

Jan van Kessel

Antwerp ?, active 1644/45 - after 1660, Amsterdam ?

A Garland of Fruit around a Niche with a Roemer

Oil on panel
76 x 92 cm (30 by 36 1/2 in.)

Provenance:

Private Collection, Germany 1920's,
as by A. van Utrecht

Exhibitions:

The European Fine Art Fair, Maastricht 1994

Literature:

unpublished

For the financial year of 1644/45 the records of the Antwerp painter's guild twice mention the accession of a painter by the name of Jan van Kessel ¹. One of them, is specifically called a flowerpainter. He is no doubt the artist we now usually call Jan van Kessel the Elder (1626 - 1679), the well known follower and presumed pupil of Jan Brueghel the Younger. It is not likely that the other entry refers to the same painter; one paid the reduced fee asked of a master's son -- Jan

van Kessel I was the son of Hieronymus van Kessel I --, the other paid the full access fee.

In the oeuvre traditionally ascribed to Jan van Kessel I, a group of works can be distinguished which clearly deviates from the characteristic manner of the artist. Most of these are signed 'J.v.kesseL' in flowing letters and nine of them are dated between 1650 and 1661. This group consists of still lifes and in- and outdoor displays, in both of which fruit often plays a dominant role. In general, their coloring is more subdued, individual shapes are larger and heavier and textures have been rendered softer and less graphically defined than in Jan van Kessel the Elder's work. To this group of works, which counts -- including a number of unsigned works, previously attributed to a rather wide range of artists -- some twenty-six paintings, the present unsigned *Garland of Fruit* clearly belongs. I believe it is likely, that they can be identified as the work of the other Jan van Kessel inscribed as a master during the guild's financial year 1644/1645.² Because of their slightly more Dutch appearance, identity with the Dutch landscapist Jan van Kessel has been suggested at some point, but this should be ruled out, as that artist was born as late as 1641.

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- 1) Ph. Rombouts and Th. van Leries, *De Liggeren en andere historische archieven der Antwerpsche Sint Lucasgilde II, Liggere van 1629-1729. Inschrijvingsregistern van 1749-1794. Rekeningen van ontvangsten van 1629-1736*, Antwerp and The Hague 1876, pp. 155 and 162.
 - 2) I have assembled the present group of circa twenty-six works since I first realised that they fall outside the oeuvre of Jan van Kessel the Elder, in the mid 1980's. In 1992 I discovered the two entries in the Antwerp guild, leading to the assumption that the artist's first name is indeed Jan.
continue on following page



cat. no. XXX

From a stylistic point of view, these still lives are reminiscent of the work of Adriaen van Utrecht (1599 - 1652), rather than of the Brueghel-group, to which Jan van Kessel the Elder clearly belongs. In this respect it is not surprising, that the present painting was considered to be Van Utrecht's work for several decades. Even though he was not registered as such, the artist could have been a pupil of Van Utrecht. If we are looking for a stylistic relationship with any other artist, we can compare the work of this 'other' Jan van Kessel to that of Kerstiaen Luyckx, who became a master at Antwerp in the same year. Luyckx's teacher is unknown too.

In view of its relatively broad manner of execution, the present still life should probably be dated to the late 1650's; it is clearly reminiscent of a work of 1657, which was on the Dutch art market in 1958.³ The Netherlands Office for Fine Arts owns a strongly related signed *Garland of Fruit*.⁴

Fred G. Meijer

The suggestion that the artist may be identified with Hieronymus (Jerome) van Kessel the Younger (see sale Amsterdam, Christie's, 18 November 1993, lot 164) seems unfounded. There appears to be no record of such an artist. Rombouts and Van Lerijs (see note 1) call Jan the Elder's father Hieronymus II van Kessel (1578 - after 1635). The 'other' Jan van Kessel probably left Antwerp shortly after his accession to the guild, as there appears to be no further record of his presence in that city. Furthermore, it can be established that he was at Amsterdam by 1649. I hope to publish further data and a full catalogue of the artist's work shortly.

- 3) With F. Enneking, Amsterdam, reproduced in the guide of the fair Oude Kunst en Antiekbeurs, Delft, 1958.
- 4) Oil on canvas, 60 x 53 cm, Inv.no. NK 2404, deposited at the Municipal Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft.



Pl. 1 Adriaen van Utrecht, *A Still Life of Fruit*
Oil on panel 64 x 87 cm, Private Collection