

**Report on the examination of the painting**

*Portrait of Larionov (1913)*

**by Natalia Goncharova**

Author of the report: Verena Franken

Report editors: Jilleen Nadolny and Petra Mandt

Location and date of the report: Museum Ludwig, Cologne, May 2018

## 1. Identification of the artwork

object type:	painting
genre:	canvas painting
title(s):	<i>Portrait of Larionov</i> ( <i>Portrait von Larionow</i> )
artist:	Goncharova, Natalia (1881-1962)  variations in spelling: Gontscharowa, Natalia Gontscharowa, Natalija Ssergejewna Gontcharova, Nathalie Goncarova, Natalija Sergeevna
signed:	n. a.
date of object:	1913 (as given in the museum files)
inventory number:	ML 01319
owner:	Museum Ludwig, Cologne Donation of Peter and Irene Ludwig (Ludwig Collection)
location:	Museum Ludwig, Cologne
material/ technique: description in catalogue / museum files:	Oil on canvas
Actual size of object without frame (height x width x depth):	109,0 x 80,0 x 2,5 cm
Original size of object without frame (height x width):	105 x 78 cm ( as given in the museum files <sup>1</sup> ). This is likely to be a mistake as there is no clear evidence of significant enlargement of the painting.

<sup>1</sup> The size 105 x 78 cm is listed in the invoice (no. 289/ 80, date: 1st April 1980) related to the acquisition of the painting which was bought from the Galerie Gmurzynska. It is also mentioned in the following exhibition catalogue: *Larionov and Goncharova: a retrospective exhibition of paintings and designs for the theatre* [exhibition catalogue, 9 September to 30 September 1961, Leeds City Art Gallery; 14 October to 4 November 1961, Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol; 16 November to 16 December 1961, Arts Council Gallery, London Gallery, / Arts Council], Chamot, M. and Gray, C. (ed.) London: Arts Council (1961), unpagged, cat. no. 117 L.

## 2. Technical investigation

Methods of examination:

The investigation of the painting *Portrait of Larionov* was carried out in March 2017 by Verena Franken and it contained the examination of the artwork with the naked eye as well as with a stereomicroscope<sup>2</sup> in different light sources (incident light, raking light, reflective light). In addition, results of investigation under ultraviolet light (UV) are considered in the following text.

### 2.1 Canvas support

Former treatments - lining and loose lining – and thick paint prevent direct examination of the canvas, making it difficult to give a precise description of the original support. Investigation of the canvas was done from the recto and at the tacking margins. As no selvage is preserved, warp and weft directions cannot be determined unambiguously. The textile weave is probably a tabby weave with one thread in both directions (see Fig. 1). Occasionally a few slubby and thicker threads are discernible on the front side in areas where the paint layers are thin. There is probably a z-twist in horizontal and vertical direction (see canvas structure analysis). The canvas's reverse is covered by the lining canvas and loose lining.

### 2.2 Stretching

The current stretching is not authentic. It is supposed that the painting has already been re-affixed on a new stretcher several times, minimum twice for lining as well as for loose lining treatment.

There are several holes in the canvas at the tacking margins with associated marks of tack or nail heads (see Figs. 2 and 3). These holes are not present in the lining canvas, the loose lining canvas and current stretcher bars. Thus, it is supposed that these holes correspond to the original stretching. Round-headed tacks or nails were originally used to affix the canvas. They were inserted in the tacking margins in primed, and in parts in painted areas (see Fig. 3). As the cutting edges look original and the canvas is slightly frayed, the cutting edges possibly were not cut away by someone else than the may be original. However, it is supposed that the position of the turnover edges may have changed due to the lining process, particularly at the top edge of the painting (see Fig. 4). The painting does not measure 105 x 78 cm (see chapter 1 and see archive report), but rather 109,0 x 80,0 cm indicating that the size was changed or, more likely, that the measurements were not recorded accurately.

For the most part, the position of the actual fastening points does not correspond to the position of the original stretching. In total, 60 round-headed tacks of different sizes (diameter of tack heads: approx. 3-6 mm) are present in the tacking margins. These tacks were driven into the tacking margins in both primed and painted areas. They are used at irregular intervals of 3, 0-9,0 cm, predominately at intervals of 5,5-6,5 cm. In addition, there are 21 holes in the canvas support with corresponding holes in the lining and loose lining canvas as well as in the stretcher bars. These holes at the tacking margins are related to the current framing of the

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<sup>2</sup> Type: 308795, firm: Wild Heerbrugg, magnification: x 10-40.

painting. They are used to mount non-original strips of wood at the tacking margins. Additionally, four new staples were used to secure the canvas on the reverse of the painting.

### 2.3 Stretcher

It is supposed that the actual stretcher is non-authentic because the painting was re-stretched several times and holes of the original stretching are not visible in the current stretcher bars.

The current stretcher is adjustable, has a centre-bar in vertical direction and ten keys (all keys are present). It measures 109,0 x 80,0 x 2,5 cm and all stretcher bars have a width of approx. 7,0 cm. The stretcher bars are not mitred at the corners and are fastened by mortise-and-tenon joints. The stretcher appears to be composed of softwood. The relatively high degree of finish and regularity suggests that it is machine-made.

On the reverse of the stretcher twelve paper adhesive labels are preserved, which are related to former exhibitions or refer to shipping of the painting. In the following section the texts of all labels and inscriptions, numbered consecutively, are listed<sup>3</sup>:

1. Kunstaussstellung Der Sturm Leitung: Herwarth Walden Berlin W9, Potsdamer Straße 134a Name des Künstlers: Gontscharowa Titel des Kunstwerks: Portrait Larionov Berliner Katalog-Nummer: No. 43 Lager-Nummer:

Notes: adhesive label with printed and handwritten text, handwritten inscription possibly done with ink. At the lower edge there is an illegible inscription in a rose-coloured tone. The paper support is discoloured and is without significant fluorescence indicating that it does not contain optical brighteners. Localisation: centre-bar in vertical direction (right).

As this label has already been removed and mounted on a cardboard for preservation, it is not possible to detect its original position. It refers to the gallery 'Der Sturm' for the planned exhibition in autumn 1914 (see report on archive review).

2. Galerie Beyeler  
Basel/ Bâle  
GONTCHAROVA  
Portrait of Larionov  
32

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed text related to the exhibition 'Larionov, Gontcharova' in 1961 (organised by the Gallery Beyeler, Basel). Discoloured paper, without significant fluorescence. This indicates that the paper does not contain optical brighteners. Localisation: upper stretcher bar.

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<sup>3</sup> All localisations related to labels and inscriptions are considered from the reverse.

Portrait de Larionov

1909

artiste: Gontcharova

[...] à l'exposition [note: first word is illegible]

à Bâle 1961

105 x 78,5

Notes: adhesive paper label with handwritten text, possibly related to the exhibition 'Larionov, Gontcharova' in 1961 (organised by the Gallery Beyeler). Discoloured paper without significant fluorescence. This indicates that the paper does not contain optical brighteners. Localisation: centre-bar in vertical direction (left area).

### 3. THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN

4 St. James's Square, London, S.W.1

Whitehall 9737

EXHIBITION [ ] ion[ ]ncharova

Larionov/ Goncharova

CATALO[ ] 29

CATALOGUE NO. 29

TITLE OF PICTURE 'Portrait of Larionov'

ARTIST Natali[ ] Goncharova

Natalia Goncharova

[ ] artist's collection

NAME OF OWNER

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed text related to the exhibition 'Larionov and Goncharova: a retrospective exhibition of paintings and designs for the theatre' in 1961 (organised by the Arts Council Gallery, London). Discoloured paper support without significant fluorescence indicating that the paper does not contain optical brighteners. Localisation: upper stretcher bar (right upper corner).

### 4. Selected for Arts Council Exhibition, London, November-December 19[...]

Not to be taken away without notice to above.

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed text, possibly related to the exhibition 'Larionov and Goncharova: a retrospective exhibition of paintings and designs for the theatre' in 1961 (organised by the Arts Council Gallery, London). Discoloured paper support without significant fluorescence indicating that the paper does not contain optical brighteners. Localisation: upper stretcher bar (left upper corner).

### 5. MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS

EXPOSITION: Gontcharova-Larionov

Sept Novembre 1963

OEUVRES: Gontcharova: Potrait de M. Laroinov

CATALOGUE No 31

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed and handwritten text related to the exhibition 'Gontcharova – Larionov' in 1963 (organised by the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de

Paris). Discoloured paper support with slight fluorescence (paper possibly might contain optical brighteners). Localisation: centre-bar in vertical direction (centre area).

6. THE HEROIC YEARS

PARIS 1908-1914

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

OCTOBER 20 – DECEMBER 8, 1965

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed text related to the exhibition 'The Heroic Years: Paris 1908-1914' in 1965 (organised by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston). Paper support with slight fluorescence (paper possibly might contain optical brighteners). Localisation: lower stretcher bar.

7. Marlborough

Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd.

39 Old Bond Street

London W1X 4BY

Selected European Masters of the 19th and 20th Centuries

16 June - 7 September 1973      Cat. no. 26

Notes: adhesive label with printed text related to the exhibition 'Selected European Masters of the 19th and 20th Centuries' in 1973 (organised by the Marlborough Fine Art Limited, London, 1973). Localisation: lower stretcher bar (lower left corner).

8. Marlborough *Marlborough Fine Art (London) Ltd. 39 Old Bond Street, London W1 Tel: 01-629 5161*

Artist GONCHAROVA Natalia (1881-1968)

Title *Portrait of Larionov*

Medium oil on canvas

Date 1913

Size 41  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 30  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches      105 x 78 cm.

No. XLOS 5482

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed text, possibly also related to the exhibition 'Selected European Masters of the 19th and 20th Centuries' in 1973 (organised by the Marlborough Fine Art Limited, London, 1973). Paper support with significant fluorescence (paper possibly contains optical brighteners). Localisation: upper stretcher bar (left upper corner).

9. WOMEN ARTISTS: 1550-1950

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

Los Angeles, California

No.: ex.76.1746      Cat. # 124

ARTIST: Natalia Goncharova

TITLE: PORTRAIT OF LARIONOV, 1913

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed text, probably related to the exhibition 'Women Artists 1550-1950' in 1976/ 77 (organised by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art).

Paper support with significant fluorescence indicating that the paper probably contains optical brighteners. Localisation: upper stretcher bar (centre area).

10. H. G. OLLENDORFF

FINE ART PACKERS

NEW YORK

Lot. No. 113 Piece no. 13

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed text, related to shipping of the artwork to New York possibly for the exhibition 'Women Artists 1550-1950' at Brooklyn Museum in 1977). Paper support with significant fluorescence indicating that the paper probably contains optical brighteners. Localisation: left stretcher bar (considered from the reverse).

11. SHERATON REF. # 4489

Imp. MARC GERSON

Entry # 496064

Broker PINSON

Ref. # 49887

Piece # 20

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Notes: adhesive paper label with printed and handwritten text, related to shipping of the artwork. Paper support with significant fluorescence indicating that the paper probably contains optical brighteners. Localisation: centre-bar in vertical direction (left area).

12. 29984

Notes: fragments of an adhesive paper label with handwritten text, paper support without significant fluorescence, localisation: upper stretcher bar (right area).

13. F 455 / 18

Notes: adhesive paper label with printed text (no idea whereupon this number is referring to), paper support with significant fluorescence indicating that the paper probably contains optical brighteners. Localisation: centre-bar in vertical direction.

## 2.4 Sizing and ground layer

It cannot be determined if the canvas was sized because the canvas is impregnated with a waxy material due to lining treatment. The white ground was applied as a single layer of relatively homogeneous thickness on the entire painting's surface always up to the turnover edge and it extends onto the tacking margins (see Fig. 5). Within painted areas and at

passages between different motifs there are some minor absences of oil colour where the ground may be discerned (see Figs. 7 and 8). Microscopic examination reveals that no trace of any tool (such as a brush or a palette knife) is visible in the layer (see Figs. 6 and 8).

## 2.5 Underdrawing

No evidence for an underdrawing was noted during either macroscopic or microscopic investigation.

## 2.6 Paint layer

The entire surface of the painting was used for application of colour. The colours were applied with brush up to the turnover edge, and in rare instances, also several millimetres onto the tacking margins (see Fig. 1). Surface structure, application of paint, non-water-sensitivity<sup>4</sup> and alteration suggest the use of oil paint.

Visual microscopic inspection reveals that the paint layer often seems to contain both fine and rather coarse particles. The thickness of the paint layer varies between opaque, smooth layers filling all pores (see Fig. 9) and a few areas where paints were applied more thickly with more body and slight impasto (see Fig. 10). In areas with thin paint layers the structure of the canvas weave is visible (see Fig. 9). Predominantly colours were applied in wet-on-dry (especially at the lower right and left part and details of the face, see Fig. 11). In contrast, there are a few areas painted wet-on-wet (especially at the upper part, see Fig. 13) and a few areas were done with undulating brush strokes, wet-on-wet. In several areas brushwork is apparent. Often the brushwork is oriented to the shape of the respective motif.

As the composition is overpainted to a large extent it is difficult to determine the sequences of paint application. Outlining in a dark tone was used for several motifs, especially the black contours employed for the pattern of the man's shirt or for the man's eyes (see Figs. 14 and 15). The mouth was rendered in a red tone (see Fig. 16). It is supposed that larger spaces were filled out first and afterward the artist placed details, colour accents and highlighted slight impastos using white brush strokes (see Figs. 17 and 18). The painting is not signed by the artist.

## 2.7 Varnish

The paint layer probably was not varnished. Neither the macroscopic and microscopic investigation nor the examination under ultraviolet light gave a clear evidence for the presence of a varnish layer. No evidence for a former removal of varnish was detected (no structural change of the paint layer caused by swelling process and no over-cleaning of the paint layer).

## 2.8 Frame

The existent frame is not date of origin.

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<sup>4</sup> Solubility of the paint layer according to water was tested in areas of yellow, orange, red, blue and black paint (magnification of x 40). No solubility was detected.

### 3. Photographic documentation

#### Technical aspects



Figure 1: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, left tacking margin (considered from the front side), incident light. The type of textile weave probably is a tabby weave with one thread in both directions.



Figure 2: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, upper tacking margin, incident light. There are holes in the canvas at the tacking margins with associated marks of tack or nail heads which probably correspond to the original stretching (see red arrows).



Figure 3: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, left tacking margin (considered from the front side), incident light. The fastening points of the original stretching were inserted in primed and in parts in painted areas of the tacking margins (see red arrows).



Figure 4: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, upper tacking margin, incident light. The position of the original turnover edge may have been changed at the top edge of the canvas (see red arrows).

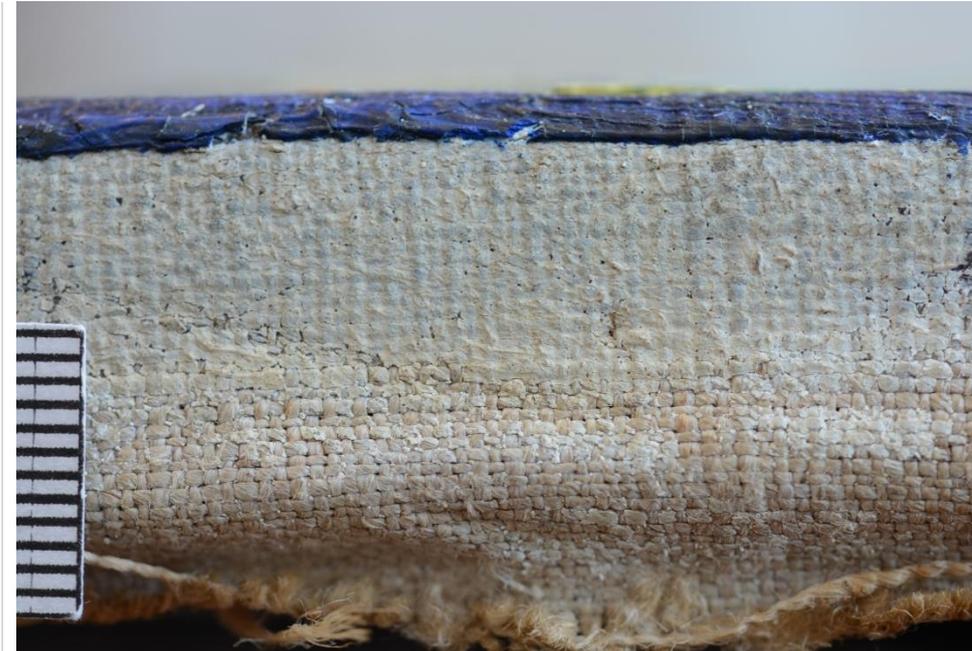


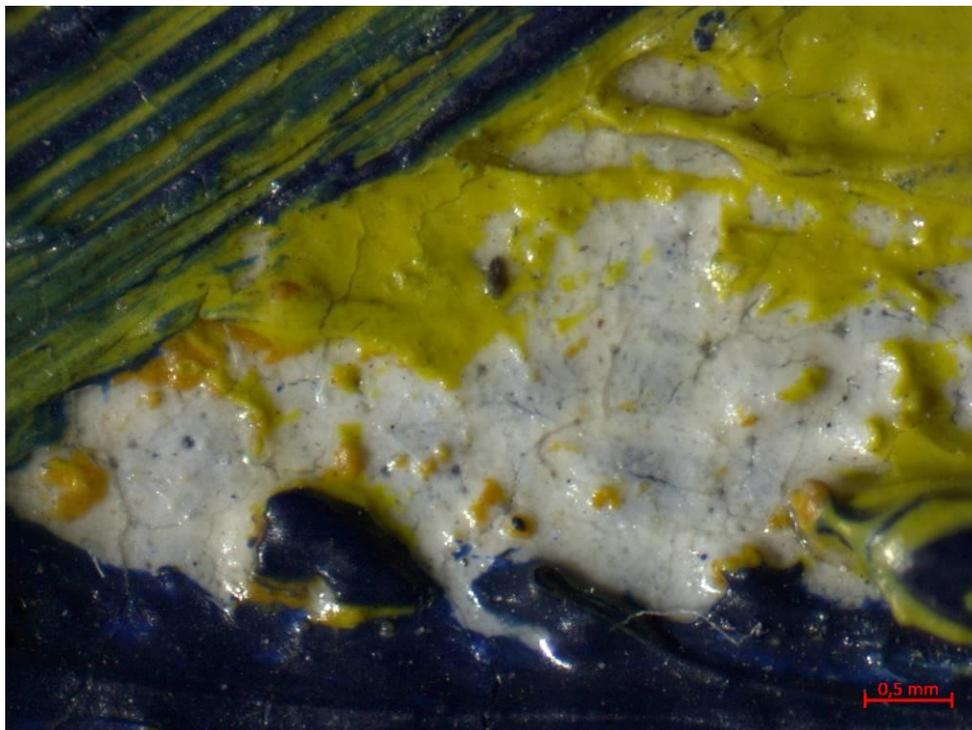
Figure 5: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, left tacking margin (considered from the front side), incident light. The white ground was applied on the tacking margin as single layer of relatively homogeneous thickness.

localisation of Figure 6



Figure 6: *Portrait of Larionov*, microscopic photograph, x 20, right upper corner, incident light. No trace of any application tool is visible.

localisation of Figures 7 and 8



Figures 7 and 8: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro (Fig. top) and microscopic photograph, x 20 (Fig. bottom), right edge (centre area), incident light. Between the yellow and blue paint layer there are a few absences of oil colour where the ground is exposed.

localisation of Figure 9



Figure 9: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, upper part, the man's head, incident light. In areas with thin paint layer the structure of the weave is still visible.

localisation of Figure 10



Figure 10: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, right upper edge, incident light. Paint was applied thicker with slight impasto.

localisation of Figure 11

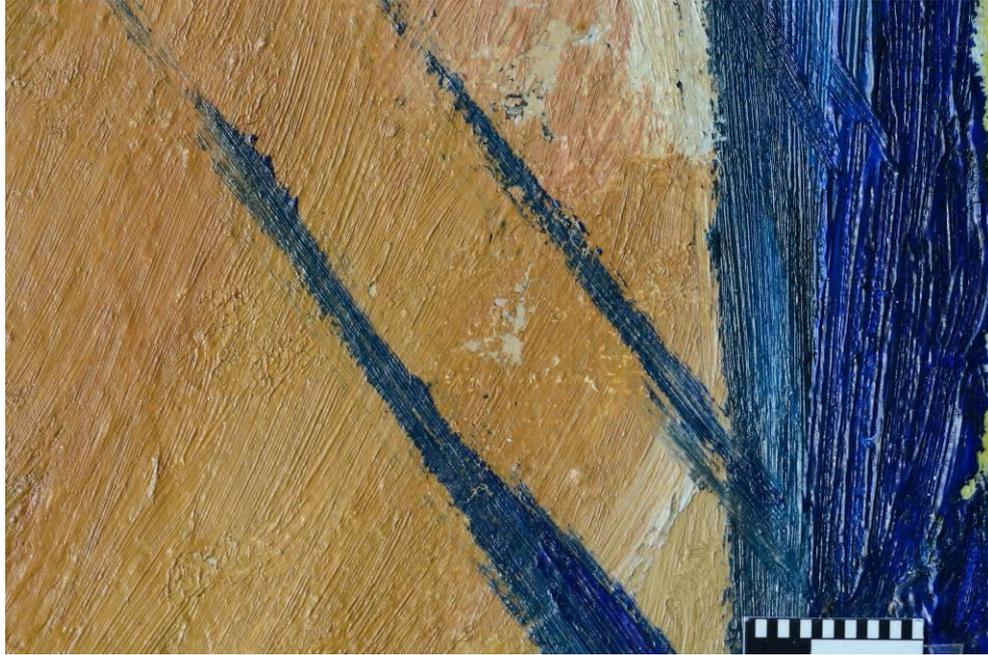
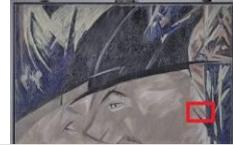


Figure 11: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, right area of the man's face, incident light. The blue paint was applied to the already thoroughly dry layer of the man's face. The brushwork is oriented to the shape of the motif.

localisation of Figure 12

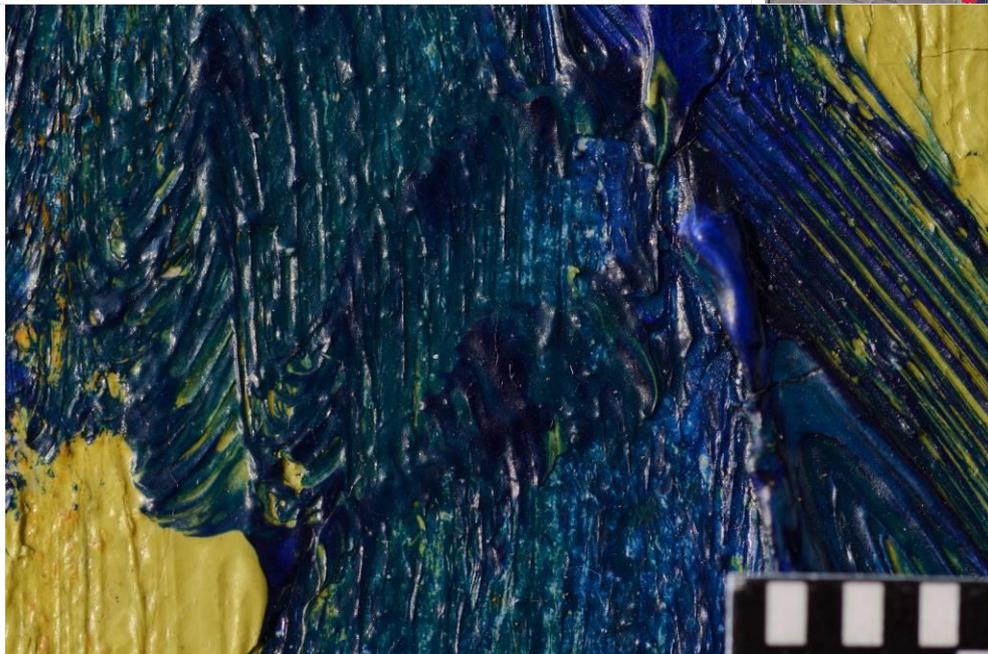


Figure 12: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, right upper edge, incident light. The blue tone was applied with slight impasto, wet-on-wet.

localisation of Figure 13

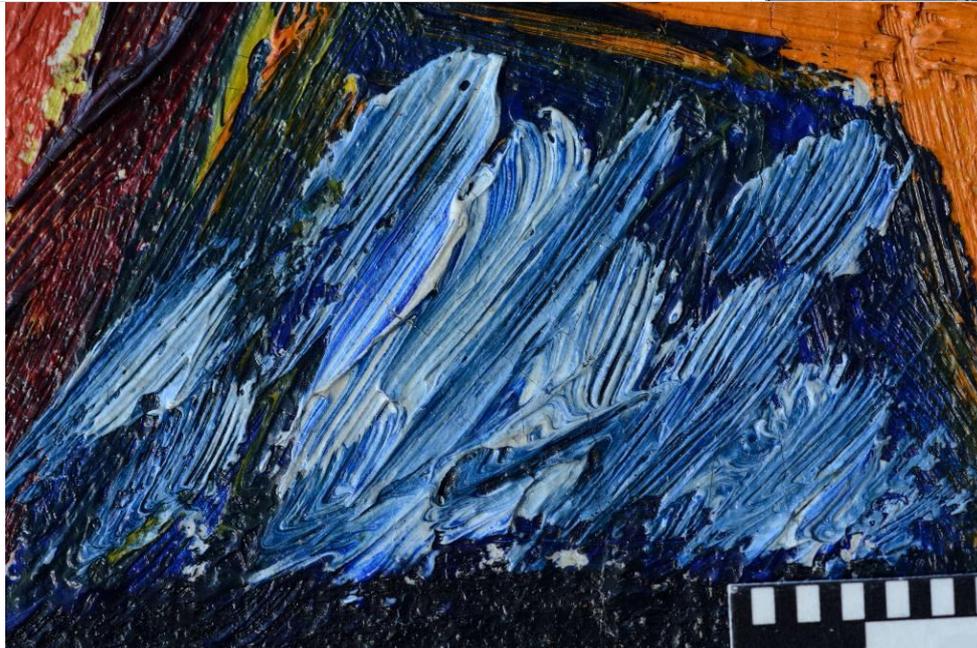


Figure 13: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, right upper part, incident light. It is obvious that Goncharova mixed blue paint with white colour. The tones were taken up with the brush and blended when applied to the painting's surface.

localisation of Figure 14



Figure 14: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, lower part of the painting (centre), incident light. Black contours are used for the pattern of the man's shirt. They were applied as last step, wet-on-dry.

localisation of Figure 15



Figure 15: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, upper centre of the painting, area of the man's face, incident light. Black outlining used for the eye.

localisation of Figure 16

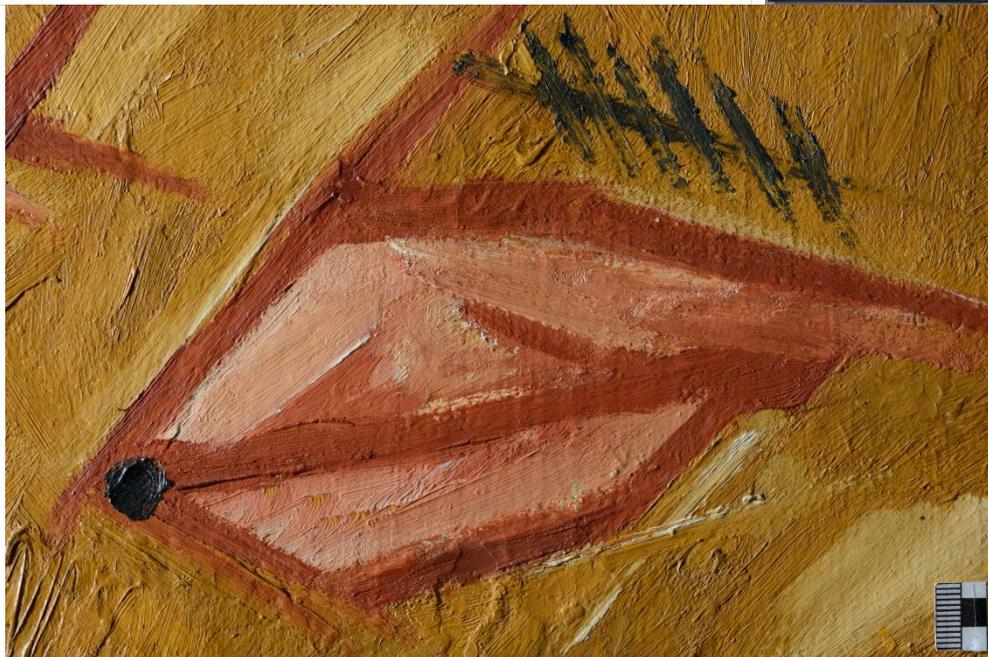


Figure 16: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, centre of the painting, area of the man's face, incident light. The mouth was rendered in red tones.

localisation of Figure 17



Figure 17: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, right lower corner, incident light. The black of the man's suit was highlighted with a white impasto.

localisation of Figure 18



Figure 18: *Portrait of Larionov*, detail macro, upper part of the painting (centre), incident light.