

CONDITION REPORT  
IDENTIFICATION DETAILS

ARTIST

Edward Wolfe  
1897 - 1982

TITLE

Aishia  
Portrait of a women.

DATE

1938

SIGNATURE:

Signature in the top left hand corner in  
black 0.2 pen.

ACCESSION NUMBER:

AQ: 57/1

Cat no: 204 (when accepted on loan)

DIMENSIONS:

915mm x 730mm x 20mm

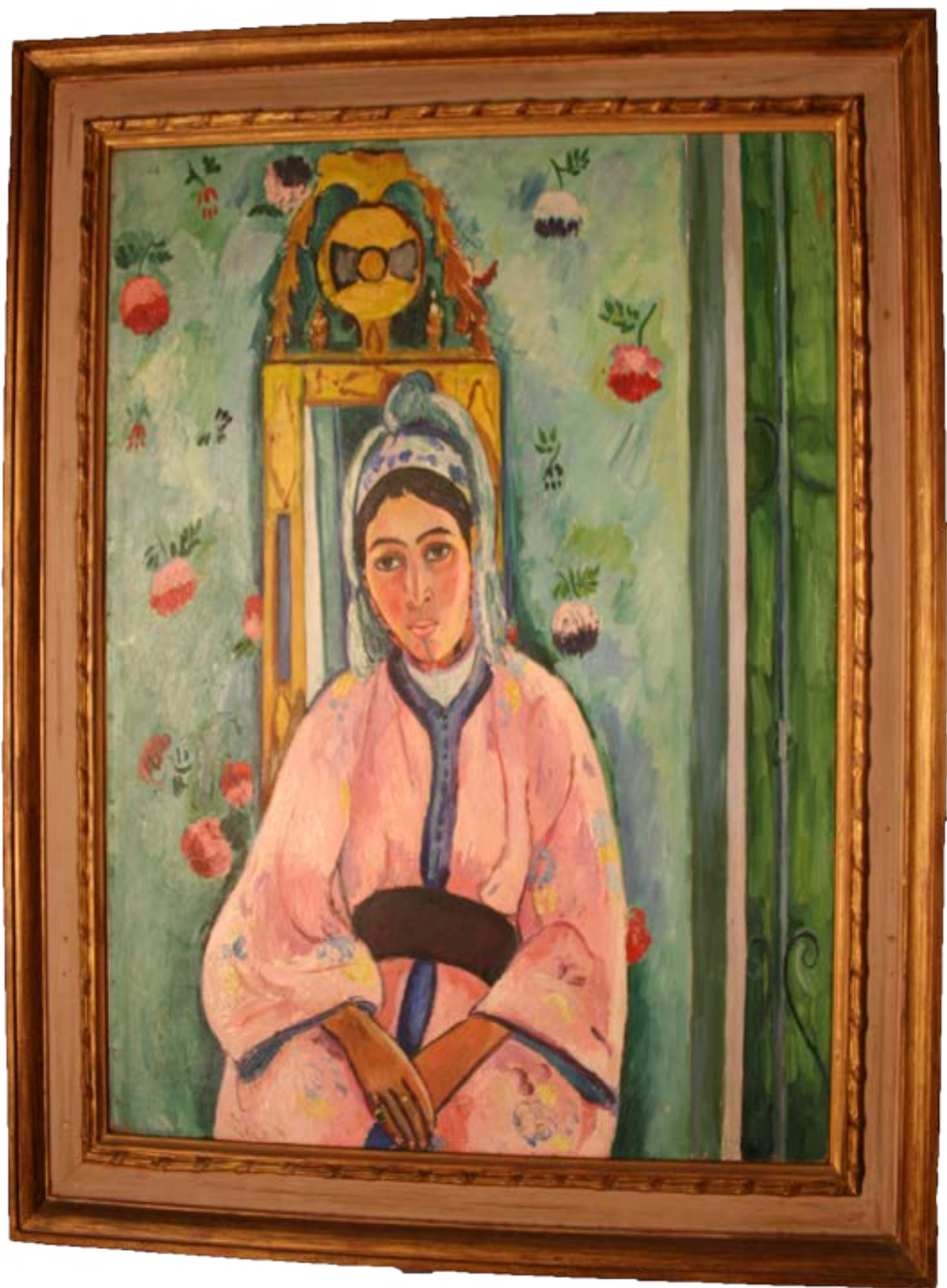
Tool used for condition investigation:

Ultraviolet Light

Racking Light.

Magnification.

Elize de Beer  
2016



*"His intellect is seen in his mastery of line. Even his simplest works a straight forward flower piece, a boat at anchor, a child's head, have a linear decisiveness that defines planes, sets up rhythms and connects decorative surface and spatial depth" - Richard Shone 1982*

Edward Wolfe was a South African born in 1897, he then moved to London in 1916. His interests lay in art and theatre which gave his paintings a theatrical flare. He became part of the Bloomsburg Group which started his career as a painter and studied at the Slade School of Art in 1916-18. Wolfe was strongly influenced by Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism, as well as by artist such as Matisse, Cezanne and Picasso. Wolfe was fascinated by the possibilities of pure form without representational connotations and as such he did a series of abstract paintings. These influences gave his work the bold colour and free handling of form he is known for. Wolfe was able to study Matisse's work first hand in the Davis Collection in Johannesburg. The vibrant colours, strong outlines and powerful interior tensions which strengthens his, sometimes, casual-seeming compositions. Wolfe's African background and penchant for traveling and working abroad made his work seem exotic in the British art scene. He travelled throughout the Mediterranean and North Africa where he would have then painted *Aishia* in Morocco. He was a colourist. The first thing one notices and the first thing one remembers of his work is the vibrant and catching colour. Wolfe studied the people that he met whilst traveling, drawing inspiration from cultural experiences and the world that surrounded him, *Aishia* being a prime example of this. One can see in other paintings such as *Women in Interior, Tangiers*, 1930 and in *Portrait of Zhora*, 1930, the subject matter parallels that are visible in *Aishia*. Wolfe painted in South Africa 1919–21, in Paris 1922, Italy 1923, Spain and Morocco 1927, New York and Mexico 1934–7, and again in South Africa 1956–8. After his travels Wolfe travelled back to England where he exhibited works he had done while traveling. In 1972 he was elected in the Royal Academy and had retrospective exhibition organized by the Arts Council in 1967 and in 1997 at Paisnel Gallery. Today his works are in countless gallery collections globally, including the Tate Gallery and South African National Gallery.

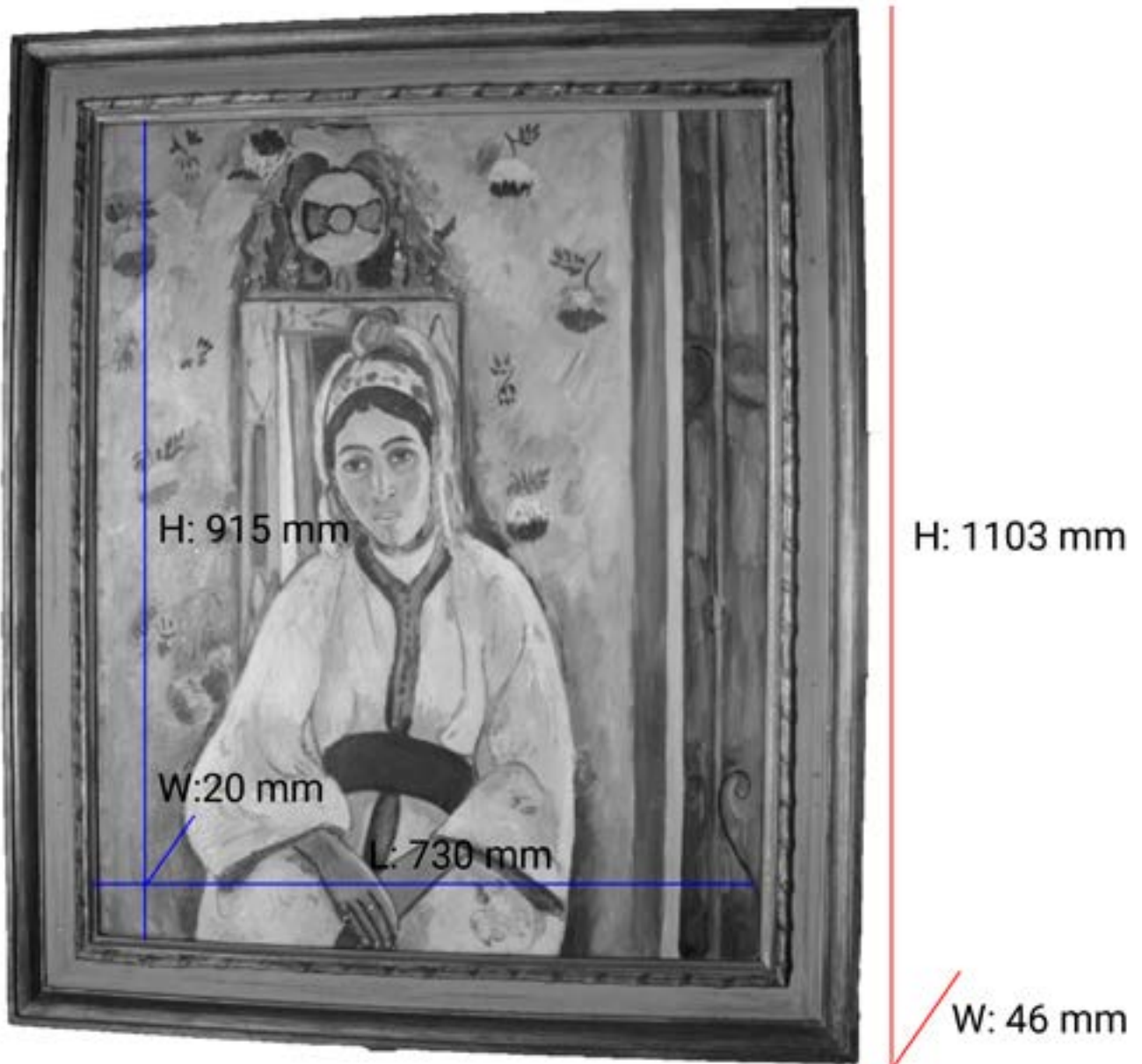


*Portrait of Zhora*  
1930

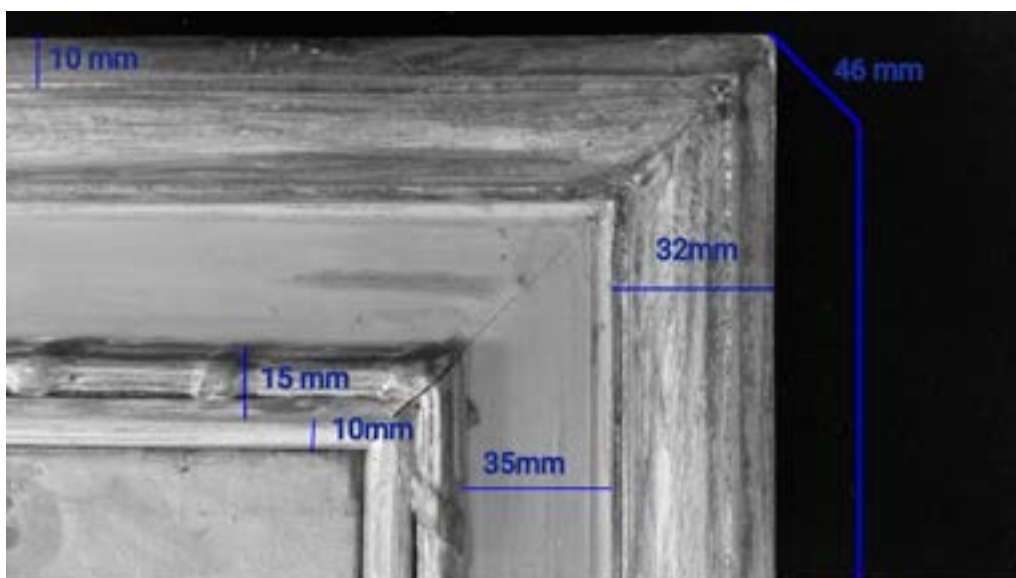
*Women in Interior, Tangiers*  
1930

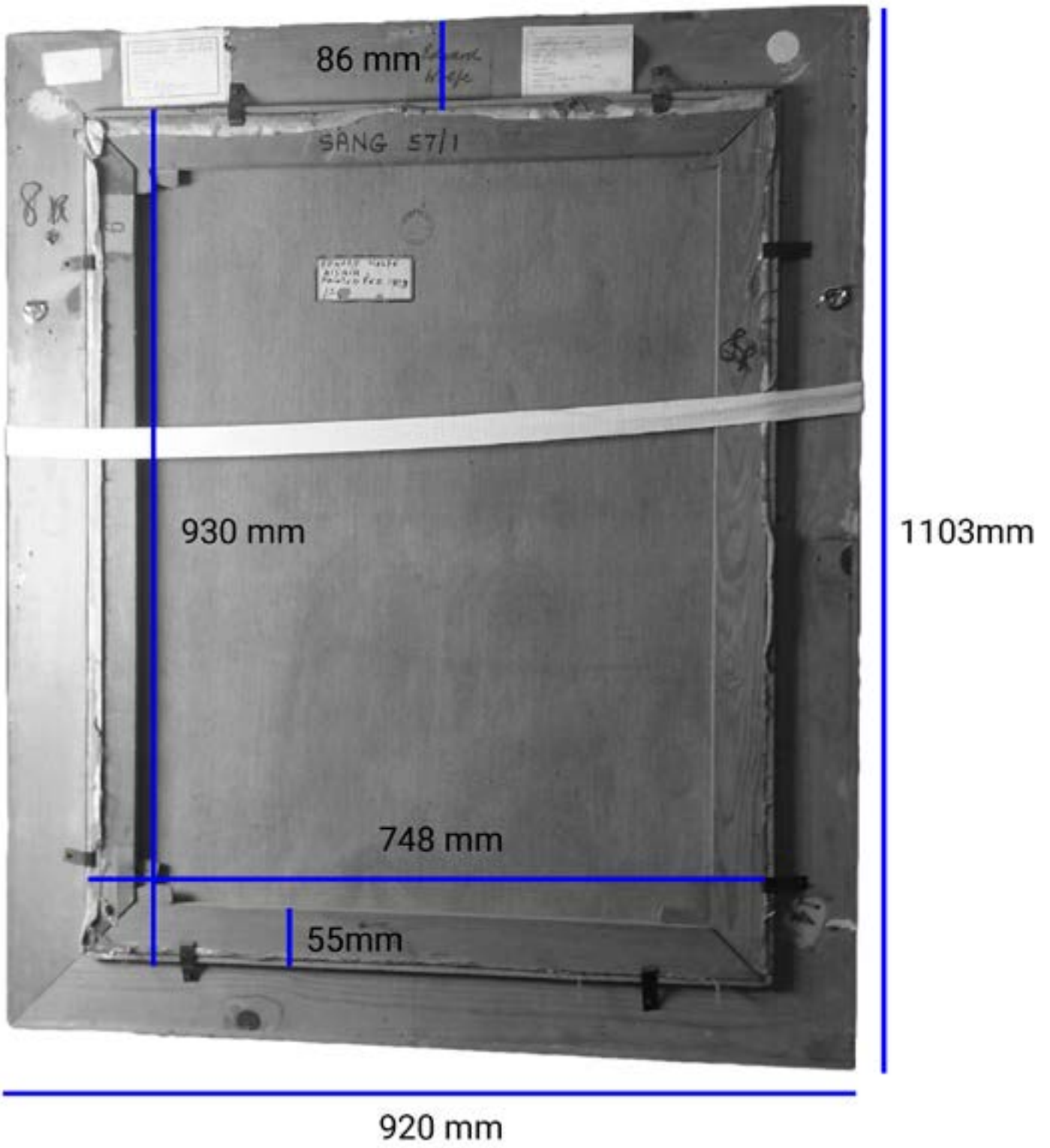


# Measurements



L: 920 mm





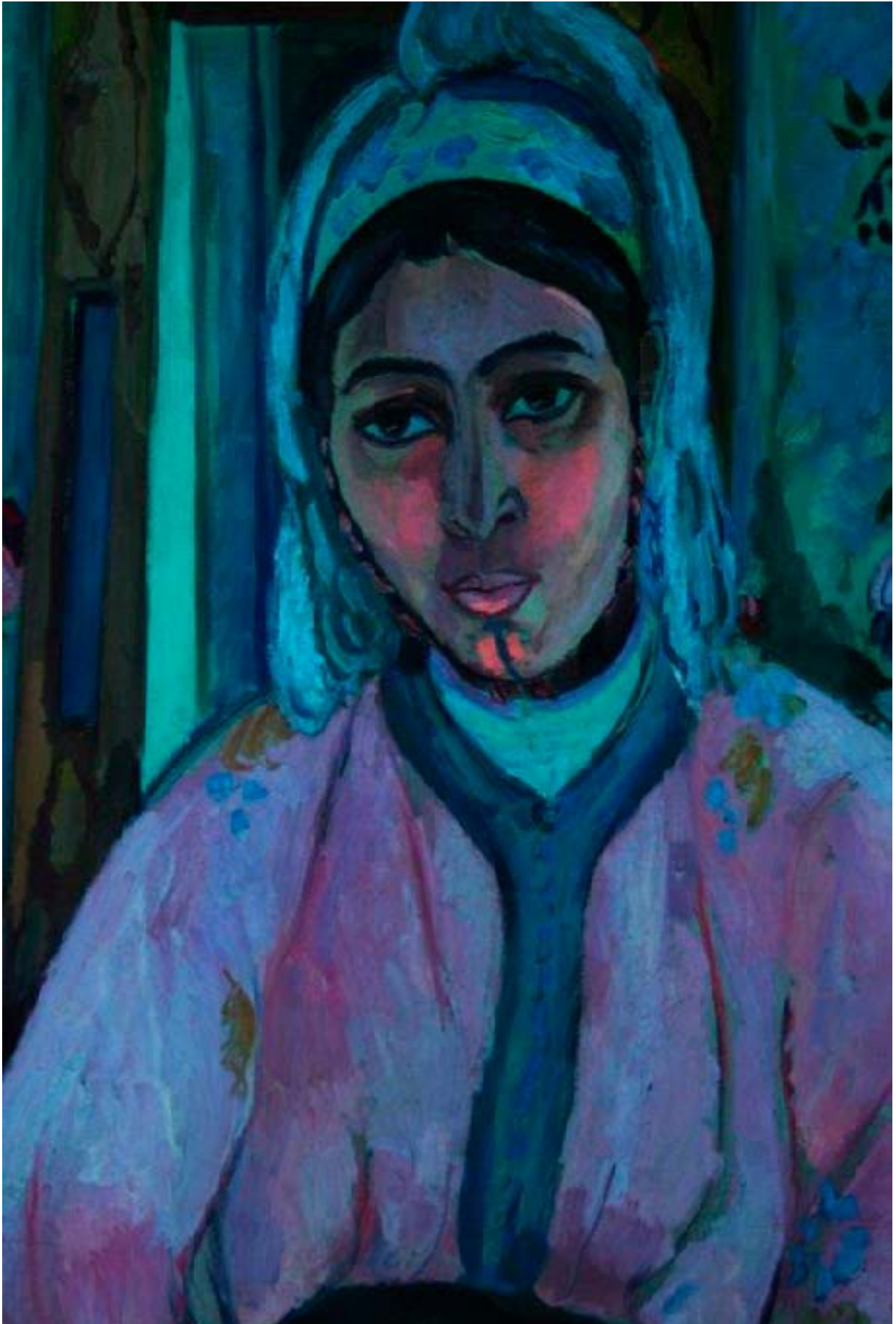
# Raking Light



# Raking Light



# Ultraviolet Light





# Micrograph Pictures

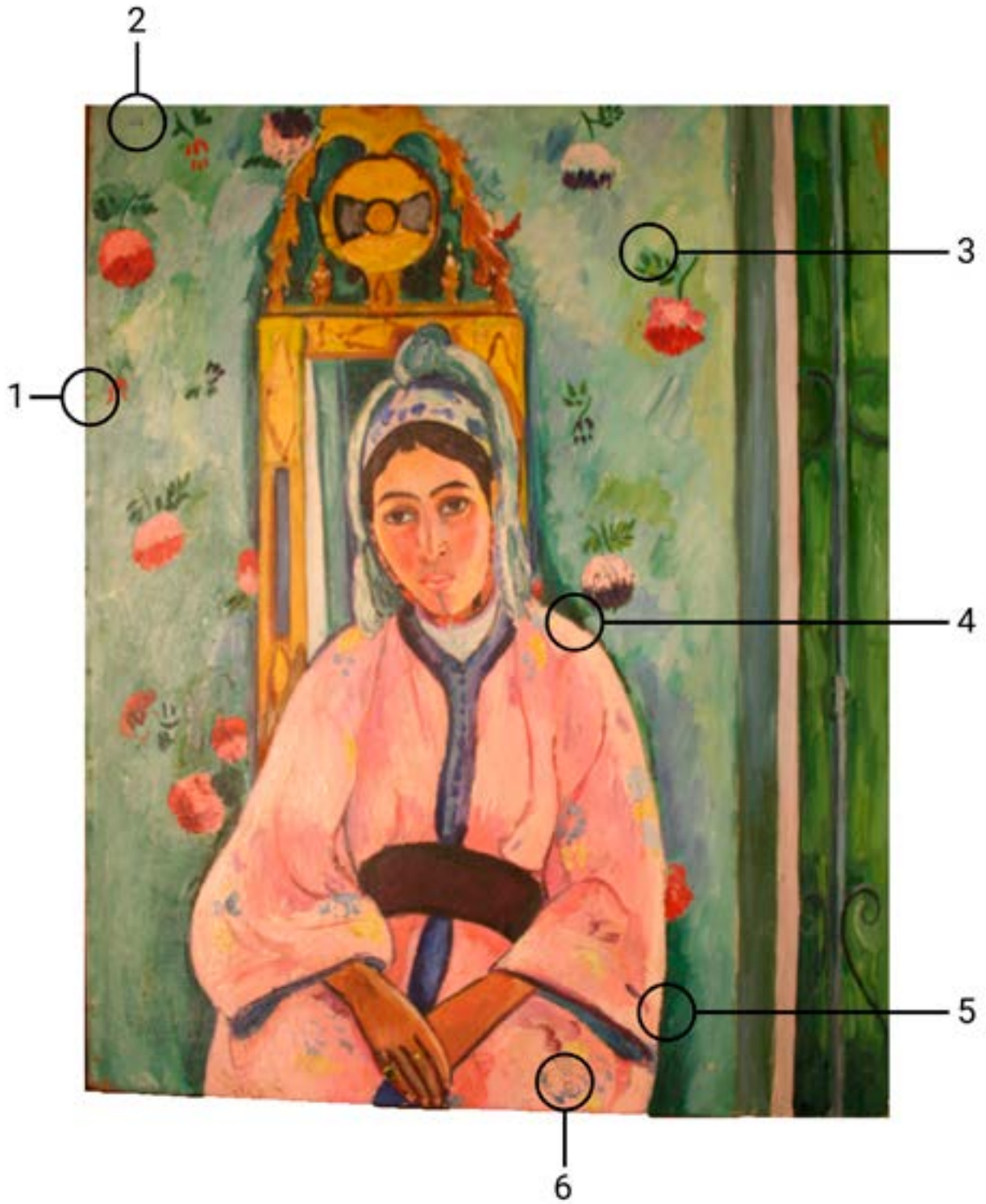


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

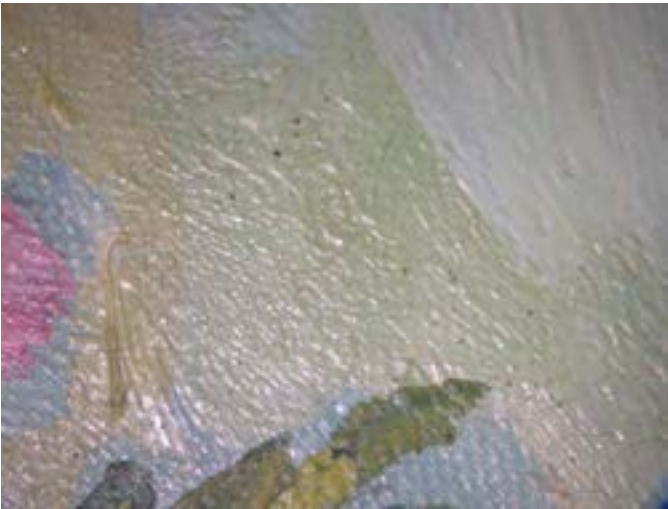


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



# Primary Support

The type of fabric: cotton canvas  
The weave type: tabby weave  
The thread count: 165cm<sup>2</sup>



Condition:

The overall condition is good, one piece of canvas has been used and there seems to be no previous restorations made to the support. The canvas is strong and taught within the secondary support structure, with little embrittlement and degradation.

There are no tears or serious damage to the front of the support other than tack holes that run along the left side of the painting that can be seen through raking light. Bucking isn't immediately visible however when put under racking light, bucking can be seen caused by a stretch bar mark along the left side of the painted canvas.



Racking Light.

At the back of the painting the canvas is fraying at the edges, there is a tear that carries into the member in the top middle, and there are also visible tack marks from a presumable original stretcher.



The canvas is attached using tacks which are not in good condition and are rusting. They are evenly spaced, 70mm apart. The tacking margin is in good order with an average width of 15mm. The tacks marks and margin have been covered by extra wooden supports that run along the sides of the painting. I assume that it was done to hide the tack marks for aesthetic reasons.

There appears to be no previous restorations done to the primary support canvas, it is still a fairly new painting. However, there are some areas what would need work to preserve the work. – This is proven when put under Ultra Violet light. There are no darker areas or paint, therefore it is young paint.

At the back of the canvas there is an import stamp and sticker declaring the artist name, tile and date along with location and price presumably 20 Euros. There are pieces of the sticker that have worn away. – refer to page for diagram and picture on the marks on the back of the painting,

# Ground

The ground seems to be well preserved under the paint layers that have not been damaged with no flaking coming through. The off white colour of the ground can be seen on the canvas extending over the secondary support stretcher. It is a commercially prepared canvas as the ground's white colour extends over tacking margin. The white may have been crisper when it was first painted on, as some areas are whiter than others when examining the back of the painting but due to age and dirt it has turned off-white.

The ground and paint surface has suffered from surface abrasions on the two bottom corners and along the tack hole marks along the left side on the painting, where raw canvas is now exposed and there are no signs of restoration.



Wolfe painted in impasto and because of the strong brushstroke mark lines, there are pieces of exposed ground that are visible between these brushstroke lines and the extended canvas as a result of stretching at the back of the stretcher.



# Paint Layer

## Cracks

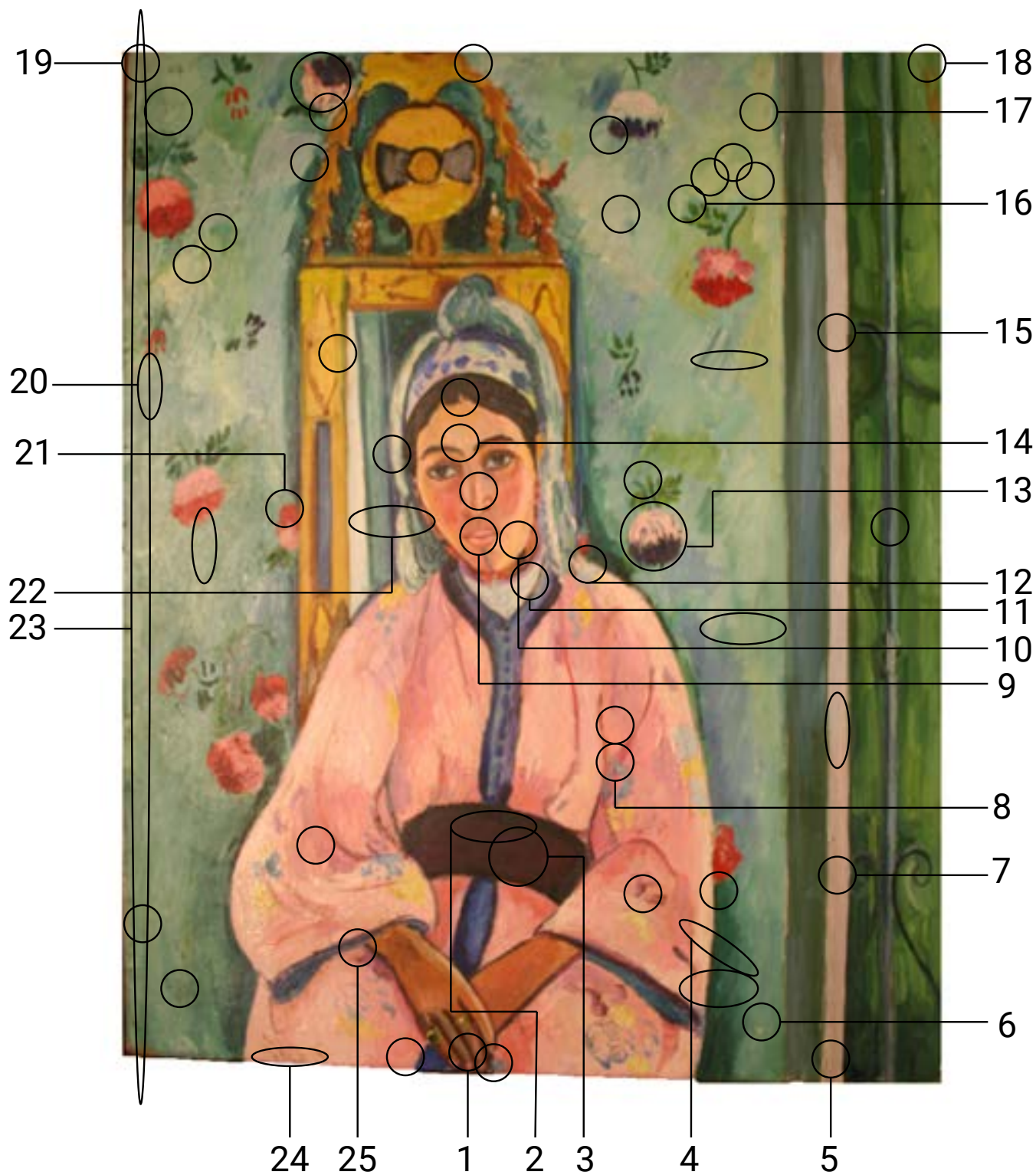


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

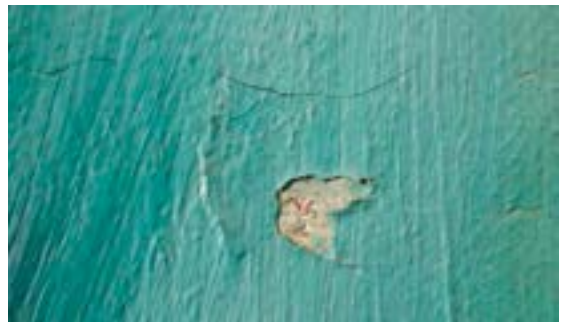


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

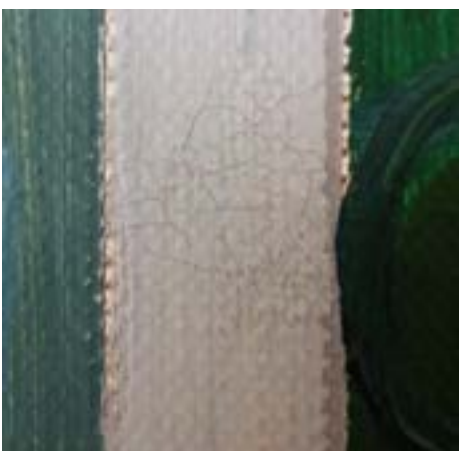


Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21





Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



# Chips and Abrasions



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

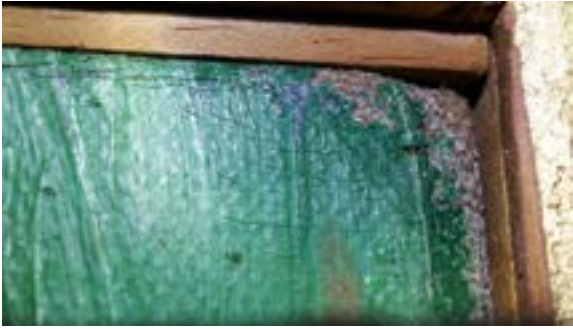


Figure 10



Figure 11

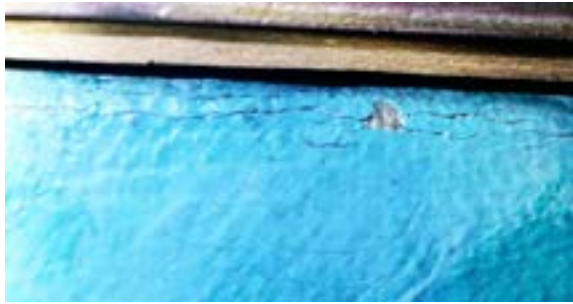


Figure 12



Figure 13

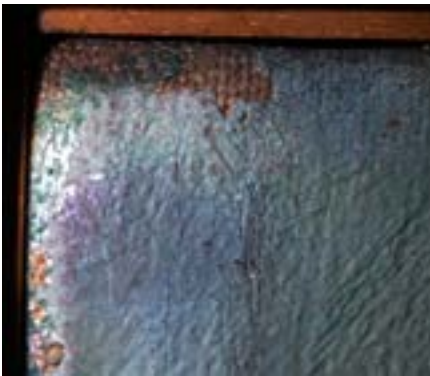


Figure 14 Detail



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16





Micrograph Picture

The painting has been applied directly onto the primary support. Wolfe tended to paint in impasto as seen in Aishia. The use of pronounced brushwork gives the painting a sense of movement and texture, especially when looking at her clothes where the brush strokes help create the folds in the fabric. Lines are also created through the techniques of sgraffito. Scraping away section of the thick paint in order to create a strong imbedded line. There are also areas of the painting that reveal the under drawing as Wolfe has chosen not to paint in certain areas, revealing the pencil lines.

## Cracks

Even though it is a young painting, only 78, it has a large amount of cracks throughout.

### Aging crazy

These are the most predominate cracks in the painting regardless of paint consistence.

These cracks penetrate though the ground to the paint layer.

Refer to Crack Figures 1; 5-21; 24-26.

### Fishtail cracks

There is a fish tail crack which is caused by a firm markers pressing onto the back on the canvas that has left the crack behind. Refer to Crack Figure 4. When looking at the area in Raking Light, it shows how something pressed against the back of the canvas causing the cracks and how it has left a dent in the canvas.



Micrograph Picture



Racking Light.



Racking Light.

### Stretch bar crack.

Along the left side of the painting is a crack running from top to bottom 20mm from the edge of the painting. A stretcher would create this type of crack and when the painting was removed from the stretcher this crack would remain. This gives evidence to that fact that it is now not in its original secondary support structure. Refer to Crack Figure 22. It can also be seen clearly though racking light.

### Drying Crack

Also known as traction crack, this is caused by layers of paint or varnishing painted over partially dried oil paint. The only drying cracks are within the woman's sash around her waist. Refer to Crack Figure 2-3.

There is a large amount of cracks for such a young painting. The painting travelled from Morocco to England and to South Africa where it now resides. This long distance traveling may have been the root of its mishandling, vibrations from transportation, and the flux in humidity and light conditions of the painting could be the causes of the various cracks.

## Chips and Abrasions

There are chips, and paint abrasion mostly on the edges of the painting that range in size. This might be due to the fact that the painting has been mishandled when being put within the secondary support and again within the frame. It could also be caused by general mishandling and disregard for the painting. Refer to Chip and Abrasions Figures.

Scratches in the paint layer show how the painting has been mishandled. Refer to Chip and Abrasions Figures 7 and 12. The loss of paint and ground has also been a cause of the compromise of the primary support. This compromise has been caused by the tack holes that run along the left side of the painting. The holes have caused the paint and ground around them to fade. Over time if not repaired the paint loss will increase in those areas. This applies to all chips and abrasions.



Micrograph Picture

Painted Surface:



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



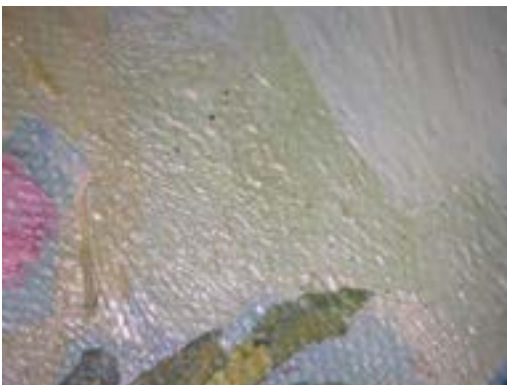
Figure 4





At the bottom of the painting there is some dirt accretion. It seems to be a splash of adhesive or sticky residue that has stuck to the painting and has then kept collecting. Painted Surface Figure 1.

Since Wolfe painted in impasto the pronounced brushworks have the potential of trapping dirt and dust in the groves of the paint if the painting is not looked after properly. There is brown gum trap residue along the top right of the painting and in the middle. – adding evidence that this is not the paintings original secondary support. Refer to Painted Surface Figure 3-4.



Micrograph Picture

There are two small hairs in the sash of the women's cloths. It is hard to locate at first because of how thick Wolfe's paint layers were and in relation to the drying cracks that surround it. Figure 2.

Signature:

Appears to have been done with a pen, 0.2 sized. This can be seen by looking at how the pen ink marks only sit on the lower levels of the paint layers.

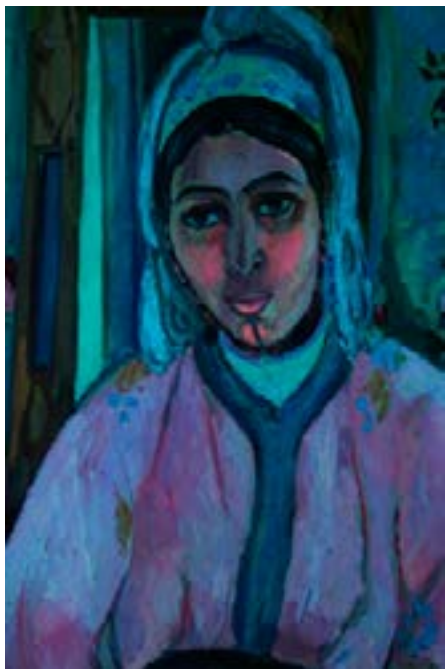


Micrograph Picture

## Ultraviolet Light

Ultraviolet light that falls with the 320-400 nm range (long-wave) of the electromagnetic spectrum is generally used to examine artworks although short/mid-wave UV light (200-280 nm and 280-320 nm, respectively) is also useful in identifying certain materials. This technique is non-destructive and can reveal important information relating to surface coatings and other organic materials such as varnishes and adhesives (depending on their composition and age the forename of the varnishes and adhesives will vary in colour); as well as an object's restoration history such as previous retouching.

There appears to be no varnish used. The Green shades that are visible are there due to the green pigments Wolfe used. However there are some areas in the painting where the green appears more florescent than others, which may just be the type of pigment or may indicate selective varnish application to give that particular area more sheen. When looking at the painting with raking light, there are some areas that have a greater sheen than others, which could indicate varnish.



UV light can also be used to tentatively identify certain pigments depending on their auto-fluorescent properties, which can also be seen. In the painting we can see that this applies to the florescent pink that appears on her cheeks and chin in-between a blue vertical line on her chin. The Pigment Rose Madder florescent nature creates a glow in the women's face. The pigment is not used anywhere else on the painting. We can then assume that the colour was carefully chosen for her face, separating it from the back ground and her clothes as the focal point of the painting.



## Raking Light

Looking at a work of art with raking light allows for a greater understanding of the relief of the painting and how the artist has used the paint. The raking light shows how Wolfe has made use of the impasto technique and the layers he has used.

It can also show any lifting cracks in the paint, any distortions caused by uneven stretching, and sometimes changes that an artist has made in paint.

# Secondary Support

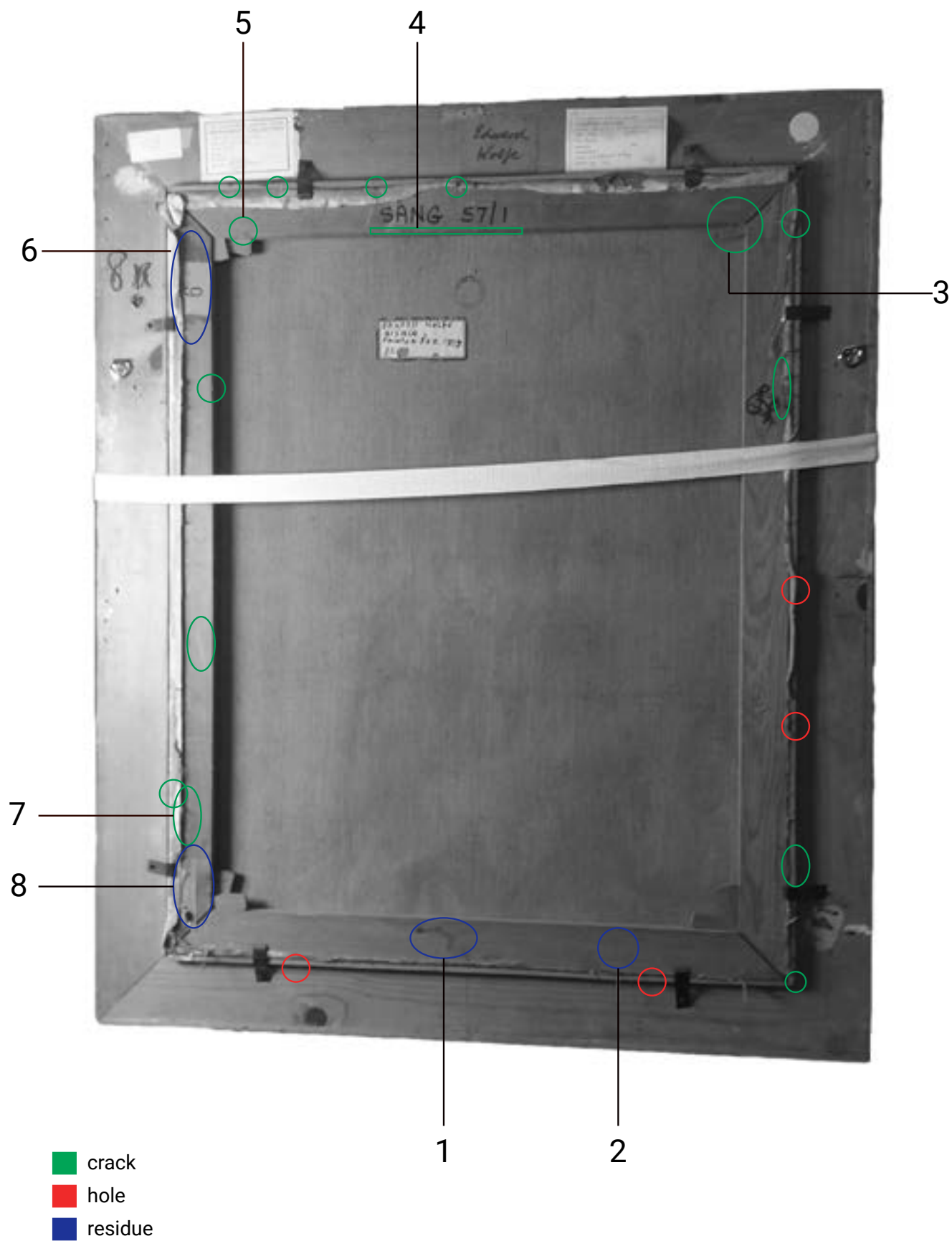


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 8



Figure 6



Figure 7



The secondary support is a stretcher with mitre joints:

The number of members: 4

Dimensions: (W = 55 mm / W=61 (including the additional member supports covering the tacking margin) x T=15mm)

Expansion keys: 7 keys, 1 missing and one damaged in the top right hand corner. They have been taped in (Figure 3)

Condition:

Overall the stretcher is in good condition regardless of the one missing key and some damage done to the members. The support structure is sturdy and keeps the tension of the canvas taught.

However I am concerned with how the secondary support is connected to the frame. There are visible gaps between the secondary support and the frame as seen in the picture below. A frame may then need to be reattached to the secondary support to ensure the stability of the support.



Damage to the support:

The members at their mitre on the left bottom, left top and right bottom corners there is a gap between the joints. However the explanation keys are still able to hold the joint in place to the support structure stable and taught. Damage can be seen in Figure 3, 4 and 5.

There are a few nail holes on the sides of the members marks on the side by it does not compromise the strength of the support.

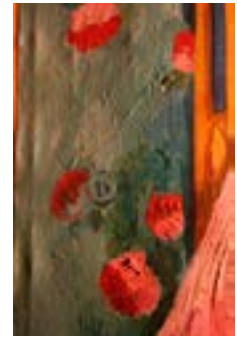
There are dents assumingly due to the secondary support having been mishandled; due to the fact that a soft wood was used or inadequate construction of the support. There are some cracks and chips of wood missing, especially in the inner corners of the support. See figures 3, 4, 5 and 7.

I don't think that this is the original stretcher. Wolfe painted the Painting in Fez, Morocco, the painting had then travel back to the UK in some way. It could have been rolled up; however there are no cracks or marks in the primary support or the paint layer to support that theory. I then assume that it was stretched while Wolfe was in Morocco and was then taken apart and re-stretched with a new secondary support in the England.

Evidence:

Tack mark holes all along the left side of the painting. -Stretch bar crack 20mm from where the original tack holes are. This has also caused subtle buckling in the painting. Tack marks and stretch bar cracks and buckling can be seen in racking light.

Tack holes and tears are visible on the canvas in secondary support at the back of the painting.



Racking Light.



Gum Tape residue and bits of tape is still on. Suggesting it was torn off to remove it from the original. The tape has been cut or torn to remove it from the original support. Seen in Figure 7 and 8. There is also Gum tape stuck on the painted surface of the painting on the right hand top corner and centre with adhesive residue.



# Marks and Inscriptions

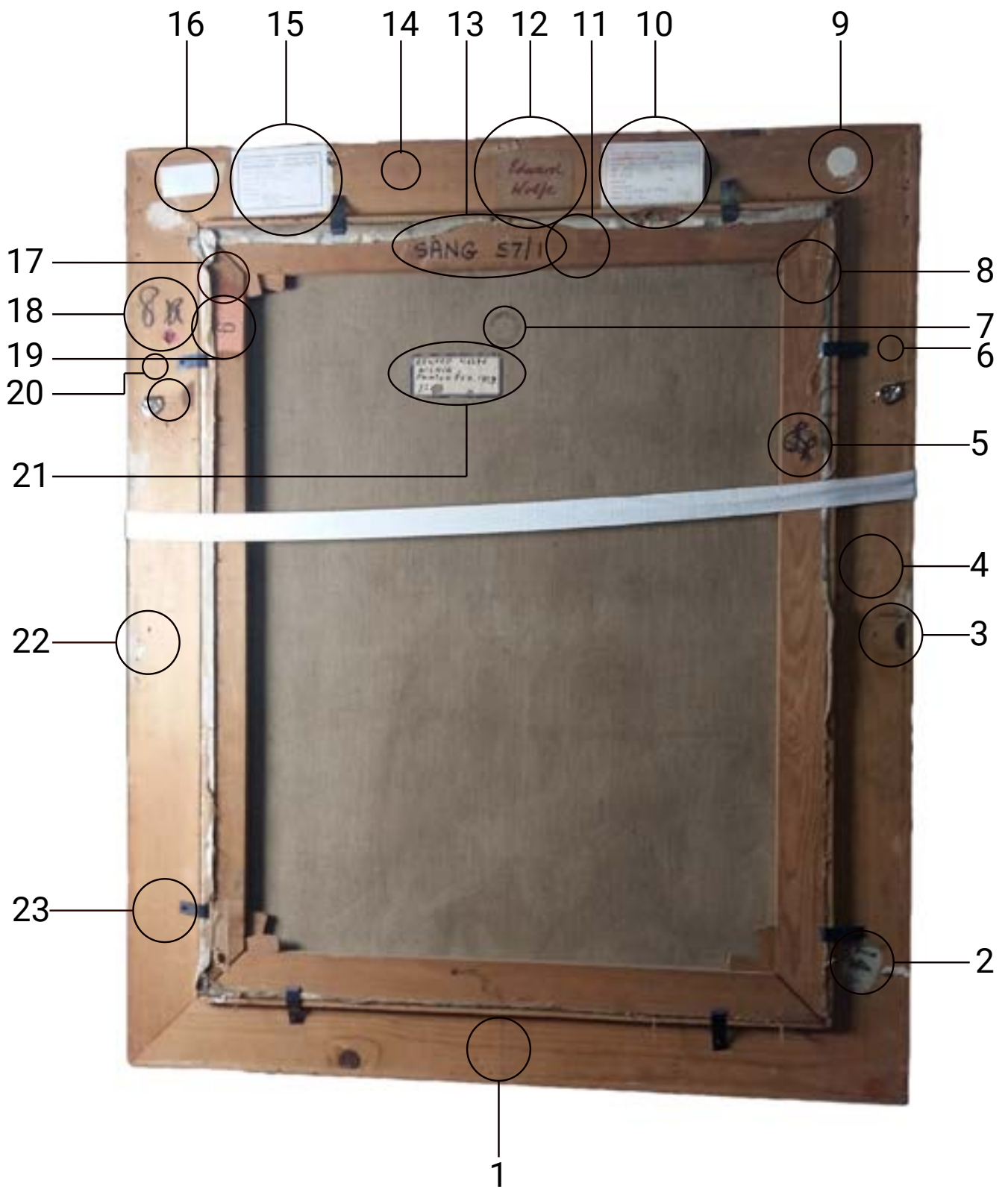


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8





Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



### **Back of Frame:**

Written in pencil: 823 left, 827 right above silver D-hooks. Figure 6 and 20.

14 circled in red right middle. Figure 4.

There are pencil marks on each frame member to indicate the centre. Figure 1, 3 and 22.

Label 14. Figure 2.

Pencil lines. Figure 23.

Permanent SANG Collecting Label. Name, Title, Date, Acquisition Number, Location. Figure 15.

Label of Artist name. Frame Signature. Figure 12.

Loan acceptance label. Exhibition, name, title, date, catalogue number, lent by, location. Figure 10.

Sticker with 542. Figure 9.

Sticker with 1K. Figure 16.

Signatures with red sticker with signature. Figure 18.

### **Back of Secondary Support:**

Label with the number 6. Figure 19.

14 and circled top middle in red. Figure 17.

SANG 57/1 (South African National Gallery). Figure 13.

Pencil written 36. Figure 11.

Pencil Line drawn. Figure 8.

Signature. Figure 5.

### **Back of Primary Support:**

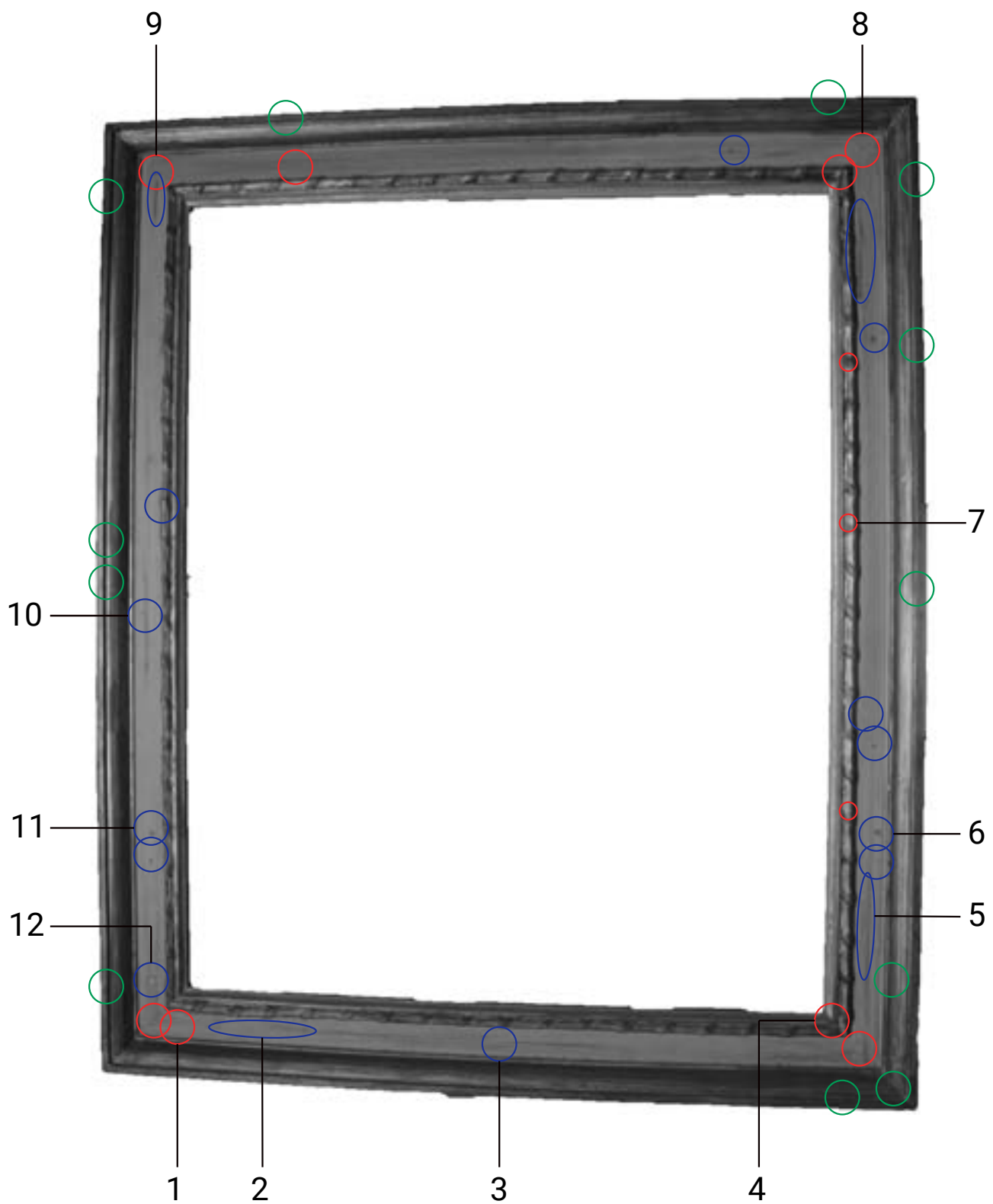
Importation Stamp. Figure 7.

Stickers showing artist name: Edward Wolfe, title: Aishia, location: Fez, date: 1938 and what look like a price. Since there are areas that have been lost, presumably by moths, where the inner and outer edge have been eaten away. I then assume that the price would have been 20 Euros. Figure 23.

It is interesting to note how information is repeated in different forms on both the back secondary support and frame; such as the number 14 and the signatures. The number 14 has been written four times in three different ways, pencil, circled red crayon twice and a sticker.

There is a loan acceptance label where the painting was borrowed for an exhibition in Paris and South African Artists. This occurred while the painting was a part of the South African National Gallery's permanent collection. It may have entered a South African collection as the painting was brought back to South Africa when Wolfe returned to South Africa in 1956. The dates are unknown as there is no documentation regarding the painting.

# Frame : Front



- chip
- crack
- marks

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



The frame is a moulded. Where the outer frame is painted with a red bole was used with gold paint to make the frame appear to be of a higher value. The middle section of the frame has remnants of the gold paint but is predominantly (pink/white) in colour. The inner section of the frame has been painted gold. All gold paint has been used in order to appear as if it is gold leaf.



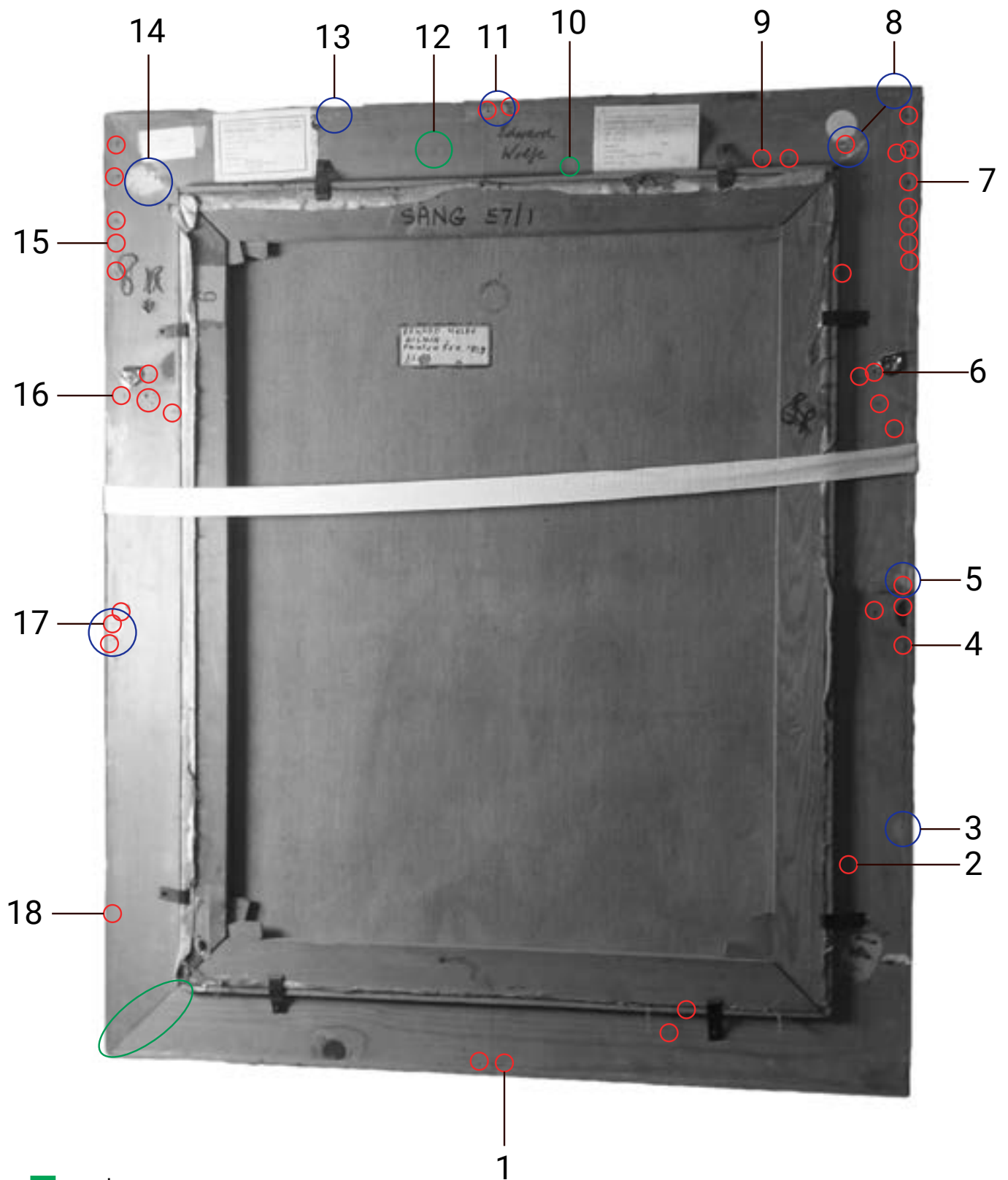
Gesso is a traditional mix of an animal glue binder, chalk, and white pigment, used to coat rigid surfaces such as wooden painting panels as an absorbent primer coat substrate for painting. Its absorbency makes it work with all painting media, including water-based media, different types of tempera, and oil paint. It is also used as a base on three-dimensional surfaces for the application of paint or gold leaf. I assume then that frame was made poorly especially in how the gesso and the frame paint layer was applied. As the paint layer and the gesso dried, the gesso began to bubble through the paint layers forming a hard white plaster like bubble on the surface of the frame. I assume this was caused by careless frame work or that it was done in damp/ humid conditions. Along the inner edges of the frame and in the middle section there are dark spots varied in size and shape of mould growing on the frame. Refer to Frame Front figure 1, 5-6 and 10.

There are partials of dirt and dust that have built up on the frame, making the frame appear dull and lowering the condition of the frame. Among the dirt build-up there are also areas with mildew on the inner edges of the frame. Refer to Frame front figure 3, 6, 8 and 11.

The structure of the frame is relatively sound. However there are cracks in the inner corners of the frame. Refer to Frame front figure 4 and 9. In the middle left member there is a hole, refer to figure 10.

The frame was apparently not well cared for when it was constructed and as a result the frame's condition would have deteriorated, additionally it is apparent that it has not been well maintained. It would need to be restored for it to be structurally sound for the painting. The frame adds authenticity to the painting, with all the marks, labels and inscriptions which makes it an important part of the painting. I suggest then that the frame should be restored.

# Frame : Back



- crack
- hole
- residue



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



As stated earlier the front of the frame is in poor condition. It is also seen in the back of the frame. Along the outer edges of the frame there are drilled holes, and around the frame's D- hook's and around the centre of each member. It shows the lack of care the frame has endured.

There are a few areas with dents, however not any that would compromise the structure, refer to frame back figure 10 and 12. There is a slight crack that runs through the left hand corner. It may need to be repaired so as to not continue the neglect of its poor condition.

There are areas of the frame that have wood filler residue, showing signs of repair. Refer to frame-back figure 5, 8, 14 and 17.

There are paint and red bole splats on the back of the frame when the front of the frame was being prepared, showing careless construction of the frame. Refer to frame-back figure 8 and 9.

Glue residue is also seen in areas where labels have been stuck down and where frame joints have been stuck together, refer to frame-back figure 8, 11 and 13.

