JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A still life of a jay perched on an upturned basket of strawberries; and companion picture, A blue tit by peaches, white currants and a fig.

£ POA

TOBIAS STRANOVER



REF: 374858

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Description

TOBIAS STRANOVERRomanian/English School1684-1756A still life of a jay perched on an upturned basket of strawberries; and companion picture, A blue tit by peaches, white currants and a fig.Oil on canvas, each signed with initials TB62.4 x 48.7 cms245/8 x 191/8 insOverall framed size 74.2 x 60.8 cms291/4 x 197/8 ins Tobias Stranover was one of the leading emigré decorative painters working in England in the early part of the eighteenth century and together with Jacob Bogdani, was one of the major artists specialising in the painting of exotic birds, wild life and fruit.He was born in 1684 in Sibiu which is situated in the foothills of the Transylvanian Alps in present day Romania and the capital of the wine growing region and was baptised on 10th July of that year.Little is known of his instruction in painting but his father Jeremiah was a local painter and probably gave his son his initial training. He was working as an artist in Sibiu before leaving and travelling around northern Europe staying in Dresden, Berlin and Amsterdam before coming to England in 1703.Jacob Bogdani, who was born in Eperies in modern day Slovakia in 1658, had come to England and by 1690 had a studio in Tower Street, St. Giles-in-the-Fields and his depiction of birds and fruit brought a lightness and exoticism to English still-life and animal paintings which were missing in the early English works of Marmaduke Cradock and Francis Barlow. Stranover came to know Bogdani and it is very likely that they shared a studio or even collaborated on paintings as there are so many similarities in their work. There are repeated uses of the same species of birds and types of fruit in both artists' paintings and a notable feature of them both is their keen attention to the eyes of the birds in which they give them a distinctive beadiness. Bogdani had studied numerous exotic species of birds in the Windsor aviary of Admiral George Churchill and he also had a collection of stuffed birds in his studio.Stranover set many of his bird paintings in landscapes, some in ornamental park settings, and in this avian assemblage would often combine exotic foreign species with the more recognisable prosaic native examples and would include differing sizes of both. His carefully constructed fruit pieces often portrayed peaches with the softness of the skin with its bloom meticulously rendered in paint and usually accompanied by a small bright songbird such as a blue tit or bullfinch. He must have made use of Bogdani's collection of taxidermy because some particularly distinctive birds appear in the work of both. In one of the former's bird paintings there are two ruffs and one of them is a prop in a Bogdani painting as is the case with a Muscovy duck. Although ruffs could be found in England, in particular on the Lincolnshire Fens and were available in some market stalls in London, they were still unknown to most of the population. In 1769, Thomas Pennant, the renowned zoological writer, travelled to the Fens not long after Stranover had painted this particular painting in order to observe them for himself.Melchior de Hondecoeter, the great Dutch Golden Age bird painter, had been a significant influence on British bird painting and the Dutch an...

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