

KLAAS MULLER

CORNELIS JONSON VAN CEULEN

Portrait of Mrs. Hyde

This refined portrait of Mrs. Hyde, wife of Benjamin Hyde, merchant of Chichester, is a work by Cornelis Jonson van Ceulen (1593–1664), one of the foremost portraitists of the Anglo-Dutch school. Painted in oil on panel, the sitter is shown in formal attire with a richly pleated ruff and embroidered sleeves, set against a deep, dark background—a signature element of Jonson's style, which enhances the luminosity of the skin tones and the elegance of the composition.

Jonson worked in England from 1618 to 1643, enjoying patronage from James I and later Charles I. His portraits are celebrated for their clarity, delicate touch, and meticulous finish. This painting exemplifies those qualities, offering a dignified yet intimate glimpse into the English merchant class of the early 17th century.

The panel bears two historical labels: one signed by Rashleigh Holt White (dated August 1909), noting its restoration by Hul Schafer and its provenance from Selborne; and another from the National Club, referencing Jonson's career and stylistic traits, as cited in the British Encyclopaedia (Edition II, Vol. 15).

The sitter's husband, Benjamin Hyde, is also portrayed in a related painting held by the National Trust at Dunham Massey, Cheshire. A staunch Royalist and ancestor of Harriet White, mother of William Grey, 9th Earl of Stamford, Hyde's legacy is woven into the fabric of English history and aristocratic lineage.

This portrait stands as a testament to Jonson's mastery and the enduring cultural resonance of his sitters.

The painting bears a label to the back reading '*This portrait of Mrs Hyde, wife of Benjamin Hyde, merchant of Chichester (whose portrait now belongs to William Earl of Stamford) hung at Selborne. It was cleaned and restored in 1909 by Hul Schafer of 40 Brewer Street, Regents, W(?) probably by a Dutch artist*' signed Rashleigh Holt White and dated August 1909.

There is a second label on headed paper from the 'National Club, 12 - Queen Anne's Gate, S.W' reading '*Janssen, or Jansen (sometimes Johnson) Cornelius (1593-1664), Flemish painter...worked in England from 1618-1643...patronised by James I and the Court, and under Charles I he continued to paint the numerous portraits which adorn many English mansions and collections. Johnson's pictures, chiefly portraits, are distinguished by clear colouring, delicate touch, good taste and careful finish. He generally painted upon panel...a characteristic of his style is the very dark background which throws the carnations of his portraits into grounded reliefs...*' Extract from *Brit. Encyclopaedia, Edition II Vol 15*.

The National Trust collection of Dunham Massey, Cheshire, comprises an oil painting of Benjamin Hyde circa 1640, indicating he was a merchant of Chichester, and was an ancestor of Harriet White (1829-1880), the mother of William Grey, 9th Earl of Stamford (1850-1910). He was a staunch supporter of Charles I.

Oil on panel, 79 x 59,5 cm

