



## MEDIA INFORMATION

Munich, 20. December 2024

### CHRISTMAS COMES EARLY FOR THE ALTE PINAKOTHEK: RESEARCH TEAM DISCOVERS LONG-FORGOTTEN WORK BY GIORGIONE!

An interdisciplinary team of scholars and scientists at the Alte Pinakothek and the Doerner Institut in Munich has made a spectacular discovery. In-depth art-historical and art-technological investigations, conducted as part of a research project on the holdings of Venetian Renaissance paintings at the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen (Bavarian State Painting Collections), have now confirmed the findings that had already begun to emerge during the exhibition 'Venezia 500<< The Gentle Revolution of Venetian Painting' (Alte Pinakothek, October 2023–February 2024). The enigmatic double portrait, which had been exhibited at the Grüne Galerie in the Munich Residenz since 2011 and is now on permanent display at the Alte Pinakothek, has been attributed to **Giorgio da Castelfranco (1473/74–1510), better known as Giorgione**. This makes it one of the few known works by the exceptionally talented artist, whose brief active period revolutionised Renaissance painting. The research findings – which are nothing short of a sensation for the art history of Italian Renaissance painting – are now being made available to the public in an open-access online publication. **Giorgio Vasari**, the famous artist-biographer, saw the painting in 1568, in the palazzo of the Borgherini, a Florentine banking family, and described it as a portrait of the young **Giovanni Borgherini**, shown with his teacher, an unnamed Venetian scholar. The portrayed scholar's head corresponds to surviving visual records of the Venetian polymath **Trifone Gabriele**, who is indeed documented as having tutored Giovanni Borgherini and who is furthermore described by contemporary sources as being a teacher of astronomy and cosmology. In the Munich portrait, the humanist is demonstrating how to use the primary tools – astrolabe and compass – of precisely these two disciplines to measure the heavens and earth, while the youthful Giovanni, with soft curls and dark eyes, is entirely in keeping with the ideal of artistic and intellectual longing that characterised the Venetian portrait mode favoured by cultivated young men of that period.

Scientific analysis has not only made it possible to determine the artist's choice of materials – the diversity of which reflects the wide range on offer by the Venetian colour sellers and pigment merchants – but has also lifted the veil on a creative process that was multilayered in every sense of the word. Imaging techniques and material analysis, including above all macro X-ray fluorescence (MA-XRF) scans taken from both sides of the painting, have revealed no less than three distinct earlier compositions hidden beneath the surface. The first of which is a brush drawing showing the young 'Christ among the Doctors', above that a landscape scene reminiscent of the artist's seminal 'Tempesta' and, finally, the portrait of a sumptuously draped figure whose robe is probably modelled after a product of late Nasrid artisanry which originated from the Emirate of Granada. As cross-section samples show, all four compositions were created in close succession. The technical analysis thus provides rare insights into the working practice of an uncompromisingly innovative artist. At the same time, the abandoned pictorial inventions testify to the joy of experimentation and creative ambition of the painter, whose virtuoso drawing shows that he strove to rival Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer. Meanwhile, the discarded visual fantasy of an Arcadian landscape illustrates how the artist sought to engage with the visual lyricism of his contemporaries, while his detailed eye for the fabric pattern and ornamentation from Moorish Spain reflects the typical Venetian openness to the cultural achievements of the Islamic world. Taken together, the findings provide a very strong body of evidence which solidly points to an attribution

to Giorgione, especially when linked with the discovery or reinterpretation of surviving archival and textual sources relating to provenance and collection history. The results mean that a second work by Giorgione can now be seen alongside the Portrait of a Young Man (c. 1505/10) at the Alte Pinakothek. The interdisciplinary research findings have now been published in full, including all technical images, in the international open-access journal ArtMatters: '[One Canvas, Four Ideas: A Double Portrait Attributed to Giorgione with Different Compositions Underneath](#)'.

**The Bavarian Minister of Science and the Arts, Markus Blume**, reacted to the news by saying: 'The discovery of a Giorgione at the Bavarian State Painting Collections is a miracle that has arrived in time for Christmas! Another Giorgione is not only a spectacular coup for the Alte Pinakothek, it is also a revelation for the art world in general. I would like to thank the interdisciplinary team of scholars and scientists from art history and art technology at the Alte Pinakothek and the Doerner Institut in Munich for making this discovery possible, thanks to their ingenuity, exactitude of research, and state-of-the-art analytical technology.'

**Andreas Schumacher, Head of Italian Painting at the Alte Pinakothek**, stated: 'Giorgione's multilayered double portrait epitomizes so many facets of the period of cultural blossoming in early 16th century Venice. For the discovery of this masterpiece, we ultimately have to thank the scholarly rigour of two young researchers: Johanna Pawis and Anneliese Földes. Their contribution was only possible due to the generous funding granted to our project. The painting is of inestimable value, it is a spectacular stroke of luck for the Alte Pinakothek and a sensation for Italian art history. Finding a Giorgione under the Christmas tree is better than getting a straight six in the lottery!'

**Eva Ortner, Director of the Doerner Institut**, explained: 'Our recipe for success is close interdisciplinary teamwork, undertaken directly on the work of art, in a constant exchange between experts in art history, conservation, and science, all working on an equal footing and with the greatest possible permeability between their various disciplines.'

In his statement, **Bernhard Maaz, Director-General of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen**, concluded by saying: 'By their very nature, museums are not only places of cultural education, communication, and engagement for the general public. They are also research institutions. Their own collections are examined by experts with the utmost care and attention, which in this case was made possible by the generosity of many sponsors. My heartfelt thanks go to the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung, and the Hubert Burda Stiftung.'

### **Publication**

Anneliese Földes, Johanna Pawis, Heike Stege, Eva Ortner, Andreas Schumacher, Jan Schmidt, Jens Wagner, Andrea Obermeier: '[One Canvas, Four Ideas: A Double Portrait Attributed to Giorgione with Different Compositions Underneath](#)', in: ArtMatters. International Journal for Technical Art History, volume 9, issue 1, pp. 1–33.

### **Research Project**

The multi-year research project headed by Andreas Schumacher and Eva Ortner is generously supported by the [DEUTSCHE FORSCHUNGSGEMEINSCHAFT \(DFG\)](#), the [ERNST VON SIEMENS KUNSTSTIFTUNG](#), and the [HUBERT BURDA STIFTUNG](#). For more details, see: [Venetian Renaissance Painting in the Alte Pinakothek](#).



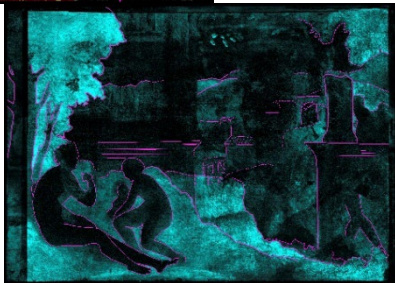
**Giorgio da Castelfranco (Giorgione) (1473/74–1510),  
Portrait of Giovanni Borgherini and Trifone Gabriele,  
1509/10**

Canvas, 91.5 x 67 cm, Inventory number 7452  
Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte  
Pinakothek  
© Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich  
Photo: Sibylle Forster



**Reconstruction of the overpainted single portrait on  
lead distribution image (X-ray fluorescence scan  
taken from the front of the painting)**

© Anneliese Földes/Jens Wagner (Doerner Institut)



**Mapping of the overpainted Arcadian landscape on  
copper distribution image (X-ray fluorescence scan  
taken from the back of the painting)**

© Anneliese Földes/Jens Wagner (Doerner Institut)



**Mapping of the overpainted figure drawing on  
inverted zinc distribution image (X-ray fluorescence  
scan taken from the back of the painting)**

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