"Solving secrets of two XVII'th century portraits; research on Anthony van Dyck artworks"

The first painting is "Portrait of an unknown woman". It was painted in a mixed technique: oil and casein tempera, very textured in white lights. The work was created on canvas, later was pasted on a secondary oak support. According to the analyses of portrait composition and the X-ray images we discover that the original dimensions of the painting had been scaled down to fit the format of the secondary oak support, probably panel of the cabinet door.

The bright greyish primer is characteristic for the portraits painted by Van Dyck during his Genoese period. Pastoso paint layers have lights on the character's face and suggest that the image is from Van Dyck's earlier period before he became fascinated by the works of the Italian masters and the typical for him great multitude of subtle forms and glazes that give an ultimately smooth surface. The recognition of the artist's model is based on the found pendant to the woman in two portraits of Genoese aristocrat Elena Cattaneo of Grimoldi. In the past, the painting was restored in non-professional way, with strong washing, over-painting and secondary tinted varnishes.

The second Anthony van Dyck's painting is called "Portrait of Sebastian's Leeser second wife" and it impresses with subtle glazes skill to model. The primer of painting is formed in two layers - white (upper) and red (lower). This kind of primer was typical for the Van Dyck's stay in Antwerp.

The image is considered as author's replica of an original work; the likely prototype is in the collection of the Old Pinacoteca in Munich. In the portrait from Gdansk we discover a two-layer ground: orange-red bosus and light grey plus colours used by the artist in most of the works created in the North of Europe. The painting is already after conservation-restoration.

CONCLUSION:
In the results of complex research we discovered the provenience, materials and thechiques typical for Anthony van Dyck.

After the completion of the studies of both paintings the commission has focused its attention on the conservation of "Portrait of women" because it's bad condition and conservation equilibristic issues related to the principle of minimum intervention and good aesthetic effect of treatment.