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**MARCH 23 -
JULY 22, 2018**

POINT OF VIEW #21
THE PAINTER AS MODEL

Portraits comprise the most popular and best researched part of Sir Anthony van Dyck's (1599 Antwerp - 1641 London) oeuvre, but there are a number of sitters whose identity was forgotten over the centuries. One of them is depicted in van Dyck's impressive Portrait of a Man in the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

Recent research including a thorough re-analysis of primary sources and a new archival discovery has revealed the probable identity of van Dyck's attractive sitter: he is Pieter Soutman

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(1593/1601-1657), a painter and engraver from Holland's Golden Age. Van Dyck met Soutman in Rubens' studio and portrayed him many years later, by which time Soutman had become court painter to the King of Poland.

Newly discovered archival sources document that in 1651 Archduke Leopold Wilhelm's court painter David Teniers the Younger acquired for his master from Matthijs Musson in Antwerp a portrait of Pieter Soutman painted by Anthony Van Dyck. Soutman was court painter to the king of Poland, and this is how the sitter is described in the inventory of Leopold Wilhelm's collection. Van Dyck knew Soutman from his time in the workshop of Pieter Paul Rubens, and the two may have met at Antwerp in 1628. Over time, however, the identity of the sitter was forgotten. During the reign of Emperor Charles VI the painting was displayed in an oval frame at Stallburg Palace. This is why it was long believed that it had been trimmed first into an oval and later into its present (smaller) rectangular format. But the reconstruction of the different formats shows that the painting was not trimmed when displayed in its oval frame, and that its reduction in size was presumably unconnected to this presentation. After 1780, the portrait was not on show in the permanent gallery for some time, as doubt seems to have been cast on its attribution to Van Dyck. This study reconstructs parts of the history of Van Dyck's handsome portrait of Pieter Soutman, painted with great confidence and economy of means.

IN COOPERATION WITH

JORDAENS VAN DYCK PANEL PAINTINGS PROJECT

More information can be found on the Jordaens Van Dyck Panel Paintings Project website: www.jordaensvandyck.org.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION SERIES

The Picture Gallery has been staging Points of View since 2012, and the series documents its role as a place of research, scholarship and education. Three times a year these small exhibitions showcase a selected work from the collection, inviting visitors to see it with new eyes and presenting the results of recent research.

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PRESS PHOTOGRAPH

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Anthonis Van Dyck

Portrait of a man identified as Pieter Soutman

c. 1628

oil on canvas, 75,5 x 58 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, Inv.-Nr. 693

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PRESS CONTACT

Nina Auinger-Sutterlüty, MAS
Head of Communication and Public Relations
T +43 1 525 24 - 4021
info.pr@khm.at

KHM-Museumsverband
Wissenschaftliche Anstalt öffentlichen Rechts
Burgring 5, 1010 Vienna
www.khm.at