

# KLAAS MULLER

V A N   H E L M O N T   M A T T H E U S

## **The Temptation of Saint Anthony**

In this dramatic and richly detailed painting, Mattheus van Helmont offers a visionary portrayal of Saint Anthony's spiritual ordeal. Set within a dark, rocky landscape, the saint is surrounded by grotesque monsters, ghostly apparitions, and fantastical figures—some sensual, others sinister—that seek to undermine his faith. A central figure in green robes appears to undergo a ritual, while the surrounding chaos evokes a surreal clash between divine resilience and infernal temptation.

Though rooted in religious tradition, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* became a popular subject in Flemish painting from the 16th century onward, especially among private collectors. The theme gave artists a creative license to depict bizarre creatures and seductive female figures, blending spiritual allegory with imaginative fantasy.

Van Helmont, known for his genre scenes and alchemical interiors, reveals his most theatrical side in this composition. With masterful use of light and shadow, he heightens the mystical atmosphere and emotional intensity of the scene.

