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OZIAS HUMPHRY (1742-1810), *PORTRAIT OF JANE AUSTEN*

Oil on canvas, 142,2 x 92,7 cm

• ORIGINAL TECHNIQUE OF A LATE 18TH CENTURY PAINTING

The original support appears to be a rather tight and regular woven linen canvas, originally mounted on a wooden stretcher that can be keyed-out. The canvas weave remains fairly prominent suggesting that the cream-coloured ground may correspond to a single application.

The technique of the painting seems astonishingly direct, and the artist had to work with great rapidity, to capture the slightly windy atmosphere, best expressed by the smooth movement of the white airy dress floating in the wind. Indeed, visual examination of the painting method reveals bold brushwork, painted largely wet-in-wet, with later brushstrokes blending with earlier ones to produce subtle colour mixtures.

The artist appears to be using an interesting range of pigments. Although no study by scientific methods of identification had been carried out we may safely assume the presence of lead white (basic lead carbonate; *hydrocerussite*), azurite, yellow ochre, vermilion (mercuric sulphide; *cinnabar*), red-brown ochre and ivory black. For a full technical analysis, samples of the paint layers and ground would need to be taken in each of the different areas in order to determine the exact stratigraphy and the nature of each of the component layers.

The binding medium of the painting has not been identified, but it is a reasonable first assumption that the painting has been executed in an oil medium. Traditionally such drying oils¹ were linseed oils, walnut oil and poppy oil.

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¹ The term 'drying oil' refers to oil expressed from vegetables sources, which has the potential to become semi-solid by polymerisation of the individual molecular units of which it is composed.