# Window Cleaner Discovers £200 Million Shakespeare Portrait

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Window cleaner, Steven Wadlow, has made one of the most remarkable art discoveries of all time: a portrait hanging in his living room has been authenticated as a genuine portrait of William Shakespeare. Aged 31 with hair and no beard, it is the only portrait painted when Shakespeare was alive.

“One expert has suggested, if it were proven to be Shakespeare, it could be worth anything from 100 to 200 million, which is obviously worth investigating further.”

Wadlow from Aylesbury initially regarded the portrait as a mere family heirloom.

“I didn't particularly like it because it used to scare me, wherever you are in the house, it's looking at you. It always used to remind me of those portraits on Scooby Doo.”

Wadlow’s journey into the art world began unexpectedly when his father was watching an episode of Time Team.

“One night over 11 years ago, mum and dad were watching a programme about Stratford upon Avon when they noticed a painting with a familiar face. My dad phoned me the next day and said, I think the painting in the corner might be Shakespeare.”

A few days later a visiting English and Art lecturer confirmed these suspicions, sparking a 12-year investigation into the painting’s origins.

Throughout this period, the portrait underwent extensive scientific analysis at some of the world’s leading art institutions including the Hamilton Kerr Institute and UCL.

Cutting edge technology revealed underdrawings, including a mysterious coat of arms and overpainting that had been added in order to disguise the true identity of the sitter. At each stage Steven feared his painting could be exposed as a fake, or a later copy like so many other portraits of Shakespeare. However, Steven’s painting passed every test.

The painting’s provenance further supports its authenticity. Steven’s father bought the painting for £900 from art restorers working on the Great Tew estate in the 1960s, Today the estate near Banbury is known for its celebrity residents, including the Beckhams, Simon Cowell, Claudia Winkleman, Prince Harry and Megan Markel.

“What I discovered was that the manor house had once been home to a portrait of Shakespeare.”

Art experts believe that this vanished portrait of Shakespeare was used as the model for the earliest engraving of Shakespeare which appeared on the first folio of his plays printed in 1623.

Steven’s portrait had many similarities with this missing portrait.

“Like my painting, it was oil on panel and like my painting was painted in 1595. 1595 would be very convenient, because in 1595 Shakespeare was 31. On my portrait is a 31.”

Whilst Steven’s research was going well, there was one big problem, the establishment refused to accept a portrait of Shakespeare with hair and no beard.

“You feel like you're banging your head against a wall or trying to get through closed doors because you're not part of the establishment.”

Part of the problem is that we don't know what Shakespeare really looked like. The engraving on the first folio was done seven years after he died by an engraver who never met him. So experts think it must have been based on a portrait.

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“I'm very, very sure, that our portrait was the model for the engraving. But how do we prove that?”

Steven found the answer through cutting edge facial recognition technology, which showed that his portrait was closer to the engraving than all the other more famous portraits that claim to be of Shakespeare.

“I suppose, if I'm being totally honest, it has become a bit of an obsession, the obsession to prove some people wrong. If I'd have known 10 years ago, we'd still be at it now, trying to find answers. Would I have begun all this? Probably not, to be honest.”

But one important lesson Steven has learned during his ten-year search, is patience.

“Just when you think you've hit a brick wall, something comes along.”

This time it was a call from Lumiere technology of Paris. Lumiere have handled thousands of the greatest artworks in the world including the Mona Lisa. Lumiere’s multispectral technique revealed a previously undiscovered earlier version of the famous smile.

So, with the portrait under his arm Steven boarded the Eurostar and took a fateful trip to Paris where the portrait was once again subjected to cutting edge tests. An analysis of the results by Jean Penicaut of Lumiere technology led to the conclusion that Steven’s portrait depicts Shakespeare as an actor, playing a role in one of his own plays and was indeed the model for the engraving.

“The conformity with the mouth I am 100% sure this is the same.” Said Penicaut: “For me, it really is a portrait of Shakespeare.”

Penicaut’s pronouncement rendered Steven almost speechless. Although he did manage a stunned reflection:

“That was an amazing day. After all these years and all the, is it Shakespeare? Isn't it Shakespeare? And then today we have Jean, who discovered the under drawings on the Mona Lisa, saying that our painting is Shakespeare. You just can't get better than that.”

Once the word gets out about this remarkable discovery, Steven’s life is going to change and who knows, someone might come forward with a cheque for £200 million.

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Barkingmad TV have been following Steven’s journey for eight years and are looking for a broadcaster who wants to share his remarkable story.

https://vimeo.com/944996902 Password: wadlow1

If you would like to interview Steven Wadlow please contact: madoc@barkingmad.tv

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