



Jacopo Tintoretto, with landscape by Maarten de Vos

Jacopo Tintoretto

Venetian, 1518 or 1519 - 1594

Maarten de Vos

Netherlandish, 1532 - 1603

Portrait of a Man with a Landscape View

1552/1556

oil on canvas

overall: 110.5 x 88 cm (43 1/2 x 34 5/8 in.)

framed: 141.6 x 118.1 cm (55 3/4 x 46 1/2 in.)

Chester Dale Collection 1943.7.10

ENTRY

Although Jacopo Tintoretto, early in his career, often seemed to define himself in opposition to Titian, in his portraiture he was more conservative, and followed Titian's models closely. [1] The Gallery's painting belongs to a group of portraits by Tintoretto and his studio that adhere to a similar compositional formula derived primarily from Titian: a three-quarter-length, standing figure, with the body turned facing the viewer, with drapery and architectural forms in the background, often before a window with a distant view. These include the earliest dated example, the *Gentleman Aged Twenty-Eight* (Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart), inscribed with a date of 1548, in which the pose is virtually identical; and the *Portrait of a Gentleman* (Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon), undated [fig. 1]. The sitter in the Gallery's portrait holds gloves, as in the Besançon painting. [2] His fur-trimmed robe is almost identical to the one worn by the subject in the portrait of *Lorenzo Soranzo* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), dated 1553, which is also extremely similar in pose, although the background there is much simpler. [3]

If, in contrast to these other portraits, the Gallery's painting seems rather flat, the face lacking a sense of underlying facial structure and the brushwork lifeless, a possible explanation may be that Tintoretto's distinctive hand has been obscured by the painting's condition over the centuries. X-radiography [fig. 2] reveals strong, free brushwork that creates a sense of the skull beneath the skin, typical of Tintoretto (and very similar to that revealed in the x-radiograph of his *A Procurator*

of *Saint Mark's*). The loss of shadows and glazes, coupled with overpainting in the forehead, cheeks, nose, and mustache, could have disguised spontaneity in the brushwork and flattened out contours that would have been more strongly conveyed in light and shadow. The darkened varnish obscures the folds of the cloak and the definition of forms, and it hides the manner in which the weave of the canvas catches the paint unevenly, a technique that Tintoretto often exploited to create effects of light and texture. If one imagines the painting with a blush of red glaze on the cheeks, a reflection of light on the forehead, and shadows under the eye and on the cheeks to define the forms, a potentially autograph portrait by Tintoretto begins to emerge. The painting has been accepted as such by most major scholars. [4] The picture's present state makes it impossible to affirm that judgment with certainty, however, and the possibility of studio involvement in the face and figure must be entertained.

The landscape visible through the window in the upper left is much more detailed than the generic views in the Stuttgart and Besançon pictures. It may represent a specific location on the Venetian *terraferma* with which the sitter had associations, although even if this is the case it may not be topographically accurate. In any case, it has not been identified, and without other clues about the sitter, it may not be possible to do so.

Nevertheless, the landscape provides important clues about the creation of the painting. Its style and pictorial technique differ from those in the landscapes in other Tintoretto portraits, but resemble the background of the *Crucifixion* [fig. 3] now in the Museo Civico, Padua, which shows a similar approach to the definition of natural and architectural forms and is also rendered with a mixture of red and green tonalities. The landscape in the *Crucifixion* has been identified by the present author as the work of the Flemish painter Marten de Vos (1532–1603), who was in Venice at the very beginning of his career, from 1552 to 1556. According to Carlo Ridolfi, Marten insinuated himself into Tintoretto's studio in order to learn the master's methods and occasionally painted landscapes for him. (Although the *Crucifixion* is usually attributed to Tintoretto, the foreground figures have been identified by the present author as the work of Tintoretto's associate Giovanni Galizzi.) [5] The landscape in the Gallery's painting also shows similarities to those in paintings executed by Marten after his return to Antwerp, such as *Laban Departs to Seek Eliezer* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen), dated 1569, and the *Crucifixion* [fig. 4] and *Baptism of Christ* in the chapel at the castle of Celle, Hannover, of 1569. [6] The landscape in the Gallery's portrait can be attributed on

this basis to Marten, during his years in Venice, 1552–1556. Given the closeness of the portrait to Tintoretto's dated Stuttgart (1548) and Vienna (*Lorenzo Soranzo*, 1553) portraits, the earlier years of the period seem most likely. [7]

The current title was adopted by the National Gallery of Art in 2018. There is no basis for the previous title identifying the sitter as a Venetian senator, for he is not depicted wearing the robes associated with that office. [8]

Robert Echols

March 21, 2019

COMPARATIVE FIGURES



fig. 1 Jacopo Tintoretto, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, undated, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon. © Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie – Photo Charles Choffet



fig. 2 X-radiograph, Jacopo Tintoretto, with landscape by Marten de Vos, *Portrait of a Man with a Landscape View*, 1552/1556, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection



fig. 3 Attributed to Jacopo Tintoretto, with landscape by Marten de Vos, *Crucifixion*, 1552/1557, oil on canvas, Museo Civico, Padua



fig. 4 Marten de Vos, *Crucifixion*, 1569, oil on panel, Celle Castle Museum. © Residenzmuseum im Celler Schloss, Celle / Foto: Fotostudio Loeper, Celle

NOTES

- [1] See Frederick Ilchman, “The Titian Formula,” in *Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese: Rivals in Renaissance Venice* (Boston, 2009), 206.
- [2] Paola Rossi, *Jacopo Tintoretto: I ritratti* (Venice, 1974), cat. nos. 17, 65. On the Stuttgart painting, see also Miguel Falomir, ed., *Tintoretto* (Madrid, 2007), 226–228, cat. no. 10. On the Besançon painting, see also *Le Tintoret: Une leçon de peinture* (Milan, 1998), 118, 119, repro. The pose of the sitter in the NGA painting is also extremely close to a supposed portrait of Jacopo Sansovino by Tintoretto, probably a studio work (Uffizi, Florence); Rossi, *Jacopo Tintoretto*, cat. no. 1; see also *Titien, Tintoret, Véronèse: Rivalités à Venise* (Paris, 2009), fig. 98. (Despite its inscription, this painting is unlikely to represent Sansovino, who was born in 1486, and would have been 60 in 1546, the earliest likely date for the painting. This painting clearly shows a much younger man and the features of the subject do not resemble those of

Sansovino as depicted by Tintoretto late in life. The inscription was probably added at some later date, reflecting the presence of architecture and sculpture in the portrait.)

- [3] Paola Rossi, *Jacopo Tintoretto: I ritratti* (Venice, 1974), cat. no. 139; see also Miguel Falomir, in *Tintoretto*, ed., Miguel Falomir (Madrid, 2007), 266–269, cat. no. 25. X-radiography reveals that the Soranzo portrait was originally a portrait of a different sitter, inscribed MDLII/ANLXXV (1552/age 75 years). The face, but not the body and costume, was changed to represent Soranzo, the inscription altered to read MDLIII/AN.XXXV (1553/age 35 years), and the monogram of Soranzo, LS, added. The fact that Tintoretto could paint the young Lorenzo Soranzo in the same costume he had used for an elderly man raises the possibility that the almost identical costume in the Gallery painting is not particular to this sitter but was either painted from a studio prop or adapted from a sketch used in the Soranzo portrait (or even from the Soranzo portrait itself, possibly still in the studio).
- [4] The only apparent dissent in the literature comes from Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Venetian School* (London, 1957), 1:183. However, his assistant Nicky Mariano reported in a letter to NGA curator Michael Mahoney dated May 18, 1964, in NGA curatorial files, that the ascription of the picture to Tintoretto's workshop was based on an error and that the painting "looks very fine."
- [5] Robert Echols, "Giovanni Galizzi and the Problem of the Young Tintoretto," *Artibus et Historiae* 31 (1995): 72; Erasmus Weddigen, "Jacopo Tintoretto und die Musik," *Artibus et Historiae* 5, no. 10 (1984): 113 n. 129, had previously noted the similarity of the landscape in the Padua *Crucifixion* to those of Marten de Vos. Carlo Ridolfi, *Le maraviglie dell'arte, ovvero Le vite de gl'illustri pittori veneti, e dello stato* (Venice, 1648), 2:75, wrote of Marten: "Giovinetto venne questi à Venetia tratto dalla fama de' Pittori valorosi, e vedute le opera del Tintoretto insinuatosi nella casa di quello, vi studio lungamente e si fece pratico nel compor le inventioni; & alcune volte gli servì, come si disse, nel far de' paesi."
- [6] Armin Zweite, *Marten de Vos als Maler: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Antwerpener Malerei in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1980), 263, 270–271, 274, cat. nos. 4, 18, and 27, figs. 4, 23, 35.
- [7] Paola Rossi, *Jacopo Tintoretto: I ritratti* (Venice, 1974), 131, dated the portrait to c. 1548 on the basis of the similarity to the Stuttgart painting. Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings* (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:464, dated it to about 1550. Hans Tietze, *Tintoretto: The Paintings and Drawings* (New York, 1948), 381, and in an undated manuscript opinion in NGA curatorial files, dated it to c. 1570, as did Pierluigi De Vecchi, *L'opera completa del Tintoretto* (Milan, 1970), 112.
- [8] Indeed, despite the Gallery's previous title, most authors continued to use

the more generic title of *Portrait of a Man* or *Portrait of a Gentleman*; see Hans Tietze, *Tintoretto: The Paintings and Drawings* (New York, 1948), 381; Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Venetian School* (London, 1957), 1:183; Paola Rossi, *Jacopo Tintoretto: I ritratti* (Venice, 1974), 21.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The picture is on a single piece of medium-weight, plain-weave fabric. The painting has been lined, and truncated cusping along the margins implies that the picture has been trimmed slightly at the top and bottom and possibly at the right. The full proper left hand may originally have appeared in the painting. Microscopic examination indicates that there is a thin white ground overall, covered by imprimatura layers of various tones, varying from black under the sky and gray in the landscape to ocher under the head. X-radiographs show that the folds of the draped fabric at the right were originally in a somewhat different configuration. They also show an unexplained area of lead white extending from the top of the sitter's head out to the left, descending across the wall and window casing and ending roughly at the edge of the fur collar, which may indicate that the head was reworked. A thicker area of lead white outlines the sitter's head at the right and the structure of the sitter's head was sketched in with bold strokes of lead white [fig. 1]. A pentimento of the sitter's ear is visible with the naked eye. The paint is built up in layers, with wet-into-wet brushwork in many passages. The brushwork is free and employs mixtures ranging from dilute scumbles to pastose strokes to thin glazes.

The picture has suffered a large amount of flake loss along the right margin, as much as 6 inches into the picture, and a lesser amount at the top. There are smaller flake losses all around the picture, mostly in the lower half. The paint film overall is abraded, most visibly in the sky, landscape, and drapery highlights, where the dark underlayers are exposed, as well as in the cheeks, nose, and forehead of the sitter. These areas have been retouched and the sitter's mustache has been thickened. Excessive pressure during the lining process has led to some weave enhancement. The thick varnish has become milky and discolored and obscures the reading of the costume. Numerous deeply discolored residues of earlier coatings are also evident.

A photograph from the 1927 sale catalog in NGA curatorial files shows that at that time the curtain was painted over as a dark, flat surface. Evidently the painting was

restored between 1927 and 1934, because the curtain is visible in a photograph in the 1934 auction catalog, [1] indicating that the painting had been treated to reveal it. The painting has not been treated since acquisition.

Robert Echols and Joanna Dunn based on the examination reports by Catherine Metzger and Joanna Dunn

March 21, 2019

TECHNICAL COMPARATIVE FIGURES



fig. 1 X-radiograph, Jacopo Tintoretto, with landscape by Marten de Vos, *Portrait of a Man with a Landscape View*, 1552/1556, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection

TECHNICAL NOTES

- [1] London, Christie, Manson & Woods, The Collection of Important Pictures by Old Masters, British Portraits, Engravings and Drawings, the Property of Leopold Hirsch, Esq., May 11, 1934, no. 136.
-

PROVENANCE

Purchased 1839 in Bologna by William Buchanan [1777-1846], London.[1] R.P. Nichols, Esq., by 1868.[2] Robert Stayner Holford [1808-1892], Dorchester House, London, by 1887;[3] by inheritance to Sir George Lindsay Holford [1860-1926], Dorchester House; (his estate sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 15 July 1927, no. 111); purchased by Hopkins, London. Leopold Hirsch [d. 1932], London; (his estate sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 11 May 1934, no. 136); purchased by (J. and S. Goldschmidt, Frankfurt, London, and New York). (Galerie Étienne Bignou, Paris); sold 14 December 1934 to Chester Dale [1883-1962], New York; gift 1943 to NGA.

- [1] According to the bill of sale from Etienne Bignou to Chester Dale dated 14 December 1934, in NGA curatorial files.

- [2] The painting was lent by Nichols to the 1868 National Exhibition of Works of Art at Leeds.

- [3] The painting was lent by Holford to the Royal Academy's Winter Exhibition in 1887.
-

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1868 National Exhibition of Works of Art, Leeds, 1868, no. 136a, as *A Venetian Senator*.^[1]

1887 Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters. Winter Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1887, no. 139, as *Portrait of a Man*.

1894 Exhibition of Venetian Art, New Gallery, London, 1894-1895, no. 162, as *Portrait of a Man*.

1965 The Chester Dale Bequest, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1965, unnumbered checklist.

EXHIBITION HISTORY NOTES

[1] Algernon Graves, *A Century of Loan Exhibitions 1813-1912*, 5 vols., London, 1913-1915: 3:1312, 1313, lists two additional loans of Tintoretto portraits made by R.S. Holford: 1867, lent to the British Institution, *A Gentleman*, no. 129; 1870, lent to the Royal Academy, *A Portrait*, 44 1/2 x 35 1/2 in., no. 50. Because of the ambiguity of the title and the similarity of dimensions between the NGA painting and Tintoretto's *Gentleman aged Twenty-Eight* (Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart), which was also in the Holford collection at that time, it is not possible to determine which was lent.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1901 Thode, Henry. *Tintoretto*. Bielefeld, 1901: 80.
- 1903 Stoughton Holborn, Ian Bernard. *Jacopo Robusti, called Tintoretto*. London, 1903: 102-103.
- 1906 Berenson, Bernard. *The Venetian Painters of the Renaissance*. 3rd ed. New York and London, 1906: 136.
- 1927 Benson, Robert H. *The Holford Collection, Dorchester House*. 2 vols. Oxford, 1927: no. 80, pl. 74.
- 1932 Berenson, Bernard. *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: A List of the Principal Artists and Their Works with an Index of Places*. Oxford, 1932: 560.
- 1943 *Washington Times-Herald* (18 July 1943): C-10.
- 1948 Tietze, Hans. *Tintoretto: The Paintings and Drawings*. New York, 1948: 381.
- 1957 Berenson, Bernard. *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance. Venetian School*. 2 vols. London, 1957: 1:183.
- 1965 *Paintings other than French in the Chester Dale Collection*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1965: 9, repro.
- 1965 *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings and Sculpture*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1965: 128.
- 1968 National Gallery of Art. *European Paintings and Sculpture, Illustrations*.

oe NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Italian Paintings of the Sixteenth Century

- Washington, 1968: 115, repro.
- 1969 Rossi, Paola. "Una recente pubblicazione sul Tintoretto e il problema della sua ritrattistica." *Arte Veneta* 23 (1969): 268.
- 1970 De Vecchi, Pierluigi. *L'opera completa del Tintoretto*. Milan, 1970: 112, no. 184.
- 1972 Fredericksen, Burton B., and Federico Zeri. *Census of Pre-Nineteenth Century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections*. Cambridge, Mass., 1972: 201.
- 1974 Rossi, Paola. *Jacopo Tintoretto: I ritratti*. Venice, 1974: 29, 131, fig. 30.
- 1975 *European Paintings: An Illustrated Summary Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1975: 340, repro.
- 1979 Shapley, Fern Rusk. *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*. 2 vols. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1979: 1:464-465; 2:pl. 331.
- 1985 *European Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1985: 392, repro.
-

To cite: Robert Echols, "Jacopo Tintoretto, Maarten de Vos/*Portrait of a Man with a Landscape View*/1552/1556," *Italian Paintings of the Sixteenth Century*, NGA Online Editions, <https://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/12208> (accessed April 23, 2024).