



John Freake

Date

about 1671–1674

Primary Maker

Freake-Gibbs Painter

Medium

oil on canvas

Description

John Freake is a three-quarter-length portrait of a man turned slightly to the right. His dark brown hair is parted in the center and falls on his shoulders. He has dark brown eyebrows, brown eyes, and a narrow moustache of the same color. His flesh tones are predominantly pink with deeper red on the cheeks and lips. The face is drawn as an oval with a pointed chin. The nose is straight and narrow. The figure stands perfectly erect with both arms bent at different angles so that the hands are presented in front of the body at different heights. The proper left hand rests at the center of the chest with the fingers turned up and touching a tassel. The proper right hand is held at hip level and holds a pair of gloves.

The extended fingers of the right hand have become transparent over time, suggesting that the artist represented them folded under to grasp the gloves before changing them to their current position. The variation in hand placement—higher/lower, centered/off center—results in the right elbow projecting out from the body and the left elbow held closer in, lending an interesting asymmetry to the composition. The figure is dressed in a dark brown coat that flares out at the sides. The sleeves of the coat end halfway down the forearm, revealing voluminous white tufted sleeves with ruffled cuffs. The coat is ornamented with twenty-two silver buttons in front, more of which are covered by the left hand; others are unseen because the coat is truncated by the bottom edge of the composition. Each buttonhole is outlined with silver thread. Only the top seven buttons are fastened. In addition, two groups of four buttons each run horizontally at different heights on the proper right side of the coat, presumably to secure pockets. The pocket closest to the front closure is lower than the outer one. The figure wears a white lace collar that lies flat across the chest and turns up in a gentle arc at the neck to frame the jawline. The collar roughly forms a rectangle with rounded corners. The dark brown of the coat shows through the negative spaces of the lace, which features vines wrapping around circular flowers. The pattern is mirrored either side of the closure. The man wears a gold-framed oval pin at the throat, a white ornament at the base of the lace collar, and a gold signet ring on the little finger of the proper left hand. The background is an even tone of dark brown, just a shade lighter than the coat.

Dimensions

canvas: 108 × 93.3 cm (42 1/2 × 36 3/4 in.) framed: 128 × 113 cm (50 3/8 × 44 1/2 in.)