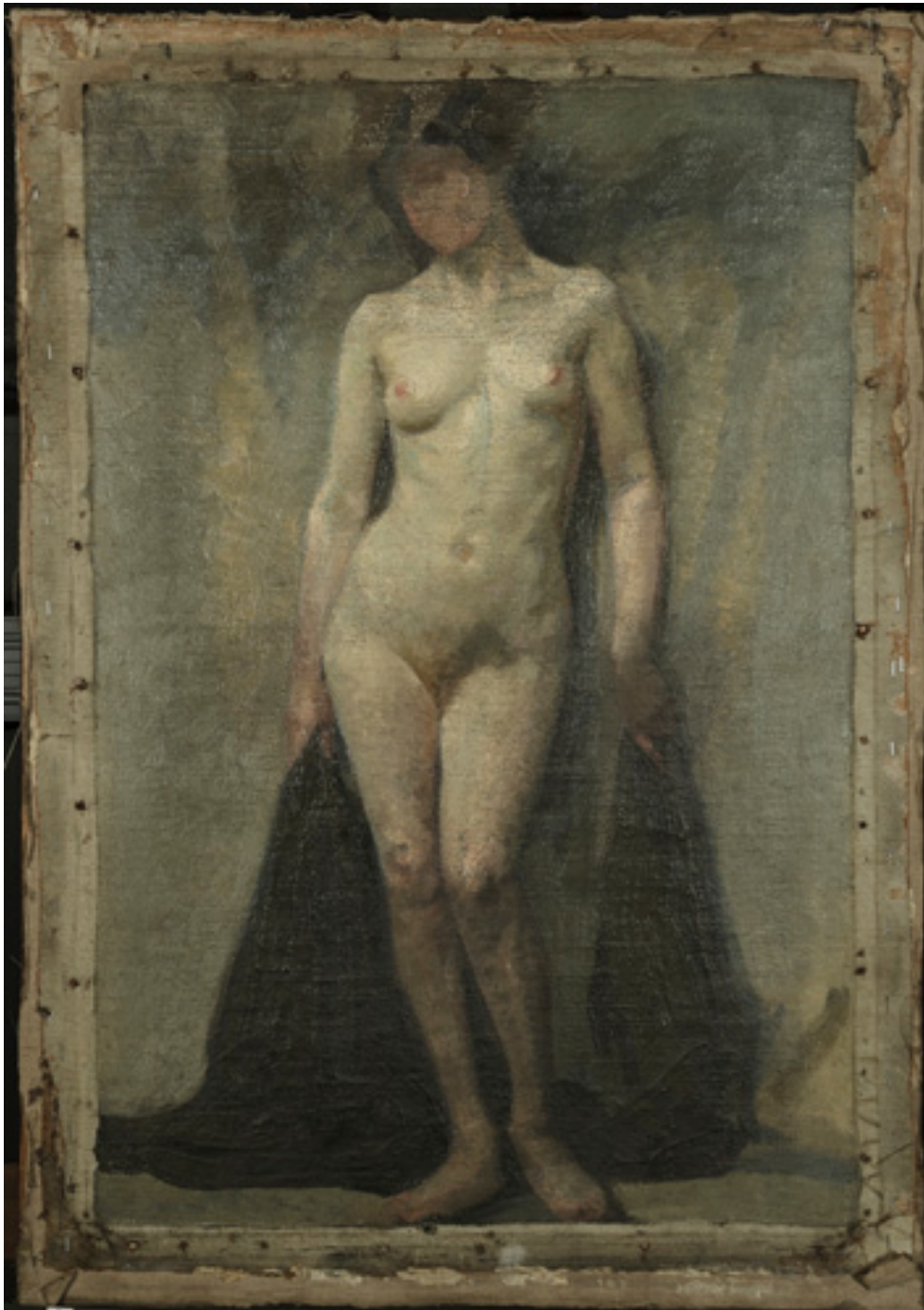


Fig. 2 – Attributed to Dora Carrington, *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* (recto), c. 1910. Oil on canvas, 85 x 60 cm. Courtauld Gallery, London (inv.no. P.1978.XX.52).

Image is in normal light, before the painting's treatment.



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Fig. 6 a-c – Details of a) a canvas patch, b) a tear mend, strip lining, and multiple tack holes, and c) original tacking margin edge and deformation in canvas/paint

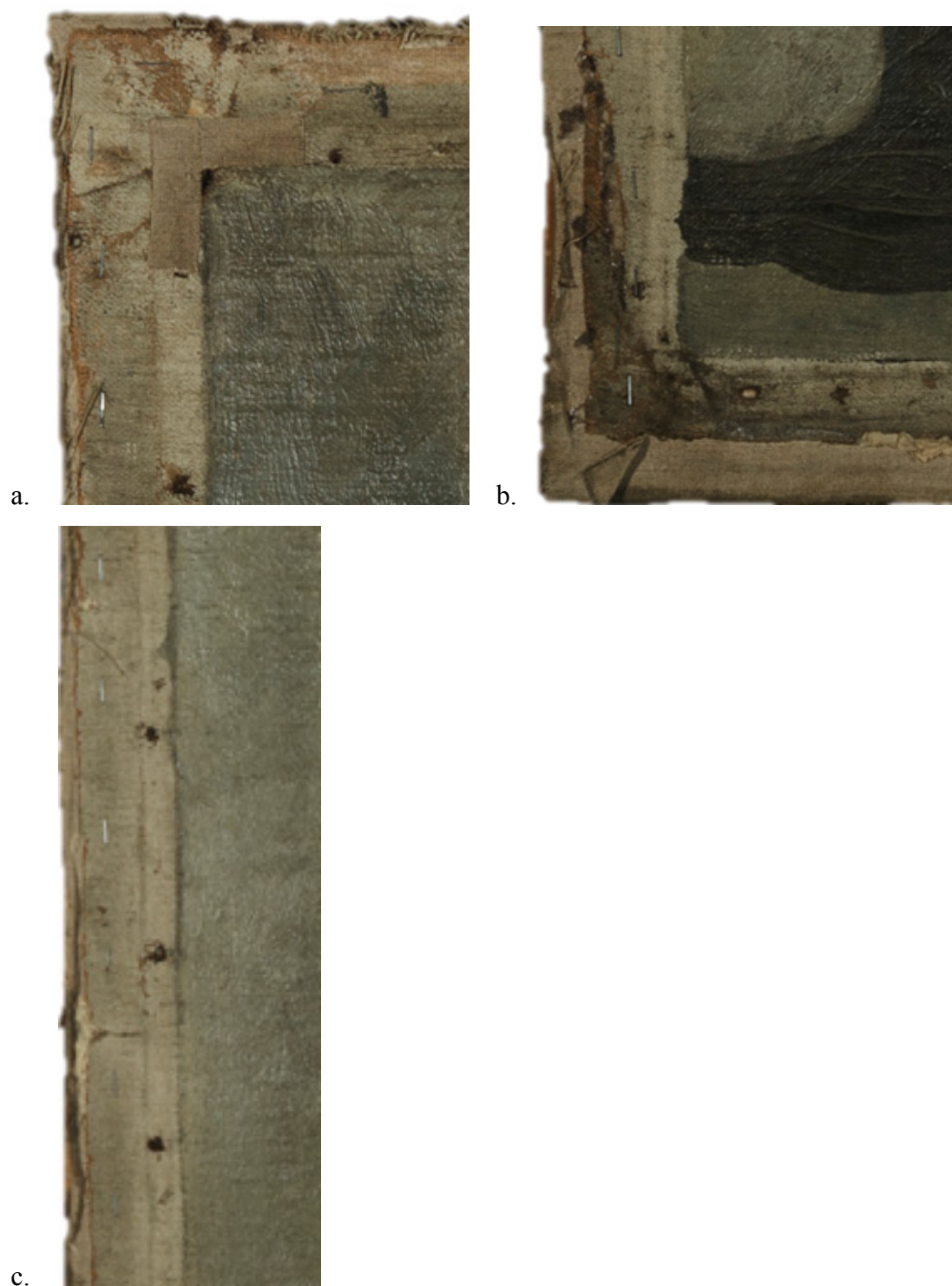


Fig. 7 (left) –*Landscape with Mountain Bridge* under UV light

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Fig. 9 – Macro image of the cross section of the *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* in normal light

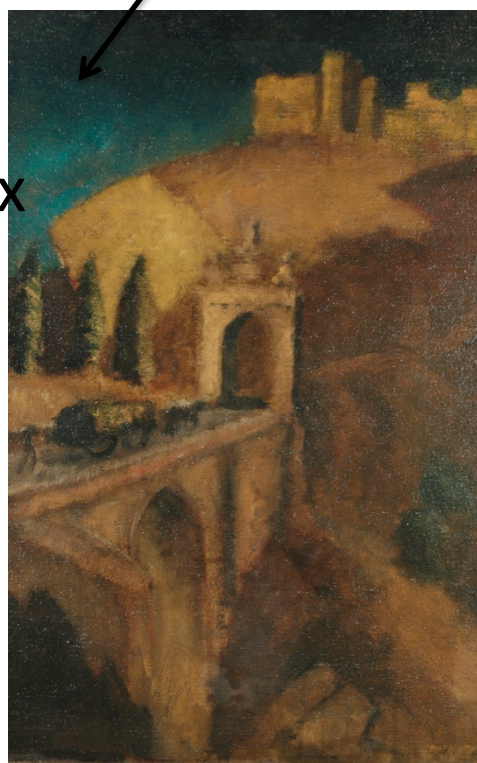
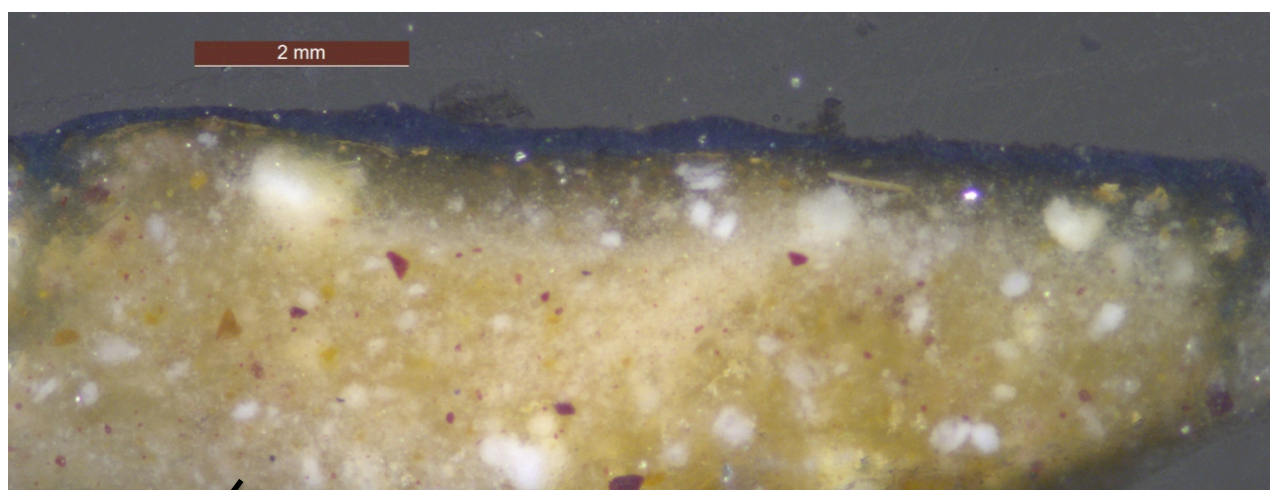


Fig. 10 – Macro image of the cross section of the *Standing Female Nude* in normal light

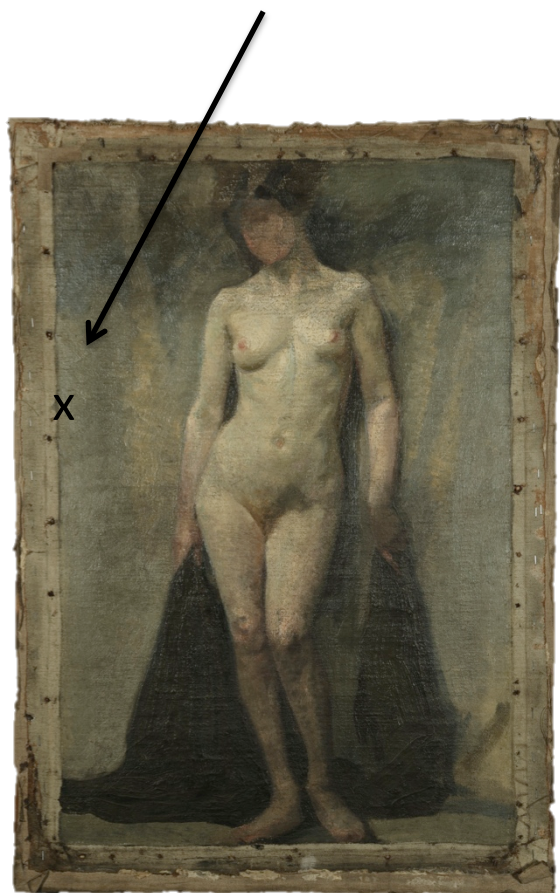
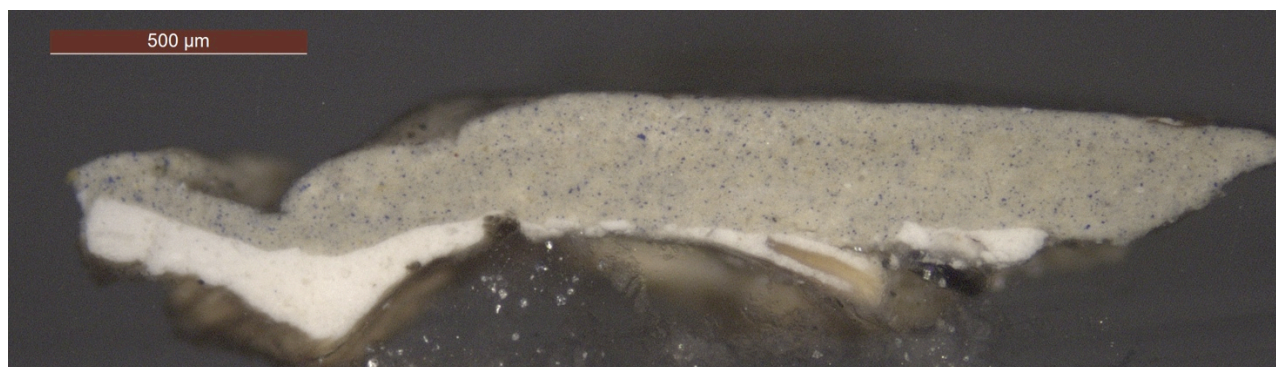


Fig. 11 – Macro image of the cross section of the *Standing Female Nude* in UV light

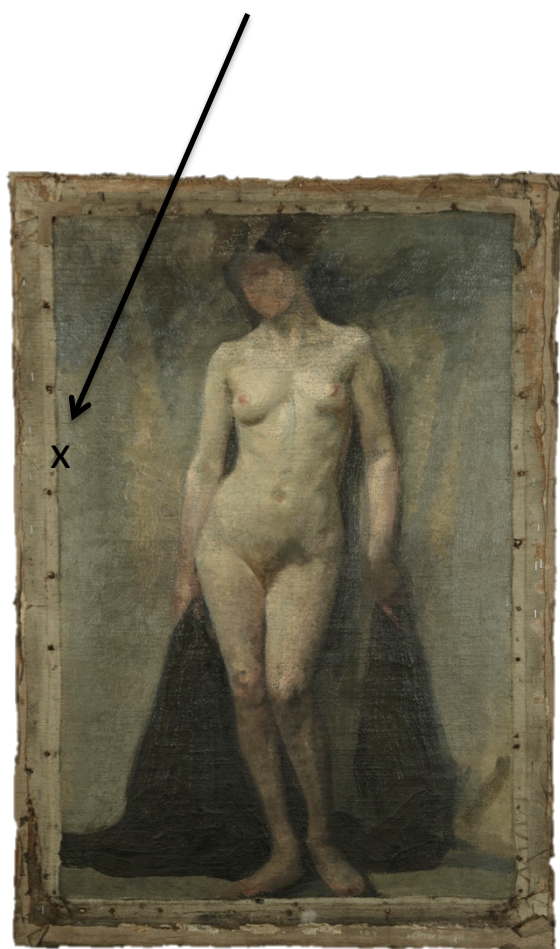
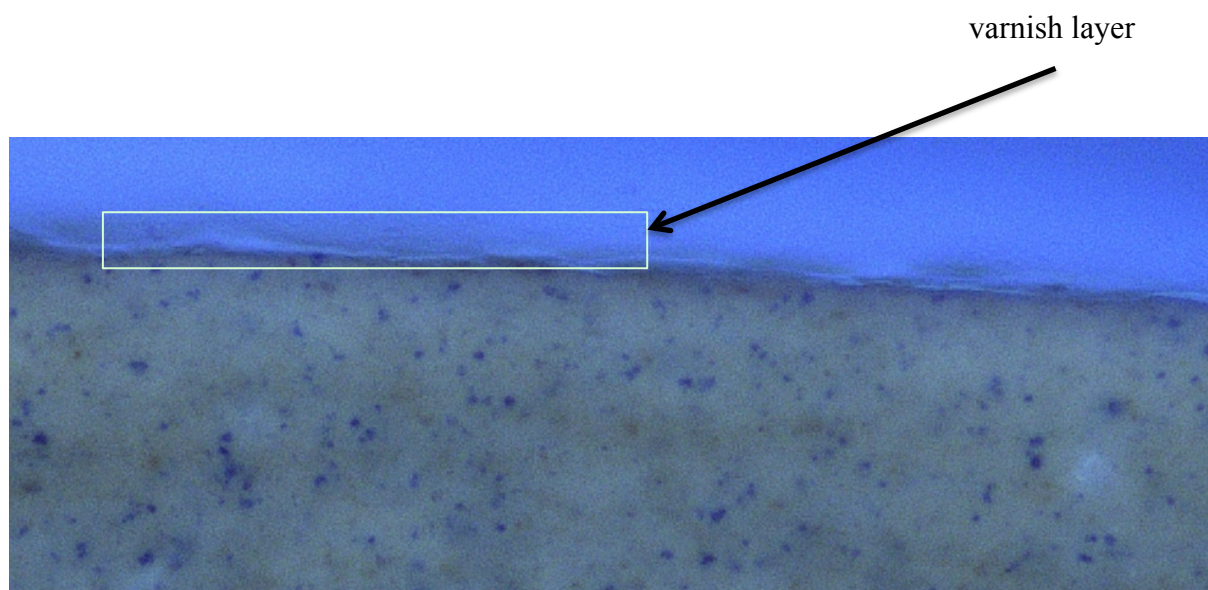


Fig. 12 – Dora Carrington, *Female Figure Lying on her Back*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 76.2 cm. UCL Art Museum, London (inv.no. PC5204)



Fig. 13 (left) – Dora Carrington, *Female Figure Standing*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 50.8 cm. UCL Art Museum, London (inv.no. PC5206)

Fig. 14 (right) – Fanny Fletcher, *Female Figure Standing*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 50.8 cm. UCL Art Museum, London (inv.no. PC5205)



Fig. 15 – X-ray of Dora Carrington, *Female Figure Lying on her Back*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 76.2 cm. UCL Art Museum, London (inv.no. LDUCS: PC5204)



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Fig. 19 (left) – Infrared Reflectography of *Landscape with Mountain Bridge*

Fig. 20 (right) – Dora Carrington, *Lytton in his Library, Tidmarsh*, preparation for woodcut, c. 1922. Pen, ink and watercolour on paper, 12.7 x 7.5 (3x5). Private collection

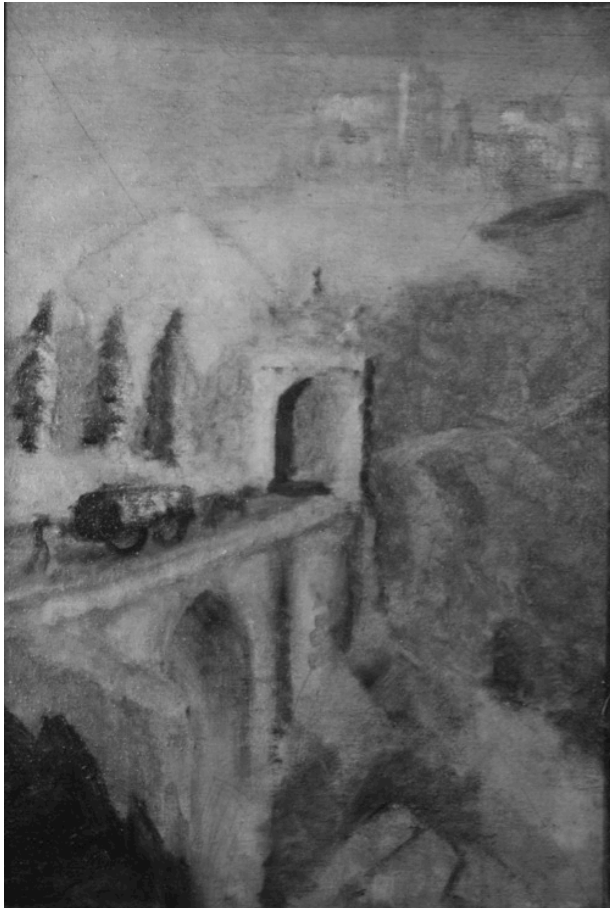


Fig. 21 – Dora Carrington, *Spanish Landscape with Mountains*, c. 1924. Oil on canvas, 55.9 x 66.7 cm. Tate Britain, London (inv.no. T11896)



Fig. 22 – Dora Carrington, *Larrau Snowscape*, 1922. Oil on canvas, dimensions unavailable. Private Collection



Fig. 23 – Dora Carrington, *Mountain Church, Larrau*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 37 x 37 cm.
Private Collection

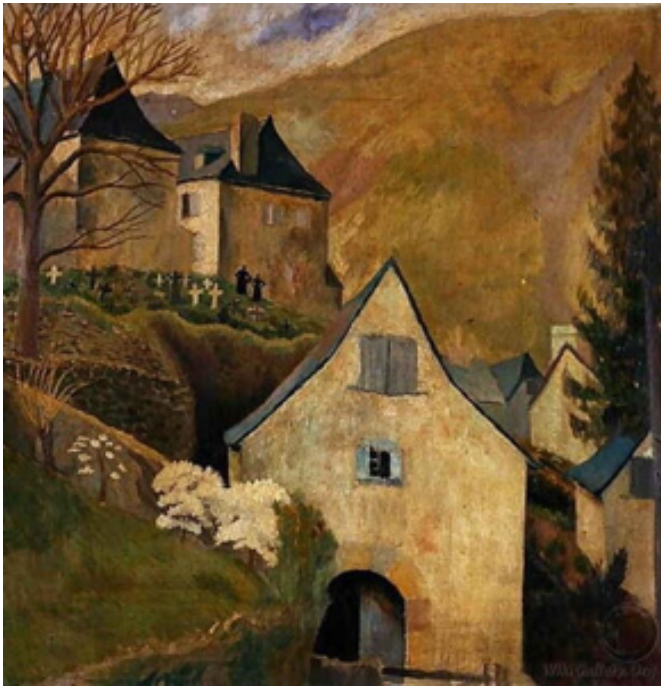


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Fig. 25a-e – Details of the sky the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* and Carrington's landscape paintings:

- a. Detail of Dora Carrington (attr.), *Landscape with Mountain Bridge*, c. 1910, Courtauld Gallery of Art, London
- b. Detail of Dora Carrington, *Spanish Landscape with Mountains*, c. 1924, Tate Britain, London
- c. Detail of Dora Carrington, *Larrau Snowscape*, 1922, Private Collection
- d. Detail of Dora Carrington, *Mountain Church, Larrau*, 1922, Private Collection
- e. Detail of Dora Carrington, *Farm at Watendlath*, 1921, Tate Britain, London

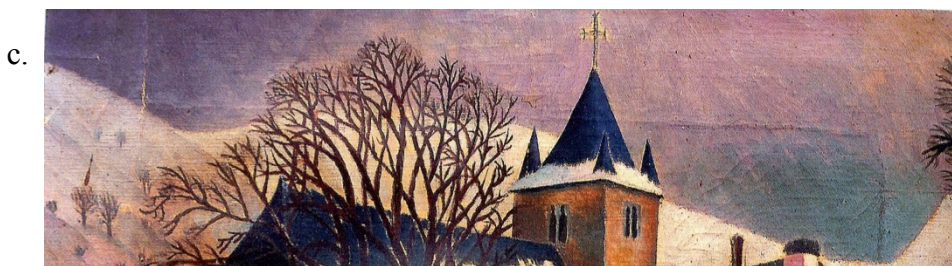


Fig. 26a-d – Details of figures in the Courtauld Gallery's *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* and Carrington's landscape paintings:

- a. Detail of Dora Carrington (attr.), *Landscape with Mountain Bridge*, c. 1910, Courtauld Gallery of Art, London
- b. Detail of Dora Carrington, *Spanish Landscape with Mountains*, c. 1924, Tate Britain, London
- c. Detail of Dora Carrington, *Mountain Church, Larrau*, 1922, Private Collection
- d. Detail of Dora Carrington, *Farm at Watendlath*, 1921, Tate Britain, London

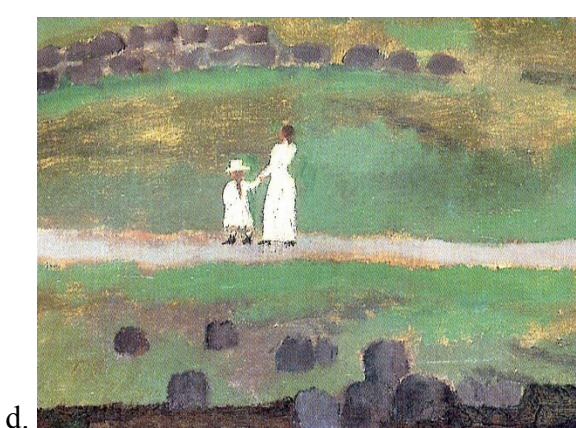
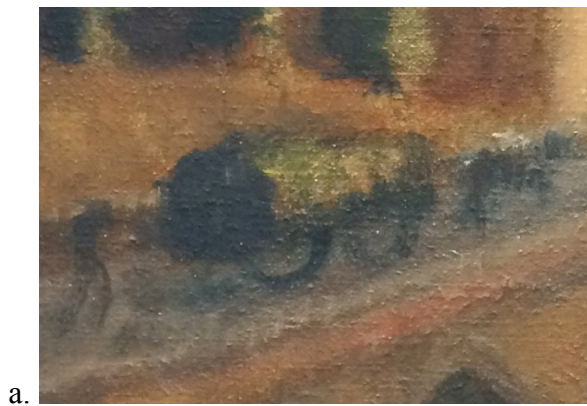
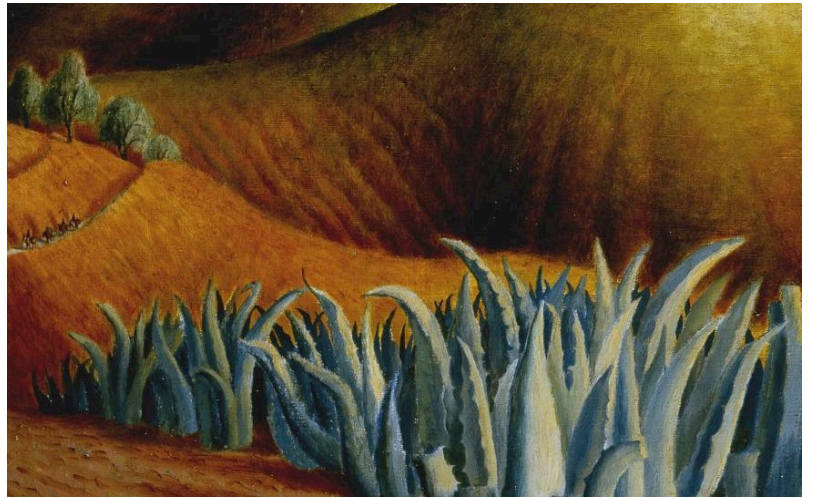


Fig. 27a-b – Details of trees in the Courtauld Gallery’s *Landscape with Mountain Bridge* and Carrington’s *Spanish Landscape with Mountains*

- a. Detail of Dora Carrington (attr.), *Landscape with Mountain Bridge*, c. 1910, Courtauld Gallery of Art, London
- b. Detail of Dora Carrington, *Spanish Landscape with Mountains*, c. 1924, Tate Britain, London



a.



b.

Fig. 28a-c – Examples of individual artistic styles and approaches of Slade students working in the early 1910s, when Carrington also visited the Slade.

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a.



b.



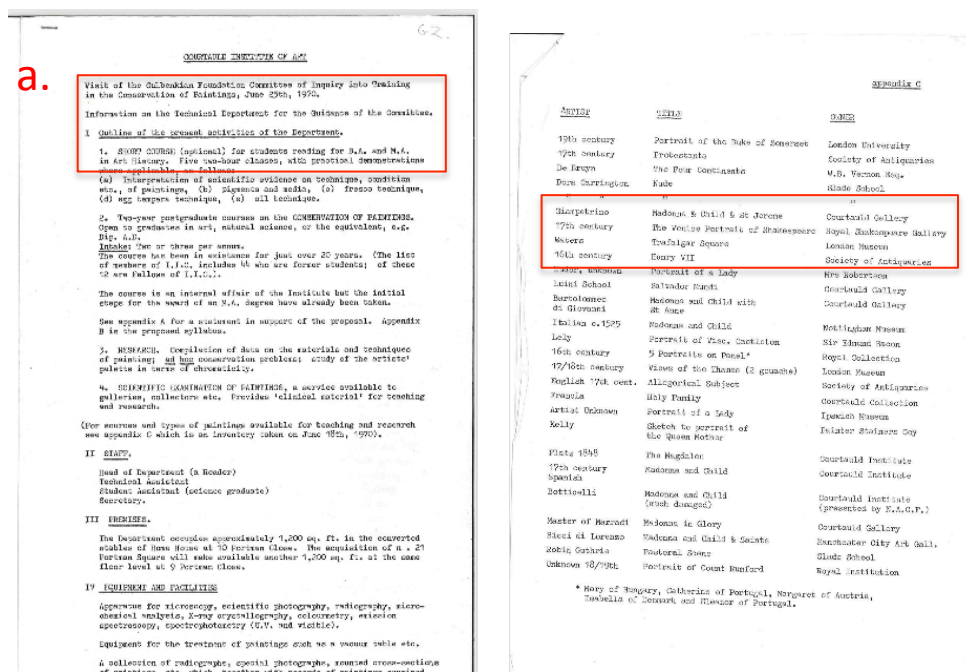
c.

Fig. 29a-c – Details of the feet of the Courtauld Gallery's *Standing Female Nude* and Carrington's other nudes:

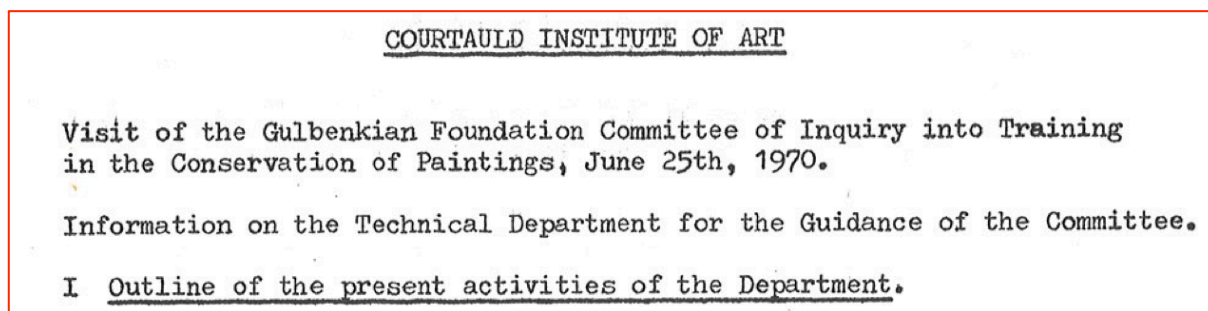
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- b. Dora Carrington, *Female Figure Lying on her Back*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 76.2 cm. UCL Art Museum, London (inv.no. PC5204)
- c. Dora Carrington, *Female Figure Standing*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 50.8 cm. UCL Art Museum, London (inv.no. PC5206)



Appendix 1 – Document revealing provenance



a.



b.

