

**Eight expert opinions on the findings of Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel presented in Part I and Part II of her book *And the Flower Portrait of William Shakespeare is Genuine After All. Latest Investigations Again Prove its Authenticity / Und das Flower-Porträt von William Shakespeare ist doch echt. Neueste Untersuchungen beweisen erneut seine Authentizität*. Hildesheim: Olms Verlag, 2010, c. 70 illus. on CD-ROM, Part III, pp. 34-42:**

### **Part III**

#### **Expert opinions on the findings presented in Part I and Part II**

The findings presented in part I and part II of this book as well as all visual documents to be found on the attached DVD (from illustration 001 - A - ill. 1 to illustration 050 - J - ill. 1) have been shown to various experts in different fields for critical examination from June 2007 to December 2009. Their expert opinions, which contain valuable additions to the author's findings, deserve the reader's attention.

***Reinhardt Altmann, former forensic expert at the Bundeskriminalamt Wiesbaden, and Professor Wolfgang Speyer (University of Salzburg), expert on Old Masters at the Salzburg Dorotheum***

In his expert opinion of 20 June 2007, the former forensic expert of the German Bureau of Criminal Investigation [CID/FBI], Reinhardt Altmann, stated that he had "thoroughly examined" the textual and visual material presented to him. He stressed the "dactyloscopic [forensic] precision" applied to observing "minutiae", and declared that he "fully and wholly" endorses the author's conclusions. After meticulously examining the materials presented to him, the Austrian expert on Old Masters, Professor Wolfgang Speyer (University of Salzburg and Dorotheum Salzburg) also confirmed all of the author's results.

***Helmut E. Zitzwitz, conservator, Hudson River Gallery and Conservators, Yonkers, New York***

On 9 July 2008 the present author contacted the American conservator Helmut E. Zitzwitz, owner of the "Hudson River Gallery and Conservators" in Yonkers, New York, who, among other things, specializes in conserving and restoring Old Masters, asking him to thoroughly examine her results presented in the manuscript of this book. In his expert opinion of 12 September 2008, Zitzwitz stated:

I studied this material in great detail and was impressed and convinced by Professor Hammerschmidt-Hummel's results. In addition, I solicited help from another expert, a friend I respect and trust in his scientific knowledge, challenging him to find holes in Hammerschmidt-Hummel's analysis. Together we enlarged the photographs. My

friend was deeply impressed by the high resolution and relative easy task to do the comparisons. He came to the same conclusion as I did, which is to say that Hammerschmidt-Hummel's findings are sound, precise and convincing.

***Dr Thomas Merriam, Anglo-American Shakespeare scholar, Reading, England***

In his detailed review article on the book *The True Face of William Shakespeare* (2006) by H. Hammerschmidt-Hummel, titled "A Question of Authenticity," to be published in *Religion and the Arts* (Boston College), the Anglo-American Shakespeare scholar Dr Thomas Merriam commented on some of the author's findings presented in the manuscript "The Flower portrait is genuine after all". Dr Merriam stressed the fact that the English film producer John Hay had sent a copy of his film "The Flower Portrait", which he had created for the BBC's *The Culture Show*, to the author. The film was broadcast on 21 April 2005. The reviewer made it clear that the version Hammerschmidt-Hummel received from Hay had incorporated a BBC time code so that she had been able "to examine it frame by frame."

Dr. Merriam pointed out explicitly:

What was astonishing was the appearance of two versions of the portrait, neither of which corresponded in detail to the version the author had seen in 1996 and had reproduced in *The True Face* (144). One of the televised versions resembled the portrait which she later examined in Stratford on 26 January 2007 [see "Painting D"].

He went on to say:

More disturbing, however, was the appearance of an, as yet, unremarked version, the upper edge of which showed solid, light-colored, untreated wood ... This upper edge seemed to be of freshly cut wood without suggestions of aging or crumbling [see "Painting E"]. By contrast, the Stratford 2007 version had some brown staining on all four edges. Also notable was the entire absence of stain on the upper right-hand edge of the "new" version where[as] the portrait seen on 26 January 2007 showed brown stain. Even the apparently older version now in Stratford, however, looked in better condition than Marion Spielmann's [1924] description of the Flower portrait's "worm-eaten panel".

Having stated these significant differences, Dr Merriam demanded:

The existence of the unstained copy seen in the Hays film [see "Painting E"] should be explained.

***Professor Dr Jost Metz, former Medical Superintendent of the Dermatological Clinic of the Horst-Schmidt-Clinics in Wiesbaden***

In the summer of 2009, the present author turned to the dermatologist Professor Jost Metz, who specializes in the diagnosis of pathological signs in Renaissance portraiture, requesting his expert opinion on the detailed comparisons she had made between the original Flower portrait, restored in 1979, the version she inspected in Stratford in 2007, and the one her German publisher, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz, received from Stratford in 2002. On 12 July 2009, Professor Metz wrote: "It is with great interest that I have read your presentation of evidence and can only share your conclusions." He continued that when he had studied "the excellent visual material" he noticed three things which in his view should be mentioned.

(1) The clearly visible mark or scratch you described on Painting A, which runs from the left eye brow to the temple, is in my opinion also present on Painting C, indicated by a light-colored line. Whereas on Painting A the scratch is slightly concave in appearance, it appears on Painting C as a straight line (s. fig. A-021, C-023).

(2) The differing delineation of the iris on Painting A, B and C is striking: The reflection of light in the iris of the left eye is to be found on all three images in the same location (in the outer upper part of the quadrant. However, the form of the dots of reflected light varies slightly in each of the images (see A-027, B-028, C-029). The delineation of the iris in Painting A shows several bluish-white dots, some of them running together.<sup>1</sup> On Painting B (see B-028) the dotted, bluish-white lighter areas are – compared with Painting A – reduced in size and are located in a different part of the surface of the iris. The areas tending more to dark blue are also configured differently. Painting C lacks almost any delineation of the iris at all.

(3) On Painting B the lower third of the left collar shows two black lines (cracks?) running horizontally (see B-016). They are not visible either in Painting A (A-017) or Painting C (C-017).

Professor Metz then states that - with regard to Part II of the analysis - he has no further observations to make. The presentation of evidence, he says, was so conclusive "that it would be difficult for the curator Dr Tarnya Cooper to refute the theses presented by the author".

***Professor Volker Menges, former Head Physician of the Central Department for Radiology in Diagnosis and Treatment, Computer and Nuclear Spin Tomography, Nuclear Medicine and Ultrasound Diagnostics at the Theresienkrankenhaus, Mannheim, a teaching hospital of the University of Heidelberg***

In his detailed expert opinion of 1 November 2009 - "Report on the X-ray investigation of a Portrait of Shakespeare (Original Flower Portrait, 1609) made in 1966, the X-rays shown in the BBC film 'The Flower Portrait' (April 2005) as well as the overview X-ray ('fig. 43 X-ray of the Flower portrait') produced in 2005 and published by Tarnya Cooper in the exhibition catalogue 'Searching for Shakespeare' (2006)" - the radiologist Professor Volker Menges, who is an expert on the x-ray photography of Old Masters, deals extensively with the x-ray of the Flower portrait taken at the London Courtauld Institute in 1966, and states that on the occasion of this x-ray investigation "an overpainted image", "a painting of the Madonna with the Christ child and St John" emerged, in which art historians recognized "an image of the Madonna of Italian origin, painted in the late 15th or early 16<sup>th</sup> century". He points out that therefore "the panel of the original Flower portrait" was "about one hundred years older ... than British experts had estimated in the [late] 19th century". Since the overpainted image is thus "a painting which must be of an earlier date than the Shakespeare portrait of 1609", this could be regarded as "important circumstantial evidence", telling us that we are dealing with "an original".

"The x-ray of 1966", Prof. Menges states, shows "all the criteria and indications of an old portrait, for which the painter used white lead paint". This was true of "the visible image" (the Shakespeare portrait) as well as the "overpainted image" (the representation of the Madonna). The white lead paint, which absorbs rays, determined the "structure", "readability" and "liveliness" of the x-ray. In contrast to the zinc white of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which absorbs rays to a far lesser extent, it (lead white) produced "the powerful contrasts in the image that are so characteristic of this x-ray, and hence caused its very good readability and openness to interpretation". The artists' "individual deployment" and "varying treatment" of white lead paint would stand out in an x-ray in an informative way. This was also true of the 1966 x-ray investigation of the Fower portrait. Since an

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<sup>1</sup> The original German text reads: 'z.T. konfluierende Flecke'.

x-ray documented "an important element of the painter's technique," it would be possible retrospectively "to look over the artist's shoulder and to reconstruct "the way that the image was created at that time and the materials the painter had used". Thus "the highlighted parts of the face" ("die Lichtpartien des Gesichtes") were "set down on a foundation of oil paint containing lead white"; "the final shape of the face" was then modelled and perfected out of "the overpainted lead white". The expert emphasises very explicitly that "the manner of painting and the individual treatment of the lead white, as it becomes directly visible and impressively readable in the x-ray", could "not be imitated and hence could not be forged".

When comparing the original Flower portrait (Image A) with the x-ray of 1966, which had been published "in a very good reproduction" in *The Illustrated London News* (18 June 1966), Prof. Menges found that this "x-ray shows all the details of the original Flower portrait of 1609 as well as the overpainted image of the Madonna from the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> centuries". He declares that "the traditional use of lead white with its typical visual contrast, being clearly and sharply visible in an x-ray, was also "impressively extant in the x-ray investigation of 1966".

In this case, the "pattern of Craquelée" (i.e. the "pattern of the cracks"), the "blemishes", "cavities", "pitting" or "damage in the paint" that are significant pointers to the authenticity of paintings were all precisely in agreement. Menges made the particular point that:

An x-ray of an old painting is – like any conventional x-ray image – a singular, scientifically recognised, unique document and a reliable source of evidence when it comes to the question of whether we are dealing with an original or a forgery. A conventional x-ray of a painting, with or without an underlying image, can never be imitated and therefore cannot be forged. An x-ray picture can only be copied, and then only in the form of a direct copy of the x-ray film.

Menges then turns to the "new x-ray" of the Flower portrait taken in 2005 and published in 2006 by Dr Tarnya Cooper in the catalogue for her *Searching for Shakespeare* exhibition. In his examination he also covers the detail included in the BBC film programme "The Flower Portrait". What Professor Menges deliberately did not deal with is the overview x-ray of the painting presented in the film by Dr Cooper. This x-ray, being "poorly defined" or "blurred", did not lend itself to rigorous analysis. The expert holds that the "new x-ray" of the Flower portrait in Cooper's catalogue, together with the x-ray detail included in the BBC film, shows "under-painting practically identical with that revealed in the x-ray investigation of 1966". Menges goes on to say that:

The x-ray of 1966 can only derive from *one* of the two paintings [i.e. either from Image A or Image E]. The painting in question must be the one that is in agreement in every particular with this x-ray picture. This applies only to the original Flower portrait from 1609 [Painting A] that was restored in 1979.

For the specialist, this gives rise to two possibilities: (1) The painting examined by Dr Cooper in 2005 was either "the original Flower portrait", or (2) "the old, original x-ray picture" was "for example, a copy falsely linked with the portrait ... under investigation". "The latter explanation", he adds, "would account for the loss of contrast already noted". His conclusion is that:

In the final analysis, we may well assume that no x-ray examination was carried out in 2005 ... . If on the other hand an x-ray examination did in fact take place, then at any rate the results were not shown or reproduced, since all the x-rays shown or reproduced so far – except for the poorly defined or blurred x-ray picture in the BBC film – can be identified as the original x-ray, i.e. the one taken in 1966.

Finally, Professor Menges goes so far as to say that Dr Cooper's claim that the "x-ray image reproduced in her catalogue" (fig. 43') shows "the result of the production of a new X-ray" (p.72)

cannot be correct. He concludes by stating that there are "significant questions" for Dr Cooper to answer, and that she must produce a credible response "if she is to uphold her pronouncements on the Flower portrait".

***Dr Eberhard J. Nikitsch, inscriptions expert at the Academy of Science and Literature, Mainz***

In his concise report of 20 November 2009 on the inscriptions in Images A, B, and C, Dr Eberhard Nikitsch was able to ascertain that "the inscriptions on the three portraits differ in condition, and that certain letters or numbers have been carried out only partially, or are missing altogether". However, Nikitsch stresses that "the three inscriptions are uniform in style". He confirms – as the author's manuscript proposes, "with good reason" – that "with regard to [Image] B and [Image] C we are looking at copies".

***Dr Eva Brachert, picture restorer at the Land Museum, Mainz***

At the beginning of her "comparative pictorial analysis of the Flower portrait to establish dating" of 9 December 2009, Dr Eva Brachert establishes that the illustrations "Images A – E" in the picture section of the author's account have in common "a middle ground and a background painted in one and the same manner".

"The middle ground" was apparent "to the viewer to the left and right of the subject's shoulder in the Madonna's drapery, in the vestiges of a halo, and in a dark area to the right". Other parts of the middle ground that could be made out were "St. John's crucifix standard" as well as the two haloes and vestiges of the heads" ("next to Shakespeare's right shoulder").

"The background" presented a "landscape scene" in the evening light. "Depth" was created "by a winding river". In this part of the painting the "naming and dating of the picture" could also be seen.

After "removing all later elements" the picture x-rayed in 1966 and restored in 1979 (cf. A - Ill. 1 – 001) proved to have "a completely overpainted middle ground and background". Before these procedures (x-ray and restoration) the viewer could not have known "anything about the existence of a Madonna with child and young St. John in front of a landscape viewed through a window". Until 1979 it was only the condition of the Flower portrait before its restoration in 1979 that was known about: "a [Shakespeare] portrait on a greenish background" (K – Ill. 1 – 051).

As regards the date of the picture, Dr Brachert comes to the conclusion that Cooper's allocation of the Flower portrait to the period "1820/1840" cannot be correct. The picture itself – "and not just the panel and the Madonna with child and the young St. John" – must be older.

In a further opinion given on 18 December 2009 Dr Brachert expands upon her observations of 9 December 2009, explaining in relation to the strikingly bright colour used in the poet's face in Image A (compare A – Ill. 1 – 001) that "this bright flesh-tone" was "commonly used by certain painters in the 17th century", but that "it also occurred in the 16th century". The restorer thereby provides a further, independent criterion for the dating of the picture, which once again reinforces the placing of the Flower portrait in the (early) 17th century. We may remember at this point that Professor Menges also explicitly drew attention to "the highlighted parts of the face" in the 1966 x-ray, which corresponded in every detail to the original Flower portrait (Image A). These "highlighted areas" of the poet's face can be explained – as Professor Menges notes – by the "foundation of oil paint containing lead white". Image B (to all appearances identical with Image E in the BBC film) and Image C (definitively identical with Image D in the BBC film) do not feature

either the "bright flesh-tone" or the "highlighted areas of the face". As demonstrated by numerous indicators cited in Parts I and II, these two paintings must be copies. According to Dr Brachert's testimony, these versions can only have been produced since 1979, after the uncovering of the overpainted middle ground and background. But in fact the two copies were probably produced only between 1999 and 2005, when they first appeared and were – in each case – presented as the original. At some point during that period, maybe as early as 1999, the original Flower portrait must have disappeared.

In her written opinion of 9 December 2009 Dr Brachert had already remarked, in connection with Dr Cooper's findings, which she found "confused" and "hard to interpret", that "the summing-up of the results" remained "somewhat inaccurate". For this reason, Dr Cooper "must expect her conclusions to be examined critically".