



ABRAHAM BOSSCHAERT
(Middelburg? 1612/13 – Utrecht 1643)

“Flowers in a glass base”

Oil on panel

63 cm. x 47 cm.

1635 ca.

This upcoming July and to welcome the summer we would like to present this colorful still life flower panel which shows the pictorial trends of the Dutch Golden Age.

This work was painted by Abraham Bosschaert, a Dutch artist who specialized in still lives and was part of a great saga of artists. According to the documentation of the time, experts believe that the artist was born in Middelburg between 1612 and 1613. In 1635, Bosschaert established his residence in Utrecht, where he would live and work until his death in 1643.

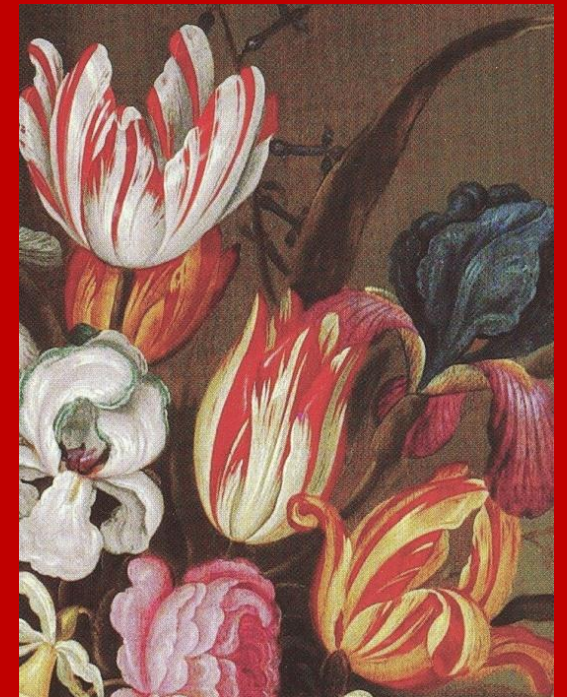
The painter's floral compositions tend to feature a vertical format and elegant painting and embellishment with the typical Flemish butterflies, lizards, flies, and seashells. However, despite including all these characteristics, Bosschaert's compositions generally give an austere impression; the colors used are strong and vivid against a gray or dark brown background which lets the color of the diverse flowers stand out. The painting showcases the traditional flowers of several seasons that are perfectly arranged in a simple glass vase. Just like his brother, the artist is visibly identifiable for his skills in painting tulips with great mastery. Flowers play an essential role in the art and culture of the golden age in the Netherlands. The artists who specialized in flowers, used their works to translate life's values and society's vanity. The flowers symbolize beauty, wealth, and luxury as well as ephemerality.



Floral works historically were known for their strong symbolism, mostly relating to the cult of the Virgin Mary, with certain flowers representing the purity of the Mother of God. This symbolism only came to change during the Dutch Golden Age, when religious symbolism was replaced by symbols reflecting the social, political, and economic attitudes of the time.

For example, in this work the viewer can see a wide range of flowers such as the white iris located on the left, which symbolizes Virgin Mary's pain. The pink peonies represent veracity and great beauty. The work also features the much-desired tulips.

By looking at this work by Bosschart, the viewer can clearly see examples of this type of tulip. The Dutch always exhibited a fascination for exotic flowers, growing them in their gardens as luxury goods and even paying very high prices for rare tulip bulbs such as 'flame petals,' which were a species of tulips with petals of two colors, an anomaly only caused by a virus attacking the bulb.



Still life paintings of flowers began to take a leading role with the appearance of the famous “tulip fever”, and the accompanying economic development. In the early seventeenth century, the tulip was still a novelty garden flower. However, historically, the flower dated back to the mid-sixteenth century where it was first seen by Gislaine of Busquecq, a tutor of a Hapsburg prince and plenipotentiary minister for Ferdinand I, in the Turkish Court in Constantinople. Busquecq ordered some of the seeds brought to be cultivated in the gardens of Eastern Europe. By the year 1630, as many as 140 varieties of the flowers had been developed through hybridization, with especially rare varieties sold for astronomical amounts. In effect, a tulip market emerged throughout The Netherlands (especially in Haarlem, Utrecht, Alkmar, Leiden, and Rotterdam), eventually reaching such grand scale that a stock market to organize the trade in the commodity was created. However, exchanges are private organizations that do not require the physical presence of a standardized good. Consequently, it proved particularly difficult to trade a good that could be easily lost or spoiled. As well, because the tulip fever’s popularity spread to many different social classes, a larger number of people took part in speculating. As a result, in 1637, the prices fell so rapidly that the state had to enact subsidizing measures to avoid ruin. However, no positive effect emerged from government efforts, and all of these factors helped bring about a massive market failure.



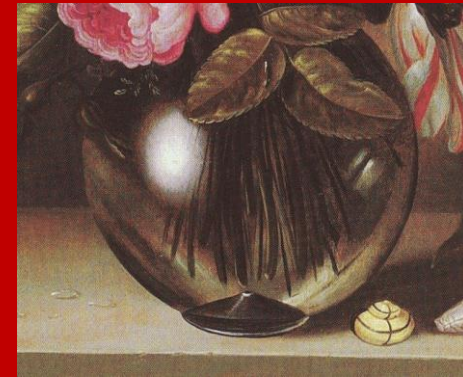
Bosschaert's characteristic use of insects and other small animals is also evidenced by the two dragonflies flitting around a vivid blue lily. These insects remind us again of ephemeral beauty, and serve to educate humans of the importance of cultivation of the spirit and to remind of the ephemeral nature of life.

The vase is made of glass, which refracts a light in great detail in the upper left corner.

This beam also passes through the glass and is reflected on the other side of the vase.



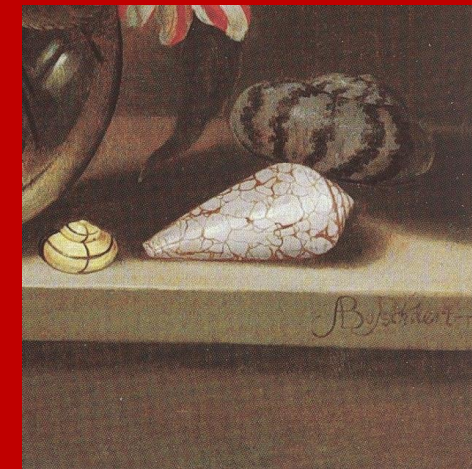
On this leaf we can appreciate the journey of a Caterpillar painted with much detail in a dark red, here also refers to the symbolism “the caterpillar is a symbol of life rising from rot...”



The table where the author sets the vase with the flowers is austere and made of wood, giving more importance to the flowers.

The seashells garnish the composition and symbolize wealth, luxury and vanity, as they were placed in the scene from some other location.

Lastly, in the lower right corner the work is visibly signed A. Bosschaert. The A is intertwined with a B, which serves to differentiate the signatures of the two Bosschaert siblings.



PROVENANCE

Matthiesen, Berlin, 1928 (n. 1263 stated in the label on the back of the painting; photograph in the archive of the R. K. of the Hague)

Private Collection, Germany

EXHIBITIONS

- Milan, “Collezioni d’Arte Antica, Moderna e Antiquariato”, Galería Luigi Caretto, from 5 to 9 of May 2010.
- Moscow, Moscow World Fine Art, Caretto & Cartategui Fine Art Gallery, December 2012.
- Madrid, Feriarte, 2013 Galería Soraya Cartategui

MUSEUMS

Abraham Bosschaert’s Works can be found in the Cambridge-Fitzwilliam Museum collection and Paris- Louvre Museum.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- L.J. Bol, The Bosschaert Dynasty. Painters of flowers and fruit, 1960, pg 91, n° 5
- Catálogo Masters of Middelburg-Waterman Gallery, Amsterdam, 1984
- Erika Gemar-Koeltzsch, Hollandische Stillebenmaler im 17 Jahrhundert, 1995, Vol II, pág 155-158.
- E. Benezit, Dictionnaire des peintres....., Volume 2 , 1999, pg. 629
- R. H. Wilenski, Flemish Painters, Faber, London, 1960, pg.50

NOTE

Our painting is the classical composition for which Bosschaert is known. The common difference between his still lives is the type of vase he uses to place the flowers that can vary from glass and porcelain vases to baskets. It is interesting to mention how the composition has a strong chromatic balance, which is reached by mixing different types of flowers together. The anecdotic detail is how the mosquitoes appear close to the flowers as well as the shells on top of the table.