



Elizabeth Clarke Freake (Mrs. John Freake) and Baby Mary

Date

about 1671–1674

Primary Maker

Freake-Gibbs Painter

Medium

oil on canvas

Description

Elizabeth Clarke Freake (Mrs. John Freake) and Baby Mary is a double portrait of a woman holding an infant upright on her lap. The woman is represented in three-quarter length and turned to the viewer's left. She sits upright with her proper left hand crossing her body and resting on the infant's belly. Her right hand holds the child's proper right shoulder. The woman wears a white cap on her head that forms a peak over the forehead and is tied in a knot below the chin. Two fanlike ends of the cloth stiffly splay from the knot to her shoulders. The woman has light brown eyes and reddish blonde hair that is visible at the forehead and along the

edges of the cap. Her complexion is a pale pink, lighter than the skin in the companion portrait, John Freake. The face is an oval with a small, rounded chin. The woman is colorfully dressed in green, red, yellow, white, and black. The dress is green with white highlights on its many folds of material. The dress fits tightly at the bodice, where two panels meet near the center and are joined by red laces. Another green panel is visible within the narrow V-shaped space between the two panels. The skirt appears to be made in two layers, with fabric from the top skirt gathered at the viewer's right and the hem falling just below the white apron. The green skirts are lifted at the knee to reveal an orange-red underskirt trimmed with a wide yellow-and-white floral design that runs along the bottom edge of the composition at lower left. In addition to the apron, the costume is brightened with a white lace collar and lace-trimmed sleeves. The top portion of the collar is solid, whereas the lower two-thirds of the collar is made up of a delicate foliate pattern. Three clusters of black and red ribbons hang loosely at the bottom edge of the proper left sleeve of the dress. The woman also wears a number of pieces of jewelry. At her neck are three strands of white pearls, which merge into two strands at left. Her proper left thumb is adorned with a simple gold band, and her wrist is decorated with four strands of round, reflective black beads. Though the long gown covers the legs from view, the child appears to be in a standing position facing slightly to the right. The infant wears a yellow cap elaborated with white lace. A touch of yellow pigment along the top of the forehead suggests that the child has the same color hair as the woman. The child also has dark brown eyes and a light pink complexion with rosy cheeks. The shape and proportions of the infant's face are rounder and fuller than the woman's, and the features are proportionately smaller. The child has a small, round chin that resembles the woman's. The child holds its proper left hand to the woman's chest, presumably for balance. The right hand is held in front of the body beside the woman's left hand. The infant wears a loosely fitting yellow gown with a white apron that begins at the neck and falls nearly to the bottom of the yellow garment, in contrast with the woman's apron which is worn at the waist. The sleeves of the gown are folded back on the upper arm to reveal the white sleeves of the shift, which are trimmed with lace. The shift sleeves are tied halfway up with a yellow ribbon, creating two billowing forms. The woman sits in a wooden chair that is upholstered in a black fabric with a yellow, red, and white design. The upholstery is secured to the chair with round-headed brass tacks, which are visible along the bottom edge, just above short tassels that hang down from the back of the chair. Left of the figures a blocklike table is faintly visible. A red drapery forms a swag in the upper left corner. The rest of the background is painted an even tone of dark brown.

Dimensions

canvas: 108 × 93.3 cm (42 1/2 × 36 3/4 in.) framed: 127.6 × 111.8 cm (50 1/4 × 44 in.)