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Auction	Fine Art
Date	19.11.2020, ca. 14:57
Preview	13.11.2020 - 10:00:00 bis 16.11.2020 - 18:00:00

HELST, BARTHOLOMÄUS, VAN DER  
1613 Haarlem - before 1670 Amsterdam

attributed

Title: Portrait of a Man.

Technique: Oil on canvas.

Mounting: Relined.

Measurement: 49,5 x 45,5cm.

Frame/Pedestal: Framed.

Provenance:

Private collection, Europe.

The present painting is included in the online databank of the RKD, The Hague, under the ill. no. 45826.

Batholomäus van der Helst, to whom the present painting is attributed, was one of the most important portraitists of the so-called "Golden Age" of the Netherlands. The native of Haarlem, who came from a family that was once wealthy but probably impoverished in his youth, must have come into contact with art as a child in his parents' house. Nothing is known about the beginning of van der Helst's career, but it is assumed that he studied with the portraitist Nicolaes Eliaszon Pickenoy in Amsterdam. In any case, he is mentioned in documents in the art metropolis since 1637. Only two years later van der Helst received the prestigious commission for a large group painting of the Rifle Company of Captain Roloef Bicker (now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). It can be assumed that by this time van der Helst was already an established artist, widely networked among the citizenry.

Among van der Helst's clients were the entire upper middle class and the social elite of Amsterdam and also the nobility. The immense prestige he enjoyed is also shown by the fact that he painted seven such large and representative regent and marksman pieces during his career, whereby he did justice to the portrayed protagonists with great individual conciseness. The fact that these monumental paintings, which demonstrated the self-confidence of the city's elite, were created parallel to Rembrandt's Night Watch, and that some of them decorated a hall together with it, may illustrate the highest esteem in which his contemporaries held him.

The portrait presented here could be from van der Helst's earlier years, in which his style resembled that of his supposed teacher Pickenoy. These earlier portraits are entirely focused on the person portrayed, the background is in

monochrome earth tones. In the course of his career, van der Helst increasingly began to elaborately design background and pictorial space through landscapes and attributes, often collaborating with other artists.

In two others, secured works by Bartholomäus van der Helst, we encounter a gentleman whose resemblance to the portrait presented here is striking: In the Alte Pinakothek in Munich there is a portrait of a "gentleman in the black atlas office" dated 1649, which looks just as strikingly similar to the one portrayed here as the son-in-law in the monumental family portrait in the Petersburg Hermitage from 1647 ("Portrait presumably of the married couple Willem Visch and Eva Bisschop and their daughter Laurentia Visch and her husband Adriaen Prins and his son").

Is the resemblance of our sitter to the sitters in the two secured paintings by van der Hals coincidence or is it the same man, perhaps ten years younger? The present painting could be an interesting "puzzle stone" that sharpens our image of van der Helst and his clients.

Estimate: 10.000 € - 15.000 €; Hammer: 12.000 €

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