

THE SPECIFICS OF PAINTING TECHNIQUE AS AN ADDITIONAL COMPLICATION IN RESTORATION

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ABOUT

The painting is at the Latvian National Museum of Art's painting collection (second half of the 20th century - today). The artist, Gunārs Zemgals graduated from the Latvian SSR State Academy of Art's (Art Academy of Latvia) department of painting. He had already begun to work at the LSSR State Drama Theatre (Latvian National Theatre) in parallel with his studies, where he was also employed as an artist and stage designer throughout his creative life. Gunārs Zemgals always paid particular attention to problems in painting, working as a stage designer/stage painter. Here we can find the explanation for the choice of the atypical painting technique in the portrayal of K. Sebris.

The painting was done on canvas, painting with tempera and gouache paints, which was finally covered with quite a thick layer of lacquer. Tempera and gouache is a delicate technique, which, in undertaking stabilization processes in conservation, like the consolidation of the priming and paint layer and the gluing of the craquelure, demanded additional attention and caution. Whereas, the stable layer of lacquer helped in undertaking the conservation processes with classical methods, which gave a result in the end.

"K. SEBRIS J. SMŪLA LUGĀ "KIHNU JENS""
 (1968)
 GUNĀRS ZEMGALS (1934-2018)
 CANVAS, TEMPERA, GOUACHE
 120 X 120.5 CM
 INV. NO. VMM GL-517



1. General view of the painting before the restoration in sliding light



2. General view of the painting during the process of the restoration in direct light



3. General view of the painting after the restoration in direct light



4. Detail of the painting before the restoration in sliding light



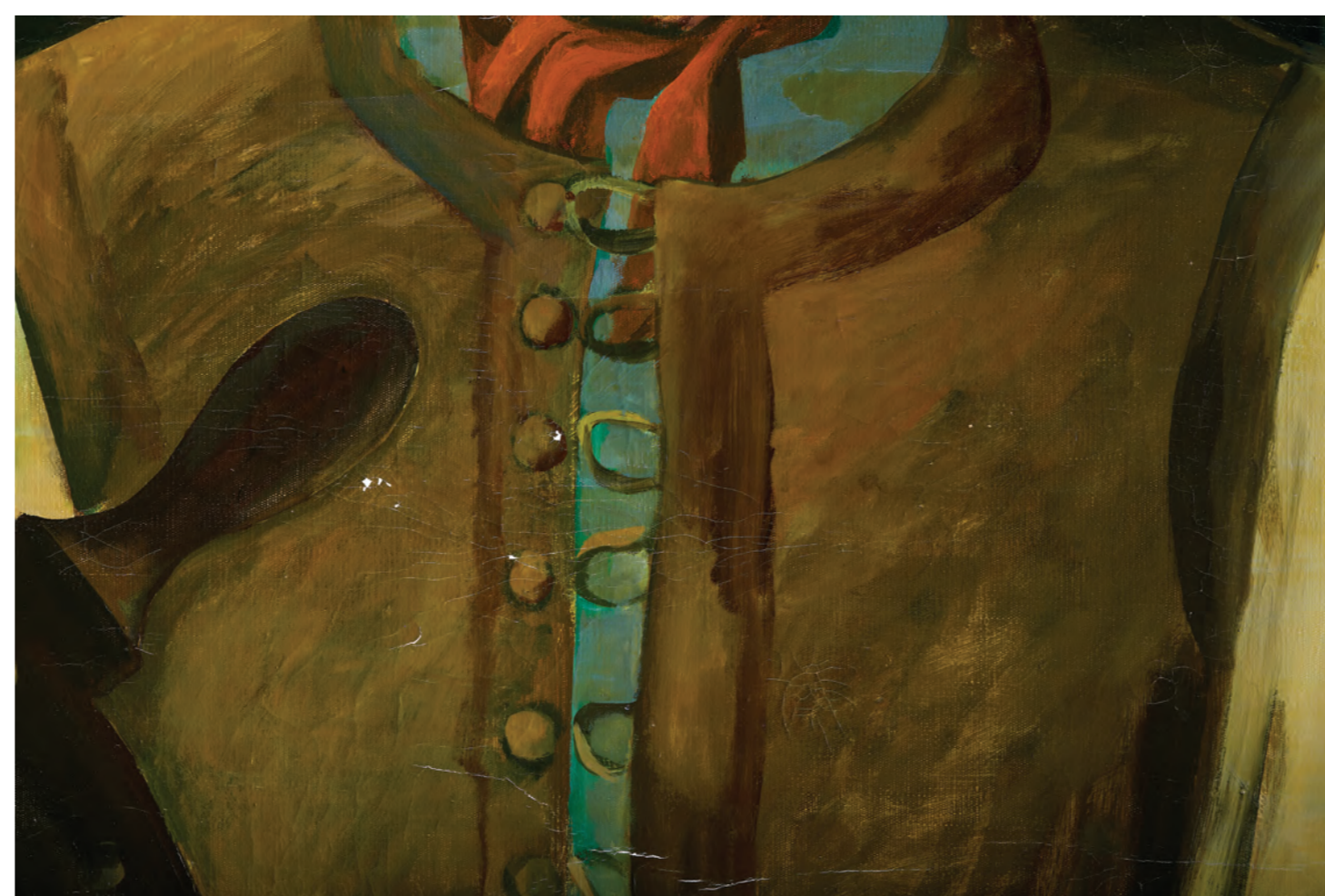
5. Detail of the painting during the process of the restoration in direct light



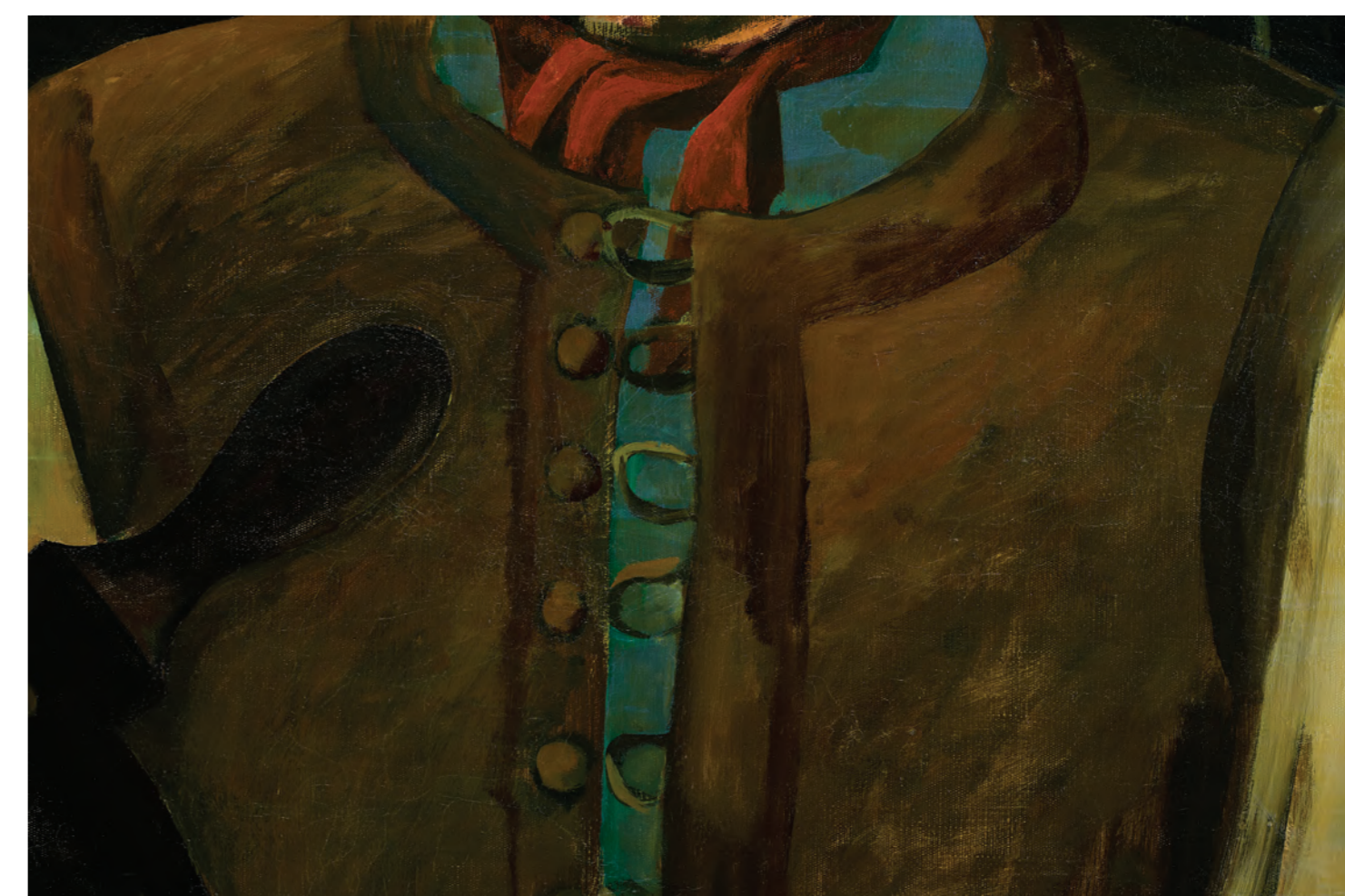
6. Detail of the painting after the restoration in direct light



7. Detail of the painting before the restoration in sliding light



8. Detail of the painting during the process of the restoration in direct light



9. Detail of the painting after the restoration in direct light



10. The backside of the painting before the restoration



11. The backside of the painting after the restoration

RESTORATION

The painting ended up in the restoration workshop due to its serious traumatic mechanical canvas imprints and its marked priming and paint craquelure, which had created both threats of loss of the paint layer, as well as changing the perception of the painting image itself. The author had used a rigid sub-frame without a marked internal slant for the ledges for the painting's base, which is why the sub-frame also had to be exchanged for a new professional wedge frame during the restoration process, so that the problems could be solved as well as possible in accordance with all of the demands of restoration.

After that the placement of a prophylactic adhesive, the sub-frame of the painting was exchanged for a professional wedge frame. The next steps were the processes for consolidating the priming and paint layer with a covered steaming method, getting rid of the imprints and deformations in the canvas in parallel. After a careful washing off of the tissue paper and surface grime, restoration priming was spread in places where the author's paint layer had been lost. The white, pale surface stains were cleaned off, after which a regeneration of the lacquer layer was undertaken using the Pettenkofer method. The painting was covered with a lacquer structure and toning was undertaken.

The restoration was done in several stages from May 2020 to September 2021.