

PORTRAITURE

PEOPLE AND FACES

Portraits, whilst often the preserve of the royal household, elites and the influential, also depict a broader variety of individuals. Artists were commissioned and also personally chose to capture the richness of humanity by depicting people across the social spectrum: from group images of middle-class families and members of the artist's own family to individual faces that might otherwise be forgotten to history.

KEY WORKS



Bartolomeus van der Helst, *Jochem van Aras with his Wife and Daughter*, 1654



Unknown artist, *Bust of a Woman*, c. 1650



Élisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Madame Perregaux*, 1789



Rembrandt, *Titus, the Artist's Son*, c. 1657



Govaert Flinck, *A Young Archer*, c. 1639-1640

A YOUNG ARCHER

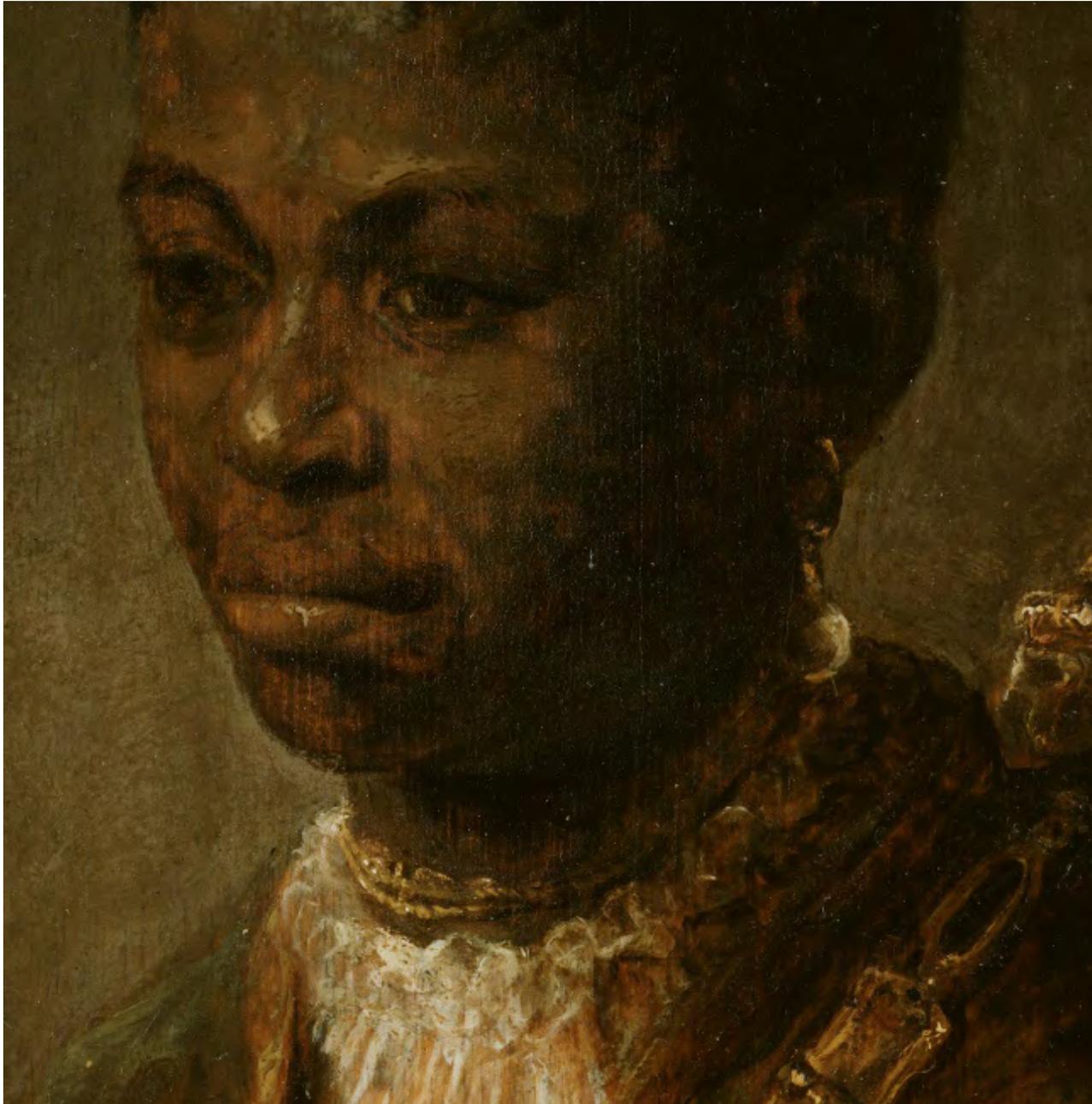
PORTRAITURE
PEOPLE AND FACES



TITLE A Young Archer
DATE c. 1639-1640
SIZE 66.2 x 50.8 cm
MATERIALS Oil on oak panel

ARTIST Govaert Flinck
DATES 1615-1660
PLACE The Netherlands

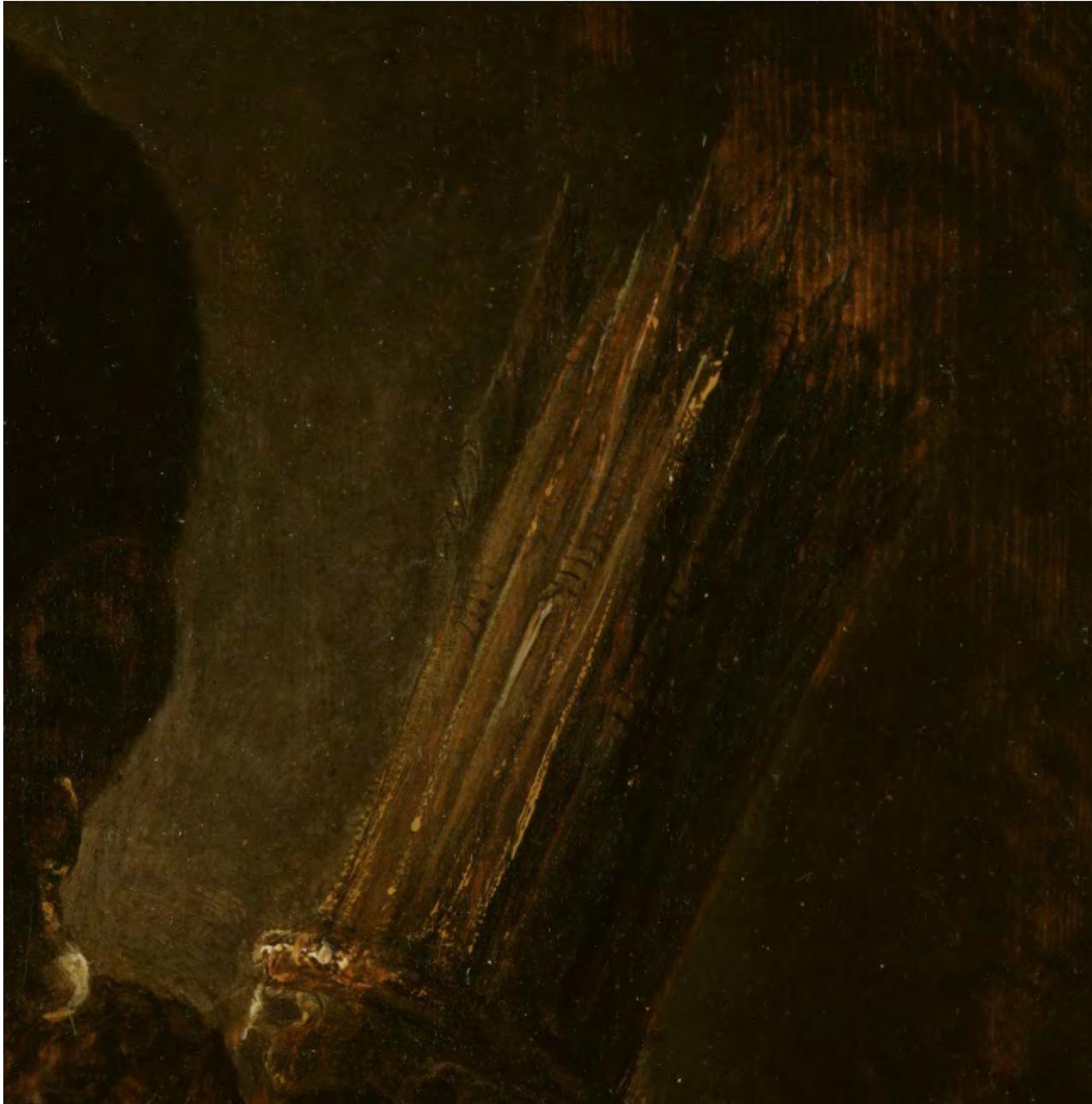
A YOUNG ARCHER



IN DETAIL



A YOUNG ARCHER



IN DETAIL



THE PORTRAIT

This portrait is not of a wealthy, famous or powerful individual. It depicts a young black man dressed in an ornate green velvet jacket adorned with a white pearl. He also wears a pearl earring and has a bow in his right hand and a quill full of arrows on his back. He is alone and dressed as an archer. As he looks off to the side he appears melancholy and is perhaps deep in thought, making us ponder what he might be thinking and feeling. Few colours have been used in this image; the detail of the light catching the adornment on his clothes and jewelry, and the collar around his neck, contrasts with his dark skin and the sombre tones of the rest of the image.

The artwork is not a commissioned portrait but a 'tronie', a painting of a person whose look and character are of interest to the artist. It is an image of a real person, who is unknown to the buyer, which was made to be sold in the art market. The sitter may be in costume, acting a part or represented as themselves. It is difficult to tell whether the young man in this image is a model dressed up in costume, perhaps as a literary character, or whether he was employed as an archer working as a huntsman or a soldier.

This picture was originally bought by the fourth Marquess of Hertford because it was thought to be by the artist Rembrandt. Rembrandt was regarded as the greatest artist in Holland in the 17th century, a period in which Dutch trade, science, and art were among the most acclaimed in the world. It is now considered to be by Rembrandt's pupil, Govaert Flinck, due to the remains of the artist's signature, and the existence of a drawing of the same model by Flinck.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Tronies were not commissioned portraits of individuals, although individuals must have posed for them. The sitter was a model of interest to the artist, whose imagination was sparked by this character. The artist had an opportunity to experiment and enhance their skills without the constraint of the patron's brief. We therefore do not know who the model for this image was.

The artist lived and worked in Amsterdam, the Dutch Republic's wealthiest city. Here merchants and migrants from all over the Dutch colonies intermingled. Although the slave trade was of major importance to the Dutch economy, slavery was not strictly legal on Dutch soil. Black immigrants in Amsterdam — predominantly sailors, soldiers or servants who had accompanied repatriated Dutch families from the colonies — were technically free although low in status. We might imagine that this is the backstory of the man shown here, who agreed to pose for the artist.

Black servants within noble households were signs of prestige and ornamentation which could only be afforded by the privileged classes. As black servants grew up, their duties within the household often changed substantially. Sometimes they were charged with duties of great authority such as bookkeeping or as horse grooms and hunting companions.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Govaert Flinck (1615-1660) was a Dutch painter mainly working in Amsterdam. He studied with the artist Rembrandt and for a long time after he trained, Flinck painted in a style that was practically indistinguishable from his master, using muted tones, a reduced colour palette and a focus on light and shade. Several of his paintings have at some time been assigned to Rembrandt. In his later career, his style developed to a more smooth, elegant style, brightening his palette under the influence of artists such as Anthony van Dyck and Bartholomeus van der Helst.

DISCUSS

Is it easier to create an ambiguous portrait of a literary character than the actual life of a sitter? How?

CONSIDER



- How might our reading of the Wallace Collection *A Young Archer* change if we knew the identity of the young man depicted?

COMPARE

Compare the Wallace Collection's *A Young Archer* with these other portraits of known black male sitters.

- How might our reading of the Wallace Collection *A Young Archer* change if we knew the identity of the young man depicted?
- How has portraiture been used to illustrate changing roles of black men in society? What role has portraiture had in shaping that change?

• **The Family of Sir William Young**

In the 18th century, servants were often included in family portraits as symbols of status and wealth. The young man steadying the boys on the horse had probably come to England from a West Indian plantation owned by Sir William Young where he had likely been enslaved. He was named John Brook.



Johann Zoffany,
The Family of Sir William Young,
1767-1769

The Walker Gallery
Photo credit: Walker Art Gallery

COMPARE



- **Ira Aldridge as Othello, the Moor of Venice**

Ira Aldridge, an American actor, was the first black actor to play Othello in Britain. James Northcote's portrait of Aldridge was bought by Manchester Art Gallery shortly after Aldridge's performance as Othello in Manchester.



James Northcote, *Ira Aldridge as Othello, the Moor of Venice*, 1826

Image Courtesy of
Manchester Art Gallery

COMPARE



- **Jem Wharton**

Jem Wharton was one of the most successful boxers in Britain in the first half of the 19th century. In his portrait by William Daniels, he is shown as if pausing during a training session with the 'colours' from his latest victory tied around his waist.

William Daniels, *Jem Wharton*, 1839

COMPARE

- **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was a composer who enjoyed considerable success in the early years of the 20th century.



After Samuel Begg, *The Makers of British Music: Famous Living British Composers of the Old School and the New*, 1908

© National Portrait Gallery, London



E.O. Hoppé, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor*, 1912

©E.O. Hoppé Estate Collection,
Pasadena, California

EXPLORE FURTHER

Look at contemporary representations of unknown black male sitters. How are artists using portraiture to comment on modern black lives? Look at these examples:

- Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *L'Ortolan*, 2011, Arts Council Collection Southbank Centre
- Thomas J Price, *Numen (Shifting Votive 1,2,3) series*, 2016

JOCHEM VAN ARAS WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER

PORTRAITURE
PEOPLE AND FACES



TITLE Jochem van Aras with his
Wife and Daughter

DATE 1654

SIZE 169.5 x 197.2 cm

MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Bartolomeus van der Helst

DATES 1613-1670

PLACE The Netherlands

JOCHEM VAN ARAS WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER



IN DETAIL



JOCHEM VAN ARAS WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER

PORTRAITURE
PEOPLE AND FACES



IN DETAIL



JOCHEM VAN ARAS WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER

THE PORTRAIT

The Van Aras family pose together: husband, wife and their only surviving daughter, in the bright contrasting colours of their finest clothes. They are positioned just off-centre so that we can get a clear view of their country estate and the city of Haarlem, in the Netherlands, on the horizon. Jochem van Aras sits pointing with one hand, drawing our attention to his other hand with which he pats a hunting dog. A second dog is nestled at his feet. In the centre of the image, his wife Elisabeth Claes Loenen proudly displays a large dead hare. Their young daughter Maria waits by their side carrying a basket full of ripe fruit.

This image might leave us wondering why a family would dress in luxurious clothing, only to be shown posing self-consciously, handling dogs, dead animals and fruit. Every aspect of this image has, however, been carefully considered and includes key symbols, which were common at that time, to tell us about the wealth, status and social aspirations of the family.

Jochem van Aras is clearly shown as the master of the family and household. He is confidently in control of his hunting dogs, which also act as symbols of faithfulness and fidelity. The basket of fruit that this daughter holds represents her hopes for a fruitful marriage in the future. The dead hare, displayed centre stage, is the result of a hunt that has taken place on their land. Recent laws had extended the privilege of hunting from the aristocracy to the middle classes. This imagery became a common theme in middle-class family portraits at this time, proud as they were to display their social standing.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Jochem van Aras was a wealthy baker and a prosperous merchant from Amsterdam. He is depicted with his wife Elisabeth Claes Loenen and daughter Maria van Aras.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Bartholomeus van der Helst (1613–1670) was a Dutch Baroque painter, and one of the leading portraitists of Amsterdam in the mid-17th century. He had many influential sitters and important commissions.

At the time that this portrait was painted, Helst had replaced Rembrandt as Amsterdam's most fashionable portrait painter in the mid-1640s. His portraits reflect the courtly and elegant manner that became popular in Dutch painting at that time.

DISCUSS

What items would you include in a group portrait to show the social class and future aspirations of your family?

EXPLORE FURTHER

Look at modern and contemporary representations of family in art.

- Henry Moore, *Family Group*, 1949
- David Hockney, *My Parents and Myself*, 1976

COMPARE

Compare the Van Aras family with other key family portraits in the Wallace Collection. How have the artists illustrated the relationships shown?

- Rembrandt and Studio



Rembrandt and Studio, *Jean Pellicorne with his Son Caspar*, c. 1632



Rembrandt and Studio, *Susanna van Collen, Wife of Jean Pellicorne with her Daughter Anna*, c. 1632

JOCHEM VAN ARAS WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER

COMPARE



- Gonzales Coques



Gonzales Coques, *A Family Group in a Landscape*, 1647



Gonzales Coques, *A Gentleman with his two Daughters*, c. 1664

TITUS, THE ARTIST'S SON

PORTRAITURE
PEOPLE AND FACES



TITLE Titus, the Artist's Son
DATE c. 1657
SIZE 68.5 x 57.3 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Rembrandt
DATES 1606-1669
PLACE The Netherlands

THE PORTRAIT

The artist's 16-year-old son, Titus, is shown wearing a bright red cap, a gold chain and an earring. He looks out at us with a slight smile and the light catches the curls of hair that frame his face. He is wearing a large coat that appears to be slightly oversized for him. The picture has a dark background that matches the sombre colours of the young man's clothes, and dramatic lighting that falls from the left side of the painting catching his shoulder and the side of his face.

Titus is dressed in clothing of 16th-century Venice, presumably from the costume collection in the artist's studio. Rembrandt often dressed up his sitters, including himself in self-portraits. His son became a favourite model for character portraits like this one. We do not know who the image was intended for but there was clearly a keen interest in such works as Rembrandt made a few of this type with Titus as the sitter.

This image blurs the line between a family portrait and 'tronie'. Rembrandt has used his son, an individual well known to him, whose likeness he has faithfully captured, as a model to create a generic character portrait for sale on the art market. Family members might often act as models for character studies like these, presumably due to the cheap cost and ease of engaging them.

Titus died aged only twenty-six, having caught the plague. When looking at the image today we don't just see the original character study intended for the art market. The modern viewer can also read the Rembrandt family story: the relationship between father and son, a story of illness and loss, and suddenly the portrait seems to take on a new, more poignant meaning.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Titus van Rijn (1641-1668) was the only one of Rembrandt's four children by his first wife Saskia to survive infancy. The year 1657 was a troubled one for Rembrandt and his family. The previous year the artist had been declared bankrupt and the fifteen-year-old Titus and his stepmother Hendrickje Stoffels were forced to sell Rembrandt's pictures and the production of his etchings. Titus went on to study painting with his father. He married in 1668, but caught the plague and died that same year, before his daughter was born. Rembrandt, his daughter-in-law and the grandchild also died soon afterwards. They were all buried in rented graves.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Rembrandt (1606-1669) was a Dutch Baroque painter and printmaker. He was a master storyteller who excelled at biblical, historical, mythological, and allegorical artworks. He experimented with light and shade, using a reduced colour palette. He had a particular skill in portraying people in varied moods and dramatic guises. He painted with an uncompromising realism that would lead some critics to claim that he preferred ugliness to beauty.

At the beginning of the 20th century the Wallace Collection listed that it held twelve paintings by Rembrandt. It is now understood that the Collection holds four works by the artist himself and several others by his studio and followers.

DISCUSS

**Does a personal relationship between artist and sitter enhance a portrait?
How might this affect the viewer?**

EXPLORE FURTHER



- Look at other portraits of artists' children. Explore how the intimacy and closeness of the relationship has been captured.



Thomas Gainsborough,
The Painter's Daughters chasing a Butterfly,
c. 1756

© The National Gallery, London

BUST OF A WOMAN



TITLE Bust of a Woman
DATE c. 1650
SIZE 72 x 49.2 cm, depth 30.7 cm
MATERIALS Black, white and jasper marble

ARTIST Unknown
PLACE Italy, possibly Rome

BUST OF A WOMAN

IN DETAIL



THE PORTRAIT

This beautiful black marble bust of a woman has an idealised sense of beauty with her dreamy gaze and upturned head. She faces slightly to her right, her hair arranged in ringlets pulled back off her face. She wears a tunic from white marble which is fastened on the right shoulder by a button. The loose cap she wears is decorated with a posy of flowers, made from variegated marble, the same colour as the drapery that covers her chest. The contrasting colours of the marble drapery and cap give a sense that the woman might have been wearing rich and vibrant fabrics. The cap and posy of flowers might suggest that she has been depicted as a fortune teller. Similar caps are worn by female fortune tellers in other 17th-century paintings.

Busts like this were usually made in pairs of a man and a woman, and often included the orientalisising costumes and turbans black servants would wear at the time. The male companion piece to this sculpture in the Wallace Collection may be meant to depict her fortune telling accomplice.

These objects illustrate a widespread interest in and curiosity towards Africa at the time, however as they are very common throughout Europe it is difficult to know the time and place of their making. Increased contact and trade with Africa and the growth of the slave trade during the 17th century meant the presence of African people would have been familiar in many European cities, along with an increase in black servants in the households of the wealthy at this time.

This bust and its companion piece in the Wallace Collection present a greater degree of realism and individualisation that distinguish them from other more stereotypical 'moor' busts of the 17th and 18th centuries.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

The sitter of this portrait sculpture is unknown. The woman has been presented in a classicising and idealised way, as an attractive and sensual fortune teller.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

The artists of this sculpture and the companion bust of a man are unknown. It is believed that the artworks might have been made in Rome, which along with Venice is known to be a centre of production for this type of object.

DISCUSS

How has the artist used different marbles to enhance the effect of this portrait bust?

Can we use this portrait to build an idea about the lives of African women in Europe around 1650? Why might we distrust this image? What are we not shown in the image?

EXPLORE FURTHER

Explore contemporary portraits of black women in art and sculpture. How might these portraits shape how we view the Wallace Collection portrait *Bust of a Woman*?

- Thomas J Price, *Reaching Out*, 2020
- Sonia Boyce, *From Tarzan to Rambo: English Born 'Native' Considers her Relationship to the Constructed/Self Image and her Roots in Reconstruction*, 1987
- Amy Sherald, *Michelle Obama*, 2018

COMPARE



- Compare this portrait bust and its companion piece *Bust of a Man* in the Wallace Collection with *The Fortune Teller* by Nicolas Régnier in the Louvre, Paris. What similarities and differences are there with the figures in the painting?



Nicolas Régnier, *La Diseuse de bonne aventure / The Fortune Teller*, c. 1626

© 1998 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski



Unknown, *Bust of a Man*, c. 1650

MADAME PERREGAUX

PORTRAITURE
PEOPLE AND FACES



TITLE Madame Perregaux
DATE 1789
SIZE Oil on oak panel
MATERIALS 99.6 x 78.5 cm

ARTIST Élisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun
DATES 1755-1842
PLACE France

THE PORTRAIT

This half-length portrait captures a moment of energy and curiosity as Madame Perregaux draws back a curtain and leans across a balcony, looking out to the left of the image at something that has caught her attention. It is a bright and colourful image. The green of the curtain with gold trim contrasts with the bright red feather in her hat and the red ribbon and trim on her fashionable black dress.

This image was commissioned by her husband on the eve of French Revolution. The artist Vigée Le Brun was the queen's portrait artist; with hindsight we might think it risky to be painted by someone with such a strong association to the monarchy at that time. The sense of revelation in the image draws us in, making us question what she is looking at and wondering about what drama might have caught her attention.

The artist knew Adélaïde Perregaux very well as her husband was the artist's banker as well as a noted collector of art. She was particularly pleased with this portrait as she wrote to the sitter claiming that 'the portrait of Madame Perregaux is the most charming of all because of its likeness'. This portrait is typical of the glamorous and flattering style the artist would use to depict her sitters.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Madame Perregaux was the illegitimate daughter of the wealthy banker Nicolas Beaujon, who became one of the richest men in France. She was the wife of a notable art collector and Parisian banker whose clients included the third Marquess of Hertford and the artist Vigée le Brun herself.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Élisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun (1755-1842) was one of the great portrait artists of her day, and among the most important of all women artists. She had a rapid journey to fame. She was a self-taught artist and despite having no formal training, as this was forbidden for women, she established a successful practice. At age twenty she became a painter at the royal court. After painting the first major official portrait of the French queen Marie Antoinette in 1778, Vigée Le Brun became her official artist and produced thirty portraits of Marie Antoinette in six years. The queen was fundamental to advancing her career and intervened to ensure her admittance to the Académie Royale in 1783, after she had previously been rejected. She was famed for her signature style: elegant and graceful portraits which usually flattered her sitters and showed off their wealth.

Afraid of the advancing French Revolution and wary of how her association with the queen might put her life in danger, Vigée Le Brun fled to Italy. French culture was greatly appreciated abroad and she was able to continue working across Europe.

DISCUSS

Vigée Le Brun used a pose from Rubens' Portrait of Susanna Lunden in depicting herself - she said that the self-portrait 'greatly enhanced my reputation'.

Why might a female artist want to associate themselves with a great artist of the past in this way?



Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun,
Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat, 1782

© National Gallery, London

EXPLORE FURTHER

Explore female artists of the past. Consider the challenges they faced, and how their artistic success was depicted.



- **Artemisia Gentileschi**



Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, c. 1615–17
© National Gallery, London

- **Mary Moser**



George Romney, *Mary Moser*, c.1770–1771
© National Portrait Gallery, London

- **Angelica Kauffmann**



Angelica Kauffman, *Angelica Kauffmann*, c. 1770–1775
© National Portrait Gallery, London

- **Mary Cassatt**



Mary Stevenson Cassatt, *Mary Cassatt Self-Portrait*, c. 1880
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

- **Henry Singleton**, *The Royal Academicians in General Assembly*, 1795

- **Mary Cassatt**, *Portrait of the Artist*, 1878

- **Laura Knight**, *Laura Knight with model, Ella Louise Napier (Self Portrait)*, 1913

ACTIVITIES



- Document people from across your community in a portrait. Consider their special qualities that might otherwise be overlooked. How do you want the portrait to talk to viewers in the future who do not know the sitters?
- Arrange and photograph three objects that can represent your identity and community.
- Create a group portrait of your family or people close to you. Consider the pose, setting and symbols you want to include that can tell their story.

EXTERNAL REFERENCES AND HYPERLINKS



Johann Zoffany,
The Family of Sir William Young, 1767-1769

The Walker Gallery
Photo credit: Walker Art Gallery

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James Northcote,
Ira Aldridge as Othello, the Moor of Venice, 1826

Image: Courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery

[LINK>>](#)



E.O. Hoppé,
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, 1912

©E.O. Hoppé Estate Collection, Pasadena, California

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After Samuel Begg,
The Makers of British Music: Famous Living British Composers of the Old School and the New, 1908

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Thomas Gainsborough,
The Painter's Daughters chasing a Butterfly, c. 1756

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Nicolas Régnier
La Diseuse de bonne aventure / The Fortune Teller, c. 1626

© 1998 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

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Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun,
Self Portrait in a Straw Hat, 1782

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Artemisia Gentileschi,
Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, c. 1615-17

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Mary Moser, c. 1770-1771

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Angelica Kauffman,
Angelica Kauffmann, c. 1770-1775

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National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

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