

JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

VP4926

FLORIS VAN SCHOOTEN

(Amsterdam 1585/88 – 1656 Haarlem)

A Kitchen Still Life with Fruit, Vegetables and metal Pans
Signed in monogram and dated, lower right: *F.V.S. 1630*
Oil on panel, 32 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 50 $\frac{3}{8}$ ins. (83 x 128 cm)



PROVENANCE

E. H. Heymans, Aerdenhout, the Netherlands, around 1950
Anonymous sale, Amsterdam, Sotheby's Mak van Waay, 3 April 1951, no. 90
Willem M. J. Russell, Amsterdam, 1962
Private collection, The Netherlands, until 2020

EXHIBITED

Nederlandse stillevens uit de zeventiende eeuw, Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht,
21 June – 2 September, 1962, no. 83, fig. 56.
17e-eeuwse schilderijen uit de verzameling Willem Russell, Historisch Museum, Amsterdam,
1970, cat. no. 80.
Still Life in the Age of Rembrandt, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1982, cat. no. 5.

LITERATURE

Poul Gammelbo, "Floris Gerritsz. Van Schooten" in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, no. 17, 1966, p. 121, no. 40.
E. de Jongh, et. al., *Still Life in the Age of Rembrandt*, Exh. Cat., Auckland City Art Gallery, 1982, pp. 71-73, cat. no. 5, illustrated.
A. van der Willigen & Fred Meijer *A Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters working in Oils 1525-1725*, Leiden 2003, p. 179.

Very little is known of Floris van Schooten's origins. We do not know precisely when or where he was born, but he was already residing in Haarlem by 1606 when he joined the local civic guard. He came from a well-to-do Catholic family and made a good marriage to the daughter of a wealthy Haarlem brewer. The name of his teacher is unknown, and whilst he is only recorded as a member of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke for the first time in 1634, it is likely that he enrolled in the guild much earlier. He probably worked in Haarlem all his life.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, Haarlem was an important centre for still-life painting, a genre that had only emerged as an independent branch of art around 1600. The first generation of Haarlem still-life painters to which Floris van Schooten belonged played a crucial role in establishing the Dutch still-life tradition that was to flourish throughout the Golden Age and beyond. Within the category of still-life painting countless sub-genres arose embracing a wide range of subjects. A particular specialism that developed in Haarlem was the so-called breakfast piece, or *ontbijtje* - a still life featuring an array of prepared foodstuffs and costly objects on a laid table – the earliest examples of which appear slightly before 1610.

A versatile and productive artist, Van Schooten's surviving oeuvre comprises around 150 works. He not only painted breakfast pieces, but also still lifes of fruit, kitchen pieces, market scenes and a few history paintings. He regularly signed his works with the monogram *FVS*, but rarely dated them. Because his dated works are few and far between, it is hard to establish a precise chronology for his oeuvre, however, the evolution of his style can be broadly determined by comparing his work with that of his contemporaries. Although van Schooten was not a great innovator, he remained receptive to the latest developments in still-life painting and evidently enjoyed a successful career. From around 1615-20, he painted still lifes of laid tables, seen from a high viewpoint and with strong local colours, which closely resemble those by his fellow townsmen Floris van Dijck (c. 1575-1651) and Nicolaes Gillis (active c. 1612-1632). During his early period, he also produced market and kitchen scenes with figures, and sometimes small religious scenes in the background, in the tradition of the sixteenth-century Flemish painters Pieter Aertsen (1507/08-1575) and Joachim Beuckelaer (c. 1533-34-c. 1574), and their later Dutch followers, such as Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem (1562-1638), Pieter Cornelisz. van Rijck (c. 1568-c.1635) and Cornelis Jacobsz. Delff (1570/71-1643). From around the mid-1620s onwards, van Schooten increasingly took his inspiration from the work of the younger, more progressive painter Pieter Claesz. (1597/8-1660), simplifying his compositions accordingly, and adopting a more restrained palette.

This impressive panel of 1630 is a splendid example of van Schooten's mature work. The artist has depicted a wide stone ledge laden with uncooked produce and culinary utensils. Displayed at the front are some plums, a blue and white Chinese porcelain bowl full of strawberries, a basket of grapes, a dead pigeon and some small songbirds, three gherkins and a pile of apples and pears. Resting on the ledge behind are a bunch of carrots, an artichoke, a marrow, a string of onions and a large green cabbage, together with a gleaming brass cauldron, and a larger copper cauldron, tipped on its side. Several stems of vine leaves appear in the background. Van Schooten has devoted a great deal of attention to the rendering of textures and materials. Employing a typically dry, precise technique, he has skilfully recreated the properties of stone, porcelain, wickerwork and metal, as well as the various surface textures of the fruit, vegetables and game, from the misty bloom on the grapes, and the pitted exterior of the strawberries, to the knobby skin of the gherkins, and

the soft plumage of the birds. An especially virtuoso passage is his depiction of the large copper cooking vessel, with its highly polished interior, complete with joints and rivets in the metal.

As one of van Schooten's very few dated works, this still life represents an important benchmark of his style around 1630. Although its subject matter clearly belongs to the realm of the kitchen, it has moved on from the kitchen scenes painted some ten or twenty years earlier. Here, he has omitted the genre elements, focusing instead upon the abundant display of fruit and vegetables, which has been placed on a horizontal ledge extending across the entire width of the composition close to the picture plane. The viewpoint has been lowered so that now we see the tabletop in strong foreshortening, with the objects overlapping one another in a compact, diagonal arrangement. The sense of closeness is enhanced by such illusionistic 'tricks' as the small bird's head that droops over the front of the ledge and the stalk of the plum that projects forward into the viewer's space, casting shadows on the front of the ledge. The background tonality is lighter, and whilst the palette remains relatively colourful, the composition is united by an overall warm greenish tonality. In his later still lifes, van Schooten greatly reduced the number of his objects and the range of his colours in emulation of the monochrome breakfast pieces by Pieter Claesz. and Willem Claesz. Heda (1594-1680).

BIOGRAPHY

Neither the date nor the place of Floris Gerritsz. van Schooten's birth is known. A birthdate around 1585/1588 is calculated on the basis that he was at least eighteen years old in 1606 when he joined the Haarlem civic guard (the third company of the first platoon of the Oude Schutterij, or Old Guard). Floris was the son of a wealthy Catholic, Gerrit Jacobsz. van Schooten, who was resident in Haarlem at the time of his son's betrothal to Rycklant Bol van Zanen on 29 December 1612. She was the daughter of the brewer Willem Bol van Zanen, a member of one of Haarlem's oldest and most eminent families. The couple received substantial wedding gifts of money from their parents: Floris brought 1000 fl. to their marriage, while Rycklant brought 1200 fl. Rycklant died in 1626, leaving four children: three daughters and a son, Johannes, who also became a painter. As far as we know, Floris did not remarry.

Nothing is known of Floris's artistic training. His membership of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke is first documented in 1634, but he probably enrolled in the guild much earlier, possibly as early as 1612, the year in which he married. His earliest known work dates from 1617, although it is likely that he began painting still lifes as early as 1610-15. He served as warden of the guild in 1639, and held the post of treasurer from 1640-1642. From 1606 until after 1651, the artist served in the third company of the first platoon of the Old Soldiery.

From 1638 to 1646 Floris lived in a house bearing the stone tablet 'De Profeet Elias', located on the northern side of the Oude Gracht, between the Grote Houtstraat and the Frankenstraat. On 4 September 1645, he was appointed canal supervisor (*graftmeester*), a job that entailed responsibility for deepening the Oude Gracht. The artist died in Haarlem and was buried in the Grote Kerk on 14 November 1656ⁱ.

ⁱ Biographical data taken from P. Biesboer, *et. al.*, *Painting in Haarlem 1500-1850: The collection of the Frans Hals Museum*, 2006, p. 301.