



BALTHASAR VAN DER AST

(Middelburg circa 1593–1657 Delft)

Still life with tulips, roses and carnations in a Wan-Li porcelain vase with butterflies and insects.

Oil on panel.

Signed lower left: B. van der. ast. fecit.

30.9 × 26.1 cm.

Provenance: - Collection of Bus de Gisignies. - Auction of the estate of Bus de Gisignies, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 17.11.1947, Lot 15. - Collection of Fernand Stuyck. - Auction of the estate of Fernand Stuyck, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 7.12.1960, Lot 122. - European private collection. The painting offered here is a very fine example of Balthasar van der Ast's early work and shows the elegance of composition

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and colouring so typical of the artist. Van der Ast is considered to be one of the most important still life painters of 17th-century Dutch painting. His contribution to this genre consists of approximately 200 paintings in various formats, characterised by refinement and delicacy. Dr Fred G. Meijer, who confirms the authorship of our painting on the basis of a photograph, dates the work, in view of its stylistic features, to circa 1622–24.

Balthasar van der Ast settled in Utrecht in 1619, a city which from 1620 onwards was regarded as a new centre of still-life painting. How inspiring this period must have been for van der Ast is shown by the relatively large number of works he produced in the first half of the 1620s. The bouquet of flowers offered here belongs to a group of about 15 small-format floral still lifes in Wan-li vases. Comparable examples are a flower still life in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, dated 1623 (inv. no. A530, oil on panel, 30 × 24 cm; see Fred G. Meijer: *The Collection of Dutch and Flemish Still Life Paintings bequeathed by Daisy Linda Ward*, Oxford 2003, pp. 157-8, no. 7), a flower piece in a Wan-li vase in the Mauritshuis, The Hague, dated circa 1624 (inv. no. 1073, oil on panel, 42.5 × 32.5 cm) and a floral still life in the P. & N. de Boer Foundation, Amsterdam, dated 1622 (oil on panel, 28.5 × 20.5 cm; see Laurens J. Bol: *The Bosschaert dynasty: painters of flowers and fruit*, Leigh-on-Sea 1960, p. 69, no. 2). In this group of works, the influence of Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder (1573–1621) is evident, by whom a large number of floral bouquets in Wan-li vases are known, for example the still life in the Rijksmuseum dated 1619 (inv. no. A 1522, oil on copper, 31 × 22, 5 cm; see P. J. J. Van Thiel (et al.): *All the Paintings of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam*, 1976, p. 136, with illustration). Van der Ast knew how to create a particular atmosphere with his bouquets. They are airy and animated, the colouring subdued and delicate. While Bosschaert was still concerned with the exact reproduction of nature, van der Ast endeavoured to lend his compositions a feeling of elegance and intimacy, as the still life offered here exemplifies.

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