

# KLAAS MULLER

## POURBUS FRANS I

### Portrait of a Noble Man

We are grateful to Dr. Koenraad Jonckheere for confirming

the attribution to Frans Pourbus the Elder, dating the work to ca. 1580.

This newly discovered portrait is a handsome addition to the small group of paintings that we

know of by Frans Pourbus the Elder, son of the Bruges painter Pieter Pourbus (c.1523 – 1584), and father to the great international court painter Frans Pourbus the Younger (1569 – 1622). Born in Bruges in 1545, Frans I was inevitably trained in his father's studio, however, his main master was the Antwerp-based painter Frans Floris (1516 –1570), whose niece Susanna he went on to marry in 1566. By 1569/70 he was appointed a master of the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke. Like his father, he painted both religious subjects and portraits of the rising mercantile class. He died of typhoid fever in Antwerp in 1581 at the untimely age of thirty-six. His pupils included most notably Gortzius Geldorp and his son Frans Pourbus the Younger.

We are grateful to Dr. Koenraad Jonckheere for his assistance with the attribution, and for pointing (in an email dated 16 June 2015) out its stylistic and technical similarity to a portrait by the artist dated 1580 (formerly with Bob Haboldt Ltd, now in a private collection), notably 'the way the beard is depicted and the subtle shading around the eyes (among other things) are very similar'.

Frans Pourbus the Elder's portraits demonstrate remarkable powers of observation. The features of the man in our portrait, with his subtly modelled flesh, angular face, high cheekbones, long nose and heavy lidded eyes have been notably individualised. He gazes directly and somewhat seriously at the viewer, his brow furrowed and contemplative. His neatly fashioned beard and moustache are rendered with remarkable precision, offset by his closely concertinaed ruff. His doublet is of a muted black silk. The portrait as a whole is an astute psychological study of a man in his prime, presumably in his late thirties.



Circa: 1680

**Artist description:**

N/A