

**Report on the examination of the painting**  
***Still Life with Coffee Pot* (1906 ?)**  
**by Mikhail Larionov**

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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>Still Life with Coffee Pot</i> ( <i>Stilleben mit Kaffeekanne</i> )
artist:	Larionov, Mikhail (1881-1964)  variations in spelling: Larionoff, Michel Larionow, Michail Larionov, Michail Fedorovic
signed:	M. L. (front, top left)
date of object:	1906 ? (as given in the museum files)
inventory number:	ML 01486
owner:	Museum Ludwig, Cologne Donation of Peter and Irene Ludwig (Ludwig Collection)
location:	Museum Ludwig, Cologne
material/ technique:  as given by the museum records:	Oil on canvas
size of object without frame (height x width x depth):	81,0 x 45,0 x 2,0 cm

## 2. Technical investigation

Methods of examination:

The technical investigation of the painting *Still Life with Coffee Pot* was carried out in February/March 2017 by Verena Franken. The painting was examined visually and with a stereomicroscope<sup>1</sup> in different light sources (incident light, raking light, transmitted light, reflective light). In addition, results of investigation under ultraviolet light (UV) are considered in the following text.

### 2.1 Canvas support

As no selvege is preserved warp and weft directions cannot be determined unambiguously. The type of textile weave is a tabby weave with one thread in both directions (see Fig. 3). The weave is of a quite high density and of a regular nature occasionally showing a few small irregularities as thicker and slubby threads in the weave (see Figs. 1 and 2). There possibly is a z-twist.

What appears to be an ink stamp of a French manufacturer and dealer is discernible on the reverse of the canvas which is particularly covered by a brushy sketch. This stamp of an oval shape provides evidence of a machine or an industrial production of the fabric (and possibly also stretched commercially, see also chapter 2.4). It probably is a stamp in of the French artists' supplier Perrod (see Fig. 8) who produced and sold artist's paint and canvas supports between 1892 and 1904<sup>2</sup>. The text is rendered in black tone and it is barely legible. It may contain the following inscription 'COULEURS FINES & TOILES à PEINDRE/ TABLEAUX/ F. PERROD/ PARIS/ 51, Rue de la Rochefoucauld'.

On the reverse in the upper part there is the inscription 'LARIONOW' (see Fig. 4) which may have been done by the artist. The capital letters are written and underlined in blue paint. The nuance of the blue tone varies according to the letter (especially dark blue for the letter 'L', for the other ones in a medium blue tone). The artist's name was painted on a light blueish layer which. This layer fluoresces in a blueish- greenish tone. The paints for this inscription, presumably oil paints, were applied with a brush.

On the reverse in the lower part there are also two sketches. There is a brushy sketch of a nude, outlined in dark blue tone (see Figs. 5 and 6). Slightly below this nude there is a second sketch, outlined in dark blue tone with the shape of an oval (see Fig. 7). The motifs of both sketches were coloured with a brush in a light blueish paint which exhibits fluorescence in a blueish- greenish tone. This light blue layer in parts contains lumpy paint fragments (see Fig. 6).

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<sup>1</sup> Firm: Wild Heerbrugg, type: 308795, magnification: x 10-40.

<sup>2</sup> Sources: < <http://www.labreuche-fournisseurs-artistes-paris.fr/maison/rey-perrod-coccoz> >  
< <http://www.labreuche-fournisseurs-artistes-paris.fr/fournisseur/perrod> >, (15.05.2017).

## 2.2 Stretching

The current strainer on which the painting is mounted is probably original. There are no evidence that the painting was removed from its strainer and has been re-affixed. It is supposed that the current stretching at the tacking margins represents the authentic stretching of the canvas (see Figs. 9-12). The position of cusping corresponds to the position of the primary stretching (see Fig. 10). The tacks that fasten the canvas were driven into the tacking margins in quite regular intervals of 2,5-6,5 cm spacing, predominantly 4,0, 6,0 and 6,5 cm spacing<sup>3</sup>. They were mounted into the primed canvas (see Figs. 11 and 12) and at the upper tacking margin, also in painted areas (see Figs. 9 and 10). The original turnover edge is preserved. It remained consistent and has not changed.

In addition, there are 34 holes in the canvas support with corresponding holes in the strainer bars. These holes at the tacking margins are related to framing of the painting. These holes are used to mount non-original strips of wood at the tacking margin.

## 2.3 Strainer

The current non-adjustable strainer with a centre-bar in horizontal direction probably is the original strainer. All holes and fastening points referring to the primary stretching are present in the strainer bars. The strainer measures 81,0 x 45,0 x 2,0 cm (similar dimensions also for *Nature morte/ Still Life*, but as landscape) and all bars have a width of 3,9 cm. The bars are not mitred at the corners. Its construction cannot be determined unambiguously but it possibly is a bridle joint. The corner joints are fixed at the reverse with three nails per corner (see Fig. 13). It appears to be composed of softwood (possibly spruce wood or fir wood). The relatively high degree of finish and regularity with plane marks left by manufacture process suggests that the strainer is machine-made.

On the reverse of the strainer there are three inscriptions, two paper labels as well as one fragment of a third label. In the following section the texts of all labels and inscriptions, numbered consecutively, are listed<sup>4</sup>:

1. Galleria  
Schwarz  
Milano

Notes: adhesive paper label with handwritten text (possibly written with a blue pen),  
localisation: upper strainer bar (near right upper corner), paper does not fluoresce strongly (does not contain optical brighteners), label refers to the painting's former owner Galleria Schwarz, Milan (also inclusion of the painting in the exhibition 'Larionov – Gontcharova', organised by the Galleria Schwarz, 1961)

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<sup>3</sup> Number and intervals of tacks (different size and different shape), all notes are considered from the reverse:  
right tacking margin: 11 tacks, intervals: 2,5-6,5 cm, predominantly 4,0 and 4,5 cm,  
left tacking margin: 9 tacks, intervals: 4,5-6,5 cm, predominantly 6,5 and 4,5 cm,  
upper tacking margin: 16 tacks, intervals: 4,5-6,5 cm, predominantly 6,0 and 6,5 cm,  
lower tacking margins: 16 tacks, intervals: 4,0-6,5 cm, predominantly 6,0 and 6,5 cm.

<sup>4</sup> All localisations related to labels and inscriptions are considered from the reverse.

## 2. LAR/ 3220

Notes: adhesive paper label with handwritten text (possibly written with a blue pen), localisation: lower strainer bar (near right lower corner), paper fluoresces strongly (probably contains optical brighteners), label cannot be dated and unclear what this refers to

## 3. [illegible]

Notes: fragments of a non-authentic adhesive paper label with printed text, contains Italian text: 'Au[tore], Titolo, Dime[nsione], Tecnic[a], Prezzo', localisation: left strainer bar (left upper corner), paper fluoresces strongly (it probably contains optical brighteners)

## 4. 533

Notes: inscription, written with a blue pen, localisation: upper strainer bar, unclear what this number refers to

## 5. 1600

Notes: inscription, written with a pencil, localisation: left lower corner (lower strainer bar), unclear what this refers to

## 6. 92376

Notes: inscription, written with a black felt-tip-pen, localisation: lower strainer bar, unclear what this refers to

In the archive of the Museum Ludwig there is the note that there is a label located on the reverse in the left part which contains the following text: '[ Werkangaben, Adresse (Maler)] Nom: Larionow Michel /Adresse: 43 rue de Seine Paris 6e / Titre de l'ouvrage: Peinture'<sup>5</sup>. However, this label is not present on the painting's reverse (but it is present on the reverse of *Nature Morte/ Still Life*, ML 1487).

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<sup>5</sup> < <https://www.kulturelles-erbe-koeln.de/documents/obj/05021028> >, (15.05.2017).

## 2.4 Sizing and ground

It is supposed that there is a sizing of the canvas because the canvas has a glossy surface, a smooth texture and the white ground has not penetrated to the reverse (see Fig. 3). The artist probably used an industrially prepared canvas (see also chapter 2.1) because the white ground is of a homogeneous thickness (see Fig. 14), is a smooth layer without traces of a brush and was applied up to the cutting edge (see Figs. 11, 12, 15 and 16). The structure of the canvas remains dominant as a result of the thin ground. The white ground particularly is visible through transparent paint layers (see Figs. 17 and 18). Viewed under ultraviolet light the ground does not fluoresce strongly.

## 2.5 Underdrawing

Evidence for the presence of an underdrawing was not visible neither with macroscopic nor microscopic investigation

## 2.6 Paint layer

The entire painting's surface was used for the application of colour. Paints were applied with a brush<sup>6</sup> always up to the turnover edge and particularly on the tacking margins. Sometimes glazing paint layers are visible at the tacking margins (see Fig. 14). In addition, at the entire upper tacking margin there is an opaque dark greyish-to-black paint layer which extends up to the cutting edge<sup>7</sup> (see Figs. 9 and 10). This tone is also visible on the tacks heads.

Generally the paint layer has a glossy surface indicating that it contains a high amount of binding medium, probably oil. The colour palette used by the artist is limited to a few tones. The artist predominantly used white, brown and green paint in different shades. It is obvious that Larionov white paint was mixed with colour.

Viewed under transmitted light differences in the thickness of the paint layer are clearly visible. Paints were applied as slightly transparent layers and as opaque layers. The structure of the canvas often remains dominant as a result of thin layers. There are just a few tiny areas where the ground is not fully covered by the paint layer and where the ground layer is visible with the naked eye on the front side. However, the white ground remains somewhat visible through quite transparent paint layers (see Figs. 17 and 18).

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<sup>6</sup> Several brush hairs are embedded in the paint layer from colour application by the artist (see Figs. 31 and 32).

<sup>7</sup> This tone possibly was particularly used as underpainting layer for the upper edge of the painting.

While the background was painted in smooth, thin layers, the tablecloth, the coffee pot and a shape in the top left area were done more thickly in slight impasto technique (see Figs. 19 and 26). For the background several different tones are layered as thin glazes upon one another. In a few areas, especially those painted with slight impasto, brushwork is apparent. The structure and shape of the brushwork is often oriented to the shape of the respective motif or painted area (see Fig. 19). Especially the white layer of the tablecloth was applied with 'softer' brush strokes, creating a glossy surface (see Fig. 26). Occasionally, a slightly stippled texture of the brush is visible (Figs. 27 and 28). Generally the artist used different techniques for colour application. Beside wet-on-dry (see Figs. 21 and 26) also wet-on-wet or wet-in-wet- applications (see Figs. 20, 22-24) were noticed. For the area of the coffee pot different tones were painted in rapid succession with brushy and sketchy character (see Figs. 23 and 24). White paint layers often contain several depressions left by air bubbles (see Fig. 29).

Viewed under transmitted light and with the microscope it is supposed that the background area was painted first. This space was filled out quite rapidly by the artist. Afterwards details such as coffee pot, tablecloth, drinking glass and the white shape in the upper centre were placed (see Figs. 19, 26). As last step s areas of motifs were highlighted with colour accents. A white tone was utilised to highlight parts of the coffee pot, tablecloth and drinking glass (see Fig. 30). The artist also used painted outlines for a few motifs (coffee pot, drinking glass). These contours seem to be painted as last step but they often were applied in wet-on-wet or wet-in-wet-technique on the underlying layer. On the white paint layer in the top left area Larionov painted the shape of a nude in a brushy and sketchy character. The contours of this nude were done predominantly in wet-on-wet- technique (see Fig. 22).

In the lower centre there the legs of figure that has been painted over may be seen to lie below the visible composition. Even with the naked eye a flesh tone/ rose tone is visible through the slightly transparent layers of the visible painting (see Figs. 35 and 36). In the area of the table and tablecloth there are a few groove-like depressions and brush strokes especially in vertical but also in horizontal direction as well as accumulation of paints which might be related to the underlying composition (see Figs. 31-34).

The recto of the painting is inscribed in the left upper corner with the monogram 'M. L.' (see Figs. 35 and 36). The artist used different tones, presumably oil paints.

## 2.7 Varnish

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

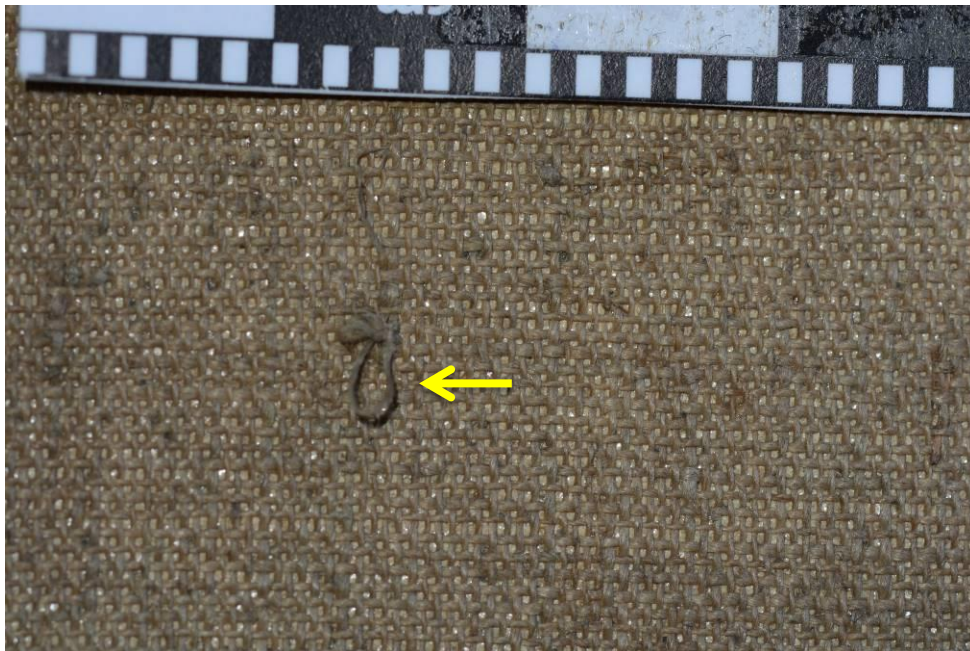
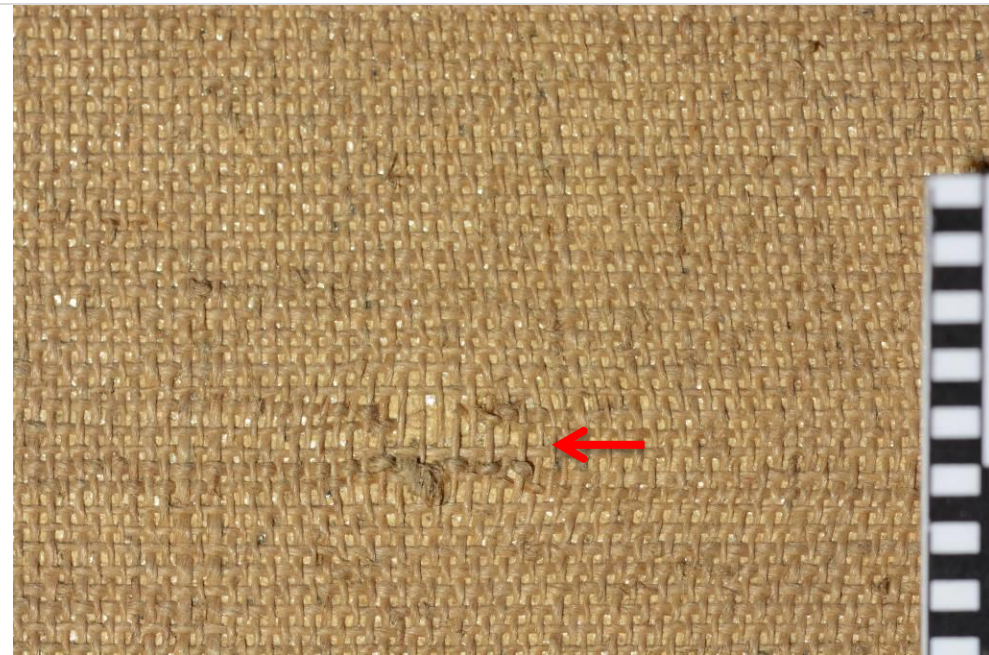
## 2.8 Frame

The existent frame is not authentic.



### 3. Photographic documentation

#### Technical aspects



Figures 1 and 2: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, details macro, reverse, incident light. The weave is of a quite high density and of a regular nature occasionally showing only a few small irregularities as thicker and slubby threads (see red arrow) or a 'loop' (Schlaufe) in the weave (see yellow arrow).





Figure 3: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, microscopic photograph, x 20, reverse, incident light. The type of textile weave is a tabby weave with one thread in both directions.



Figure 4: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, reverse, incident light. On the reverse of the canvas there is the inscription 'LARIONOW' which was probably done by the artist. The artist's name is written in blue tone painted on a light blueish layer.



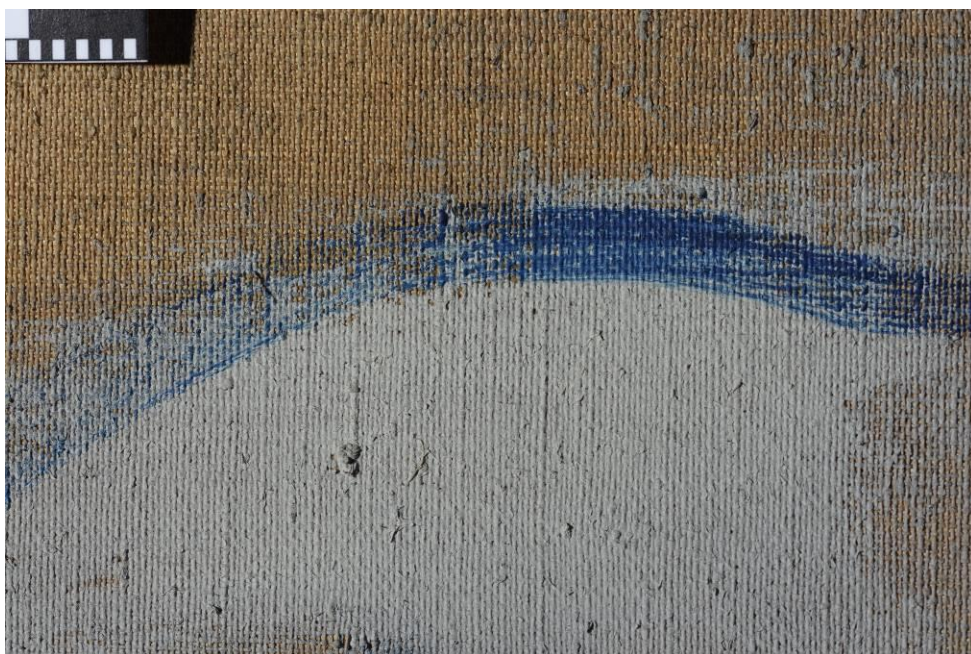
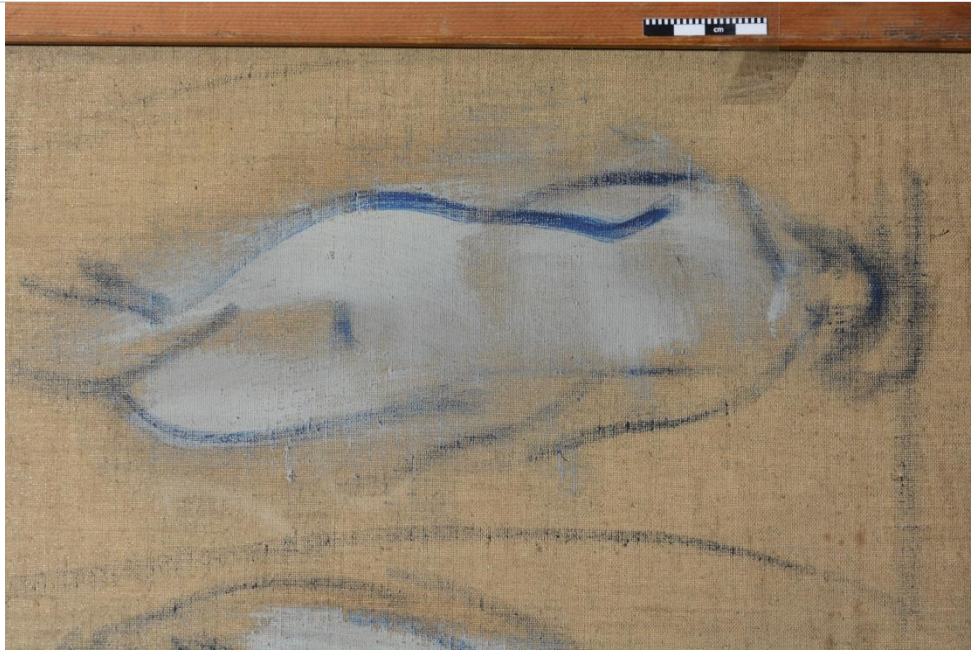


Figure 5 and 6: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, details macro, verso, incident light. On the reverse of the canvas there is a sketch of a nude which was possibly painted by Larionov. The nude's body was filled out in a light blue tone which contains lumpy paint fragments. On this layer outlines were painted in a dark blue tone.



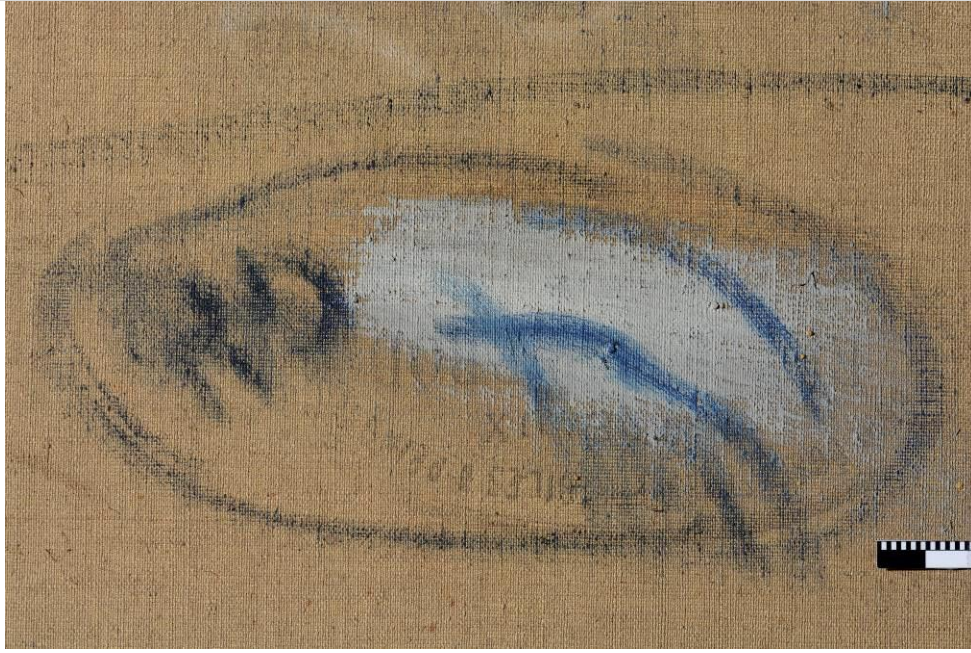


Figure 7 and 8: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, details macro, verso, raking light. On the reverse of the canvas there is a second sketch which was possibly painted by Larionov in a light blue tone and with dark blue contours. The sketch in parts covers a stamp on the canvas support. This stamp is of the French manufacturer and dealer Perrod.





Figure 9 and 10: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, details macro, upper tacking margin, incident light. The current position of the fastening points corresponds to the primary position of stretching. An opaque dark greyish-to-black paint layer was applied on the tacking margin which particularly covers the tacks. Cusping is visible between several of these fastening points. There are also a few holes related to the current framing of the painting.



Figures 11 and 12: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, details macro, left (Fig. top) and lower (Fig. bottom) tacking margin, incident light. The current position of the fastening points at the tacking margin seem to correspond to the primary position of stretching. There are also a few holes related to the current framing of the painting. There is a mark with pencil on the ground layer.





Figure 13: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, verso, incident light. The corner joints of the strainer are fixed at the reverse with three nails per corner

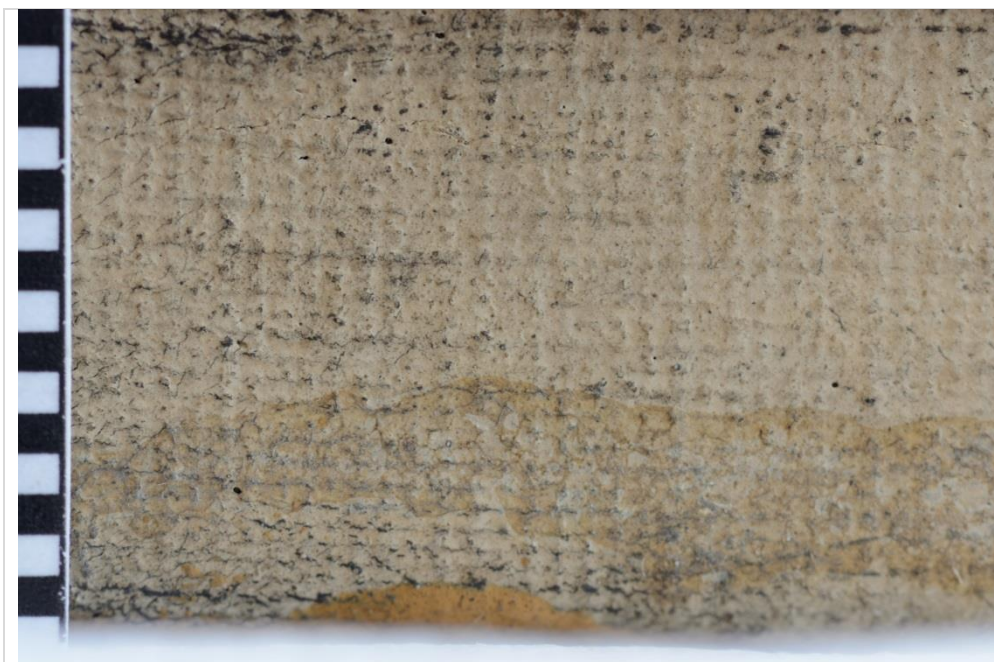
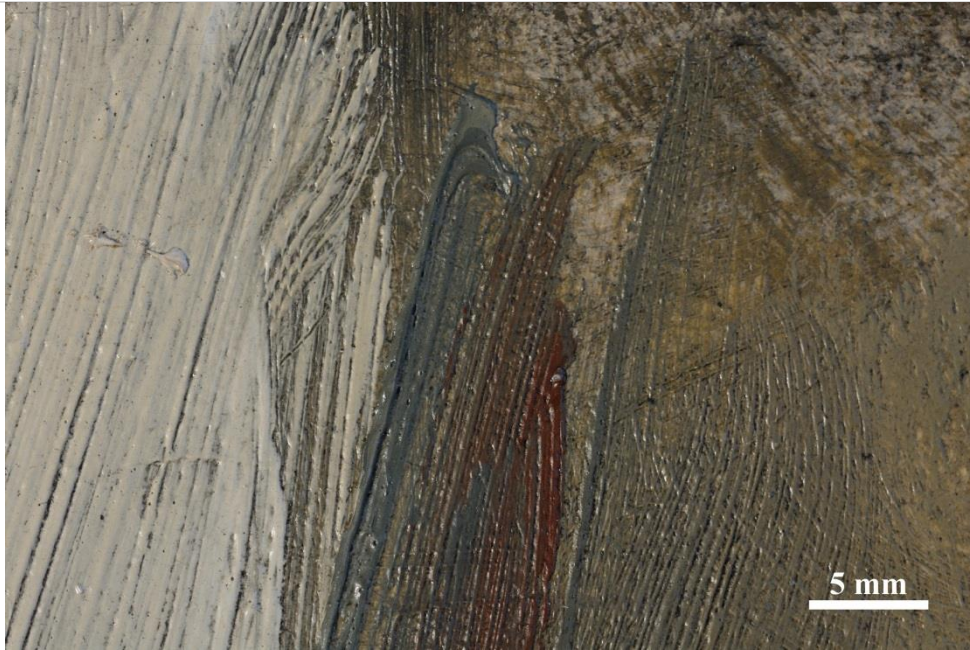


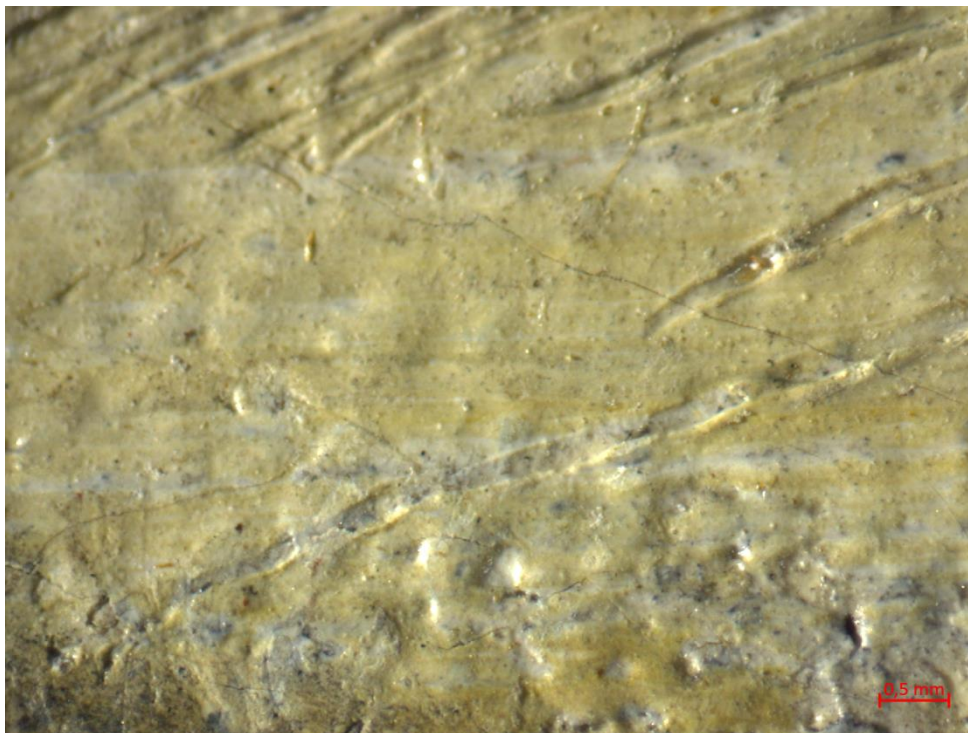
Figure 14: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, lower tacking margin, incident light. The white ground is of a homogeneous thickness.





Figures 15 and 16: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, recto, detail macro (Fig. top), and microscopic photograph, x 20 (Fig. bottom), upper edge (near right upper corner), incident light. The white ground is not fully covered by the greenish paint layer.





Figures 17 and 18: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, microscopic photographs, recto, x 6.3, right lower part, table, incident light (Fig. top) and x 16, upper edge, near left corner, raking light (Fig. bottom). The white ground particularly is visible through transparent paint layers. There are a few groove-like depressions in vertical direction which possibly might refer to the composition lying beneath the painting on top (see Fig. 17).



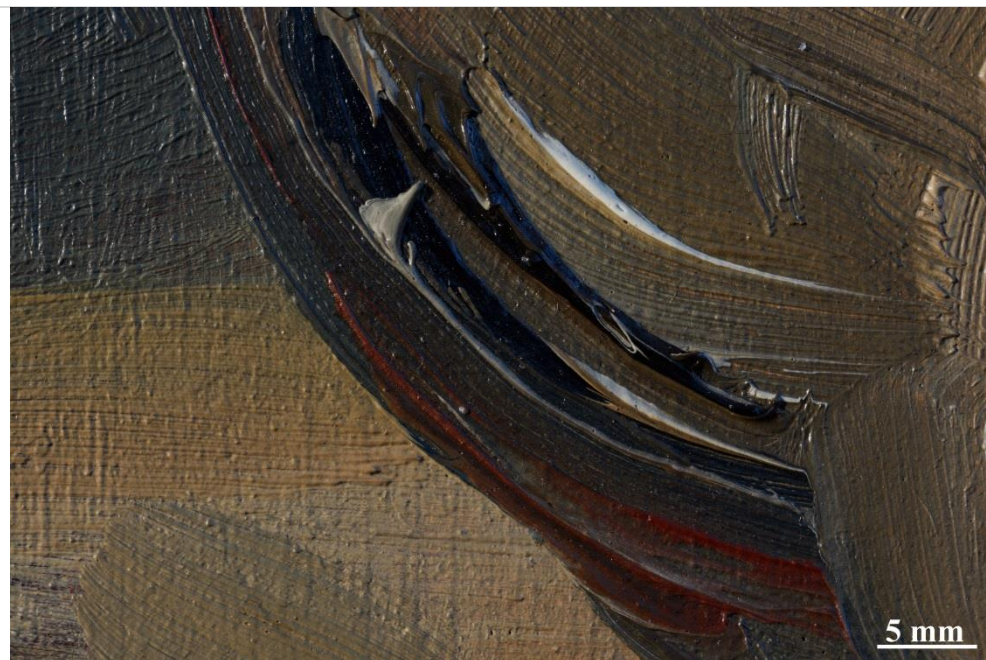


Figure 19: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, recto, area of the coffeepot, incident light. The handle of the coffee pot was painted with slight impasto.



Figure 20: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, microscopic photograph, recto, x 6.3, area of the coffeepot, incident light. There is a slight impasto.





Figure 21: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, recto, left lower edge, raking light. The black paint layer was applied on the brownish layer in wet-on-dry technique.

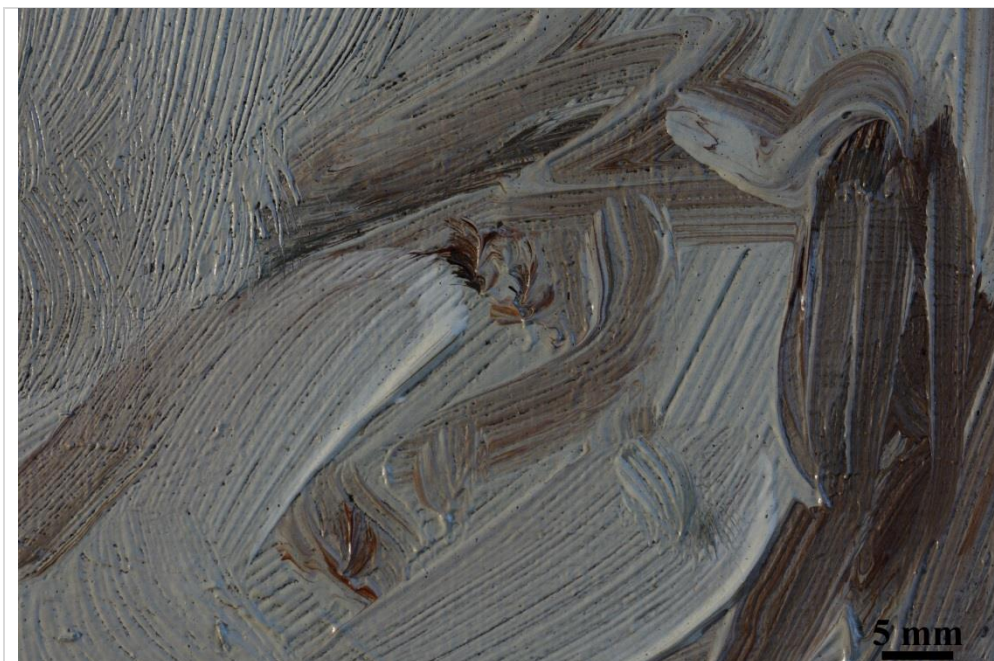


Figure 22: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, recto, upper centre area, incident light. The white and brown tones were applied with brushy and sketchy character in wet-in-wet and wet-on-wet technique.



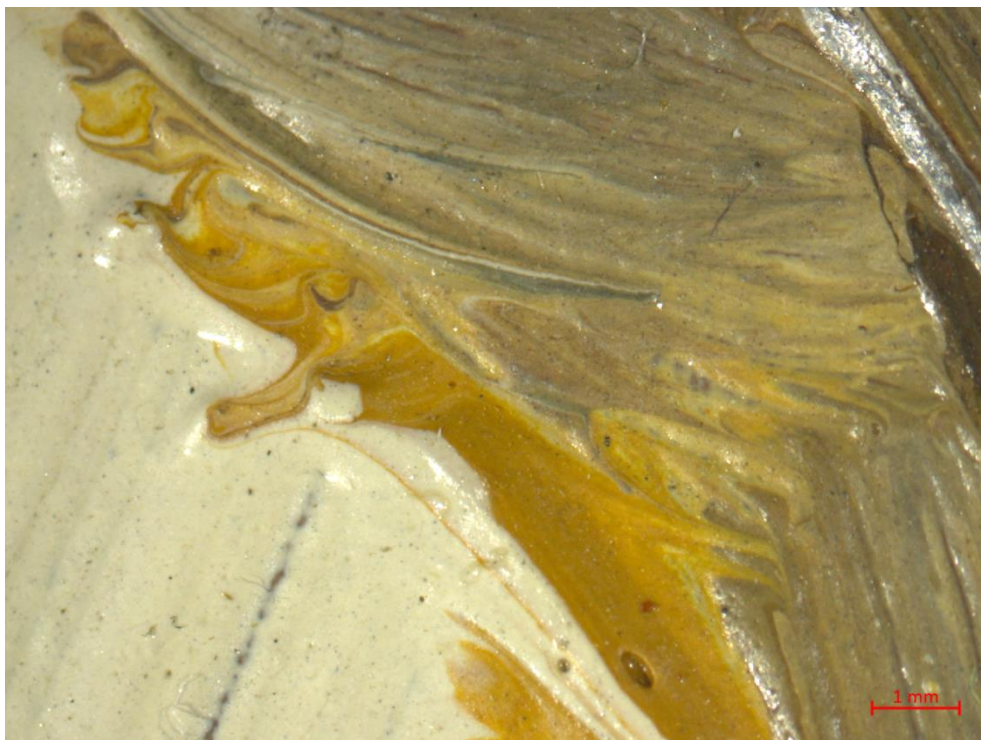


Figure 23 and 24: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, recto, detail macro (Fig. top), and microscopic photograph, x 10 (Fig. bottom), area of the coffee pot, incident light. Different tones were predominantly applied in wet-in-wet technique.

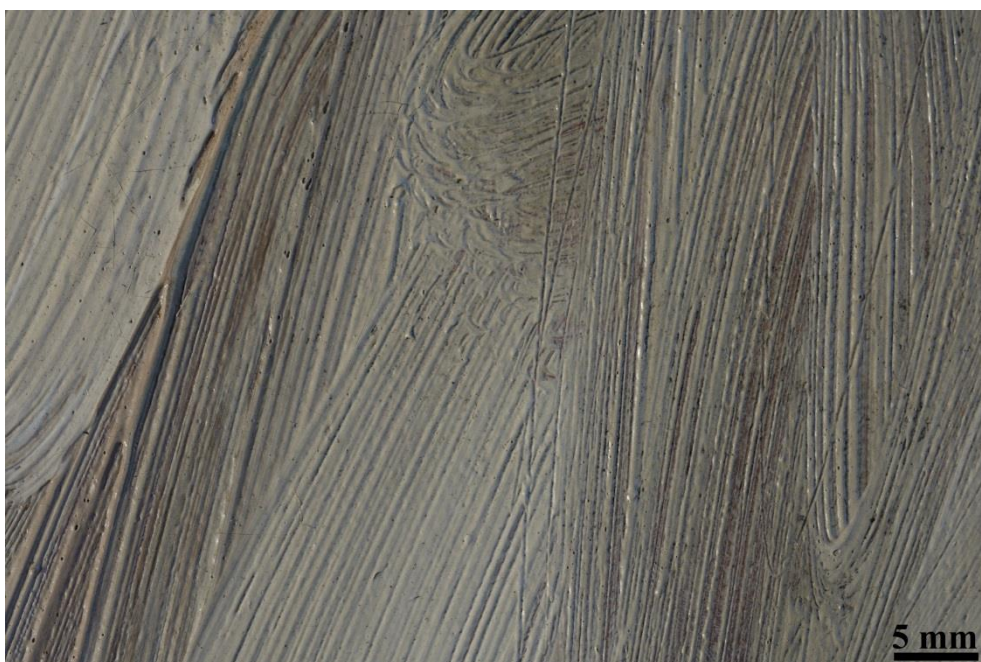
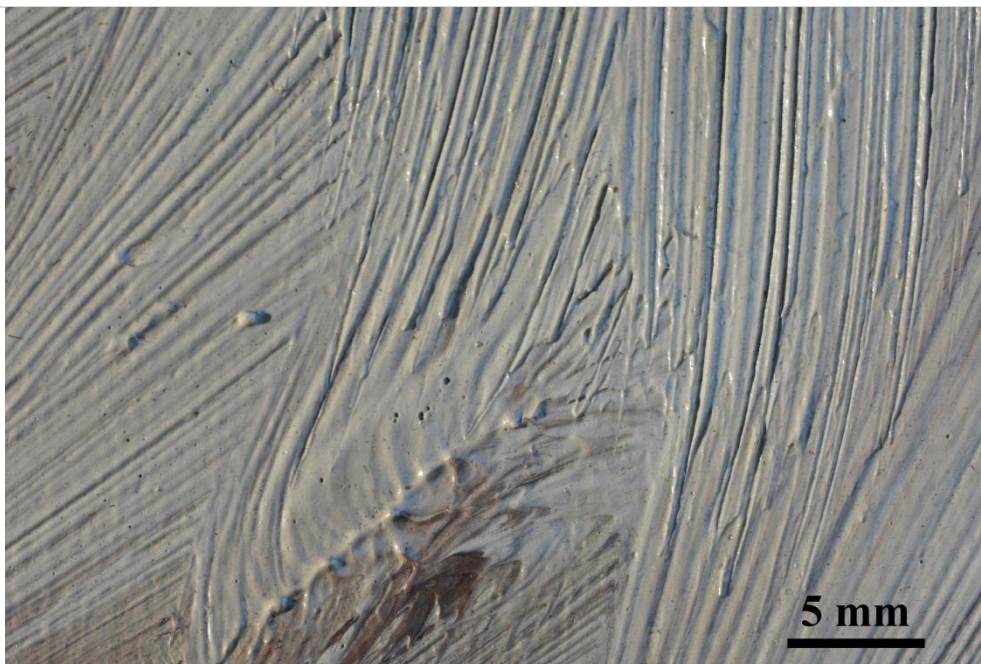


Figure 25: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, recto, upper part, raking light. Slight brushwork is visible throughout.



Figure 26: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, recto, area of the tablecloth, raking light. The white paint layer was applied with 'softer' brush strokes indicating that the artist used a quite high load of binding medium creating a glossy surface.





Figures 27 and 28: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, recto, details macro, incident light (Fig. top) and raking light (Fig. bottom). Occasionally, a slightly stippled texture of the brush is visible.



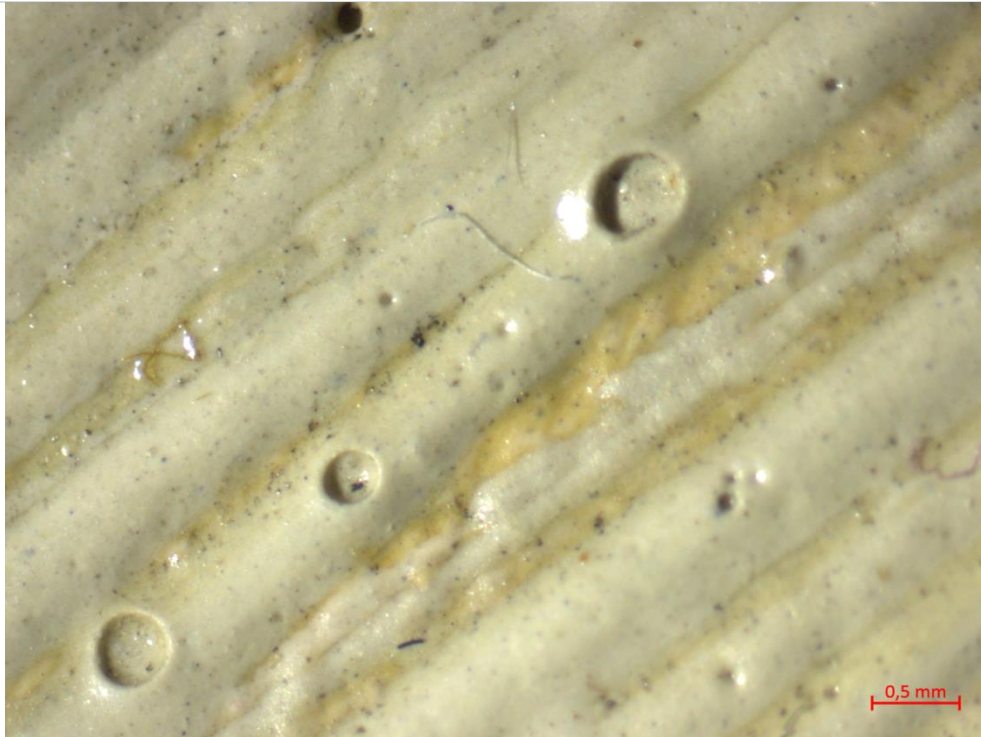
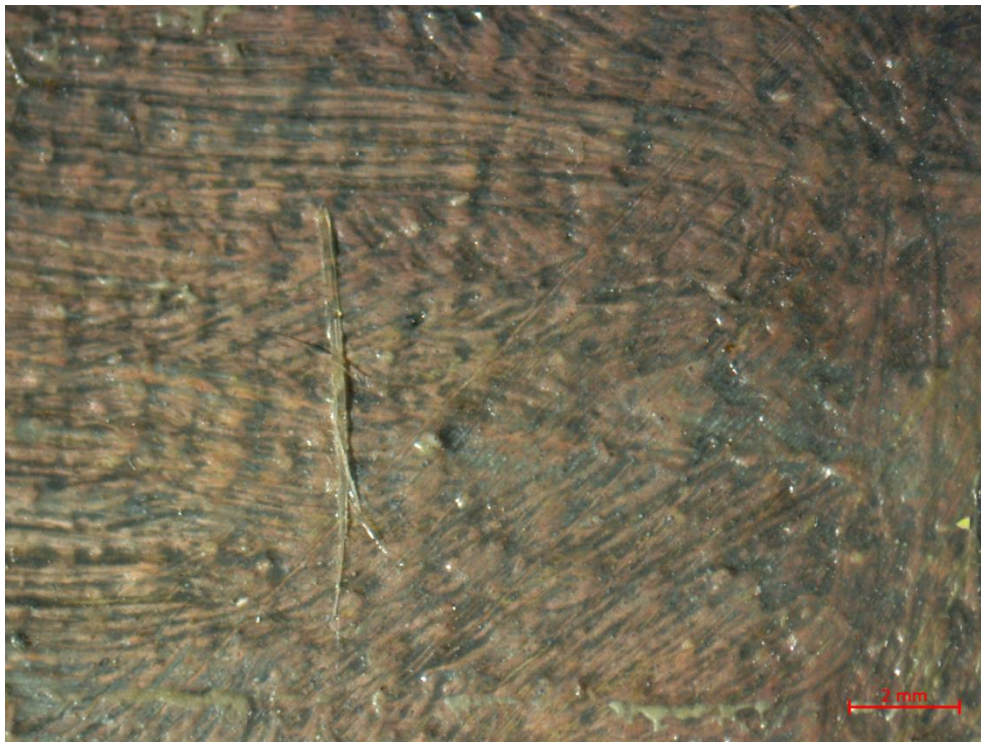
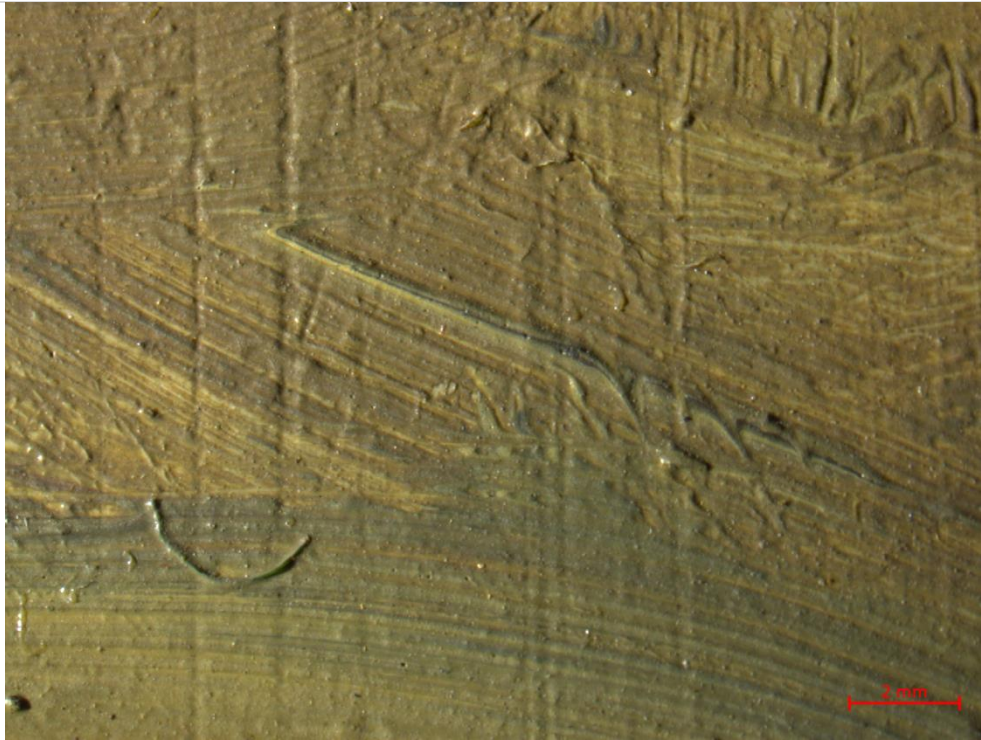


Figure 29: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, microscopic photograph, x 20, white layer in the left upper part, incident light. There are several depressions left by air bubbles.



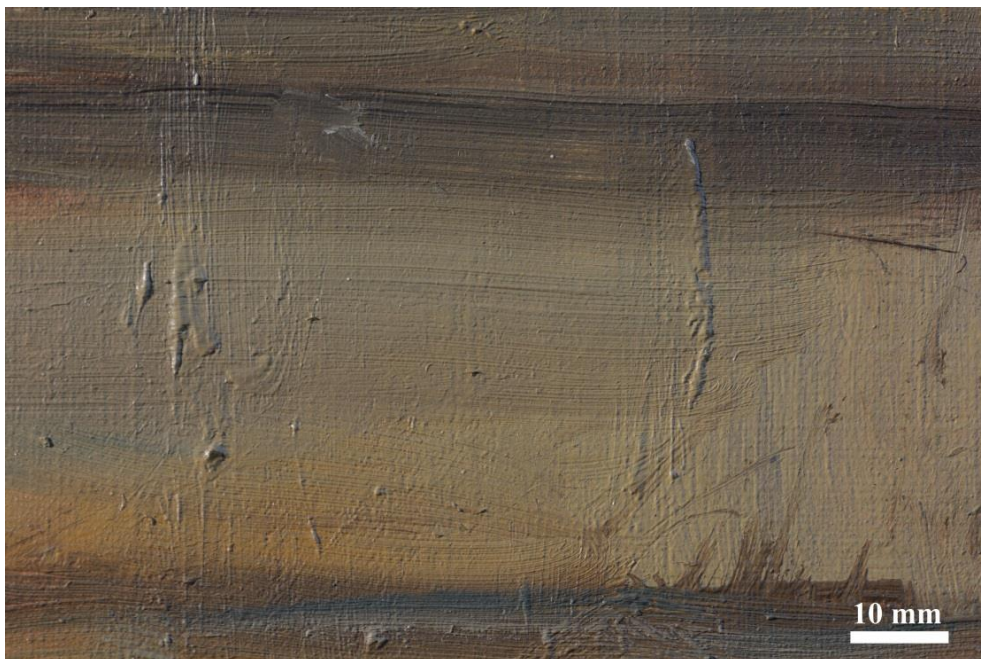
Figure 30: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, detail macro, area of the drinking glass, raking light. Colour accents were highlighted with slight impasto in a white tone.





Figures 31 and 32: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, recto, microscopic photographs, x 6.3, right lower part, table (Fig. top) and centre area of lower part (Fig. bottom), incident light. Hairs of a paint brush are embedded in the paint layer. There are a few groove-like depressions in vertical direction which possibly might refer to the composition lying beneath the painting on top. The rose tone of the underlying composition is clearly visible (see Fig. bottom).





Figures 33 and 34: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, details macro, recto, lower part, raking light. In the area of the tablecloth and of the table brush strokes in vertical and horizontal direction as well as accumulation of paints are visible which might be related to the composition lying beneath the painting on top.





Figures 35 and 36: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, details macro, recto, lower part, incident light. Legs of the underlying composition painted in rose tone are slightly visible through the paint layer on top.



Figures 37 and 38: *Still Life with Coffee Pot*, details macro, recto, left upper edge, raking light. At the front side the painting is signed with the monogram 'M. L.'.