

Abstract

This project investigates a privately owned panel painting, described at auction as ‘Northern European, 17th Century. An Aristocratic Midwifery Scene.’ The painting, on a small bevelled oak board, depicts a birth scene featuring seven women, including a central mother figure encircled by midwives. The project aims are to determine whether the painting represents the Birth of the Virgin or a secular genre scene, to analyse the order of paint application and identify pigment mixtures, and to suggest an approximate date for the panel, considering Early Netherlandish painting techniques. Methods included iconographic and stylistic analysis of the composition, incorporating elements from the Northern and Italian Renaissance. Technical analysis involved pigment identification and spectroscopy, including Macro-XRF scanning. Macro-XRF analysis indicated a previous composition beneath the Birth Scene.