

KLAAS MULLER

FRENCH SCHOOL 18TH CENTURY

Portrait of a Lady as Venus

This elegant composition from the 18th-century French School presents a refined allegorical portrait in which a noblewoman is depicted in the guise of Venus, goddess of love and beauty. Draped in sheer fabric and partially nude, the sitter evokes classical ideals of sensuality and grace. A winged cherub whispers into her ear, adding a playful yet intimate dimension to the scene, while the wooded backdrop enhances the mythological ambiance.

Such portraits were popular among the aristocracy, blending personal vanity with classical symbolism. By adopting the persona of Venus, the sitter aligns herself with divine beauty and allure, while the presence of Cupid suggests themes of desire, seduction, and romantic intrigue. The soft modelling of flesh, delicate treatment of fabrics, and gentle light all reflect the Rococo sensibility of the period—elegant, refined, and subtly erotic.

This work exemplifies the 18th-century fascination with mythology as a vehicle for portraiture, where identity, fantasy, and status converge in a single, graceful image.

