KLAAS MULLER

FLEMISH SCHOOL 17TH CEN

A Family Portrait

A moving and at the same time monumental family portrait with a great psychological connection between the figures: The man clenches a fist (sign of power) but looks and touches his wife lovingly. She looks ahead as her daughter grabs her wrist and accepts an apple from the little brother, who seems to blend in with his father's rich black clothing and so the circle is complete. Connectedness is clearly a central theme in this work.

Everything in this portrait represents wealth and prosperity (or the desire for it). The rich and brocade-decorated clothing, the jewels, the red curtain, the apple. On the right a remarkable fountain with Diana (Artemis) of Ephesus, the mother-goddess and symbol of fertility. She is holding 2 dolphins that squirt water.

More than a static portrait - that only wants to radiate power and wealth and urge for prestige - we see a family in which solidarity and humanity reign, away from many stiff 17th century family portraits.

An interesting enlargement of the painting once again points to originality: an 11 cm high border has been attached at the canvas (at the behest of the artist). This technique was quite common with large and monumental canvases in the Southern Netherlands in the 17th century.

Oil on Canvas, 134,5 x 159cm

17th century



Circa: ca 1620

Artist description:

After the Siege of Antwerp (1584–1585), the Southern Provinces of the Netherlands ("Flanders") remained under Spanish rule and were separated from the independent Dutch Republic. Although many artists fled the religious wars and moved from the Southern Netherlands to the Dutch Republic (Dutch Golden Age), Flemish Baroque painting flourished, especially in the Antwerp school, during the seventeenth century under Rubens, Anthony van Dyck, and Jacob Jordaens.