

light reflecting off the various textures of the objects and gave the whole immediacy by situating the table in the frontal picture plane. By placing the lemon rind, the pewter plates, and the black-handled knife over the table's front edge, he created the illusion that they actually protrude into the viewer's space. Although these compositional ideas had been current in Dutch and Flemish still-life painting from the first decades of the century, Heda utilized them here with unprecedented forcefulness and conviction.

Heda's selection of objects was carefully chosen to convey a general thematic message, one frequently encountered in still-life paintings of the time.⁵ The sensual pleasures of the feast and the luxuries of the world are only temporary and not eternal. The snuffed-out candle indicates not only the end of the meal, but also the transience of life itself.⁶ The same message is conveyed by the broken glass and the sheet of the almanac used to hold the pepper.⁷ Underlying these warnings were theological issues current in both Catholic and Protestant thought: sensual pleasures threatened to distract man from the message of Christ's sacrifice and from the overriding significance of God's word. Jan Davidsz. de Heem (q.v.), a Catholic artist, explicitly conveyed this Christian message by juxtaposing a crucifix with a luscious bouquet of flowers (fig. 2).⁸ De Heem included a text in his painting that laments that man does not observe the "most beautiful flower of all." The implication is that instead of focusing on the message of Christ's sacrifice, man is distracted by the temporal pleasures of flowers and luscious fruit.⁹ With Heda, the same idea is conveyed in a more subtle way. Here, while man has enjoyed the pleasures of exotic spices, rich meats, and oysters¹⁰ and dined with expensive and finely wrought objects made of rare materials, he has overlooked the most fundamental nourishment of all, the simple roll in

the foreground. Given the central placement of the roll on a plate that extends into the viewer's space, and the fact that it has traditional eucharistic connotations, its untouched state is neither accidental nor without iconographical significance.¹¹

Notes

1. An unusual feature of this painting is this unidentified monogram. It does not appear to be an artist's monogram. Dr. Pieter Biesboer, curator, Frans Halsmuseum, Haarlem, has suggested (verbally) that it is the mark of the linen maker.

2. See Vroom 1980, 1: no. 335, fig. 71 (private collection, the Netherlands), signed and dated 1632; no. 340, fig. 74 (Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam), signed and dated 1634; no. 341, fig. 67, (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), signed and dated 1634.

3. Inv. no. A 4830, acquired in 1984, oil on wood, 88 x 113 cm. The other 1635 dated picture where the tazza appears was auctioned at Sotheby's, New York, 10 January 1991, no. 66.

4. Vroom 1980, 1: no. 340.

5. For a discussion of these issues see Wheelock in Washington 1989a, 11–25.

6. Cats 1629, 1: section title "Emblemata Moralia et Aeconomica," Emblem XX, "Liceat Sperare Timenti." I would like to thank Quint Gregory, a graduate student at the University of Maryland, for calling my attention to this emblem.

7. See Delft 1988, 137.

8. Alte Pinakothek, Munich, inv. no. 568.

9. See the entry on De Heem's *Flowers with Crucifix and Shell* in Washington 1988, cat. 33, 136–138.

10. Oysters were seen as a potent aphrodisiac. For a discussion of the meaning of oysters in Dutch art see Cheney 1987, 135–158.

11. This interpretation was first suggested to me by Quint Gregory. Similar ideas are found in still-life paintings by Pieter Claesz. See Lowenthal 1986b, 188–190. See also Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., "Introduction," in Winterthur/Washington 1989, 26; and also 50, cat. 11.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem

1606–1683/1684

JAN DAVIDSZ. DE HEEM was born in Utrecht to a Catholic family. He received his early training with his father, David de Heem the Elder (1570–1632), who was also a painter. In 1626 he moved to Leiden where he married his first wife, Aletta van Weede, a native of Utrecht. Nearly a decade later, in

1635, De Heem moved to Antwerp and entered its Saint Luke's Guild. A year after the death of Aletta in 1643, the painter married Anna Ruckers, a native of Antwerp. Although he would spend many years in her hometown, De Heem also spent periods of time in the north. In addition to an extended stay in

Utrecht in 1649, he also resided there between 1667 and 1672; he rejoined its painter's guild in 1669. Following the French invasion of the city in 1672, De Heem returned to Antwerp, where he lived until his death in 1683 or 1684.

The few works known from De Heem's first Utrecht period resemble those of the still-life painter Balthasar van der Ast (q.v.). While active in Leiden, De Heem painted tonal still lifes with vanitas subjects—books, writing and smoking implements, musical instruments, skulls, and hourglasses—that relate to works by contemporary Leiden artists David Bailly (1584–1657) and Harmen Steenwijck (1612–after 1656). Following his move to Antwerp, the work of Flemish still-life painter Daniel Seghers (1590–1661) provided an important model for De Heem. His compositions became more elaborate, and he depicted bouquets and garlands of flowers, baskets of fruit, and other motifs, such as glasses, insects, and illusionistically painted drapery. Occasionally he incorporated background views to a distant landscape or seascape.

During his long and productive career De Heem was especially admired for the realistic way he painted gold and silver. His paintings vary from small cabinet pieces to large banquet paintings containing luxurious *pronk* objects. He also is known to have collaborated with other painters, including Jan Lievens (1607–1674). Among his many students and followers were Abraham Mignon (q.v.), Cerstiaen Luyckx (1623–after 1674), and Joris van Son (1623–1667).

Bibliography

Houbraken 1753, 1: 209–212.
Bergström 1956: 191–228.
De Mirimonde 1970.
Bergström 1988.
Meijer 1988b.
Delft 1988: 141–164.
Bok 1990.
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1961.6.1 (1649)

Vase of Flowers

c. 1660
Oil on canvas, 69.6 x 56.5 (27³/₈ x 22¹/₄)
Andrew W. Mellon Fund

Inscriptions

At lower left on parapet: *J. D. De Heem f.*

Technical Notes: The support, a medium-weight, plain-weave fabric with irregularly spun threads, has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Cusping is visible along all edges.

Paint is applied over a thin, smooth off-white ground in thin, liquid layers blended wet into wet. Outer flowers are painted over the dark background, while the central bouquet is painted directly over the white ground. The red-and-white poppy is painted over a light green underlayer. Reserves were left for details when final glazes were applied. Thin glazes are slightly abraded. Small losses in the background have been retouched. No major treatment has been carried out since acquisition.

Provenance: Baron Edmond de Rothschild [1845–1934], France. Mr. McIntosh, Bridge Allen, Scotland.¹ (William Hallsborough Gallery, London, 1958). (Fritz Nathan and Peter Nathan, Zurich, 1959); (Paul Rosenberg & Co., New York, in 1961).

Exhibited: *Exhibition of Fine Paintings and Drawings of Four Centuries*, William Hallsborough Gallery, London, 1958. *Jan Davidsz de Heem en zijn Kring*, Centraal Museum, Utrecht; Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, 1991, no. 30. *The Age of the Marvelous*, Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, 1991, no. 157.

THE EXTRAORDINARY DELIGHT the Dutch and Flemish took in the richness of the visual world is nowhere better expressed than in the flower paintings of Jan Davidsz. de Heem. In his *Vase of Flowers*, the brightly colored blossoms, fruits, vegetables, and grains that seem to burst forth from the glass vase are painted with such sensitivity that they seem almost alive. Whether it be in the translucency of the petals, the sheen of dew drops on the leaves, or the minute insects that crawl about the stems and blossoms, De Heem has exerted painstaking care to capture the very essence of the still-life elements that make up his composition.

While De Heem's concern with illusionism was shared by other still-life painters, none matched his ability to convey a sense of organic life. Poppies, tulips, roses, wheat, and peas reach out in dynamic rhythms, while insects crawl and flutter about as though the air around them were rife with the varied smells of the richly laden bouquet. Through his artifice, De Heem has allowed the viewer not only to enjoy the beauty of the individual forms but also to imagine the richness of their fragrances. He has done so, moreover, with an arrangement of flowers, fruits, and vegetables that would never have been placed together in the same bouquet, for they grow at different seasons of the year.

While De Heem's ability to capture the full range of one's sensual experiences in appreciating flowers is exceptional, the underlying attitude in his work