



**NYU**

**INSTITUTE OF  
FINE ARTS**

Morland – The Water Mill, 2018

## Treatment Report

**Artist:** George Morland  
**Title:** The Water Mill  
**School/Period:** British, c. 1780-1790.  
**Support/Medium:** oil on canvas  
**Dimensions:** 33.5cm. H x 44.7 cm. W x 1.5 cm D  
**Owner:** Old Westbury Gardens  
**Frame:** Gilded frame, original to painting  
**Date of Treatment:** 1/23/2018

**Conservator:**

Kimberly Frost, Masters Candidate, Conservation  
Center, Institute of Fine Arts, NYU

**Supervisor:**

Lucie Kinsolving, Conservator in Private Practice,  
Paintings Conservation



Before Treatment Image

**Photography:**

*Nikon D700 and D810 camera with 60mm lens, ISO100, f8.0, shutter speed 1/5 sec.*

Before treatment – digital photography in normal light and ultraviolet light; front, reverse.

During treatment – digital photography in normal light and ultraviolet light; front.

After treatment – digital photography in normal light and ultraviolet light; front, reverse.

**Analytical techniques performed:**

Examination under ultraviolet radiation with UV Systems TripleBright II LW370 Lamp, long wave, UV peak: 368 nm.

**X-radiography**, Phillips MG161 X-ray Radiography system and Carestream INDUSTREX HPX-1 Digital system with 8x10" Flex XL Blue Digital Imaging Plate, 35KeV, 5 mA, 90 sec

**Signature, Marks, Labels or Notations:**

Front - signed by artist on blanket of horse at right, G.M.

Reverse – Top stretcher bar left of center #[3]; top to middle on the center stretcher bar: #12, small black and white label with 66 crossed out, rectangle white label with red trim with Morland hand-written, red wax seal illegible probably remains of a customs stamp.



Detail of inscriptions and labels on the central stretcher bar.



**Provenance:** Possibly purchased by Jay Phipps in 1906 from the James Staats Forbes collection, but this is not confirmed as the work is not cited on the list of the collection.

**Art Historical Background:**

George Morland was an English painter of the eighteenth century. The son of artist, Henry Robert Morland, he trained under his father producing paintings for exhibition as early as the age of ten. The landscape and motifs in this version of *The Water Mill* are similar to those in Morland's landscapes from 1785 through the early 1790's. Two examples, *Winter Landscape* and *The Old Water Mill* from the Yale Center for British Art show similarly shaped buildings and clouds. A thick tree trunk plays a more prominent role, while in the Old Westbury painting trees are less prominent and serve to create a foliage cover similar to Morland's handling of *Pheasant Shooting*, also dating to this time period. This time period represents the best of Morland's works. He had just returned from a successful trip to France and settled with his wife in London's Kensal Green. Shortly after his wife's illness Morland's life again took an unsteady turn ending in arrest for debt despite his high production of paintings.



George Morland, *Winter Landscape with Figures*, ca. 1785

Signed, lower right: "G Morland~  
[underlined]", Yale Center for British  
Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Accession Number: B1993.30.23



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*The Old Water Mill*, George Morland,  
(signed) 1790, Yale Center for British Art,  
Paul Mellon Collection  
Accession Number: B1976.2.3



George Morland, *Pheasant Shooting*, ca.  
1790, Yale Center for British Art, Paul  
Mellon Collection, Accession Number:  
B2001.2.277

**Treatment History:** Treatment history is unknown; the painting appears to have previous restorations based on its current state and lining. Examination in ultraviolet light reveals possible areas of retouching.

## Examination and Condition Report:

### Frame

#### *Construction*

The frame is made from 4 wooden members each 6 cm wide and measures 55 cm W x 45.7 cm H and 5.7 cm D. The wood is covered in a gesso ground and gilded. Its corners are decorated with attached pieces made from compo molding. The central portion of the frame is a cove molding, the interior edge consists of a lambs' tongue pattern with a rounded quarter molding on the outside. The four corners have decorative motif consisting of a shield at the center with floral moldings extending into the cove and abstract decorative leaves in the outermost corners. Two



eye screws and a wire are attached at the sides to hang the painting. Four brass mending plates are attached with screws at the center of each edge to secure the painting.

### *Condition*

The frame is in very poor condition with large losses and active flaking. Two of the attached leaf decorations are lost along the outer edge of the top left and bottom right corners. Two shield decorations on the interior face are also missing in the top right and lower left corners. Large losses of gesso along the outer edges have left bare wood visible. In some areas, this has been carelessly toned with overpaint, which occurred in several campaigns. Cracks, lifting ground, and loss are also scattered throughout the interior cove of the molding. A heavy layer of dirt, dust, and grime has accumulated over the surface. Due to the extensive damage of the frame it will not be conserved at this time. It is recommended that the frame be replaced by an appropriate reproduction or period frame to suit the painting.

### **Support**

#### *Construction*

The canvas, lined at some point in the past, is stretched over a 5-member stretcher made from 4 bars forming the outer frame and one central, vertical cross bar. The outer bars measure 5.5cm wide and 1.5 cm deep, the central cross bar measures 4 cm wide and 1.5 cm deep. Joins at the corners are either butt joining or lap joints and the central bar is constructed with a lap joint. Extension keys sit in each of the joints, 10 in total, and appear to be original to the current stretcher. All stretcher bars have beveled edges positioned to face the reverse of the painting and the turning edges. Only the lining canvas extends to the reverse of the stretcher and is attached using modern flat head nails just past the point of the beveled edge.

The original canvas appears to be a fine plain weave fabric. No surface losses reveal the original canvas. The threads of the canvas are slightly visible along the cut edges of the original painting, which are slightly abraded. The original tacking edges were removed, presumably at the time of lining. These original edges sit slightly inside the edge of the stretcher bars exposing the lining canvas on the front face of the picture, as you move vertically towards the bottom.

The lining canvas is a tight plain weave fabric to fine threads. The edges of the lining canvas are not left open, instead they are folded under the secured nails. The reverse and sides of the lining canvas is covered on all four sides with several layers of dark brown glue and paper. Under magnification, the fibers of the lining canvas appear to be saturated with an adhesive, which is estimated to be paste.

#### *Condition*

The stretcher is structurally sound and in good condition. There is a heavy layer of dirt and dust accumulation along the edges of the bottom keys and stretcher bar. The reverse of the lining also carries a layer of dust. The lining is fully adhered to the original canvas and the painting is held at appropriate tension with no undulations in the plane of the canvas. The tacking edges consisting of the lining fabric are in good condition with only two small holes at the center of top and bottom outer edges of the stretcher bar.





Detail of paper covering on the tacking edge before treatment.

### **Ground Layer and Underdrawing**

#### *Construction*

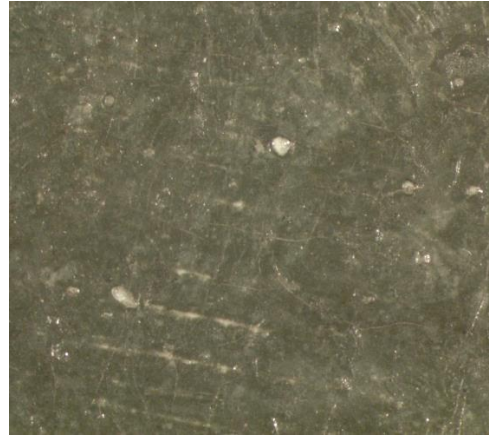
The original canvas appears to have an even white ground layer, which can be seen through the slight abrasion at the cut edges of the canvas.

#### *Condition*

The ground layer is in good condition with no visible losses or damage. After cleaning, it became evident that the white ground was visible through small pinhole losses in the paint layer. During microscopic examination, these white spots protrude from the surface and often have a translucent quality characteristic of lead soap formation. Lead soaps are often formed from ground and paint-layer interactions and the effects of ageing binding mediums. The ground appears radio-opaque and thinly applied in the X-ray image. These observations indicate that the ground layer may contain lead white.



Detail of retouching over surface protrusions.



Detail of white protrusions after cleaning.

## Paint Layer

### *Construction*

The application and gloss of the paint layer suggest a traditional oil medium was used. The paint was applied in various levels from thin washes to areas of moderate thickness. Individual fluid strokes were used to build-up the forms of the composition, especially in areas of white paint which have a slightly thicker impasto, seen in the clouds, central horse and water.

### *Condition*

The paint layer has developed a fine craquelure network which is stable. No cupping or lifting of the edges is observed. The craquelure is most pronounced in the large portion of the exposed blue sky. Mechanical cracking caused by impacts can be seen along the inner edge of the stretcher bars and in a concentric pattern in the top right of the painting, in the sky.



Detail of crack pattern observed in the sky.



Some weave emphasis from the lining is evident, as for example, in the area of pooled water below the mill. The thinly applied paint layers are slightly abraded throughout, especially in the darks. Abrasion is also noticeable at the cut edges of the original canvas, which sit above the lining. During UV examination, small dark dots were visible throughout the landscape. This suggests that the surface has been retouched to eliminate the small white spots caused by the abrasion of protrusions in the paint layer.



Detail of dark spots seen under UV examination

## **Varnish Layer**

### *Construction*

The painting is covered by a thin and even coating of varnish, which appears dull and unsaturated. The coating fluoresces a yellow-green tone under UV, suggesting a natural resin was used.

### *Condition*

The natural resin has darkened and yellowed over time, obscuring the subtle details of the painting technique and original palette. The varnish is strongly discolored to a yellow-brown tone, as was revealed by a cleaning test from 3-5 cm below the upper right corner, showing the original. White spots of localized blanching are observed in the top and bottom edges of the painting covered by the rabbet of the wooden frame.

## **Treatment Report: Painting**

### *Surface Cleaning*



The reverse of the canvas and stretcher were dusted to remove loose dust. Several pine needles were found between the bottom stretcher bar and the canvas, causing a slight protrusion. These were removed, and the protrusion relaxed by applying a gentle weight overnight. The canvas reverse and stretcher were then dry cleaned with Absorene rubber sponges to remove accumulated particulates. The brittle remains of the paper tape glued along the tacking edges was removed by scalpel.

Left side of the canvas is significantly lighter after dry cleaning with sponges. Pine needles can be noted in the removed debris.



Removal of the brittle paper tape and glue adhesive with scalpel.



The discolored varnish was then removed with a solvent mixture of 1:1 Mineral Spirits and Acetone. No pigments were observed to be sensitive to the solvent mixture. The retouching spots from a previous treatment did not match the true colors of the original paint layer and necessitated removal. The previous retouching was not sensitive to solvent action. Instead these were mechanically removed from the surface using a scalpel under high magnification.





Detail during solvent cleaning of discolored varnish.

#### *Fills and Isolating Varnish*

An isolating varnish of mastic resin at 11% dilution in triple distilled turpentine was applied by brush.

#### *Inpainting*

Inpainting was completed with a precise brush using Qor watercolors in Aquazol medium.

Inpainting aimed to reduce the visual disruption caused by the pinhole losses, especially in dark areas. Where discolored retouching could not be safely removed, especially in the sky, they were scumbled to visibly match the surroundings.



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Detail of pinhole losses in cleaned state.



Detail after inpainting to cover pinholes and reduce abrasion in the water below.

#### *Final Varnish*

No final application of varnish was necessary.

#### *Framing*

A backing board made from acid-free blue board was cut to size and fixed to the reverse of the painting using ¼ inch brass screws and washers. The painting was placed back in its frame and secured in place with 8 brass mending plates, two on each edge.





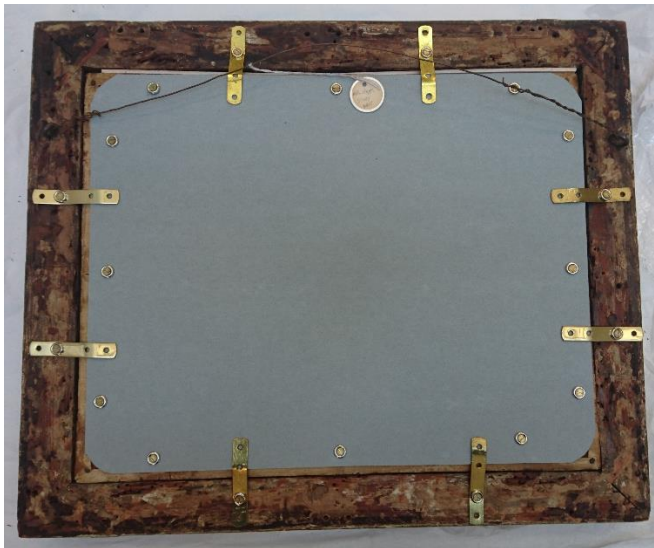
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Reverse of framed canvas before treatment.



Reverse of framed canvas after treatment.



Front of framed canvas after treatment.



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## Appendix: Documentation



Before treatment, front, visible light.





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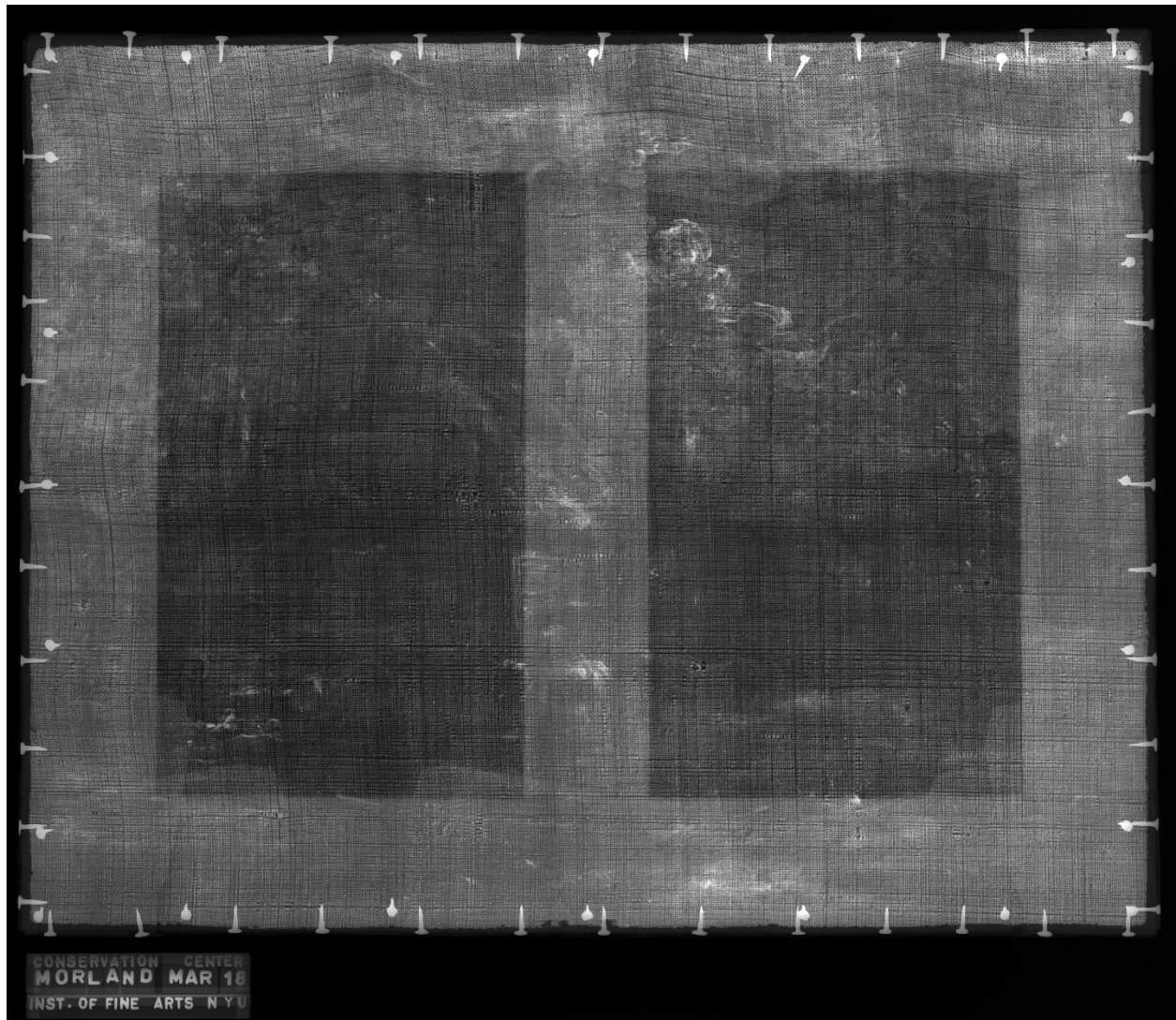
Before treatment, reverse, visible light.



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Before treatment, X-radiograph.





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Before treatment, front, ultraviolet light



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During treatment removal of varnish, front, ultraviolet light.





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During treatment, removal of varnish, front, visible light.



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During treatment, cleaned state, front, visible light.





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After treatment, front, visible light.



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After Treatment, Reverse, Visible Light.





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Morland – The Water Mill, 2018



Frame, Front



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Frame, Reverse