A Historical and Technical Investigation of Sir Peter Lely’s *Cimon and Efigenia* from the Collection at Doddington Hall.

**Introduction**

The Conservation and Art Historical Analysis Project at the Courtauld Institute Research Forum aimed to carry out technical investigation and art historical research on Sir Peter Lely’s painting *Cimon and Efigenia*. The painting came to the Courtauld Gallery in 2012 for the *Lely: A Lyrical Vision* exhibition, which focused on Lely’s subject pictures from his earlier years in England. After the exhibition, *Cimon and Efigenia* was brought to the conservation department for conservation treatment. *Cimon and Efigenia*’s conservation treatment, along with previous technical examination of the Courtauld Gallery’s Peter Lely subject pictures, provided a unique opportunity to further investigate the history of this painting and its place within Lely’s practice and oeuvre. In her essay “Becoming Peter Lely” in the *Lely: A Lyrical Vision* catalogue, Caroline Campbell describes Lely as a “pictoral magpie: picking up ideas and motifs from any number of sources, but uniting them in a fashion which combined the Italian Renaissance and the Dutch Classicist movement, but in a more Baroque and showy manner.” This report will explore how Peter Lely’s many influences (artistic, cultural, and literary) contributed to the formation of this painting: through composition, materials, and techniques.

**Historical Investigation of *Cimon and Efigenia***

by Esther van der Hoorn

**Context in Sir Peter Lely’s Oeuvre**

As was recounted by Dutch art historian *avant-la-lettre* Arnold Houbraken in his 1718 work *The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters*, Peter Lely was born Pieter van der Faes on the 14th of September 1618 to Dutch parents living in the small town of Soest, in German Westphalia. The name of Lely, under which he would become famous as an artist, stems from the lily, which adorned the gable of his father’s house in Soest.¹

In emulation of Vasari and the Netherlandish artist-biographer Karel van Mander, Houbraken wrote on the lives of the most famous Dutch artists. Peter Lely proves an interesting case, as he seems as much – or perhaps even more – an English artist. When Lely’s soldier-father noticed that his son preferred wielding the brush over the sword and the art of painting over the art of warfare, he sent his 18-year-old son to the Dutch city of Haarlem to study under the painter Frans Pieter de Grebber.² Hardly any work from the time he spent in Haarlem is known, however, and it seems that Lely’s career only became truly established when he moved to London in 1641, travelling in the suite of William II of Orange, who sought to marry the daughter of Charles I, Mary. Just a few years later, in October of 1647, Lely became a freeman of the London Painter-Stainer’s company.

Netherlandish painters had been present in London throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as many fled religious strife beginning in the 1530’s, or later followed the example of court artist Anthony van Dyck.³ Van Dyck died in 1641, the year that Lely arrived in England. After Van Dyck, Peter Lely was perhaps the most accomplished of the Dutch fortune-seekers of his generation. Lely’s early English works depict subjects from mythology and history, painted in the Haarlem classicist style, featuring romantic landscapes and rich colouring. Lely however found these paintings unpopular in England, and subsequently turned to portraiture as his main area of expertise.⁴ Lely had been taught in portraiture by De Grebber, and according to Houbraken, had established a reputation as an excellent portrait painter during the short period in which he lived in Haarlem. It was for his portraiture that Lely became incredibly sought after, resulting in his appointment as Principal Painter to the Restoration court of Charles II in 1661.⁵
Lely might have profited from the vacuum left in London after William Dobson’s move to Royalist Oxford during the English civil war.

The painting under consideration in our research appears to be from the early decades of Lely’s career, as it is a so-called ‘subject picture’ rather than a portrait. The scene depicts a narrative from secular literature, painted in the richly coloured, dramatically illuminated style preferred in Haarlem, combined with influences from Italian art, especially Titian. In his later portraiture, Lely would fuse these stylistic characteristics with the traditions of Van Dyck’s grand Baroque style of English portraiture. As *Cimon and Efigenia* presumably is one of Lely’s earlier works, and not a portrait of a known sitter but a narrative scene, it is unclear whether it was a piece made for the market, as was common in Haarlem, or if the painting was a commission. The former hypothesis would be possible, as Lely continued working with art dealers in London, most notably George Geldrop.

The provenance of the painting, however, is relatively uncertain. The work is presently in the collection of Doddington Hall, an Elizabethan mansion in Lincolnshire. In all probability, the painting was brought to Doddington Hall in the second half of the 18th century by Lord John Delaval, first-born son to Rhoda Apreece, who had inherited Doddington through her mother. How Lely’s *Cimon and Efigenia* might have come into the possession of the Delavals remains thus far unknown. The painting might have been bought at the sale of Lely’s personal collection after his death in 1680. In the inventory made up for this sale, there was listed as lot 83 under the heading ‘History paintings of Sir Peter Lely’ a picture of *The
History of Cimon, with naked figures.” However, the ‘History of Cimon’ mentioned in this inventory might also have been Lely’s painting of the same subject presently in Knole House, Kent.

**Lely’s Artistic Heritage**

In the late sixteenth-century Karel van Mander, a Haarlem-based artist and the author of the *Lives of the Dutch Artists*, modelled after Giorgio Vasari’s *Vite*, an ‘academy’ of painting in Haarlem together with his contemporaries Hendrick Goltzius and Cornelis van Haarlem. Although we should not consider this to be comparable to Italian examples of truly academic schools of painting, jointly these three artists did constitute a very influential ‘Haarlem School’. The Haarlem School of the late sixteenth century produced a style that has been called Haarlem Mannerism, featuring convoluted postures and extravagant proportions, after the example of the Flemish artist Bartholomeus Spranger, who had travelled extensively through Italy.

Although few works by Frans Pieter de Grebber, Lely’s teacher, have been left to us, it appears that he was a follower of the Haarlem Mannerism, as well. De Grebber was also a painter of so-called ‘schutterstukken’, which depicted all the members of the prestigious civilian city guards. During his time as a pupil of De Grebber, Lely must have taken in skills in portraiture. In his narrative scenes, however, Lely does not show much Mannerist qualities. Instead, he seems to have been inspired by the reactionary Classicist movement that emerged in Haarlem in the early seventeenth century. Frans de Grebber’s son Pieter worked in this style, and Lely may have seen work by him as well.

In London, Lely again saw new sources of inspiration: in his later portraiture, he fused the rich colours and dramatic lighting that were preferred in Haarlem, influences from Italian art, especially Titian, and the traditions of Van Dyck’s grand Baroque style of English portraiture.

**The Story of Cimon and Efigenia**

The story of Cimon and Efigenia can be found in Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, written and published in Florence in 1353. The *Decameron* consists of one hundred short stories, told over the course of 10 days by a group of elite citizens who have fled the Florentine Plague of 1348, seeking safety in a deserted villa in nearby Fiesole. To pass the time, they told stories of love and fortune. Cimon and Efigenia feature in the first story told on the Fifth Day.

The reception of the *Decameron* in England commences with the possibility of Chaucer having been inspired by Boccaccio’s frame narrative. William Painter’s *The Palace of Pleasure* of 1566 for many years remained the most extensive collection of translated fables from the *Decameron*, but the first full English translation of the *Decameron* appeared in 1620. Lely did read Dutch, however, he could have also consulted the Dutch translation of 1564 by Dirck Coornhert. Still, his English clients would presumably have been most familiar with the 1620 English translation.

Despite him being the son of the king of Cyprus, a “Noble Gentleman, who was commonly called Aristippus, and exceeded all other of the Country in the goods of Fortune,” Cimon turned out to be a course, uncivilised and unlettered youth, who above all lacked “the reall ornament of the soule, reason and judgement; being (indeed a meere Ideot or Foole,).” Because he embarrassed his family so, Cimon was sent to live away from the court to work on the farming lands. One day, as he was walking through his meadows, Cimon stumbled upon a sleeping beauty and her handmaidens. Near a fountain at the edge of the meadow, Cimon “espied a very beautifull young Damosell, seeming to be fast asleepe, attired in such fine loose garments, as hidde very little of her white body.” The encounter with the sleeping Efigenia would prove life-changing for Cimon, as seeing this perfect specimen of beauty imbued within him the humanist civility previously lacking: as Cimon fell in love with Efigenia, the prince’s heart opened up to all the virtuous qualities that had been missing before. He suddenly became well-versed in Philosophy, music, horse-riding and martial arts. Boccaccio writes: “What shall we say then concerning this Cimon? Surely nothing else, but that those high and divine vertues, infused into his gentle soule, were by envious Fortune bound and shut up in some small angle of his intellect, which being shaken and set at liberty by love.”

The voyeuristic dimension to this moment in the story has been widely commented upon, as Lely
and contemporary painters often depicted sleeping nymphs or goddesses, which are ‘espied’ by either a male character within the painting, or the viewers of the paintings themselves. Yet although the delight of spying on half-naked sleeping beauties such as the nymphs in Lely’s *Nymphs by a Fountain* is perhaps obvious, in his *Cimon and Efigenia* there seems to be another dimension relevant to his choice of subject matter. This painting is not merely a pastorale, meant for the voyeuristic delight of male viewers, but depicts a moment in which the judgment of beauty as civilising process is key to the development of the narrative. Lely’s Cimon retains his distance from the sleeping Efigenia. In this muted scene, he is beholding her with his eyes only, and does not appear to even consider reaching out to touch Efigenia’s smooth flesh. The way Cimon leans his hands on his staff too seems reverent, as if kneeling down before an altar – we should note here that X-Ray analysis shows Lely’s obsession with getting this gesture just right (Figure 2). If this painting were a piece made by Lely for the market early on in his career, the subject matter might therefore suggest it being a self-referential showpiece in the line of Vermeer’s *The Art of Painting*, as the story may be seen to be very much about connoisseurship as the judgment of beauty.

This period in the Netherlands saw the emergence of the ‘liefhebber,’ literally ‘lover,’ of painting: a connoisseur who could judge good art, just as Cimon became a judge of Efigenia’s beauty. The viewer of this painting would thus identify with Cimon, not only as voyeur of the sleeping Efigenia, but also in him too becoming cultured by judging different elements within the painting after having fallen in love with its beauty. In fact, it is this that awakens in Cimon the civilised prince: “He began to distinguish her parts, commending the tresses of her hair, which he imagined to be of gold; her forehead, nose, mouth, necke, armes, but (above all) her brests, appearing (as yet) but onely to shew themselves, like two little mountaines. So that he would needs now become a Judge of beauty”. This also led to Cimon now being able to speak properly, whereas previously his utterances were rude and coarse. This might have resonated with the artist himself, as being *emigrés* of a different tongue, Lely and his fellow non-English painters were often subject to London’s resentment.16

### Seventeenth Century Depictions of Cimon and Efigenia

Although Titian did not paint a *Cimon and Efigenia* scene as far as we know, his *Danae* series might to have been a possible source of inspiration for Efigenia in Lely’s Doddington Hall painting. The way Efigenia’s arm is draped is especially similar. This might also explain why Lely initially set out to make something interesting out of Efigenia’s leg (Figure 3),

Figure 2. Detail of pentimento of Cimon’s hands as seen in X-ray (left) and visible light (right).
although he did not succeed quite as well as Titian did, and had to cover up his attempt to emulate him. From the inventory made up for the ‘main picture sale’ of Lely’s collection after his death, we know that the artist was in the possession of “a Danae after Titian”, which was auctioned off to a Mr Sayer.17 Another work by Titian, a Sleeping Venus owned by Thomas Howard Earl of Arundel, who was to become one of Lely’s most important patrons and advocates, might have been another source of inspiration.18 Amongst other paintings which may have influenced Lely’s depiction of Cimon and Efigenia is Anthony van Dyck’s Cupid and Psyche, which we know to have been in Lely’s collection of Old Master paintings (Figure 4).19 Lely bought this painting after the dispersal of the royal collection following Charles I’s downfall.

In Van Dyck’s Cupid and Psyche, Psyche is laying down on a blue cloth. A similar blue cloth features in Lely’s Cimon and Efigenia, as it frames the left side of the painting. The blue of Lely’s cloth is somewhat reminiscent of the fabric depicted in his Nymphs by a Fountain, often suggested to be a pendant of his Cimon and Efigenia. Although the paintings currently are not of the same size, they might once have been, as the canvas of Lely’s Cimon and Efigenia has been both cut down and extended. Furthermore, the way Lely prepared the grounds of both paintings is very similar, as is his use of pigments.

Finally, it was documented that Rubens’ Hero and Leander was in Peter Lely’s collection: the painting is listed as lot 53 of the ‘main picture sale’ after Lely’s death, and was purchased for £85 by a Mr.
If our painting was indeed a showpiece meant to establish Lely’s position in the English art market, the artist’s eclectic use of sources and techniques contributes to the subject matter being a reference to Lely’s art as something connoisseurs wanting to judge beauty could fall in love with. As we may thus compare Efigenia with the painting in which she is depicted, Lely’s use of light pink-grey grounds becomes significant in this regard. Theodore de Mayerne, a Swiss-born physician who moved to England in the early 1600’s and who between 1620 and 1645 wrote a treatise on the use and production of pigments, wrote that “the beauty and the vivacity of a painting’s colour depends upon a good priming”22. Most of the sixteenth and seventeenth century paintings in the Haarlem-based Frans Hals Museum feature what we may call ‘flesh-coloured grounds’.23 Frans Pieter de Grebber, Lely’s teacher, even used his light-pink grounds to model faces with, adding only a few more layers of contouring and shade. The ‘skin’ of the painting thus crossed over with the skin of the depicted person. Perhaps De Grebber did so for economic reasons only, but we may also consider the possibility of Early Modern Dutch artists considering the grounded canvas a ‘skin’ on which to paint, the painting itself a body to be admired in the way Cimon admires Efigenia.

By giving Cimon a much darker complexion, which contrasts heavily with Efigenia’s unblemished skin, Lely adds to this notion. This use of skin tone to contrast female beauty with masculinity was popular in the period. Looking at the composition, it is as if the viewer of the painting enters the picture with Cimon from the top-right corner. As his gaze travels downward, it is suddenly halted: the nudes stop the gaze from leaving the picture at the lower-left corner. Unlike in Rubens’ paintings, there is no sense of a wave-like movement, such as in the Hero and Leander that Lely himself owned, as we know from the inventory made up after his death, or in Rubens’ own rendering of Cimon and Efigenia’s story.24 Instead, the gaze lands upon Efigenia, much like the viewer of the actual painting encounters the physical object. The muted tones of the rest of the painting, and Cimon’s reverent distance from Efigenia – deliberately and painstakingly suggested by Lely, as we have seen in X-Ray images – add even further to the sense of ‘be-
holding a work of art’, both inside and outside of the painting.

Not much is known of the actual studying of nudes in early seventeenth-century Haarlem, but there is some evidence that suggests that this practice was taking place. As mentioned earlier, Karel van Man- der founded an ‘academy’ in Haarlem. According to the records, he did so in order to facilitate life-drawing. This so-called ‘academy’ was probably not very formal, and could potentially provide a space in which life-drawing after female nudes was allowed. Lely himself appears to have set up an informal life-drawing school in London later on in his career, and in 1656 an application was made to hold life drawing classes at the Painters and Stainers Guild in London. Although this request was denied, life-drawings after female nudes could have been made in more private studio environments. A study of a reclining nude by Lely closely resembles one of the handmaidens in our painting. However, just as important to Lely were examples of female nudes, nymphs and goddesses that he witnessed in other paintings – either through print, or in real life, seeing as he himself and his patrons owned examples.

Materials and Techniques of Cimon and Efigenia by Morgan Wylder

As mentioned previously, Cimon and Efigenia is a large subject picture, and it is executed in oil on a large, single piece of plain-weave linen canvas of medium-fine weight. There have been several campaigns of past restoration in the painting’s history, with treatments including two linings, filling of losses, and several varnish and retouching campaigns. Sometime during its earlier restoration history, the original tacking edges of Cimon and Efigenia were removed, save for the innermost fraction of the top tacking edge. The picture plane was then extended from 2 – 4 cm on all edges of the composition by the addition of a lining canvas and retouching. The composition was most likely extended to fit a particular stretcher or frame.

In the X-radiograph (Figure 3), cusping is visible on the edges of the composition. On the far right, the cusping or scalloping is much less pronounced, indicating the canvas was cropped slightly from its original size on the right side. At the top of the painting, some of the tacking edge is still extant. Not enough of the original tacking edge remains to confirm how the painting was stretched for the sizing process; but given the known practice of this time, it is likely the canvas was loomed by lacing the linen inside of the opening of a large strainer with cords. It would later be stretched onto a stretcher or strainer possibly for painting, and certainly for display and framing.

The current size of Cimon and Efigenia is 131 x 150 cm. In mid-seventeenth century England, large canvases made from a single piece of fabric, with widths larger than 51 cm, such as this one, would have most likely been imported from mainland Europe. The English linen industry was relatively small, and large works by artists in the British school from the early to mid-seventeenth century were typically made from two or more pieces of cloth, made from looms with smaller widths, sewn together. Alternatively, linen with much wider loom widths was available from the Netherlands and France at this time, up to two Dutch ells, or approximately 139 cm. With tacking edges and looming techniques considered, two ells corresponds to the height of this painting.

Priming

By the examination of cross-sections, a uniform double ground was found to be painted over the entirety of the composition. The first ground is a translucent, beige oil-bound chalk layer with only few particles of earth pigments and carbon black, confirmed by SEM-EDX analysis and staining tests. This thicker, oil-bound chalk layer was applied to fill the canvas weave and give a relatively smooth surface for painting.

The second is a pink-grey oil ground made from combination of lead white, chalk, carbon black, and some red earth (and possibly some red lead), confirmed by SEM-EDX analysis. This ground would serve to further smooth the surface of the painting and provide a robust, coloured tone on which the artist could paint.

The grounds would have been applied carefully with a knife to evenly distribute the medium and to ensure good adhesion to the sized canvas. After the first ground was applied, the surface was most likely scraped down, removing knots from the
fabric, and polished with a stone to create a smooth, nearly textureless surface. Then, the second ground was applied with the desired pink-grey colour. In the X-ray, the large patterns created by the application of grounds with a palette knife are clearly visible (Figure 3). In a micrograph of the surface, it is possible to see the colour of the ground underneath the paint layers (Figure 5).

Through technical examination, it is not possible to determine whether the ground was artist or commercially applied. Through written accounts, we know that ready-prepared canvases were available from primers in London as early as 1631. According to the anonymous author of the educational manuscript *The Excellency of the Pen and Pencil*, by 1668, few artists primed their own canvases. This painting was executed during that transition from artist- to commercially-applied grounds as common practice.

**Chronology of Light-Coloured grounds**

This use of a double ground with a pink-grey imprimatura positions Lely within a Dutch tradition of Venetian-influenced ground construction in England. Sixteenth century Italian artists, such as Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto, each painted on coloured grounds ranging from red to grey to brown on canvases to exploit tonal and chromatic possibilities within their compositions. In the late sixteenth century, Haarlem artist Hendrick Goltzius, and later, Antwerp artists Maarten de Vos and Frans Badens, traveled to Italy and were inspired by the techniques they saw: rich oil-bound paints over coloured grounds on canvas. They returned to the Netherlands and introduced this new painting style. Golzius and Cornelis van Haarlem began to use coloured grounds in their work beginning in the 1590’s, and their cool, grey primings influenced mannerist circles in the Northern Netherlands. Red grounds did not become widely used in Haarlem, and following after Cornelis van Haarlem, lighter-toned grounds in beige and greys were preferred by most artists there. The light-coloured double ground was subsequently employed by later Haarlem artists such as Frans Hals, who preferred pale pink or ochre, and then later by Fransz de Grebber and his student, Peter Lely.

When Lely arrived in England in 1643, the lightly-toned double ground was already commonplace. Early in his career, Anthony van Dyck occasionally worked on red-brown underlayers, but for much of his career in England seems to have made his primings lighter. The grey preparations on which he painted in Ruben’s workshop probably formed the basis of this evolution. It has been said that Van Dyck introduced light-coloured primings in England, where they remained popular well into the eighteenth century. He may have found that the lighter, coloured primings were less tonally dramatic and less inclined to discolour over time.

Through the technical analysis of a number of Lely paintings, there is some amount of variation between the grounds in his works, but many of the primings were composed of an opaque light pink-grey layer over a translucent chalk layer like in *Cimon and Efigenia*. Whether the primings were artist-applied or commercially applied, the consistency of this construction is indicative of his Haarlem training and preferences, and also perhaps the continued popularity of this Van Dyck-inspired style in England.

**Underdrawing**

After the ground, Lely likely sketched in his composition with paint based on some preliminary drawings. In this painting, there is no indication of a transfer process from a drawing. Instead, he laid out his composition by sketching in a loose preliminary drawing with paint. It is possible that he painted this sketch over a light, thin, chalk drawing, as is described in an account of his process from 1668 and
In the “Extracts from the Executors Account-Book of Sir Peter Lely, 1679-1691: An Account of the Contents of Sir Peter Studio,” Lely’s remaining pigments included: red lake, red lead, yellow lake (brown pink), orpiment, ultramarine, ashes of ultramarine, blue byce [blue verditer], smalt, and indigo.46 Fever lists Lely’s rather typical seventeenth century English palette in Kirby Tally’s Portrait Painting in England: Studies of Technical Literature Before 1700 (ca. 1673) as: lead white, red lake, red ochre, yellow ochre, pink (yellow) lake, ultramarine, indigo, smalt, cologne earth, lamp black, and vine or charcoal black.47 A large technical survey of Peter Lely paintings entitled Lely’s Studio Practice was carried out at the Hamilton Kerr Institute in 1994. In the survey, the aforementioned pigments were cumulatively identified in thirty-two paintings in addition to natural azurite, vermillion, lead-tin yellow, and a number of other earth colours including umber and brown earth. These three pig-

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**Palette**

As with other subject pictures here at The Courtauld, the ‘underdrawing’ was made by loosely laying in figures and drapery with brown to red-brown earth colours. In a detail photograph of Cimon’s face, it is possible to see an initial underdrawing executed in a brown earth colour (Figure 6). It is also possible to see that Lely later enriches the shadows and accentuates the contours of Cimon’s face with a redder earth colour. In another instance, on one of the background sculptural putti, the initial laying in of the drawing is also done in a brown earth colour (Figure 7). Later, Lely reinforces the forms with more decisive strokes and a warmer colour.

Through examination of cross-sections, it is possible to again see a combination of brown earth underdrawing and red earth underdrawing. A cross-section from a leaf in the darker background foliage shows that a thin, brown wash was placed first in the painting process, with the green paint of the leaf later placed on top (Figure 8). This thin, brown layer is very likely part of the underdrawing applied thin scumble to lay out the composition.

It is possible to visualise Lely’s underdrawing process through his unfinished works. In Lely’s The Concert, commonly thought to be an unfinished piece, preliminary contour drawings in brown and red earth colours are still visible around the forms of some of the subjects (Figures 7-10).

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Figure 6. Detail (left). Umber underdrawing visible in shadow of Cimon’s eyelid and eyebrow. Warmer earth colours were then applied during the painting process to enrich shadows.

Figure 7. Detail (right) of sculptural putti which shows brown underdrawing and red contour reinforcement.

Figure 8. Cross-section taken from area of foliage. Layer 1: Pink-grey ground composed of lead white, charcoal black, and red earth. Layer 2: Thin imprimatura layer painted with brown earth colour. Layer 3: Green foliage colour; matrix is composed of copper blue pigment (possibly azurite), smalt, yellow ochre, and possibly yellow lakes.
browns and greens and yellows to render the wooded background, forest floor, and the figure’s hair and shadows. With SEM-EDX analysis, it was determined that most of these pigments are siliceous clay earths, with consistent peaks for silicon, iron, calcium, and aluminum. Large quantities of calcium were found in the earth pigments; this may be a result of using calcium-rich earth pigments, or calcium carbonate may have been added as an extender to alter the rheology and possibly the drying properties of the oil paint. Chalk is also present in the second, lead white ground, indicating that a cheaper lead white (English “ceruse” and “Spanish white,” or Dutch “lootwit”) with chalk was most likely used for the imprimatura. Lely appears to have used primarily a warmer bone black for the paint layers and charcoal black in the imprimatura layer.

Blues

The sky in the upper right corner of the painting, now discoloured into a dark, grey-brown, is composed almost entirely of smalt with only small quantities of lead white, copper-containing blue pig-
Greens (Foliage)

Over the great majority of the background, Lely created a visual green colour by combining a copper blue pigment (possibly azurite), smalt, yellow ochre, and possibly yellow lakes to achieve a rich, green colour. This can be seen in a cross-section taken from a leaf on the left side of the painting (Figure 7). The smalt may have been combined with the copper blue for its specific colour or for its drying properties, or alternatively, the smalt was already mixed in with the copper blue pigment when it was purchased. The use of visual greens (made from blue and yellow pigments) for areas of foliage has been identified in other Lely paintings as well, and seems typical of Lely’s painting technique. For instance, Lely employed azurite with yellow colours in the rendering of the foliage in 

Rueben Presenting the Mandrakes to Leah.56

The combination of azurite and yellow ochre was also identified in the foliage of Lely’s Lady Jenkinson and Mr Stafford.57

A combination of smalt, natural ultramarine, yellow ochre, and possible yellow lakes were recorded for the foliage in Nymphs by a Fountain.58

Technical analysis of The Concert and Rueben Presenting the Mandrakes to Leah demonstrates that Lely had access to a range of blue pigments (including ultramarine, azurite, indigo, smalt, verditer and charcoal black), and seems to have deliberately chosen which blue to use in which area of his composition.55 This is perhaps also true in Cimon and Efigenia, although Lely uses the combination of smalt and copper blue for both the sky and the foliage. He used indigo singularly for the drapery, most likely employing its glaze-like rheology in order to best imitate rich silk. And, as stated previously, ultramarine may have been added as a final, brilliant colour on the bottom blue drapery as well.

Flesh

The flesh tones were painted directly on top of the pink-grey ground with a combination of pure lead white, a few particles of carbon (most likely charcoal) black, and vermillion, as confirmed by SEM-EDX analysis of a cross-section (Figure 14). Efigenia and
her handmaiden’s red lips as were also painted with vermil- 

lion, as determined with XRF analysis. These combination 
of pigments to paint flesh is perhaps unusual for Lely, as in 
many paintings, such as Nymphs by a Fountain, Lady Jenkin-

son, Lady Cullen, Mrs Gilly, Mr Stafford the flesh pigments 
were fount to be lead white, yellow ochre, red ochre, and 
charcoal black. 59, 60 Organic red pigments were also possibly 
identified in the flesh tones examined in Nymphs by a Foun-

tain, Mr Stafford and Mrs Gilly. 61, 62 No substrates for red lake 

pigments were identified with SEM-EDX in cross-sections 
from the flesh tones in Cimon and Efigenia.

Efigenia’s Drapery

Although Efigenia’s robe appeared to be made of mut-
ed brown colours, discoloured varnish removal and further 
technical examination suggests that Lely originally painted 
it more vibrantly. SEM-EDX analysis of cross-sections from 
areas of Efigenia’s drapery reveal the metal substrates of now-
faded red and possibly yellow lakes, which were mixed with 
red earths, and small percentages of smalt and massicot yel-
low (Figure 15 and 16). XRF analysis allowed us to detect the 
use of vermillion in some of the redder passages as well. The 
cross-sections indicate that Lely employed a more complex 
layering and colouring system than most of the other passag-
es of the painting (three to five paint layers instead of one to 
two). Micrographs of the surface demonstrate the layering of 
green, red, and yellow colours (Figures 17-20). The use of this 
technique is explored in greater depth in a later section.

Medium

The paint layers are thought to be oil, through what is known 
of Peter Lely’s painting practice and through staining tests of 
cross-sections. William Fever, a contemporary artist to Peter 
Lely, wrote of Lely’s practice that he ground white with nut oil 
(presumably to avoid the yellowing of white colour) and all 
the rest of the colours with linseed oil. 53
Painting Technique

General Painting Technique

Lely created Cimon and Efigenia by first elaborating on his underdrawing and painting in the leaner, dark shadows of his composition, effectively leaving reserves of the pink-grey ground for the lighter figures, drapery and sky. He continued by painting in the flesh of the figures, and then possibly the base colours of the sky and background. Lely was known to work in his colours quickly, building up the lighter areas of richer colour and lower impasto with often just one or two layers of paint. Only in areas of drapery and select deep shadows does he employ glazing techniques. In this way, he exploits the contrast between thin washes and thicker impasto, drawing attention to areas of light and colour and letting others fade into the background or shadow.

Lely employed more textured brushwork to build up highlights in layers in the drapery, in the leaves and branches, variations of coloured light in the horizon of the sky, and highlights on the flesh and pearls in the one handmaiden’s hair. Detail photographs illustrate areas of impasto in drapery, leaves in the background foliage, and also the subtly-coloured background sky (Figures 21 and 22). His quick, confident brushstrokes create a textured but precise effect.

Even with a preliminary painterly sketch and reserves, Lely continued to modify the composition well into the painting process. From the X-ray seen in Figure 3, it is evident that Lely freely altered the figures even after he had more fully developed the major forms. In the X-ray, we can see Efigenia’s legs with their lead-white containing flesh colours and the conforming drapery. The anatomic rendering of her legs is perhaps awkward, and so Lely abandoned the legs for only richly painted drapery. It is possible to see Efigenia’s former foot is actually still visible in the final composition as it is currently. Some attempt was made to hide the foot, but not particularly well. It seems the foot was completely rendered before Lely decided to alter his composition (Figure 23).

Another major compositional alteration is Cimon’s hands. In the current composition, Cimon rests his hands on top of the staff; in the X-ray (Figure 2), it is possible to see that Cimon grasped his staff from both sides. This was perhaps a later compositional alteration made to underscore the chaste reverence and admiration of Efigenia’s beauty. Lely also altered the original skyline, possibly opting for more trees and foliage in the final composition, or alternatively, he knowingly utilised the sky colour underneath to peak through the tree foliage.
Red Contours

Red outlining was used at intermediate states throughout the painting process to reinforce the contours of the figures. In some passages, it is used early on to establish form. In other passages, it is perhaps used as a reinforcement of form as he introduces colours. For example, a detail photograph of Efigenia’s robe shows a passage of red contour at an intermediate stage, on top of the flesh paint but below the passages of drapery (Figure 24). Another detail photograph depicts the handmaiden’s shoulder, where the red-brown contour is blended directly into the flesh colour wet-in-wet (Figure 25). In other instances, Lely seems to enjoy the red edges and reiterates them in the final composition to enrich contour and shadow. Passages of red earth colour were also placed towards the end of the painting process to emphasise the contours (Figures 26 and 27).

A cross-section taken from an area of red contour confirms the observations made with surface microscopy (Figure 28). The red coloured brush-strokes were applied in two layers here; the first is a warm, earthy colour placed to lay out the design or create an edge for the flesh colours. The second layer was painted on top in a richer red, composed of red iron oxide, with a specific aesthetic intent that is not unprecedented in figure painting.

Appropriation of Red Contours for Figure Painting

When Dutch artists, such as Frans Badens and Hendrick Goltzius, visited Italy in the 1590s, they were inspired by artists’ ability to capture the warmth of human flesh tones. The “glow,” as they called it, referred to a new manner, associated with Italian techniques, in which colours and especially flesh were warm instead
admired and imitated the later works of Goltzius and his circle in Haarlem. Alternatively or additionally, after seeing works of Venetian painters and Rubens in London, Lely began to experiment with the red contours of his own subject picture figures.

**Changeant Techniques in Drapery**

The complex layering technique of red lakes, vermilion and red earth contrasted with passages green earths and yellows may suggest Lely's own painterly variation of changeant technique: painting shot fabric, a tradition found both in Italian and Netherlandish painting tradition. Changeant fabric is made with a simple weave in which the warp and weft threads are different colours. This produces a colour-changing effect as the textile moves.

Changeant fabrics can be seen in fifteenth and sixteenth century Netherlandish paintings, and it has been suggested that a precursor to changeant technique called "purpura" can be seen even earlier in thirteenth century paintings, and even back to ninth to eleventh century illuminated manuscripts. The more sophisticated changeant techniques were made possible in Netherlands with the introduction of the oil medium, which could be exploited for its transparency and layering capabilities. Oil-bound changeant techniques also can be seen in sixteenth century Italian paintings. Venetian painters, such as Veronese, undoubtedly wished to portray the luxurious, richly coloured textiles imported through the prosperous sea trade. Lely would have likely had access to paintings demonstrating changeant fabric techniques in Dutch paintings in Haarlem, and then later within Venetian paintings in the English collections like that of Charles I.

It is clear Anthony van Dyck also employed a changeant technique in some of his paintings. One example can be found in drapery in The Continence of Scipio, painted during his first trip to London (1620-21), where he was able to see Venetian paintings, including those in the collection of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. Thomas Howard was later one of Lely's patrons, and it is likely Lely viewed his Venetian collections as well.

Another 17th century Dutch painter who employed that changeant technique is Haarlem painter Frans Hals. For example, though Portrait of a Woman,
was frequently used by the next generation of painters. In the following generation, Frans Hals is seen as pioneer in his use of indigo around 1627 for the blue sashes and patterns of the standards in the portraits of the large-scale painting Officers and Sergeants of the St. George Civic Guard. Haarlem would have been at the centre of indigo synthesis and use, as a preeminent textile centre with a flourishing linen and silk-weaving industry. The paintings of Haarlem artists from this time, beginning with Frans Hals, have been studied because of the remarkable endurance of the indigo pigment. With the tutelage of such techniques in Haarlem, Lely’s resilient indigo is perhaps not surprising after all.

Technical analysis of Hals’ paintings has shown that one reason indigo is well preserved is because he mixed the indigo with pure lead white (called “schulp-wit”), rather than the cheaper lead white extended with chalk (called “lootwit”). Evidence suggests that the addition of chalk causes particularly severe discoloration of indigo in the long term, though it is not known exactly why. Additionally, Hals used a course lead white with large particle sizes. It has been suggested that because large particles have a lower ratio of surface area to volume compared to fine particles, there is less light scattering, and therefore less degradation caused by light overall. In a similar way, Hals’ use of a grey ground rather than a white ground prevented more reflection of light back into indigo layers.

In Haarlem, around the turn of the century, none of the leading painters—Hendrick Goltzius, Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem, and Karel van Mander—used indigo, whereas only a few decades later, it was frequently used by the next generation of painters. In the following generation, Frans Hals is seen as pioneer in his use of indigo around 1627 for the blue sashes and patterns of the standards in the portraits of the large-scale painting Officers and Sergeants of the St. George Civic Guard. Haarlem would have been at the centre of indigo synthesis and use, as a preeminent textile centre with a flourishing linen and silk-weaving industry. The paintings of Haarlem artists from this time, beginning with Frans Hals, have been studied because of the remarkable endurance of the indigo pigment. With the tutelage of such techniques in Haarlem, Lely’s resilient indigo is perhaps not surprising after all.

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In the early 1640’s, he joined a long tradition of Dutch artists in traveling to London to paint for the aristocracy. In London, he was exposed to the major royal collections composed of Old Masters, with a notable group of Venetian works by Titian and Giorgione, and as well as masterpieces by his Dutch predecessors in London, Van Dyck and Rubens. Throughout his lifetime, Lely acquired a large collection of drawings and paintings from which he could continuously draw inspiration. Lely historiography has emphasised his “magpie” tendencies primarily in terms of stylistic characteristics that he took from these teachers and the paintings in the collections of his patrons. This research had determined that this stylistic observation is very much supported by technical analysis: Lely combined Dutch, Italian, English materials and techniques as well. Just as Cimon “distinguishes Efigenia’s parts, so that he would now needs to become a judge of beauty,” connoisseurs beholding the painting would be aware of Lely’s complex practice, taking delight in unpicking each example or influence, thereby becoming more “civilised” themselves.

Notes

1 “Pieter vander Faes, genaamt Lely, is geboren tot Soest in Westsaalen op den 14 van Herfstmaand 1618. (...) Om nu den oorspronk van den bynaam Lely (als wy belooft hebben, en waar
by hy alleen in Engeland beken is) aan te duiden, zoo moet de
Lezer weten dat zyn Vader, die voor hem dien bynaam gehad
heeft, geboren is in ’s Gravenhage in een Huis, daar een Lely in
den gevel stond." Tr.: ‘Pieter van der Faes, named Lely, was born
in Soest in Westfalia on the 14th of the autumn month 1618. (…) To
tell now the origins of the nickname Lely (as we have prom-
ised and as he is known only in England), the reader should know
that his father, who has had the same nickname before him, was
born in The Hague in a house, the gable of which was adorned
with a lily’. Houbraken, Arnold. 1718. De groote schouburgh
der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen. Amsterdam. 42, 47.

27 Zyn Vader ziente dat hy van der jeugt aan meer tot de Schil-
derkonst dan tot de Krygsoeffening geneigt was, en liever ’t
penceel dan den deegen hanteerde, bestelde hem tot Haarlem by
den Konstszilder Piet. Fr. Grebber’. Tr. ’His father saw that in his
youth he leaned more towards painting than warfare, and rather
wielded the pencil over the sword, and brought him to the painter
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