



Man with a Fur-Trimmed Hat

Ferdinand Bol
(Dordrecht 1616 – 1680 Amsterdam)

ca. 1646–48

oil on canvas
100 x 79.5 cm
FB-105

How To Cite

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Although traditionally considered to be among the last in Ferdinand Bol's series of character studies, or *tronies*, executed in the 1640s and 1650s, this three-quarter-length, exotically dressed male figure bespeaks a formal portrait.^[1] Wearing a fur-trimmed hat and a brown jacket accented by a mustard colored collar and sparkling golden highlights, the man raises his right hand toward the beholder in a rhetorical gesture. In the other he grasps a fur pelt, which nearly spills into the viewer's space. Speckled black spots, which are softly rendered across the light brown pelt, fall into folds of light and shadow. A deep red cloak—a reoccurring element in Bol's *tronies* and self-portraits—hangs down over his left shoulder so that only his thumb is visible beneath it.^[2] The sitter's frontal, engaged pose and expectant expression distinguish this composition among Bol's portraits.^[3]

The figure's costume combines historicizing and contemporary elements.^[4] The golden brown jacket and the white shirt beneath it are both diagonally fastened around the man's torso, which, as Marieke de Winkel has noted, was a style associated with sixteenth-century oriental clothing.^[5] Fur hats, although a common feature of men's wardrobes in the seventeenth century, were rarely depicted in portraiture.^[6] Bol may have been inspired by Rembrandt's 1631 *Portrait of Nicolaes Ruts* (**fig 1**), which represents the wealthy merchant in a similar fur-trimmed hat, along with a fur-trimmed *tabbaard*.^[7] Bol's spotted fur pelt—probably sable—would have likewise been an extremely valuable item. Sable was exclusively imported from Russia, and its representation here, combined with the unusual, oriental-style jacket, is exceptional.^[8]

This inventive costume departs from the type of dress typically worn by sitters in Bol's portraits, as well as in his *tronies* and self-portraits. Following the model provided by Rembrandt in works such as his 1640 *Self-Portrait at the Age of 34* (**fig 2**), Bol depicted male figures wearing old-fashioned velvet berets and elegant cloaks, as in his *Portrait of a Gentleman* (**fig 3**) and *Portrait of a Man* in Munich, both dated ca. 1645, and the Leiden Collection's *Man with a Book* (FB-100) and *Self-Portrait*,



Fig 1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Nicolaes Ruts*, 1631, oil on panel, 116.8 x 87.3 cm, The Frick Collection, New York, 1943.1.150, © The Frick Collection



Fig 2. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait at the Age of 34*, 1640, oil on canvas, 102 x 80 cm, National Gallery, London, NG672, © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY

behind a Parapet (FB-107).^[9] Although Bol occasionally rendered figures in oriental turbans and helmets, which similarly relied on Rembrandt's example, there is no indication that these works were commissioned portraits.^[10] The only other figure that Bol portrayed so prominently in fur was the scholar in his *Old Man with a Globe* in the Hermitage (**fig 4**).^[11] This work, dated to around 1650, shows the elderly man wearing a fur-trimmed hat, a spotted fur-lined cloak, and a golden tunic that resembles the one depicted in *Man with a Fur-Trimmed Hat*.^[12]

The distinctive character of the Leiden Collection's portrait broadly reflects Bol's approach to portraiture in the second half of the 1640s. The painting's bare, brown background, the artist's use of chiaroscuro, and the frontal pose of the sitter correspond to works such as the *Portrait of a Gentleman* (**fig 3**) and the Munich *Portrait of a Man*.^[13] Bol's treatment of the composition and the posture of the figure, specifically the commanding frontal pose and outstretched hand, are seen in *Self-Portrait* in Dordrecht from 1646 and *Portrait of a Gentleman* (**fig 3**).^[14] These similarities suggest that Bol executed the Leiden Collection work during these same years, ca. 1646–48.^[15] A date in the mid- to late 1640s more closely situates the painting in the period following Bol's training in Rembrandt's workshop, reinforcing the probability that the master's *Portrait of Nicolaes Ruts* (**fig 1**) served as the model for this work.^[16] Although the identity of Bol's sitter is unknown, the prominent display of fur in this portrait bolsters the argument that he was also involved in the fur trade.^[17]

-Lara Yeager-Crasselt

Endnotes

1. Albert Blankert situated FB-105 among the last of Bol's *tronies* executed in the mid-1650s, following Hofstede de Groot's dating of ca. 1655. Blankert based his *tronie* description on the work's single-figure, half-length composition and the fancy, exotic costume worn by the sitter. He noted how Bol's modeling of the form and careful attention to the various textures in FB-105 relate to the large-scale history paintings that Bol produced in the 1650s. Although Blankert argued that FB-105 exhibits an ease in handling that is not apparent in Bol's paintings from the 1640s, it bears the strongest similarities in character and composition to the portraits and self-portraits that Bol produced during that decade. The individuality of the sitter, the exceptional character of his dress, and his forthright pose suggest a commissioned portrait. For a discussion of the possible identity of the sitter, see below. For



Fig 3. Ferdinand Bol, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, ca. 1645, oil on canvas, 86.4 x 70.5 cm, Private Collection / Bridgeman Images



Fig 4. Ferdinand Bol, *Old Man with a Globe*, ca. 1650, oil on canvas, 122 x 98 cm, The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg



Blankert's discussion of FB-105 in the context of his *tronies*, see Albert Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680): Rembrandt's Pupil* (Doornspijk, 1982), 57–59, 66–67, no. 66. Questions surrounding Bol's portraits and *tronies* have a long history in the scholarship on the artist. For a more recent discussion of Bol's work in this context, see Dagmar Hirschfelder, *Tronie und Porträt in der niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2008), 136–37, 277–82.

2. The same contemporary red cloak appears in a number of Bol's paintings, including the Leiden Collection's *Self-Portrait, behind a Parapet* (FB-107); *Self-Portrait*, 1646, oil on canvas, 102 x 85.5 cm, Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht (see below, and FB-107, fig. 3); and *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1669, oil on canvas, 128 x 104 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
3. See Albert Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680): Rembrandt's Pupil* (Doornspijk, 1982), 56–70.
4. Bol often combined old-fashioned and contemporary dress in his *tronies* and self-portraits, as discussed in the essay for FB-107, but, to my knowledge, he did not do so in formal portraits.
5. Marieke de Winkel discusses the oriental fashion of diagonal fastening in regard to Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait* from 1658 in The Frick Collection, New York (oil on canvas, 133.7 x 103.8 cm). Under a bright yellow pleated garment with a horizontal neckline and a brocaded neck cloth, Rembrandt wears a diagonally fastened white garment, joining sixteenth-century European and oriental fashions. De Winkel suggests that Rembrandt may have also looked to a portrait print of *Maarten Ryckaert*, published in Anthony van Dyck's *Iconographie* in 1645, in which the artist wears Polish attire—a fur-lined outer gown and a diagonally fastened kaftan tied at the waist. It is possible that Bol was also familiar with this print when he executed FB-105. It is worth noting that *Man in a Fur-Trimmed Hat* shares Rembrandt's striking frontal pose in this image. See Marieke de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings* (Amsterdam, 2006), 183–86. For Polish costume, see Irena Turnau, *History of Dress in Central and Eastern Europe from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Warsaw, 1991), particularly 71–78.
6. Fur hats were commonly cited in seventeenth-century Dutch inventories, along with the fur-trimmed *tabbaard*. See Marieke de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings* (Amsterdam, 2006), 29–30.
7. For a discussion of the costume worn by Ruts, see Marieke de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings* (Amsterdam, 2006), 26–32. A similar fur hat appears in a painting attributed to Rembrandt's workshop, *Man with a Fur Hat*, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel.
8. See Marieke de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings* (Amsterdam, 2006), 28–29, 277 n 16.



9. Bol was especially influenced by Rembrandt's 1640 *Self-Portrait* (oil on canvas, 102 x 80 cm, National Gallery, London), which served as a model for the younger artist on a number of occasions. See Bol's *Portrait of a Man*, ca. 1645, oil on canvas, 87.5 x 72.5 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich. For Bol's reliance on Rembrandt's prototype, see the essays for FB-100 and FB-107.
10. *Young Man with a Sword*, ca. 1650, oil on canvas, 204 x 130 cm, The Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, Ohio; *Man with Helmet*, ca. 1655, oil on canvas, 72.5 x 62.5 cm, Muzeum Narodowe, Warsaw; *Standing Oriental*, ca. 1665, oil on canvas mounted on wood, 131 x 102 cm, Milwaukee Art Museum. See Albert Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680): Rembrandt's Pupil* (Doornspijk, 1982), nos. 72, 74–75.
11. Albert Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680): Rembrandt's Pupil* (Doornspijk, 1982), no. 69. For the relationship of this work to the tradition of scholarly portraits, see the essay for FB-100.
12. The similarities in costume between these two paintings suggest that they may have been created within a few years of each other. For the dating of FB-105, see below. A fur hat also appears on Eliezer's knee in FB-106.
13. Similarly, see *Portrait of a Man*, ca. 1644, oil on canvas, 96 x 79 cm, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main.
14. *Self-Portrait*, 1646, oil on canvas, 102 x 85.5 cm, Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht (see the essay for FB-107, fig. 3). See Albert Blankert, *Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680): Rembrandt's Pupil* (Doornspijk, 1982), no. 60. In FB-105, Bol opened the angle of the figure's arm, making the gesture more direct than in the earlier work, whereas the gesture is reversed in the *Portrait of a Gentleman* (fig. 2). For the significance of this gesture in self-portraiture, and particularly in regard to the Dordrecht portrait, see Hans Joachim Raupp, *Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim, 1984), 262–64.
15. This dating is nearly ten years earlier than Albert Blankert's dating of the mid-1650s. By the 1650s, Bol also changed his approach to portraiture. His figures, typically dressed in more reserved contemporary costume, are situated within a definable interior space, often holding an object or associated with a particular attribute.
16. The close similarities between Rembrandt's and Bol's portraits demonstrate the continuing influence that Rembrandt had on the younger artist, even after Bol left the master's workshop.
17. Bol increasingly attracted an elite clientele in the late 1640s and 1650s, and it is conceivable that a wealthy fur trader was among his patrons. The tradition of a merchant being depicted in his wares went back to the sixteenth century, as seen in Dirck Jacobsz's *Portrait of Pompejus Occo*, 1531, oil on panel, 66.5 x 65 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. In this work,



Occo, who was active in the Baltic as a trader, is shown wearing a fur-trimmed *tabbaard* of costly lynx. See Marieke de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings* (Amsterdam, 2006), 28–29.

Provenance

- Private collection Scotland, by 1860.
- [Lewis and Simmons, New York, by 1929]. 1
- Private collection, Forfar, Scotland, by 1938.
- Private collection, Scotland, until 2009 [Johnny van Haeften Ltd., London, 2009].
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2009.

Exhibition History

- Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, on loan with the permanent collection, February 2014–February 2016 [lent by the present owner].

References

- Blankert, Albert. *Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680), Rembrandt's Pupil*. Doornspijk, 1982, 59, 121, no. 66. Translated from *Ferdinand Bol, 1616–1680: een leerling van Rembrandt*. The Hague, 1976.



Technical Summary

The support is composed of two sections of medium-weight, plain-weave fabric joined with a vertical seam that passes through the figure's proper left sleeve.^[1] The tacking margins have been removed and the support has been lined. Cusping is visible along the left edge only, and the right has a precisely cut edge, which indicates it may have been trimmed. There are no wax collection seals, import stamps, stencils, inscriptions or labels along the lining or stretcher reverse.

A light-colored ground has been thinly and evenly applied and remains visible through the thin passages of paint along the background, the curls of hair, and the drying cracks that have formed along the brown drapery folds along the left side of the composition. The paint has been smoothly applied with transparent glazes along the figure's crimson cloak and with areas of low rounded brushwork along the gold details of the figure's *tabbaard*. The light brown fur in the foreground has been painted wet-into-wet with wisps of dark brown paint applied over the top.

No underdrawing is readily apparent in infrared images captured at 780–1000 nanometers. The images reveal minor compositional changes to the fingertips and contours of the figure's proper right hand.

The painting is unsigned and undated.

The painting was cleaned, lined, and restored circa 2009, at which time a compound tear along the lower left quadrant of the support was repaired. The painting remains in a good state of preservation.

-Annette Rupprecht