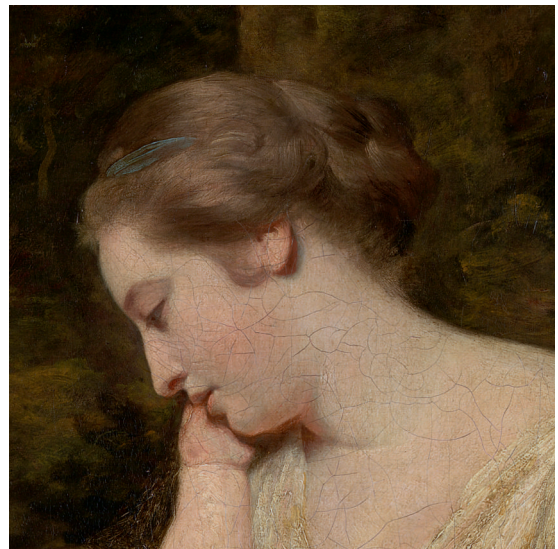
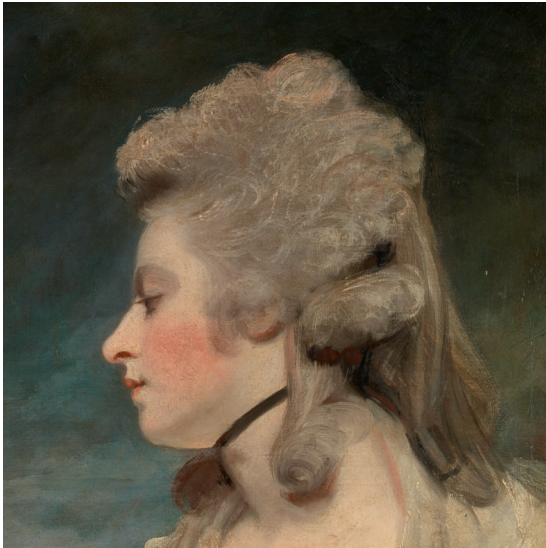


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Joshua Reynolds in the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection



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FRONT COVER

Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons* (NG 2077), 1773 (detail)

TITLE PAGE

TOP LEFT: Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs Mary Robinson ('Perdita')*, The Wallace Collection (P 45), 1783–4 (detail).
TOP RIGHT: Joshua Reynolds, *Colonel Tarleton*, The National Gallery (NG 5985), 1782 (detail).
BOTTOM LEFT: Joshua Reynolds, *Miss Jane Bowles*, The Wallace Collection (P 36), 1775–6 (detail).
BOTTOM RIGHT: Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs Susanna Hoare and Child*, The Wallace Collection (P 32), 1763–4 (detail).

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Joshua Reynolds in the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection

In recent years we have adopted a policy of publishing volumes of the *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* devoted to special subjects, with annual issues appearing more occasionally offering opportunities for authors to publish their technical research on any subject connected to the National Gallery Collection, however diverse the point of interest. Two recent special issues embody this policy: that devoted to Leonardo da Vinci and his associates (Volume 32) published in 2011, and in 2013 a *Technical Bulletin* on the early part of Titian's career (Volume 34). Plans are in hand to publish, in 2015, a second volume of technical research on Titian, dealing with his painting technique after 1540.

This new volume of the *Technical Bulletin* – number 35 – is also a special issue, with an unusual and innovative theme. It is devoted wholly to the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds, his technical practices and, particularly, the influence of his unusually elaborate painting procedures on both the present condition of his pictures and their often complex and unpredictable conservation needs. This subject has caused much understandable debate and anxiety in the conservation community, to the degree that it is widely acknowledged that pictures under treatment by Reynolds require an unusual level of preliminary technical exploration in order for conservation to be carried out with confidence that safe methods can be applied. All those who have explored Reynolds's techniques in any detail agree that no two of his pictures are likely to be quite the same in terms either of their materials and making, or their response towards conservation treatments and especially to cleaning.

The material complexities of Reynolds's work have been the central point of interest behind an imaginative and forward-looking research project organised by our sister institution in London, The Wallace Collection, begun in November 2010. This was designed to study and analyse as fully as possible the twelve paintings by Reynolds in the collection at Hertford House, Manchester Square. The Wallace Collection Reynolds Research Project was the initial plan of Dame Rosalind Savill, then Director of the Wallace Collection. On her retirement, in 2011, responsibility for the project was assumed with great energy and enthusiasm by

Dr Christoph Vogtherr, Director of the Wallace Collection. Somewhat later, when fully established, day-to-day responsibility and management was taken on by Dr Lucy Davis, Curator of Old Master Pictures, who has been the project's coordinator until the conclusion of the work in 2014. The generous support of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art has made the project possible. Other Benefactors of the Wallace Collection have significantly contributed towards it.

At the outset it was agreed with Nicholas Penny, Director of the National Gallery, that an essential part of the project plan would be close collaboration with the National Gallery's Scientific Department for the technical and analytical study of the twelve Wallace Collection pictures, which would be brought in sequence to the Conservation Department at Trafalgar Square for technical examination, analysis and documentation by scientific and conservation staff, under the supervision of a Wallace Collection paintings conservator appointed to the project. Alexandra Gent fulfilled this pivotal role for the duration of the work, and was also charged with assessing and advising on the growing body of technical information on the pictures under study, as well as the potential for safe conservation treatments to be carried out on each of the Wallace Collection paintings selected and approved during the course of examination and analysis. As a result of the project, four paintings by Reynolds belonging to the Wallace Collection have been cleaned and restored, and the last of these returned to public display at the end of 2014. The progress of the project was monitored and discussed regularly by an international panel of experts consisting of art historians with a special interest in Reynolds and British painting, and by conservators with particular expertise in this highly specialist area. Scientific interpretation and advice has also been available to the panel throughout.

The National Gallery is particularly suited as a partner to collaborate on detailed technical study of Old Master paintings, since its laboratory is unusually well-equipped for the microanalysis of the materials of paintings, including the challenging chemical identifications in paint microsamples of the wide range of complex organic constituents of Reynolds's

idiosyncratic paint formulations, sometimes now only present as trace amounts, or known only from their surviving degradation products in the paint film. Perhaps more importantly, the instruments available for analyses are suitable for interpreting paint structures that are unusually multilayered and constitutionally highly complex, a feature of Reynolds's technique in general that has proved more than equal to his reputation among his contemporaries in this respect, and a genuine challenge to the skill and ingenuity of paintings conservators to negotiate.

Although the National Gallery possesses fewer paintings by Reynolds in its permanent collection – five in all – these span an interesting and representative period of the painter's career, from *Captain Robert Orme* (NG 681) of 1756 to *Lord Heathfield of Gibraltar* (NG 111), not exhibited until 1788. These pictures have undergone sporadic technical analysis by the Scientific Department over the years, including the publication of the first instrumental analyses of Reynolds's paint media using gas chromatography (GC), by John Mills and Raymond White in Volume 1 of the *Technical Bulletin* in 1977. A rather more systematic survey was undertaken in conjunction with Martin Wyld, then Chief Restorer, and Judy Egerton between 1992 and 1994 in preparation for the latter's *The British Paintings*, National Gallery Catalogue, published in 1998. Further technical study has taken place since then, particularly in the last two years, in order to integrate and compare the results of examination and analysis of the National Gallery pictures with the data acquired for the Wallace Collection paintings, which cover an equally long time span, 1759–88, in Reynolds's career. As in all survey studies of the work of one painter, the results are inevitably enriched and deepened the more examples that are included in the total, so we believe that this collaborative programme of research, the results of which are recorded fully in this *Technical Bulletin*, will be of particular value to all those concerned with understanding (and preserving) the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds and his imperfect but spectacular techniques of painting.

I would like to record here very great thanks to the following individuals outside the National Gallery without whom this special edition of the *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* on Reynolds would have been neither possible to compile nor feasible to publish. They are: Mark Aronson, Lucy Davis, Rupert Featherstone, Mark Hallett, Rica Jones, David Mannings, Martin Postle, Ros Savill and Christoph Vogtherr. Within the Gallery,

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ASHOK ROY

Editor, National Gallery Technical Bulletin