

KLAAS MULLER

S T U D I O O F A N T H O N Y V A N D Y C K

Portrait of Gaspar De Crayer (?)

Between 1632 and 1635, Van Dyck began a series of designs (drawings and oil sketches) for engravings: the "Uomini Illustri". The intention was to publish a series of portraits of important artists, politicians and other prominent figures.

Unfortunately, his untimely death in 1641 prevented the artist from completing this project but many designs were nevertheless engraved by Paulus Pontius, Schelye Bolswert and Lucas Vorstermans. The series later became known as 'Van Dyks Iconography'.

Many of Van Dyck's original oil sketches are preserved in the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch (Northamptonshire), including a sketch of the portrait of Gaspar de Crayer of which there is also a design drawing that was later converted into engraving (see S. Barnes, N. De Poorter, O. Millar, H. Vey, *Van Dyck, a complete catalogue of the paintings*, Yale University Press, 2004, p. 367, Nr III.149).

There is quite a bit of confusion surrounding the oil sketches van Dyck made for this project. Some copies seem to have been made by his studio or after engravings afterwards.

However: our oil sketch (like the Northamptonshire version) is in opposite directions to the engraving (in reverse). Moreover, it is much more sketchy, less detailed and differs substantially in composition (see attachment). The portrait is remarkably smooth and vitally painted, with a minimum of resources.

Gaspar De Crayer had a large studio in Brussels and later in Ghent, from where (after Ruben's death) he worked on large commissions, especially for religious institutions. He was court painter for cardinal-infant Ferdinand and later Leopold-Willem.

Oil on panel, 18.5 x 12.7 cm (7 ¹/₄ x 5 inches)

