

**Stanley Pinker**

Figure with Bird (1978)

Oil on canvas (61 x 44,5 cm)

SANG Acc 88/21

**TECHNICAL REPORT**

This painting exhibits a very precise working method, which does not however detract from the spontaneity of the painterly effect, in part due to the simultaneous build-up of the paint and planning layers.



Recto



Verso

**Support**

The painting is executed on a pre-prepared fine weave linen canvas stretched onto the stretcher by the artist.

**Ground**

The canvas is pre-primed with a white ground layer that extends over the tacking margins. It remains visible through reserves in the paint in some passages of the composition, such as the wings of the bird.

## Underdrawing

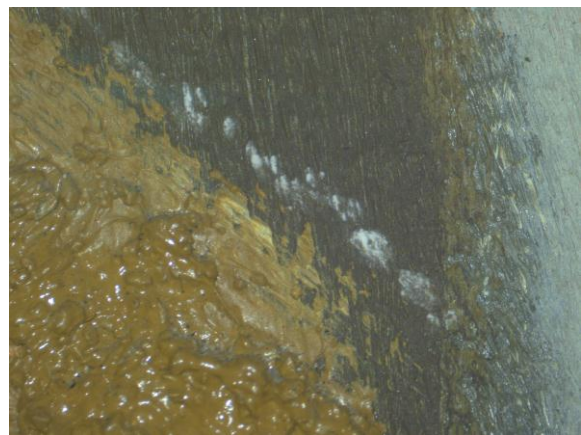
As expressed by the artist in the excerpt below discussing his working method from 'A Conversation with Stanley Pinker', the paint and planning layers are built up simultaneously. Thus, drawing is found to lie on top of the background paint layers and can be seen to have been applied during the painting process. This is evident in *Figure with Bird* as applied in both pencil and chalk.

“Essentially the flat background does the footwork in my paintings; it is usually a base colour, or colours, and it sets the mood. Whether a painting contains minimal information or has very complicated imagery, in each case it is with the background that it all begins. It is my first concern, long before I start with the detail. The components of the imagery then assert themselves on the flat space in terms of their shape, line and colour.”

(Michael Stevenson, *Stanley Pinker*, 2004:19)



Macrograph showing drawing in pencil at pentiment below arm applied over the background paint, as well as evidence of underdrawing at hand, and a further pentiment at the cuff with adjustments via sgraffito



Macrograph showing drawing in chalk at bottom of leg, left, over the paint layer

## Paint layers

Although as stated by the artist in the above quote, and as evidenced by examination of the painting, there is a simultaneous build-up of paint and planning layers above the background paint layer, some initial planning was also undertaken. This can be seen in the reserves of white ground that are visible through the wings of the bird, and which were not painted with the background colour.

The paint has been applied with a variety of interesting features and techniques. These include the sgraffito used in the pentiment at the cuff, seen above, as well as rubbing back of the paint / abrasion evident in the bird's leg. The use of short-bristles, stiff brushes is also evident in the handling of the paint where the brushstrokes go through to the ground layer. This is also evident as the paint has been fairly dryly applied, and several different sizes of brush can be detected through examining the different brushstrokes.

The use of masking through a stencil or a ruler is clearly visible in the straight lines of some of the details, such as the lines through the sky and those on the man's clothing. The inclusion of sand



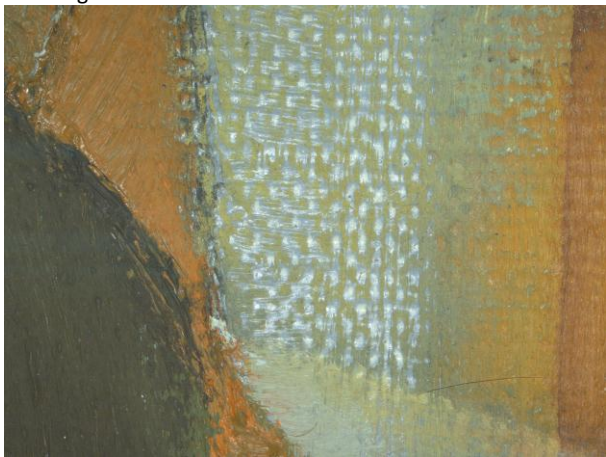
granules is another interesting feature apparent in the lower left of the painting, which produces an interesting texture to the surface of the paint.



Detail showing the reserves of the white ground visible at the wings



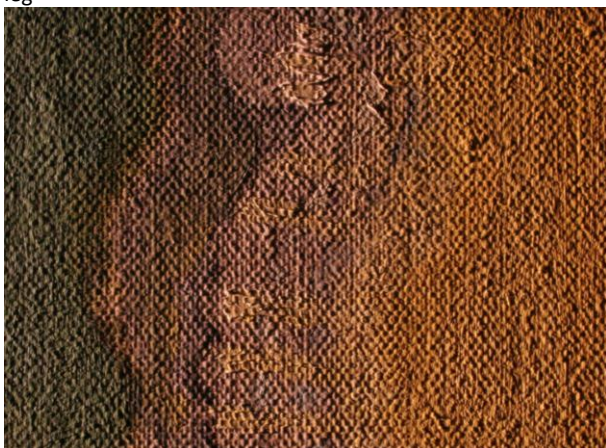
Macrograph showing white ground visible through the upper paint layer in the wings



Macrograph showing rubbing back or abrasion in the bird's leg



Macrograph showing the use of short stiff bristles and relatively dry paint application in the underlayer

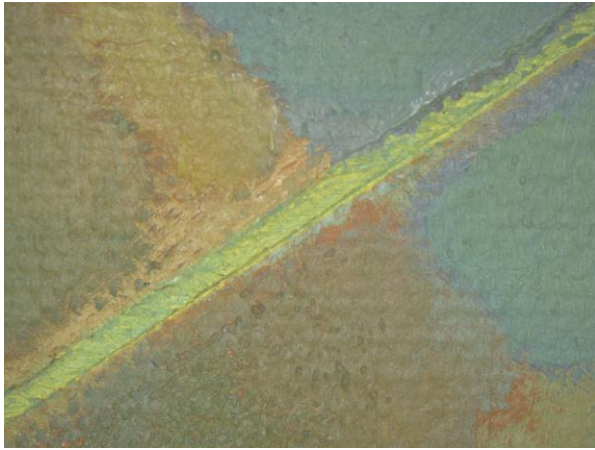


Raking light detail showing use of tiny brush in the headdress

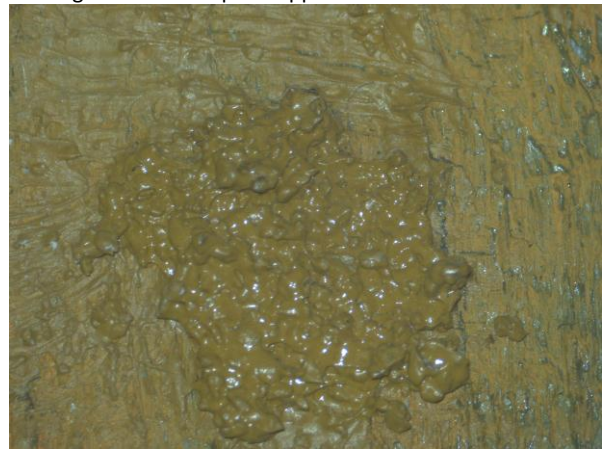


Raking light detail showing variety of brushstrokes in the legs as well as stencil for the stripe





Macrographs showing use of masking by a stencil or ruler for the straight lines in the paint application



Detail in raking light showing the texture achieved with the inclusion of sand in the paint

Macrograph showing sand inclusions

### Varnish

There is no varnish layer and the image in ultraviolet light shows only slight fluorescence at the reserves of ground and some surface accretions splattered across the wings of the bird, possibly a glue residue.



Image in ultraviolet light

The painting is framed by the artist in a hand-made frame of painted batons.

Bronwyn Leone  
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