

Unknown artist, *Thomas Buttes of Great Ryburgh, Hughenden*

Manor (National Trust), Buckinghamshire

CIA2773



An Elizabethan portrait on panel by an unknown artist.

Painting Pairs: Art History and Technical Study

2021-2022

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ABSTRACT

Art historical research, scientific examination, and conservation treatment have been undertaken with the aim of answering a range of art historical questions about the portrait. These questions concern the artist's painting materials and techniques within the historical context of the implantation of Netherlandish practices in Britain in the fifteen to sixteenth centuries. We will also address the relationship between how the sitter is portrayed and the religious landscape of the late sixteenth century, and whether the coat of arms and inscription in the background are original or later additions.

The surface cleaning to remove the severely discoloured varnish and retouching in the past has uncovered the details of the painting, including the delicate handling that models the face and grey beard, which could indicate the strong influence of Netherlandish technique. Elemental analysis has also suggested the proximity to Netherlandish painting techniques, by the use of zinc sulphate, a type of dryer found in fifteenth and sixteenth century continental paintings, and the copper containing oil medium, which has been pointed out in some portraits painted by Cornelius Ketel.

Before treatment, his plain black costume could be associated to sobriety that reflects his religious attitude towards Protestant in this period. However, a fur collar and the elaborate decorative pattern of the black doublet that were found during the conservation treatment suggest that the wealth of the sitter was clearly represented in the picture. Scientific examination has also suggested that the inscription and heraldry are likely to be part of the original painting campaign, or, they were added soon after the creation.