

Painting Pairs: Art History and Technical Study 2022-2023  
I.M. Coope *and the Old Iron Portrait Series*  
Chloé Glass (MA History of Art '23) &  
Catherine Dussault (PGDip Conservation of Easel Paintings '24)



Katharine Frances Clausen, *I.M. Coope*, 1927, oil on canvas, 68.9 x 51.0 cm  
Braintree District Museum, Braintree, Essex, UK  
CIA 2790

## Abstract

This paper outlines the research undertaken on the portrait *I.M. Coope*, painted in 1927 by British artist Katharine Frances Clausen (b. 1886 d. 1936). Courtauld Institute of Art history of art Master's student Chloé Glass and paintings conservation postgraduate Catherine Dussault have conducted a collaborative investigation of *I.M. Coope*, combining art historical research with technical analysis as part of the Courtauld Research Forum's 2022-23 Painting Pairs programme. *I.M. Coope* came to the Courtauld in 2022 from the collection of the Braintree District Museum in Essex, to be included in the Painting Pairs project and to receive accompanying conservation treatment due, in part, to the painting's degraded condition, with active and extensive paint flaking which caused the portrait to be removed from public museum display in 2019. This degradation became a primary focus of the technical analysis undertaken, while the art historical research, in turn, aimed to contextualize the painting in its socio-cultural background.

*I.M. Coope* belongs to the *Old Iron Portrait* series, a collection of portraits commissioned by the Crittall Window Company in the early 1920s that portrayed a selection of Crittall employees. Our art historical research centered on three main queries. Firstly, on the background of the *Old Iron* series and those involved, in particular the network of artists who painted the portraits and those who nominated them. Secondly, on artist Katharine Clausen herself and her connection to the *Old Iron* project, and how *I.M. Coope* fit into her personal oeuvre and studio practice. Finally, we wondered what the precedent for a series such as *Old Iron* might be in the wider social context of British art. We pursued archival research at the Royal Academy, the Braintree District Museum and other local sources, and also entered into dynamic discussions with curators, conservators and descendants of the Clausen family. Our findings led to a more holistic understanding of *I.M. Coope* in relation to Katharine Clausen's artistic practice, the *Old Iron* commission and British portraiture series.

Technical analysis within the project focused on understanding the painting's materiality: what Katharine Clausen used to create the painting and how, and how those materials and techniques may have contributed to the degradation effects present in the object's condition today. Investigative methods such as paint cross section analysis, light microscopy, infrared reflectography and SEM EDX elemental analysis yielded information that helped to better characterize the paint flaking phenomenon and in the construction of hypotheses on contributing materiality and physical history. Results from these methods, in addition to comparisons with the conditions and materials of the other paintings from the *Old Iron* series, have provided additional context for *I.M. Coope*'s creation and the physical state of the object throughout its history, including Katharine Clausen's use of modern materials new to the art world of the early 20th century.