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**“Self-Portrait” in Fanciful Dress**

Frans van Mieris  
(Leiden 1635 – 1681 Leiden)

ca. 1667  
oil on oval panel  
11 x 8.2 cm  
FM-123



### How to cite

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In “*Self-Portrait*” in *Fanciful Dress*, Frans van Mieris indulged himself to the fullest with colorful, imaginary clothing elements, particularly his red velvet beret with white ostrich feather and the multicolored scarf knotted behind his head that holds the feather in place. A loosely pleated white linen shirt and a black jerkin with slashed openings are visible beneath the fur-trimmed robe around his shoulders. The pearl earring dangling from his ear reinforces the exotic nature of this wardrobe, which was unlike attire worn in the Dutch Republic. The same distinctive combination of headgear—red velvet beret, colored scarf, and feather—appears in Van Mieris’s *Man in Oriental Dress*, 1665, in the Mauritshuis, where the figure, appropriately, stands next to a column before a foreign, mountainous landscape (**fig 1**).<sup>[1]</sup>

As is characteristic for this Leiden *fijnschilder* (“fine painter”), Van Mieris applied the paint thinly and smoothly in this small oval panel painting while, at the same time, varying his strokes to model the face, fur, and jerkin. Judging from the extremely fine elaboration of the details, Van Mieris intended this small treasure to be seen closely, and without doubt, art lovers would have held this painting in their hands to admire its outstanding technique. They would have equally admired the lively, scrunched-up expression of the middle-aged, mustached subject, who looks as though he is reacting to something slightly unappealing.

Whether Van Mieris’s main interest was to express a certain emotion or to show a figure in fanciful dress, the sitter’s features clearly resemble those of the artist himself. However, this small painting, despite its title, is not a self-portrait, but rather an expressive character study known as a *tronie*. “*Self-Portrait*” in *Fanciful Dress* is closely related to another Van Mieris *tronie* in The Leiden Collection, “*Self-Portrait*” with a *Plumed Beret* (**fig 2**), where the artist, wearing a similar red velvet beret and colored scarf, expresses surprise.<sup>[2]</sup> Van Mieris learned the art of making *tronies* in Leiden from his teacher, Gerrit Dou (1613–75), as well as from Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69), who did more than any other artist to popularize *tronies* in his paintings and prints (**fig 3**).<sup>[3]</sup> For modern-day viewers, the distinction between *tronies* and self-portraits can be difficult to discern, but seventeenth-century inventories often make a clear division.<sup>[4]</sup> One has to remember that the word *self-portrait* only came into use in the nineteenth century; if one wished to speak of a Rembrandt self-portrait, one described it as “Rembrandt’s likeness done by himself” or “the portrait of Rembrandt painted by himself.”<sup>[5]</sup>

That this painting was recognized as a *tronie* can be deduced from the inventories of its early owners, among them Jan van Beuningen (1667–1720), a man of standing in the art world and a banker and merchant in the Baltic, and Pieter de la Court van der Voort (1664–1739), an extremely wealthy cloth merchant and a famous collector who

## Comparative Figures



**Fig 1.** Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Man in Oriental Dress*, 1665, oil on panel, 14.9 x 11.2 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague, inv. no. 1163.



**Fig 2.** Frans van Mieris the Elder, “*Self-Portrait*” with a *Plumed Beret*, 1668, oil on oval panel, 11.3 x 8.2 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. FM-108.



**Fig 3.** Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait in a Cap, Wide-Eyed and Open*, 1630, etching. © 2026 The Leiden Collection

had a penchant for works by the Leiden *fijnschilders*.<sup>[6]</sup> De la Court van der Voort assembled a large body of works by Dou and Van Mieris in his house on Rapenburg 26 in Leiden.<sup>[7]</sup> In a 1731 inventory of his collection, the little painting by Van Mieris is mentioned for the first time as “*Een Persiaantje met een turban*” (A little Persian with a turban).<sup>[8]</sup> After Allard de la Court van der Voort (1677–1755) inherited the panel from his father, it was listed in his 1749 inventory as “An oval being a Persian or Turkish figure with a Turban on the head.”<sup>[9]</sup> In 1766, the painting was sold at public auction from the collection of his widow, Catharina Backer (1689–1766), again as “A Persian.”<sup>[10]</sup>

Van Mieris’s painting was soon acquired by the famous Leipzig banker Gottfried Winckler (1731–95), who included it in the extensive catalogue of his collection published in 1768.<sup>[11]</sup> Johann Friedrich Bause (1738–1814) made an engraving after Van Mieris’s painting when it was in Leipzig, giving it the title *Der Persianer* (*The Persian*). Jean-François-André Duval (1776–1854) from Saint Petersburg subsequently acquired Van Mieris’s painting from one of Winckler’s heirs.<sup>[12]</sup> When it was in his collection, Ignaz Sebastian Klauber (1753–1817), or one of his studio assistants, made a reproductive engraving after the painting from a drawing by Pavel Nikolaivich Michailoff (1786–1840) (fig 4). Although Klauber’s engraving appeared in the 1846 catalogue of Duval’s collection, by that time Duval had already sold the collection to Napoleon III’s half-brother, Charles-August-Louis-Joseph (1811–65), Duc de Morny, who lived in Paris, but who dispersed many of his newly acquired paintings in London.<sup>[13]</sup>

Van Mieris’s painting seems to have remained in England until 1903, when the German-Jewish banker Max Steinthal (1850–1940), famous for financing Berlin’s metropolitan railway, acquired it. Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929), director of the Berlin museums, advised Steinthal and his wife and probably recommended the purchase of this panel.<sup>[14]</sup> In 1935, the Nazis forced Max Steinthal to resign from the Deutsche Bank, and the collection that he and his wife had formed was confiscated—a fate this painting escaped. The couple’s daughter, Eva Steinthal, had always kept this small panel; she sold it at auction in 2012.<sup>[15]</sup> Prior to that time, its appearance was only known through the two early nineteenth-century engravings.<sup>[16]</sup> Although recent examinations have found no trace of a signature or date on the panel, old sources indicate that it once bore a date of 1667, which is entirely consistent with the artist’s style at that period of his career.<sup>[17]</sup> Two early copies of Van Mieris’s *tronie*—one can be tentatively attributed to Willem van Mieris (1662–1747), the artist’s son (fig 5)—indicate that this painting had a certain renown during and after his lifetime.<sup>[18]</sup> After The Leiden Collection acquired this wonderful little gem in 2017, it found a home among many paintings by Van Mieris and other Leiden fine painters.

*Mouthed*, 1630, etching, 51 x 45 mm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-P-OB-697.



**Fig 4.** Ignaz Sebastian Klauber (and/or studio), after a drawing by Pavel Nikolaivich Michailoff, after Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Man in Persian Dress*, in or after 1812, engraving, 112 x 84 mm, RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague, inv. no. BD/0676.



**Fig 5.** Attributed to Willem van Mieris, *Man in Oriental Costume*, oil on copper, 12.8 x 10.2 cm, Private Collection, © Christie’s Images Limited (2020).



- Quentin Buvelot, 2020

## Endnotes

1. For this painting, see Quentin Buvelot, ed., *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art) (New Haven, 2005), no. 34.
2. See the remarks in Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 1: 72 and 126n205; see also the entry "Self-Portrait" with a Plumed Beret in this catalogue.
3. Interestingly, both Rembrandt and Van Mieris made "official" self-portraits at the same time that they used their own faces in *tronies*.
4. This is clear from the inventory of the Leiden collector Franciscus de le Boë Sylvius (1614–72), one of Van Mieris's Leiden patrons. The document made a distinction between the portraits and *tronies* of Van Mieris in the collection, even though the painter and his wife were recognized in each; see Eric Jan Sluijter, Marlies Enklaar, and Paul Nieuwenhuizen, eds., *Leidse fijnschilders: Van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge, 1630–1760* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 133.
5. See Ernst van de Wetering, "The Multiple Functions of Rembrandt's Self Portraits," in *Rembrandt by Himself*, ed. Christopher White and Quentin Buvelot (Exh. cat. London, National Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (Zwolle, 1999), esp. 19–22.
6. Interestingly, De la Court van der Voort would become an important patron of Van Mieris's son, Willem, to whom one of the existing versions of the present painting has been tentatively attributed (see fig 5). Cornelia Willemijn Fock, "Willem van Mieris en zijn mecenas Pieter de la Court van der Voort," *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 2* (1983): 261–82.
7. In 1711, Zacharias von Uffenbach (1683–1734), a famous German traveler, greatly admired the paintings by Dou and Van Mieris in the De la Court van der Voort collection. However, he did not specifically mention the painting discussed here in his travel accounts; see Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, *Merkwürdige Reisen durch Niedersachsen, Holland und England* (Ulm, 1754), 3: 421.
8. Gemeente Archief Leiden, Archief de la Court, inv. 132; quoted in Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 1: 207.
9. In translation; Gemeente Archief Leiden, Archief de la Court, inv. 117A; quoted in Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 1: 207; see also Peter Hecht, *De Hollandse fijnschilders: Van Gerard Dou tot Adriaen van der Werff* (Exh. cat. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) (Amsterdam, 1989), 88n2.
10. Gerard Hoet and Pieter Terwesten, *Catalogus of naamlyst van schilderyen, met derzelver pryzen* (The Hague, 1770), 3: 545–6, no. 23.
11. Franz Wilhelm Kreuchauf, *Historische Erklärungen der Gemälde, welche Herr Gottfried Winkler in Leipzig gesammelt* (Leipzig, 1768), 174, no. 432; see Dieter Gleisberg, "'Liebe zur Kunst und besonders zur Malhrey': Die Gemäldesammlung des Leipziger Bankiers Gottfried Winckler," *Leipziger Almanach*



- (2011–12): 117–96. The 1768 catalogue counts 628 paintings, including works by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), Hans Holbein (1497/8–1543), and Rembrandt, and at the time of Winckler’s death, the collection of paintings had more than doubled in size, to about 1300 paintings, including *Woman Reading and a Man Seated at a Table*, another painting by Van Mieris now in The Leiden Collection. Watercolor drawings by Christian Friedrich Wiegand (1748–1824) show the rich interior of Winckler’s house in Leipzig; see Gleisberg, “Liebe zur Kunst und besonders zur Mahlerey,” 149, fig. 33.
12. Dieter Gleisberg, “Liebe zur Kunst und besonders zur Mahlerey’: Die Gemäldesammlung des Leipziger Bankiers Gottfried Winckler,” *Leipziger Almanach* (2011–12): 160–62. François Duval’s collector’s mark, the initials “FD,” can be found on the back of this panel (see also Frans van Mieris, *Woman Reading and a Man Seated at a Table* in The Leiden Collection). Duval was court jeweller to the Russian Tsar.
  13. Dieter Gleisberg, “Liebe zur Kunst und besonders zur Mahlerey’: Die Gemäldesammlung des Leipziger Bankiers Gottfried Winckler,” *Leipziger Almanach* (2011–12): 162.
  14. Willy Kurth, *Die Kunst im Hause Steinthal 1889–1914* (Berlin, 1914), no. 15, as in the manner of Ary de Vois.
  15. In 2004, the Steinthal collection was found in a German storage unit and returned to the rightful heirs. This painting was one of the few not seized by the Nazis. W. Michael Blumenthal, *Max Steinthal: Ein Bankier und Seine Bilder* (Berlin, 2004).
  16. Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 2: 84, no. 70 (as whereabouts unknown, with brief mention of the two known prints after this painting); for more details, see Versions.
  17. See technical report by Kristin de Ghetaldi, April 2017. In Van Mieris’s paintings, some signatures are known to have disappeared during cleaning and restoration in the past. The date was mentioned in old sources, see Franz Wilhelm Kreuchauf, *Historische Erklärungen der Gemälde, welche Herr Gottfried Winkler in Leipzig gesammelt* (Leipzig, 1768), 174, no. 432 (as dated 1667); Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century Based on the Work of John Smith*, ed. and trans. Edward G. Hawke (London, 1928), 10: 64–5, no. 240 (as dated 1667); see also Quentin Buvelot, under “List of Frans van Mieris’s Paintings and Drawings,” in *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681*, ed. Quentin Buvelot (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis; Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art) (New Haven, 2005), 235, no. 70.
  18. Both are painted on copper and turned up in 2019, in Belgium and France (see Versions). The author is most grateful to Otto Naumann for his help in cataloguing these versions (mail correspondence, October and November 2019). The painting in France came to our attention via an email sent 15 February 2019 to the present author by G. Albers, a paintings conservator in Paris who restored the work in question. According to Naumann, the copy in France is of lesser quality and probably later than the superior copy in Belgium. Otto Naumann, *Frans van Mieris (1635–1681) the Elder* (Doornspijk, 1981), 2: 84, no. 70a; and forthcoming sale, Christie’s, New York, 2020, which may tentatively be attributed to Van Mieris’s son, Willem van Mieris. As Naumann’s no. 70a is painted on copper, it is clearly not identical to the

panel described here, as was suggested in the sale catalogue of Sotheby's, London, 5 December 2012, no. 6.

## Provenance

- Jan van Beuningen (1667–1720), Amsterdam (to Pieter de la Court van der Voort for 120 florins).
- Pieter de la Court van der Voort (1664–1739), Leiden, before 1731; by descent to Catherina Backer, his son's widow (her sale, Leiden, 8 September 1766, no. 23 [to H. de Winter for 470 florins]).
- Gottfried Winckler (1731–95), Leipzig, by 1768.
- François Jean-André (François) Duval (1776–1854), Saint Petersburg and Geneva, by 1812 (to Charles de Morny).
- Charles Auguste Louis Joseph (Charles) de Morny (1811–65), Duke of Morny, Paris, 1845 ("Duval" sale, Phillips, London, 12 May 1846, no. 42 [for £525]).<sup>[1]</sup>
- Private collection (sale, London, Christie's, 21 February 1903, no. 80 [to Schroeder for £38]).
- Max Steinthal (1850–1940), Berlin, by 1909; and by descent to the Steinthal Community of Heirs (sale, Sotheby's, London, 5 December 2012, no. 6 [to Johnny Van Haeften, Ltd.])
- [Johnny Van Haeften, Ltd., London]
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2017.

## Provenance Notes

1. Frans van Mieris's *Woman Reading and a Man Seated at a Table*, now in The Leiden Collection, was also sold in the "Duval" Sale at Phillips in London on 12 May 1846 (no. 99).

## Exhibition History

- Berlin, Königliche Kunstakademie, "Ausstellung von Bildnissen des fünfzehnten bis achtzehnten Jahrhunderts aus dem Privatbesitz der Mitglieder des Vereins," 31 March–30 April 1909, no. 84 [lent by Max Steinthal].
- Beijing, National Museum of China, "Rembrandt and His Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection," 17 June–3 September 2017, no. 40 [lent by the present owner].
- Shanghai, Long Museum, West Bund, "Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection," 23 September 2017–25 February 2018, no. 40 [lent by the present owner].
- Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, "The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces



of The Leiden Collection,” 28 March–22 July 2018, no. 36 [lent by the present owner].

- St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces of The Leiden Collection,” 5 September 2018–13 January 2019, no. 36 [lent by the present owner].
- Amsterdam, H’ART Museum, “From Rembrandt to Vermeer: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 9 April–24 August 2025 [lent by the present owner].
- West Palm Beach, Norton Museum of Art, “Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 25 October 2025–29 March 2026 [lent by the present owner].

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## Versions

### Versions

1. Attributed to Willem van Mieris, after Frans van Mieris the Elder, *A Man in Oriental Costume*, oil on oval copper, 12.9 x 10.3 cm, Private Collection, Belgium, 2019.
2. After Frans van Mieris the Elder, oil on oval copper, dimensions unknown, Private Collection, Sèvres, France, 2019.

## Prints

1. Johann Friedrich Bause (1738–1814), after Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Der Persianer*, 1769, etching and engraving, 270 x 191 mm, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, inv. no. JFBause V 3.258a.



2. Ignaz Sebastian Klauber (1753–1817) and/or studio, after a drawing by Pavel Nikolaivich Michailoff (1786–1840), after Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Man in Persian Dress*, in or after 1812, engraving, 112 x 84 mm, RKD – The Netherlands Institute of Art, The Hague, inv. no. BD/0676.

## Technical Summary

The oval-shaped panel has been cut from a single piece of vertically grained wood; the verso of the panel's circumference is entirely beveled.<sup>[1]</sup> The panel has three red-wax seals on the verso, each with discernible markings.

A thin, light-colored ground has been evenly applied across the entire panel, although only portions of the composition were covered with a gray-brown *imprimatura* layer. The overlying paint has been applied thinly and smoothly, with transparent glazes applied to the dark background, red turban, and fur lining of the costume.<sup>[2]</sup> Two curious parallel strokes of paint are visible in the black and white portion of the sitter's costume near the lower section of the picture. They may have been intentional even though they resemble accidental swipes through wet paint. The artist deftly modelled the opaque flesh tones while allowing the gray-brown *imprimatura* to remain in reserve. In other areas, this *imprimatura* layer was used to create mid-tones between lighter passages and shadows.

Minor, scattered retouching can be seen throughout the picture, with the largest loss located along the proper, right edge.<sup>[3]</sup> Overall the paint, ground, and varnish layers are stable and in good condition.

– Kristin deGhetaldi, 2020

## Technical Summary Endnotes

1. The wooden support is presumably oak; however, no information pertaining to wood identification or dendrochronological analysis was provided at the time of this report.
2. No infrared photography/reflectography or x-radiography had been carried out at the time of this report.
3. Retouching is readily visible under long-wave ultraviolet illumination. In addition, the autofluorescence of the varnish suggests that it is a natural resin varnish (such as mastic or dammar).