

Portrait of a Man (Self-Portrait?)

This is painted using oil on an oak canvas by Jan van Eyck. The title is simply 'Portrait of a Man' but at the top of the painting he inscribed some letters in Greek which are a punning allusion to his name 'Als Ich Can' (as I/Eyck can). This combined with the slanted gaze of the man as well as the well preserved state of the painting have lead to the conclusion that this was most probably the portrait of the artist himself.

The painting itself has been placed carefully into a gold frame and the original frame and painting can both be seen at The National Gallery in the UK today. The painting also has an inscription at the bottom with the date and van Eyck's signature but this time in Latin which show that he was either well educated or did a lot of travelling.

Jan van Eyck uses lots of light and dark shades to create a subtle but dramatic effect overall. The shadows make the man look like his is emerging from the darkness of the background. His face and headdress are defined and discernible only because of the light coming in from the left. It is the man's eyes that draw in the viewer. He has a stern gaze but wise gaze which makes him look like an important figure. And given the artist's popularity, he was definitely an important artist.