

PARKER CONSERVATION, INC.

Administrative Offices and Consulting Services

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PAINTING CONDITION REPORT

Object: Franz von Stuck Painting
Dirk Soulis Auctions
Lonejack, MO

Accession Number: NA

Examining Conservator: Rick Parker

Date of Examination: 9/15/22

Location of Conservation Facility: Gentry, AR

KEY

PR=proper right; PL=proper left

F=front; R=rear; S=side; B=bottom

Painting Dimensions:

SS - 32 3/4" TB - 36" FB - 7/16"

Frame Dimensions:

SS - 44 1/4" TB - 47 1/2" FB - 2 1/4"

COMMENTS:

After examining the painting, a small area in the very upper PL corner of the painting was selected as a test site for a potential solubility test site in anticipation of potential cleaning at another time. The contiguous resin varnish and several of the earlier degraded varnishes did respond very well to a mild solvent based, PH modified detergent for cleaning. While not completely establishing solubility parameters as well as a TEAS Chart test would do, it did indicate that the heavily discolored varnishes and particulate would respond very favorably to cleaning without damage to the existing paint film.

Painting

Structure: The painting is on a softwood (unidentified conifer, possibly pine) panel consisting of four panels glued together. The cut of the wood is mostly radial but, in the center, there is clearly a tangential cut making the over-all panel somewhat unstable in that area. In addition, there are three battens running horizontally glued to the back.



Normally this would indicate some inherent stress and potential cracks in the tangential board. The battens are secure and there are no cracks or insecurities visible on the back of the panel. That said, there are vertical stress cracks through the paint into the gesso on the front of the painting where that tangential board is located. This would also indicate some, as of yet unresolved internal stress related issues on that particular board in the panel.



This particular cracking appears to be recent in that it is through all of the varnish and paint layers to the gesso layer with almost no particulate or dirt and debris in the cracks. By not having any varnish in the cracks it would also indicate that this has evolved since the last varnish was applied. The panel core remains flat and with good environmental conditions should stabilize. Excessive changes in the panel due to environmental shifts could cause further and more excessive cracking.

Painting: The painting is of a single figure playing a lyre being shadowed by two demons. The over-all appearance is very dark with irregular varnishes being quite darkened with normal aging and accumulated particulates and oils. There are numerous runs in the varnish as well as broken remains of the brush used to apply the varnish.



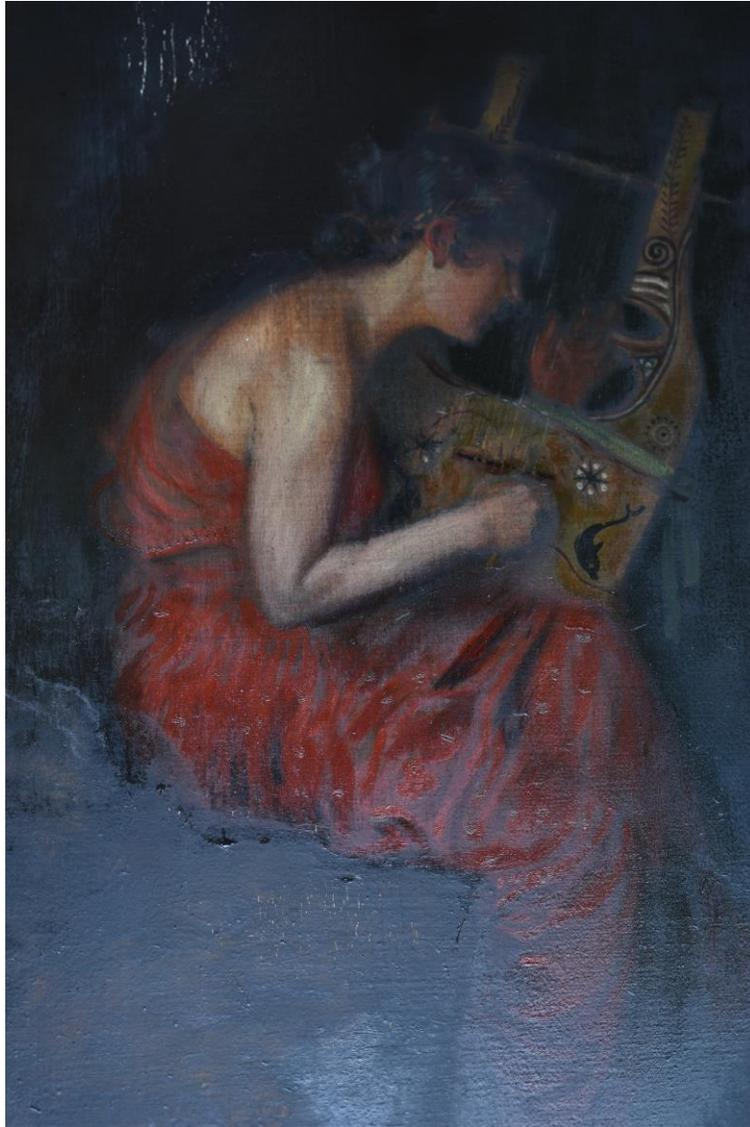
The surface is not continuous but very splotchy and irregular. There are clearly multiple layers of varnishes. Under UV at 365 nanometers the surface is clearly much different. There is a thin but very continuous oil resin varnish present with very few breaks of any kind. The runs, drips and spills as well as a less than consistent varnish coating is actually under a more recent oil resin. Given the amount of darkening and particulate UV light penetration is not as thorough as it could be if the layers were less thick and dark. However, the original paint appears intact and very stable. This is clearly a grotto scene with a small pool and water cascade in the lower PR portion of the painting.



This is almost completely obscured. There is also clearly other painted subject matter that is just hidden by the darkened varnish. The two demons in the upper portion of the painting are greatly obscured by the darkened varnish but the original paint seems intact underneath.



Above the demons is an area of sky with clouds which at first glance could be mistaken for an over paint or something missed by a varnishing. The sky under both long and shortwave UV is just lost in the darkened varnishes to the point of being recognizable but not at all as was intended by the artist. The figure is somewhat more recognizable with a red colored dress. The lyre is also more clear than other portions of the painting with many details visible.



The red dress under long wave UV (365 nanometers) shows the accumulated varnishes but a series of around three dozen very small crosses light up under the UV. When shifting to another wavelength (short wave at 254 nanometers) only the crosses from the knee down are visible indicating different materials. It is felt that these crosses are possibly gilding meant to represent details on the dress and not a later damage or addition. In addition to the crosses there is a fringe that is visible in the waist area. The figure's shoulder has had a portion of the varnishes and debris either abraded or worn off. It is a more true color but still not as clean as it was originally intended. There are some very dark spots in several places on the painting that could represent some later inpainting and touch up work, but the varnishes are too thick and dark to get a conclusive read on those areas. The signature on the PL lower portion of the painting is clearly below all of the varnishes and shows no indication of any alteration. When looked at under both long and short-wave UV it completely blends with the existing background indicating consistency with the surrounding paint.

Frame

The frame is made of an unidentified softwood that has been gessoed and water and oil gilded. There is a red bole present under the gilding. There are three locations of missing pieces on the top horizontal portion of the frame and approximately 16 areas of loss on the horizontal lower portion of the frame. The spiral carving on all four sides shows considerable wear and some loss but is acceptable when age and usage is factored in.



There is considerable dirt and particulate but no real additional damage from added coatings. The exception being all four corners where an oil resin has been applied at some earlier time and darkened with age. Further microscopic examination needs to determine exactly what the function of those four corner colorants were. There are two very dense hardwood panels running vertically on the sides of the painting.



While dark, both have fairly good visibility and not as much darkening as is found on the actual paint. Both wood panels have a floral motif running from top to bottom that is painted on. These elements are more sensitive to particulate and have darkened more visibly than the wood they are painted on. The corresponding top and bottom horizontal flat panels are gilded and have structural cracking indicating some environmental expansion and contraction. These currently appear stable.

Attachments

Eyelets screw into the wood to hang the painting with turnbuckles installed at a later date. There is no wire currently with the frame. The eyelets are screwed into a softwood and the PL eyelet is still secure although both are undersized. The PR eyelet is loose to the point of allowing the painting to come loose and fall. It would be appropriate to remove the turnbuckles, leave the original eyelets in place and mount either D-ring hangers appropriate in size or a museum type mounting with a ledger board underneath. The current eyelet configuration is a danger to the security of the painting if it is retained.

There are three attached labels on the rear of the frame. All are very acidic and fragile as well as very dark. Information on these indicates that the framing is most likely original to the painting. Examinations of the nails and attachment for the painting in the frame also corresponds with this thought. More study needs to be done to absolutely confirm the link between the artist and framer.

