JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A Still Life of game with a flintlock gun and game bag at the base of a tree; huntsmen by a lake in the distance

MICHIEL SIMONS

£ POA



REF: 374851

1

Description

London, England

+44 (0) 20 8748 1747

MICHIEL SIMONSDutch School1620-1673A Still Life of game with a flintlock gun and game bag at the base of a tree; huntsmen by a lake in the distanceOil on canvas, signed102.5 x 136.7 cms403/8 x 537/8 inchesOverall framed size 114.8 x 148.7 cms 451/4 x 585/8 ins Provenance: Ex collection Princes of Bethune Hesdigneul and Barons de Moreau A painter of flowers and game, Simons is sometimes referred to as Michiel Simons II to avoid confusion with an Antwerp flower painter of the same name who died in 1632.Surprisingly little is known of Simons II for an artist of such quality who depicted his subject matter with sensitivity and understanding. His known dated works span the period 1648 to 1663 but his place of birth was uncertain until recently when Antwerp seems now to be accepted. Previously there had been only one inventory from 1644 which suggested that he was born in Antwerp and undertook his artistic instruction there but nothing else had been found to corroborate this until new evidence was discovered. He was certainly in Antwerp between 1648 and 1652 working as a painter and tapestry designer but in 1653 he married Beerentje Kessels on 24th April in Utrecht and he remained in that city until his death on 20th May 1673.It is probable that Utrecht is where he spent his working life despite traces of an Antwerp influence discernible in the way he depicted his still life paintings and the landscapes which formed the background to some of these game pieces. However it is the Utrecht school which dominated stylistically. Simons' fruit and flower paintings show the influence of Ambrosius Bosscahert the Younger (1609-1645), the Amsterdam born flower and fruit painter who later worked in Utrecht. However, his less common hunting still life paintings, are somewhat reminiscent of the work of Jan BaptistWeenix.It is for his fruit and game still life, often in a quite large format, that Simons is best known. His fruit paintings sometimes feature a vase of flowers tucked among the fruit and the dead game works. When out in the open, these compositions feature the sky and a landscape which is slightly redolent of the Utrecht painter Jan Both who had travelled in Italy. Flower paintings were a major feature of mid-17th century painting in the Netherlands and works depicting game had been popular in Flanders since the first decade of that century exemplified by artists such as Frans Snyders (1579-1657) and Jan Fyt (1611-1661). Such works took longer to appeal to the Dutch painters and public and it was not until around 1650 that they gained popularity. Jan Baptist Weenix and the Utrecht school were leaders in this genre. Hunting had traditionally been the preserve of the aristocracy but with the burgeoning wealthy merchant class in Holland, this pastime had become more accessible to those with money rather than high birth. These new patrons of the arts, keen to display their achievements and new status, were probably part of the reason for the increase in hunting works. The Utrecht citizen Johan van Beverwijck wrote in 1651: "The partridge… has never been as common as other members of the p...

London, England

+44 (0) 20 8748 1747