



JACOB MARRELL

(Frankenthal 1613/4 - 1681 Frankfurt am Main)

"Flowers in a glass vase with a lizard and a sprig of cherries, on a stone ledge"

on panel: 49 x 35,5 cm; painted in the mid-1640s

Expertise: Fred G Meijer from the Netherlands Institute for Arthistory
RKD, The Hague (images no. 3343).



Provenance:

sale Sotheby's New York, May 1995; to Richard Green, London, inventory cat. no.17, 1996, with determination of the various flowers; (advertised in *Weltkunst* 70, 2000, no. 5, with ill); exhibited at TEFAF, Maastricht, March 2002; in sale Lempertz, Keulen, Nov. 2002; with Adam Williams Fine Art Ltd., New York City, exhibited at TEFAF, Maastricht, March 2010; private collection, USA; private collection, Belgium

Expertise:

Notes Fred Meijer, RKD: The German-born painter and art dealer Jacob Marrell was a pupil of the great Frankfurt still-life earliest Georg Flegel around 1627. By 1634 he had moved to Utrecht in the Netherlands, judging by one of his earliest dated works, now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, signed 'JACOBUS MARELLUS FECIT UTRECK 1634'. That still life of a flower vase demonstrates clearly that by then he had thoroughly studied works of the artists of the so-called Bosschaert dynasty working in Utrecht, specifically those of Ambrosius Bosschaert the Younger, whom he probably knew personally. The dead frog lying by the base of the vase in his Rijksmuseum still-life was a motif he copied from a small painting by Bosschaert which depicts only the frog. That work is now in the Frits Lugt collection (Fondation Custodia, Paris). Marrell worked mainly in Utrecht until 1650, painting still lifes of flowers and of fruit which were firmly rooted in that city's artistic traditions, although he is known to have produced a *Vanitas* painting in Frankfurt in 1637. Beginning in the late 1640s, Marrell's work also showed the influence of Jan Davidsz. de Heem; he occasionally copied or emulated that artist's still lifes. Although Marrell eventually returned to Frankfurt, where he lived and worked from circa 1650, he is recorded as having made return trips to Utrecht and met de Heem as he is known to have introduced his pupil Abraham Mignon to that great artist.

Tulips were a favourite subject for Marrell. He usually assigned them a leading role in his flowerpieces and he also produced several tulip books or catalogues, one of which is in the Reichsprinten kabinet, Amsterdam. In the present flowerpiece, two large tulips constitute the weight of the composition and with their bright white and red they catch the strongest light in the picture. Thus, they attract the eye, which is guided downwards across the smaller flowers, along the sprig of lily-of-the-valley, towards the small-scale drama of the dragonfly being threatened by a the lizard – a reptile which is a common element in Marrell's still lifes.

Similarly, the wide open poppy anemone facing the viewer in the centre of the bouquet is a recurrent feature in Marrell's flowerpieces, but is rarely found in the work of other artists. The depth of the bouquet is enhanced by the presence of smaller, blueish and greyish flowers on the second plane, pushing the bright red and yellow flowers forward.



Even though Marrell regularly dated his still lifes, it is not easy to propose a secure date for many of his undated works, as his style does not appear to have developed along a clearly definable line. Rather dense bouquets like the present one appear to originate mainly from the 1640s. Marrell's more loosely spaced flowerpieces of the late 1630s clearly precede this still life, whereas two equally dense flowerpieces from 1647 (a small panel with Richard Green Gallery in 1984 and a larger one with John Mitchell & Son in the early 1990s, illustrated in Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting 1600-1720*) appear to represent a following step in the artist's career, towards a type containing flowers of a more 'crisp' appearance. Consequently, it seems most likely that the present still life dates from the mid-1640s. It can be compared with a larger flowerpiece of similar composition, signed in monogram and dated 1645 (with E Slatter Gallery, London; exhibition April-July 1956, no.22).

Biographic notes:

Jacob Marrell was one of the greatest masters of the Utrecht and Frankenthal schools of still life painting, forming an important link between the Bosschaert dynasty and the Flemish tradition of Jan Davidsz. de Heem (1606-1683/4) and Daniel Seghers (1590-1661). He was also an accomplished draughtsman, engraver and art dealer.

He moved with his family to Frankfurt am Main in 1624, where he became a pupil of Georg Flegel (1566-1638) in 1627. During the early 1630s, Marrell moved to Utrecht where he was influenced by the Utrecht painters particularly the Bosschaert family and Roelandt Savery. During the late 1640s, he was also influenced by Jan Davidsz. de Heem.

In 1641, Marrell married Catharina Eliot and after her death in 1649, he returned to Frankfurt and married Johanna Sibylle Merian, widow of the famous engraver Mattheus Merian in 1651. During this period he had two pupils, his stepdaughter Maria Sibylle Merian and Abraham Mignon (1640-1679), with whom he returned to Utrecht circa 1659. He visited Frankfurt often and finally returned there where he died in 1681. The work of Jacob Marrell is represented among others in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.



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