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Galería de Arte

Soraya Cartategui

Dear friends,

In this month we present you this magnificent portrait, of the young Helena van de Poll, of the important Dutch painter Paulus Moreelse known for his ability to make portraits.

Best wishes,
Soraya Cartategui

**Paulus Moreelse**

(1571-1638) Dutch school

"Portrait of Helena van de Poll"

Oil on panel

71,2 x 56,4 cm. (28,03 x 21,49in.)

Signed and dated above on the right: PMorle 1624

studies, he traveled to Italy where he received great commissions as a portraitist although he had already made portraits of nobles such as the Van Voorst family of Utrecht and aristocrats such as Duke Christian of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. And from 1620 I would also paint some religious, mythological and historical scenes. He joined the Guild of Saddlers of Utrecht in 1596 and was one of the founding members of the Guild of San Lucas in 1611, of which he was dean on four occasions. He also became a master at the Drawing Academy with Abraham Bloemaert, who became a great influence for him.

In 1602 he married Antonia van Wyntershoven, with whom he had five children, and three years later he bought a large house in Boterstraat. Moreelse became a wealthy and respected person in Utrecht, becoming involved in city politics by obtaining a seat on the city council in 1618 when, together with Joachim Wtewael, they requested the resignation of the municipal council. This position provided him with many new opportunities, as well as important civic commissions. In this way he became guardian of the church, captain of the Civic Guard and chief treasurer of the city, works that he combined with the design of an extension of the city and the Santa Catalina Gate of Utrecht, and with his participation in the foundation of the university in 1636.

Definitely, Moreelse was a central figure in the life of the city of Utrecht, both artistic and political.

The dexterity in placing the lights and shadows, together with the wise choice of colors, make his paintings true masterpieces. The poses of their portraits are always elegant and elaborate, while the backgrounds are usually made in neutral tones giving all the protagonism to the represented, thus capturing their psychology and personality. It should be noted that in this case the painting is signed and dated by the artist himself ('PMorle 1624') in the upper right corner with the importance of that for a work of art.

The portrait was a very booming theme during the Golden Age in the Netherlands especially in the Delf area, where we remember that Paulus Moreelse was formed by the important portrait painter Michiel van Miereveldt. This type of works were very demanded especially by the mercantile class and for this reason we will find portraits made by all kinds of artists, both first class and second or third. The price of these portraits not only varied depending on the technical quality of the artist who did it, but also influenced the amount of body that was represented in the painting. In this way, the paintings in which only the chest area was represented were cheaper than those in which it came up to half a body with the hands, and these in turn were more affordable than those of the whole body and no longer speak of the group portraits, representations that were very demanded mainly by the civic associations like the militias, the Guilds, etc.

In this case, we find ourselves before Helene van den Poll, a young member of a noble and wealthy Utrecht family. We can recognize it thanks to a copy of this painting that is in the

Leeuwen so that we may be faced with a bridal engagement painting that was sent to the future husband or was made to remain in the family of the bride as a souvenir before your wedding.

It emphasizes the luminosity of his complexion and the meticulous work of the artist in the realization of all the small details of the dress, where Moreelse shows his skill as a portrait painter. The sweetness with which the girl's face is made is incredible because it endows her with an elegant beauty where the intense look that is directed directly to the viewer or the addressee of the painting is striking, which, as we have already mentioned, could be her future husband.



Perhaps for this same reason the eyes of Helene convey a certain sadness, because it is more likely that it was a marriage arranged by the family of both without taking into account the opinion of the two young people. This shows us the great capacity to capture the psychology of Paulus Moreelse's character because with a single glance he transmits a whole story.



This portrait also allows us to know the fashion of the Golden Age of the seventeenth century. We can see how the girl has her hair completely collected in three bunches, one on the back of the head and the other two on the sides hiding the ears. The back bun gathers it with a ribbon in red with small decorations while the lateral pickup adorns it with a gold jewel that falls near his face. In the painting one can also distinguish the left earring of the young woman who appears through the bun and who, being gold, looks like an extension of the ornament used to hold her hair.

If we want to find a touch of color in the work, in addition to the tape of the

and red colors that contrast with the white collar of Helene's dress. Precisely if there is something that captures all the attention in the picture is the thoroughness with which this neck is made, whose white lace stands out on the velvety black of the dress.



In fact it is three overlapping collars that together acquire a great prominence thanks to its detail and color, although if we look closely we can appreciate the transparency of the fine fabric that lets us glimpse the lower lace. This allows us to appreciate the great technical quality of Paulus Moreelse that did not leave even the smallest detail at random.

Finally, we can't forget the detail of the sleeves that open under the shoulders showing a floral embroidery made with white and gold threads on an ocher background, and that contrasts with the velvety black color of the rest of the dress. Here Paulus Moreelse's technique is also reflected because with small touches he manages to recreate the velvet effect despite working with flat and dark colors.



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-Simon and Isack Luttichuys, Monographie mit Kritisachem Werkverzeichnis, pg. 96

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PROVENANCE

Auction, Van Ommeren, Utrecht, 7 November 1810, lot. 19

With Dowdeswell, London

Collection Leonard Koppel (1854–1933), Berlin, 1909

Auction, Parke Bernet Galleries, New York, 5 March 1952, lot. 75

Soraya Cartategui Gallery, Madrid, Spain.

EXHIBITIONS

Berlin, Real Academy, 1909

MUSEUMS

There are works by Paulus Moreelse in the collections of the museums of the following cities, among others: Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Berlin- Gemaldegalerie, Bonn, Boston, Brunswick, Brussels, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Cologne, Copenhagen, Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum, Dublin- National Gallery, Dusseldorf, Edimburgo National Gallery, , The Hague, Leiden, Lille, London "Royal Colletion", National Trust, Walthamstow, Metze, Minneapolis ,Narbona, New York Metropolitan Museum, Paris Louvre, Rome- Corsini Museum, Rotterdam, San Francisco, San Petersburgo- Hermitage, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Utrecht, Vienna.

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