

Abraham van Beyeren

The Hague 1620/1 - 1690 Overschie

A Pronk Still Life of Peaches on a Silver Salver with Grapes, a Melon, Drinking Vessels, A Gilt Chalice and a Blue and White Vase upon a Ledge Draped with a Carpet

Oil on canvas

75 x 96 cm (29 1/2 by 37 3/4 in.)

Signed in monogram lower left: AVB.f. (linked)

Provenance:

Freiherr von Münchhausen, Hanover, his deceased sale and others, Cologne, Heberle, 28-29 october 1887, lot 81, as by Willem Kalf
F. van Gans, Frankfurt am Main
With Bachstitz, The Hague
Acquired from the above by Julius Böhler, Munich by 1920
James Simon, Berlin
With P. de Boer, Amsterdam 1930, cat.no.33 as by Abraham van Beyeren
Private Collection, Germany

Abraham van Beyeren was born in The Hague in 1620. He was taught by his brother-in-law, Pieter de Putter. By 1638-39 he had been in Leiden for about a year. He married Emerantia Staëke there in 1639, who bore him three children. In 1640 he became a member of the guild in The Hague, where, after the death of his first wife, he remarried Anna Queborn in 1647. In 1656 he was one of the

founders of the 'Confrerie Pictura'. In 1657 he was inscribed as a member of the guild in Delft. He returned to The Hague in 1663. From 1669 to 1674 he lived in Amsterdam. Later he went to Alkmaar and Gouda, and finally, from 1678, he lived in Overschie (near Rotterdam) where he died in 1690.

His restless life is reflected in his work. His oeuvre consists not only of 'pronk' still lives, but also some fruit and some flower pieces, kitchen still lives with plucked birds, many excellent fish still lives (pl.1) and seascapes. He was not highly valued in Holland, either during his lifetime, when he was often in debt, or after his death up to the nineteenth century. It is possible, however, that his work was understood and appreciated by artists like the French painter Chardin, in whose kitchen still lives from around 1730 a similar atmosphere can be seen. Van Beyeren's work was not appreciated until the Impressionist period, when people came to understand the artistic expression of broad brushwork.

Most of Van Beyeren's works are signed with the monogram AVB. Dated works are known from 1649 until 1667.¹ His paintings are present in many museums all over the world, notably those of Amsterdam, Budapest, Munich, Oxford, Paris and Saint Petersburg.

1) There are a few indistinctly dated works said to be of a later date



cat. no. XXIV

A Sumptuous Still Life with Precious Objects

A marble table, partly covered by an Eastern carpet, is placed before a grey wall with a niche to the left. We observe, from left to right, a cut melon, an ornamented lobed silver plate with three and a half peaches, a knife with an agate handle and a time piece, purplish brown and greenish grapes, a silver 'bekerschroef' (glass holder) with a rummer of white wine, an overturned silver gilt 'Hansje-in-de-kelder' (tazza), two plums, a façon-de-Venise glass goblet with rosé wine, a half round bread, a big Chinese blue-and-white vase on a narrow foot and decorated with figures within medallions, a Seville orange and a half peeled lemon with its peel dropping down the front of the carpet.

The painting may be dated between 1667 and 1670. It shows many similar details with works from 1666 and particularly one from 1667.² Both these paintings show the silver platter with the knife, a time piece, grapes with its foliage, a slightly cut melon, a half broken peach and a half-peeled lemon. The latter work also shows a similar wall, marble table and eastern carpet, an orange, and a glass goblet, though a different one. An identical glass goblet may be seen in a 1663 dated work with dead fowl,³ and on an indistinctly dated work with fowl, probably dated 1670.⁴ The lobed tazza is a rare object in Van Beyerens's oeuvre. It is present in a work in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.⁵ This lobed silver cup is, most probably, a 'Hans-in-de-kelder' (little-

John-in-the-cellar). When the cup is filled with wine, a small doll floats to the top through a little hole in the bottom. These bowls were used to congratulate a woman, and to wish her well when she announced that she was pregnant. The painting could, in fact, be an occasional piece, commissioned at the birth of a child, since the cup is lying on its side.

Van Beyerens painted the same object in several paintings. Other objects in the work we are discussing, however, can only be traced in very few pictures. That is the reason for a date after 1667. A 'bekerschroef' is a rare phenomenon in his works. A different one was in a sale in New York in 1985.⁶ I have not been able to trace the big Chinese pot in any other of his paintings.

The composition is reminiscent of Jan Davidsz. de Heem's, but the style is totally different. Abraham van Beyerens was a painter of the broad brush, which is rare in paintings of that period. He worked in a fluent manner, sometimes painting thickly in opaque paint, sometimes with broad passages of transparent glazing, with touches of impasto. His work has a directness and spontaneity that appeals to the modern age. His tonality is golden brown and velvety.

Sam Segal

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- 2) compare: M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, inventory no. M 86.96, canvas 138,5 x 115 cm
also: Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, inventory no. 52.23.2, canvas 141,5 x 120 cm
 - 3) compare: Rafael Valls Gallery, London 1987, canvas 77 x 58 cm
 - 4) compare: Galerie Julius Böhler, München, canvas 63 x 58 cm
 - 5) compare: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inventory no. A 3944, canvas 126 x 106 cm
 - 6) compare: Christie's, New York, 6th July 1985, no. 134, canvas 95 x 80 cm



Pl.1 Abraham van Beyeren, *A Still Life of Fish*
canvas 124 x 90 cm, signed with monogram
Private Collection