

Visible and hidden paintings: Bronzino's Cosimo I de' Medici in armour 1540s.

Tuesday, 3 December 2019 13:30 (20 minutes)

The Art Gallery of NSW's Portrait of Cosimo I de Medici, emerged from obscurity in 1971 and is considered to be a $\frac{3}{4}$ length version of an earlier $\frac{1}{2}$ length composition in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence (Simon 1983). An X-ray image was published in 1987 (Simon) showing that another portrait of a man in a wide brimmed hat holding a book exists underneath the painting.

Since the 1980s, many more works by Agnolo Bronzino have been studied with technical photography, infrared and X-rays and we now have a greater understanding of the artist's extraordinary tendency to re-work and radically modify his paintings directly on the panels (Plazzotta & Keith 1999, Tucker 1985).

Early this year the Sydney painting underwent X-ray fluorescence mapping at the Australian Synchrotron to enable detailed examination of its elemental composition and to enhance the imaging of the lower painting. The elemental mapping of the painting was done at a resolution of 120 microns enabling the construction of elemental distribution maps across the whole work which can be assigned to the artist's use of different mineral pigments. The distribution and application of each type of pigment visualised in the maps demonstrate that the evolution of the painting in the artist's studio was a complex sequence of alterations and adjustments of subject, size and composition.

REFERENCES:

Plazzotta, Carol & Larry Keith, 'Bronzino's 'Allegory': new evidence of the artist's revisions', The Burlington Magazine, vol.141, no. 1151, Feb 1999, pp. 89-99.

Simon, Robert B. 'Bronzino's portrait of Cosimo I in armour', The Burlington Magazine, vol. 125, no 966, Sep 1983, pp 527-39.

Simon, Robert B. "Blessed by the hand of Bronzino": the portrait of Cosimo I in armour', The Burlington Magazine, vol. 129, no 1011, Jun 1987, pp 387-88.

Tucker, Mark S. 'Discoveries made during the treatment of Bronzino's Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus', Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin, vol. 81, no. 348, Autumn 1985, pp. 28-32.

Level of Expertise

Expert

Do you wish to take part in the poster slam

No

Travel Funding

No

Speakers Gender

Female

Primary authors: Dr DEDGE, Paula (Art Gallery NSW); GERARD-AUSTRIN, Anne (Art Gallery NSW); IVES, Simon (Art Gallery NSW)

Presenter: Dr DEDGE, Paula (Art Gallery NSW)

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