

„Edlinger Mozart“ and „Edlinger Steiner“ are two different portrait paintings: Conclusive empirical evidence

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Five years after the publication of the so-called „Edlinger Mozart“ ¹⁾ in 2000, a hypothesis appeared suggesting that the portrait might not show W.A. Mozart (1756-1791) but instead the Munich merchant J.A. Steiner (1753-1813) ²⁾. The key evidence in support of this hypothesis was a hanging sketch of seven paintings in private ownership in Munich from 1929. The sketch was drawn by Karl Trautmann, a scholar of local history of Munich, when he was collecting material on the history of the famous Munich publisher family Lindauer ³⁾. Fig. 1 shows part 2 of the hanging sketch, with four of the seven paintings.

The large painting in the middle was sufficiently described by Trautmann, based on what he saw and what the owner reported to him, to enable a definite identification as the “Family Lindauer on their rural estate at Lake Starnberg” painted by Lorenzo Quaglio ca 1832 ²⁾. The painting is today owned by the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, inventory Nr. 53, oil on canvas 65.5 x 81.3 cm.

The painting on the right was reported by Trautmann, based on the owner’s memories, as a portrait of J.A. Steiner, a successful businessman and close friend of the family. This portrait and the one on the other side of the Quaglio, depicting Mr. Steiner’s wife, were reported as works of Edlinger. Their whereabouts are unknown today.

According to the above-mentioned hypothesis, the portrait of Mr. Steiner, as documented by Trautmann, was suggested as possibly being identical with the now famous Mozart portrait by Edlinger in the Gemäldegalerie Berlin, which consequently would then be a false Mozart. The Berlin painting, however, has a height of 80 cm, which would dramatically contradict the hanging sketch of Trautmann. According to this sketch, both portraits of the Steiner couple were considerably smaller in height than the Quaglio in between them, i.e., smaller than 65.5 cm. Assuming a drawing to scale, the two Steiner portraits would have had a height of ca 58 cm. This is 22 cm less than in the “Edlinger Mozart” in Berlin. The red lines in Fig. 1 show the size of the “Edlinger Mozart” in scale relative to the adjacent painting by Quaglio.

The following facts demonstrate that Trautmann indeed took great care to draw the hanging sketch to scale, and also that he was fairly successful in doing so.

(1) Measurements on the drawing revealed that size proportions apparently had been estimated, rather than based on measurements and calculations. However, the estimates were remarkably accurate.

(2) For the Quaglio the height vs. width ratio deviated from the exact value by only 9 %. For the fourth painting on the left, the only other one for which size data are known, the same deviation was only 5 %.

(3) Trautmann did not draw simple rectangles, but double ones, thus depicting the size both of canvas and of frame.

(4) The process of drawing was highly systematic, like that of an engineer. The order of drawing strokes apparently was as follows. First, the corners were marked out by **circles**, which is a common precaution in free-hand drawing, when the aim is to draw to scale. Second, around each circles a **square** was drawn, which marked out the extent of the frame beyond the canvas. Third, the sidelines of the squares in the four corners of a frame were connected by **straight lines**, thus completing the drawing of a frame.

In conclusion, the hanging sketch evidently was intended to be to scale, and this goal of the draftsman evidently was well reached. A possible identity of the “Edlinger Steiner”, as documented in 1929, and the “Edlinger Mozart”, now in Berlin, must therefore be ruled out on the grounds of irrefutable technical evidence. We are dealing with two portraits of dramatically different size.

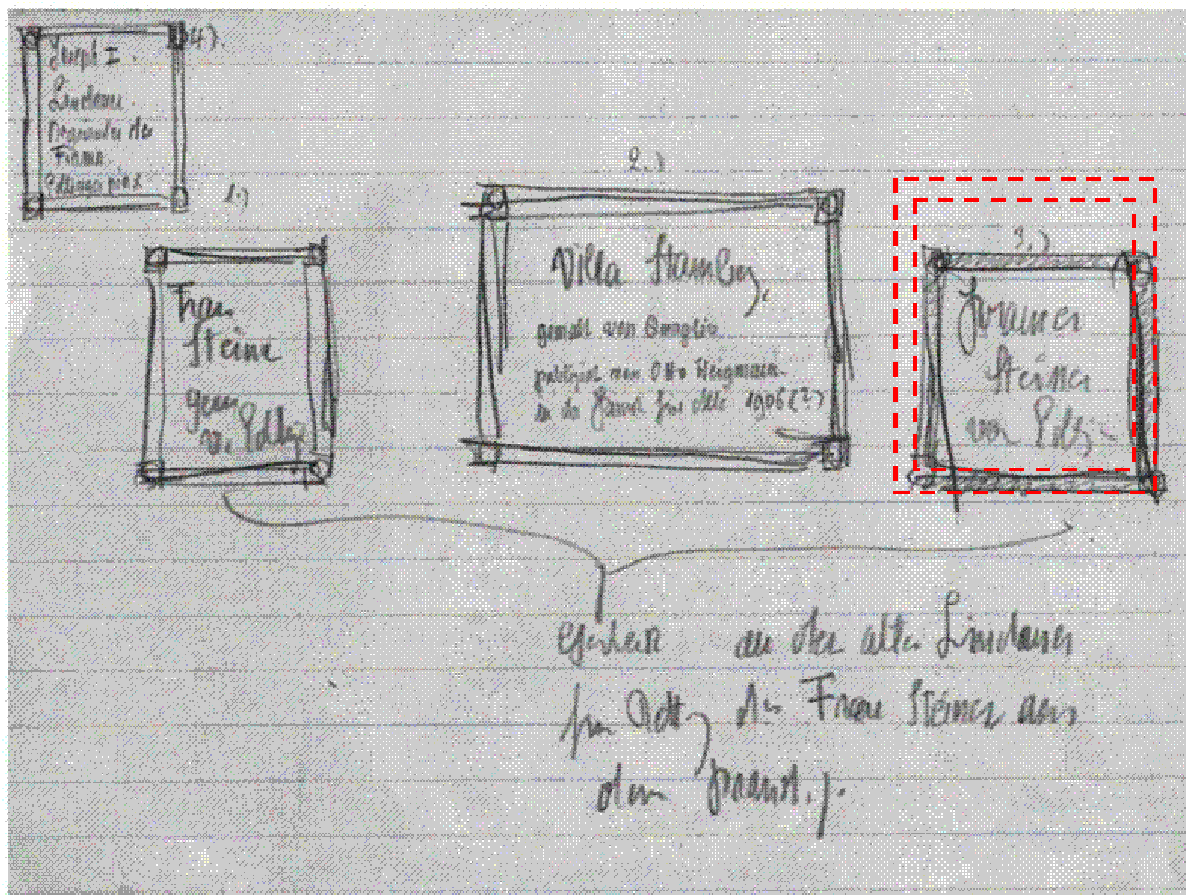


Fig. 1: Part 2 of the hanging sketch of 1929 by K. Trautmann³⁾. The red lines show the size of the “Edlinger Mozart”, depicted in exact proportion to the adjacent painting by Quaglio.

References

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