

KLAAS MULLER

FLEMISH SCHOOL 17TH CENT

Portrait of Mrs. Hyde

This refined portrait of Mrs. Hyde, wife of the Chichester merchant Benjamin Hyde, is an accomplished work by a master of the Flemish School of the 17th century, whose elegant handling of likeness and surface recalls the great portraitists active in Antwerp during this period. Painted in oil on panel, the sitter appears in formal attire with a finely pleated ruff, richly worked sleeves, and discreet jewellery — details rendered with the precision and quiet sophistication characteristic of Flemish craftsmanship.

Set against a deep, velvety background, the figure emerges with striking clarity. This compositional device, widely favoured by Flemish painters, enhances the luminosity of her complexion and lends the portrait a serene, dignified presence. The artist's delicate modelling, subtle transitions of light, and meticulous finish reflect the refined aesthetic that defined the mature Flemish tradition.

The portrait offers an intimate glimpse into the cultivated world of the early 17th-century English merchant elite, captured through the lens of a Flemish painter whose restraint and refinement elevate the sitter's quiet authority.

The reverse of the panel preserves valuable historical documentation. A handwritten label by Rashleigh Holt White, dated August 1909, notes that the painting once hung at Selborne and was cleaned and restored by Hul Schafer of Brewer Street, London. A second label from the National Club provides a period account of the artist's career and stylistic traits, citing the British Encyclopaedia and emphasising his reputation for dark backgrounds, clear colouring, and careful finish — qualities fully evident in the present work.

Mrs. Hyde's husband, Benjamin Hyde, is known through a related portrait now in the National Trust collection at Dunham Massey, Cheshire. A committed Royalist and ancestor of the Earls of Stamford, his lineage situates this portrait within a broader narrative of English history and aristocratic heritage, enriched by the distinguished hand of a 17th-century Flemish master.

Oil on panel, 79 x 59,5 cm



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.