



Sir Peter Paul Rubens **Portrait of a Woman**

The subject

We do not know who the woman in the portrait is. She was once thought to be Rubens's wife, Helena Fourment, but the portrait does not seem to bear any resemblance to the other pictures of Helena that have survived. It has also been suggested that the sitter may be Elizabeth Fourment, a younger sister of Helena, who was born in 1609.

The painting

The portrait dates from around 1625–1630. It is painted in oils on a wood panel and measures 33 × 23 inches (84.8 × 59.3 cm). On the back of the panel is a rough sketch by Rubens, which is also drawn in oil paint. The sketch seems to have been part of Rubens's early thinking for another painting, but that painting has not survived.

The artist

Sir Peter Paul Rubens was a hugely successful artist and produced over 1,400 works in his lifetime. He was enormously versatile, and produced large-scale religious paintings as well as many fine portraits and drawings of exceptional clarity and skill.

Where is the painting now?

Rubens's *Portrait of a Woman* is on display at Buckingham Palace in London. The painting was bought from Rubens's descendants by King George IV in 1818 and now forms part of the Royal Collection.