

Presentation Abstracts

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Finding a signature: Adriaen Hanneman at the National Gallery of Victoria

Full presentation

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In 1934 the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) purchased a painting in the Dutch style of the 17th century which depicted a young woman. The painting was thought to have no signature and no date but did have an inscription identifying the sitter as *Mary Lucas, Sister of John Lord Lucas, Grandfather to Henry Duke of Kent*. However, the auction house listed Peter Lely as the artist and the Duchess of Newcastle as the sitter (Hoff, McCulloch, Lindsay 1949, p.58). It was of good provenance, once part of the Wrest Park collection, home of the Duke of Kent (Hoff, McCulloch, Lindsay 1949, p.58). By 1961 the attribution was given as *School of Van Dyck* based upon research carried out by Dr Ursula Hoff, senior curator at the NGV (Hoff, U 1961, p.44). The identity of the sitter returned to that of the inscription, Mary Lucas, and not Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle and the most famous Lucas sister. Dr Hoff (1961, p.44) put the date of the painting at c.1635 due to the paintings style and the sitter's dress and likely age.

Then in 2014 the painting was selected for treatment in preparation for display. It was my good fortune as the conservator working on this painting to experience the wonderful moment of removing a varnish and finding a signature. Very faint, it read *A. Hanneman 1636*. A photo of the signature, skilfully enhanced on Photoshop by Predrag Cancar, a senior photographer at the NGV, enabled the signature to be documented and seen by all.

However, the painting had more to reveal. Next, a partial over-paint removal revealed a second inscription casting doubt on the identity of the sitter once again. Located under the first inscription along the bottom right of the painting; the newly discovered inscription names the sitter as another Lucas sister, Lady (Catherine) Pye.

This paper will discuss the historical context of the artist and the identity of the sitter. The painting is a rare record of Hanneman's development as a portrait painter in England, before his return to the Netherlands in the 1640's where he would make his name as a portrait painter to the English court in exile (Toynbee 1950, p.73). The paintings new attribution expands the NGV's rich collection of 17th century Dutch masters. These artists were not just part of the Golden Age of Dutch art but also part of England's own 'Golden Age' of international art collecting under Charles I (Hoff 1942, p.3), which attracted many Dutch painters to London. This artistic connection between the two countries in the 17th century would inspire a new generation of English born masters in the 18th century.

The 2014 treatment will also be briefly discussed in terms of techniques and materials used by a Dutch artist working in the UK in the 17th century; including how the problem of a discoloured smalt sky was resolved.



Mary Lucas: Adriaen Hanneman, 1636, NGV
Photo by: Predraq Cancar



Photoshop Image:
Mary Lucas [detail]: Adriaen Hanneman, 1636, NGV
Photo by: Predraq Cancar

References:

Hoff, U 1942, *Charles I Patron of Artists*, William Collins of London, London.

Hoff, U, McCulloch, A & Lindsay, J 1949, *Masterpieces of The National Gallery of Victoria*, F.W Cheshire, Melbourne and London.

Hoff, U 1961, *National Gallery of Victoria Catalogue of European Paintings before Eighteen Hundred*, Printed by order of the Trustees Melbourne, Australia.

Toynbee, M 1950, *Adriaen Hanneman and the English Court in Exile*, The Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd., Vol.92, No. 564, pp.73-80.

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Helen Casey currently works as Senior Conservator, Exhibitions and Loans for the State Library of NSW. From 2010 to 2014, Helen worked at the National Gallery of Victoria, firstly as a conservator for Exhibitions and Loans; and then as a paintings conservator for 6 months in 2014. Helen graduated with a Masters of Cultural Material Conservation at the University of Melbourne in 2009.