

**Walter Battiss**  
African Rocks and Figures  
Oil on canvas (81,5 x 102 cm)  
SANG Acc 61/20

### TECHNICAL REPORT

This painting exhibits an interesting working method with a thick build-up of paint and an original artist's varnish. It is not clear whether the medium is exclusively oil or indeed mixed and including some enamel or household emulsion paint.



Recto



Verso

#### Support

The secondary support is a wooden stretcher. The pre-primed canvas is attached to the stretcher with tacks.

#### Ground

The canvas is pre-primed with a white commercial priming that extends over the tacking margins.

There does not appear to be any underdrawing.

#### Paint

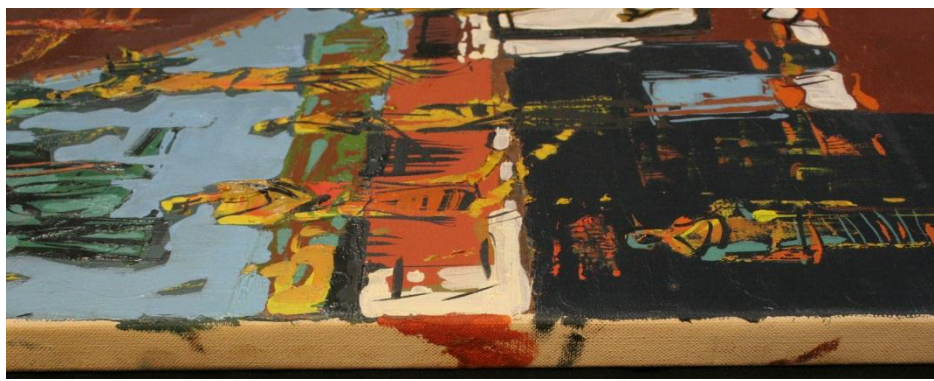
The paint layers are thickly applied with much impasto and an interesting build up, the thickness of the paint visible in a raking light. It can be seen that the paint is applied in blocks of colour to build up the background, after which the figures and further reworking of the background layers are built up simultaneously after that.



Recto in raking light



Verso in raking light showing how the more thickly painted areas have pulled the tension of the canvas

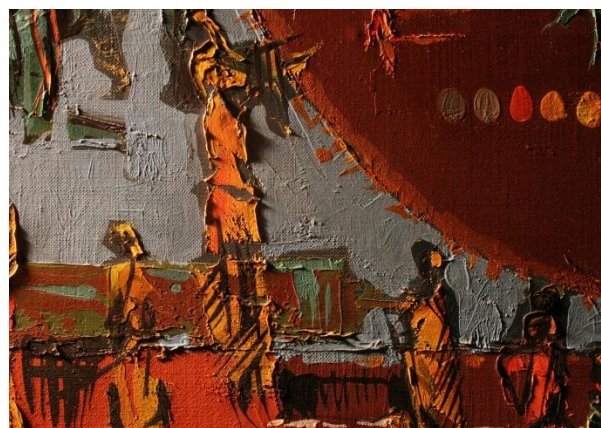


Detail showing the build-up of the paint layers

Interesting features of the technique include minor pentiments to the positioning of the figures, which seem to have been built up simultaneously with the background. There is use of a palette knife for some of the paint application, and there is also sgraffito, possible done with the back of the paint brush handle. Some of the paint has been thinned so that it is applied like a glaze but in a drawing technique, and used to form the outlines and details in the figures.



Macrograph showing pentiment where blue background is reapplied to adjust positioning of black figure



Detail in a raking light showing how some of the paint has been applied with a palette knife





Macrograph showing sgraffito in figure's costume applied over a dried underlayer

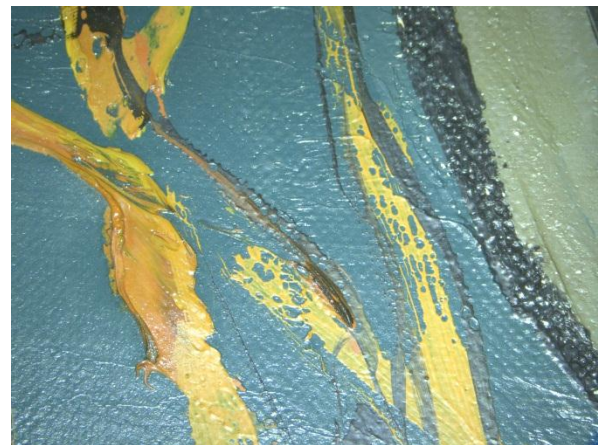


Macrograph showing use of thinned black paint used for 'drawing' in the figures, applied over not fully dried white paint

It is not clear whether the medium is exclusively oil. Some of the paint has the texture and appearance of enamel or house paint, for example the glossy black and the glossy white which has also yellowed with age. There is also a fair amount of resistance between some of the paint applications, where upper brush strokes have pulled away from the underlayers upon which they have been painted, suggesting a difference in medium. This could however also be due to the use of resin interlayers or resin mixed in with the paint. Some of the greens in particular appear to have had resin mixed in with them, they fluoresce brightly in ultraviolet light and blobs of resin can be seen to be extruding from the paint.



Macrograph showing white paint with yellowed glossy appearance similar to enamel or household emulsion



Macrograph showing resisted brushstrokes of yellow and black paint



Macrograph showing green which fluoresces brightly and appears to have some medium / resin extruding

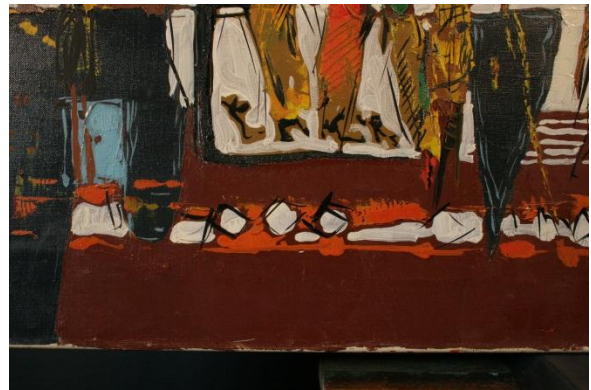
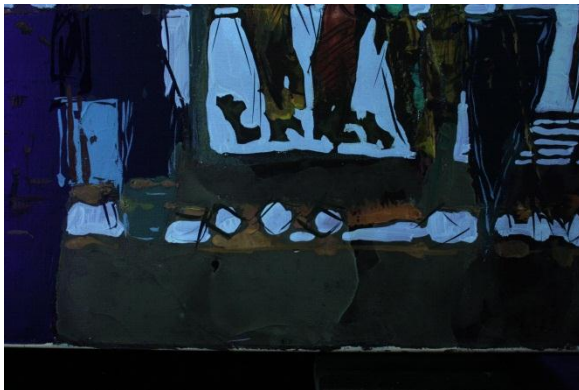


Macrograph showing another area of green with similar extrusions, as well as resistance of the white layer

The painting is signed bottom left 'Battiss'.

#### Varnish

There is a partial application of varnish. This is almost certainly the original varnish applied by the artist, and its brushy and uneven application can be clearly seen in ultraviolet light where it fluoresces the typical greenish colour of a natural resin varnish.



Detail in ultraviolet light (left) and normal light (right) showing the uneven and brushy application of the original artist's varnish



Detail in ultraviolet light (left) and normal light (right) showing the uneven and brushy application of the original artist's



varnish



Whole image in ultraviolet light

Bronwyn Leone  
July 2016

#### Further work

- Investigate medium – enamel / house paint??
- Green? Strange resin extrusions?
- FTIR?

#### Photography

- UV detail of green with resin