

Foreword

An exhibition dedicated to still life painting through the ages, held in Paris in 1952, offered the French scholar, Charles Sterling, the opportunity to make some surprising assumptions as to the origin of the genre as an independent form of visual expression. Sterling appeared no longer to be satisfied with the references to the choir-stalls in Verona or Bergamo, or the marquetry which the Duke of Urbino ordered. Sterling dug much deeper into the past, back to the wall paintings of Pompei and their classical examples from even earlier centuries, to be found in Asia Minor and Egypt. In this process of development the role received a major set-back, but the result was such that interest was stimulated in Spain and Italy for the subject matter. Two Scandinavian scholars, Poul Gammelbo and Ingvar Bergström devoted themselves furthermore to the study of the intrinsic meaning, the hidden message of the still life. This goal finally led to a major exhibition in Münster and Baden-Baden which threw light on the still life as a social phenomenon. The show also promoted the understanding of the development of still life painting as an independent genre by the end of the sixteenth century, when still life painting liberated itself from its subordination to other genres of higher esteem like historical paintings. Obviously, the many inspiring thoughts which were formulated in the course of these explorations called for continuous exchange of ideas. Since then, many more exhibitions dedicated to still life painting have been presented and many more books on this subject have been published. But the large amount of material which presented itself all too quickly and became too awkward to be accepted by unanimous scholarly approval. Many more exhibitions followed, and impeachments became the rule especially in the field of Italian still life painting.

In the meanwhile, a great deal has been written about still life paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and many monographs have appeared in this field about artists formerly only known by name. Nowadays it has become possible to sketch their portraits rather more clearly. This increase in knowledge also posed questions as to the probable existence of international contacts which appeared increasingly manifest on the grounds of the expressive similarities of works of art produced simultaneously in a variety of places. Almost everywhere in Europe artists began painting still lives as independent subjects before the seventeenth century. The increase in knowledge also posed questions for scholars on the acceptance of a theory about an unexpectedly large collaboration between the master and his workshop. This appeared increasingly manifest on the grounds of the expressive differences in quality of art works produced.

We hope to intensify the numerous studies already existing and to add, if possible, a new aspect to this research. Our goal is to analyze and to understand better the complexities of the creative sharing activity between artists in a workshop and the various links between Northern and Southern still life painting, using material which was hitherto unpublished or little known. Leading art historians have contributed to the research.

The title of our joint venture *THE LURE OF STILL LIFE* alludes to a pleasure which hopefully is granted to the reader of this book and the visitor of our exhibitions.

Last but not least we are very happy to donate the entire proceeds of the catalogue sale to UNICEF and the International Red Cross.

Eckard Lingenauber