
KUNST HISTORISCHES MUSEUM WIEN



**FEBRUARY 25 –
OCTOBER 16, 2022**

PICTURE GALLERY

POINT OF VIEW #25

**THE VIENNESE SALVATOR MUNDI – TITIAN'S *CHRIST WITH AN ORB*
IN A NEW LIGHT**

The Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna houses the world's second largest (after the Museo del Prado in Madrid) collection of works by one of the greatest painters of the sixteenth century: Tiziano Vecellio (c.1488-1576), called Titian. A multiyear research project carefully analysed and examined our entire Titian holdings. In *Point of View # 25*, the Picture Gallery presents important findings relating to the religious painting *Christ with an Orb* (1520/1530). Long believed to be by Titian's workshop, these new findings support its attribution of the master himself.

Celebrated for his unconventional approach to traditional compositions, Titian produced several depictions of the *Salvator Mundi*. All derive from fifteenth-century Early Netherlandish painting and feature Christ raising his right hand in blessing and holding a sphere/orb surmounted with a cross, central aspects of Christian belief. The Christ in Vienna, however, is an example of a new religious interpretation within this pictorial tradition. The hand of the "Saviour of the World" from the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna rests on a simple transparent glass

KUNST HISTORISCHES MUSEUM WIEN

sphere – like a temporal ruler – without the usual cross. The artist also omitted the hand raised in blessing. A Hebrew inscription on the Saviour's tunic suggests a so-far anonymous Christian patron who sympathised with the ideas of the Kabbala, the Jewish secret doctrine.

In the course of a project funded by the Fonds für wissenschaftliche Forschung (Fund for Scientific Research/FWF) we analysed all the paintings by Titian in the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna using X-ray and Infrared images, and examined his technique and handling. Under the Christ we discovered a composition featuring the Virgin and Child that is very similar to other early depictions of this subject by Titian, and that, in addition, sheds light in his typical method of working such as moving figures around and altering their poses. Until now the painting was dated to around 1530, but these new findings indicate it was painted earlier, presumably sometime in the 1520s.

A pictorial concept tailored to the requirements of a particular patron suggests Titian himself was responsible for the composition. We can detect his idiom both in the „economical“ brushwork and the quality of the painting technique.

However, earlier restorations such as retouchings that have changed colour or darkened over time make a definite attribution difficult. Making the original paintwork more legible and establishing Titian's authorship beyond doubt requires additional complex restoration work.

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. Several 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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ONLINE OPENING

As part of our series *Thursday Evenings at the Museum*, Point of View #25 will be opened on 24 February 2022 at 6 pm with a lecture (in German) by the joint curators of the exhibition, Wencke Deiters and Elke Oberthaler.

Thursday, February 24, 6 p.m.

The lecture will be presented via [Zoom](#).

Meeting-ID: 82847210910

Password: 278787

The event will also be live-streamed on [Facebook](#).

PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

Press photographs are available in the press section of our website free of charge, for your topical reporting: <http://press.khm.at/>.



Tiziano Vecellio, called Titian (c. 1488-1576)

Christ with an Orb

c 1520/30

inv. GG 85

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PUBLICATION

Every *Point of View* is accompanied by a booklet.

To see all the booklets published in this series, go to:

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