INTRODUCTION

Conservators from the Paintings and Paper Conservation Laboratories at the Centro Nacional de Conservación y Restauración de Chile (CNCR) were faced for the first time with the challenge of treating two oil paintings on paper with surface distortions (warping). Treating the warping presented the greatest challenge.

**CONDITION**

- Support friability
- Losses
- Tears
- Warping
- Cracks
- Dimples
- Tears and edge losses
- Ripples

**Support Instability**
- Varnish oxidation
- Inpaintings

**“Portrait of Pilar Garfías del Fierro”**
- Raymond Monvoisin - 1844
- National History Museum, Santiago

**“Outline: Dido and Eneas”**
- Ernst Kirchbach 20th Century
- National Museum of Fine Arts, Santiago

**Underdrawings identified in both paintings**

**Mechanical behavior of supports exposed to the environment**
- Some areas of the support adhered to the protective canvas
- Strips adhered along the edges of the support

**Pentimenti**

**Cracks**
- “Portrait”: produced by uneven tension (mishandling)
- “Outline”: external pressure from the verso

**CONDITION HISTORY**

- Before Treatment “Portrait of Pilar Garfías del Fierro”
- Before Treatment “Outline: Dido y Eneas”

**TREATMENTS CARRIED OUT**

1. **RECOVERY OF SUPPORT DISTORTIONS**
- Protective fabric and paper strips on the edge were discarded
- A “Gustav Berger Sandwich lining”, with Beva® film, Mylar® and a polyester monofilament mesh (vacuum hot table). This new support provided more rigidity, allowed stretching and offered protection from Tº and RH changes

2. **STRUCTURAL STABILITY**
- Tears were repaired with Beva® gel compatible with lining materials
- Lining
- Japanese paper inserts were adhered with Beva® film to the lining support
- Varnish removal to clear color distortions
- Selective removal of visually disturbing old inpaintings

3. **VISUAL RECOVERY**
- Surface cleaning
- Fillings placed on uneven areas
- New inpaintings
- Mounted on a frame with glass and a conservation quality cardboard window mat, as per the owners request

4. **MOUNTING**
- Attached and stretched to the original mounting stretcher with staples
- Framed, according to the artist original intent

**METHODOLOGY**

**Objective:** Reverse the surface distortions so paintings can be exhibited

**Criteria:**
- Respect the artist intent
- Recover the esthetic integrity, according to the owners expectations
- Develop treatments starting with the less invasive, and progressively carry out more complex treatments as needed for each object

**“Outline: Dido and Eneas”**

**FINAL COMMENTS**

- The artist intent of these two oil paintings on paper were quite different. This fact guided the successful treatments proposals. At the end, it was possible to exhibit both paintings after treatment.
- The portrait was conceived as an easel painting placed on a stretcher as part of the artistic technique. This aspect was respected to avoid modifying the artist’s intent. For this reason, materials and methods were used that offered enough resistance to the support allowing it to be stretched.
- The outline was created as a working sketch, that at some later time was mounted on a frame for exhibition.
- Reversing the surface distortions (warping) was the most challenging aspect of the treatment due to “paper memory”. The warping of the portrait persisted after several attempts to flatten it. Treatments at different levels were chosen starting with those less invasive until the expected results were obtained. The warping caused by uneven tension proved to be the hardest to reverse.
- Even though the search for information on the oil-painting-on-paper technique resulted in few and outdated results, paintings and paper conservators were able to adapt their technical knowledge in order to reach the objective and achieve the owners expectations, always respecting the artist intent.