

Presentation Abstracts

(in order of program)

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AI P A I N T I N G S
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National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

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Who painted Henry?

Full presentation

Simon Ives

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A portrait of Henry VIII on oak panel c. 1535 has recently undergone technical examination to answer questions regarding its authorship and relationship to a group of similar works in the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Society of Antiquaries. The painting underwent high-definition X-Ray Fluorescence elemental mapping on the X-ray Fluorescence Microscopy beamline of the Australian Synchrotron.

Little is known about the artisan workshops that may have been involved in the production of these early English portraits. Authorship of the Sydney painting (and the similar works in London) has been, for many decades, attributed to an anonymous Anglo-Flemish workshop. Little associated documentation on London workshops and artistic practice prior to 1540 has survived and so the paintings themselves are potentially the only source of insight into these questions. Analytical studies and imaging techniques of the paintings have the best potential to provide new insight on authorship and workshop practice.

The Henry VIII painting provides an excellent case-study of the ability of the synchrotron-sourced XRF mapping technique to provide images of high resolution to inform the understanding of the materials and techniques used.

XRF mapping of the panel has guided the conservation treatment of the painting and the revelation of previously obscured features. It has also provided compelling insight into the process of its making and enabled us to date its origin. The detailed elemental maps, alongside ultra-high definition scans of the painting will be highlighted in an exhibition of the painting.

Simon Ives is a Paintings Conservator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. He gained a Masters degree in Fine Art Conservation specialising in easel paintings at the University of Northumbria (UK) in 1994. He has worked at the Tate Gallery in London, the National Gallery of Australia and in various private practices. He also has a Masters degree in Painting and is completing a degree in Fine Art Education.