

KLAAS MULLER

W I L L E M V A N A E L S T

Still Life with Fruits, a Tazza and a Silver plate

Willem van Aelst, one of the most refined still-life painters of the Dutch Golden Age, was renowned for his elegant compositions and masterful control of light and texture. In *Still Life with Fruits, a Tazza and a Silver Plate*, he presents a meticulously arranged ensemble of fruits and luxurious objects that are both sensually rich and symbolically layered.

On a white tablecloth rest ripe peaches, a yellow quince, a split-open pomegranate, and clusters of grapes — some placed on a silver plate, others elevated on a delicately engraved tazza. The gleam of the metal contrasts with the velvety skin of the fruit, while subtle reflections and shadows enhance the illusion of depth and realism. The dark background adds dramatic tension, allowing the colors of the fruit and silverware to stand out with vivid intensity.

Van Aelst's still lifes are far more than decorative displays; they often carry deeper meanings. The pomegranate, with its burst skin and glistening seeds, may symbolize transience, fertility, or even religious themes. The abundance of ripe fruit and precious materials reflects the wealth and sophistication of the patron, but also serves as a reminder of the fleeting nature of worldly luxury — a concept frequently explored in 17th-century vanitas imagery.

Having worked in Florence and Paris before settling in Amsterdam, Van Aelst brought a cosmopolitan elegance to his work. His still lifes are distinguished by their asymmetrical compositions, subtle palette, and near-photographic precision.

Oil on canvas

37,5 x 43cm

