

## *The Man of Science*



Photosource: National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA

(Unknown painter but attributed to Moritz Kranz, 1839)  
Oil on canvas, 39 1/4 x 33 1/2 in. (99.7 x 85.0 cm)

### PORTRAITURE AND SCIENCE

**P**ortraiture is a specialized subgroup of art with its own standards and criteria. Exact visual likeness is not always the goal. Artists may intentionally alter the appearance of their subject by embellishing or refining their images to emphasize or minimize particular qualities. Artists try to capture some non-visual quality by utilizing backgrounds and props to provide information about the subject's character or place in society.

The portrait above shows a man surrounded with some of the tools of science such as a globe, maps on the floor, telescope, thermometer, shelves of beakers and other containers, and what looks like a distilling equipment. The man sits with assurance, holding a small book in his left hand, and his dog, a Dalmatian with brown spots sits at his feet, looking up at him attentively and loyally. He has an air of authority about him. Although we do not know the identity of the subject, we know from the objects around him that he had a scientific identity. Perhaps, he was an explorer or a chemist?

The term "scientist" was not coined until the third decade of the 19th century. Learned men who pursued their interest in the sciences aligned themselves with colleagues in philosophical societies to form an elite corps of like-minded men, bound through their interest in experiment and study. Those men of science were usually physicians, educators, wealthy men with time for scientific work, those who used science for their business or livelihood such as instrument makers and map makers.

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