KLAAS MULLER

J A N F Y T

Still life with Hare, Birds, Crustaceans and Fish

Besides Frans Snyders and Paul De Vos, Jan Fyt (or Joannes Fijt) was the most important Flemish animal painter of the 17th century. The painter came from a family from Sint-Niklaas and became a member of the Antwerp Sint-Luke Guild in 1630. After a long stay in Italy (Fyt was chairman of the "Bentvueghels" in Rome and stayed in Italy for 7 years) and a stop in Paris, Fyt returned around 1641 to Antwerp where he ran a successful studio. His most famous student was Peter Boel. The influence of Jan Fyt's style on later painting was important, especially in hunting still lifes showing hunting booty, a genre that Fyt took to a peak.

Our work has a deeper iconographic meaning than one might think at first glance: the birds are a metaphor for the sky, the hare (a very popular element in Fyts oeuvre) for the earth, the crustaceans and fish for water or the sea. Of course the vanitas element also comes into play

Fyt paints a work that is stylistically very modern and quite unconvincing; with broad brown tones, taking up space and a very loose touch. Unsurprisingly, after his stay in Italy he inspired Neapolitan masters such as Guissepe Recco (°1634), among others, and contributed a lot to the Italian still-life painting from the second half of the 17th century. It is not impossible that our work was painted in Italy or France: in his Antwerp period, Fyt's colour palette will become slightly lighter but his style will gradually become even looser and more unconventional.

His painterly touch is very typical and recognisable and can be called ‘dry’ and ‘stringy’. We also find this in Fyt's pupil Pieter Boel and later in Boel's most famous pupil David De Coninck.

During his career, Jan Fyt worked together with many well-known painters such as Erasmus Quellinus II, Jacob Jordans, Cornelis Schut and Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert.

We are grateful to Fred G. Meijer for confirming our work as an original work by Jan Fyt

Oil on canvas, 99 x 127cm



Literature

Edith Greindl: *Les peintres flamands de nature morte au XVIIe siècle*, Brussels 1956, p. 163, , ill. /

catalogue of the 12th Kunst- und Antiquitätenmesse Munich, Munich 1967, p. 75

Artist description:

Jan Fijt or Joannes Fyt was a Flemish Baroque painter of the Antwerp School and a pupil of Frans Snyders, draughtsman and etcher.

One of the leading still life and animaliers of the 17th century, he was known for his refined flower and fruit still lives, depictions of animals, garland painting and lush hunting pieces, and combinations of these subgenres, such as game, flowers and fish under a festoon of flowers. He was probably the master of the prominent Pieter Boel, who worked in a style very similar to that of Fyt. Jacob Jordaens also called on Fijt to add animals to his works.