

Original Portraits of Francis Bacon



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Four, possibly five, portraits of Bacon were done from life as far as is known. The four are the miniature of Francis Bacon painted by Nicholas Hilliard in 1578/9, the full length portrait of Bacon as Lord Chancellor painted by Paul van Somer in 1618, the three-quarter length portrait of Bacon as Lord Chancellor painted by Abraham Blyenberch c.1618, and the engraving of Bacon as Lord Chancellor made by Simon Passe in 1618. A possible fifth portrait is an oil painting by an unknown artist that is traditionally said to be of Francis Bacon as a child. James Spedding conjectured that there was yet another, a lost painting by Cornelius Janssen, who came to England in 1618, but this appears to be pure speculation.

(1) Portrait supposedly of Francis Bacon as a child, aged 1-2 years old, by unknown artist (c.1561-2). [In the Gorhambury Collection on display at Gorhambury House, St Albans.]

(2) Portrait miniature of Francis Bacon in his 18th year, painted by Nicholas Hilliard in Paris in 1578/9. The Latin inscription reads: “*Si tabula daretur digna animum mallet*” (“It would be preferable if a picture deserving of his mind could be brought about”). [On display in Room 4 at the National Portrait Gallery, London.]

(3) Portrait of Sir Francis Bacon as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England and Lord Chancellor by Paul van Somer (1618). [In the Gorhambury Collection on display at Gorhambury House, St Albans.]

(4) Portrait of Sir Francis Bacon as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England and Lord Chancellor by Abraham van Blyenberch (c.1618), bequeathed to the Royal Society by Martin Folkes in his will (died 1754). [In the Royal Society Collection, London.]

(5) Engraving of Sir Francis Bacon as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England and Lord Chancellor by Simon van de Passe and printed in Holland's *Baziliologia, a Booke of Kings* (1618). [A copy is in the National Portrait Gallery Archive Collection: NPG D26070.]

The engraving has a border bearing the words "HONORATISS : D^s. FRANCISCUS BACON : EQUES AU: MAG : SIGILL : ANGL : CUSTos". Above the picture are shown his heraldic arms, with the Bacon motto, "MONITI MELIORA". Beneath his left hand is depicted the Chancellor's bag. Beneath the portrait is an inscription which reads, "The righte Honourable S^r Frauncis Bacon knight, Lorde highe Chancellour of Englande and one of his Ma^{ties} most hon^{ble} privie Counsell". Under this inscription, in small letters, is engraved "Simon Passæus sculpsit L. Are to be sould by John Sudbury and George Humble at the signe of the white horse in Pope's head Ally".

Because the inscription does not include Bacon's title of Baron Verulam, it is probable that the engraving was made sometime between 4 January 1618, when Bacon was created Lord Chancellor, and 12 July 1618, when he was created Baron Verulam. It is recorded that at least £33 was "paid to the picture drawer for his Lp's picture" on 12 September 1618.

Passe's plate was copied later by Hollar for the frontispiece of Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626 and 1627), with suitable changes. The frontispiece to the 1640 *Advancement and Proficiency of Learning* is also based on this same portrait.



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(5) Engraving by Wenceslaus Hollar after Simon de Passe forming the frontispiece to the first and second editions of Francis Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626 and 1627).

(6) Engraving by William Marshal after Simon de Passe forming the frontispiece to the first English translation of Francis Bacon's *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, entitled *Of the Advancement and Proficiency of Learning or the Partitions of Sciences* (1640).