NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Ast, Balthasar van der

Dutch, 1593/1594 - 1657

BIOGRAPHY

Balthasar van der Ast was born in Middelburg. The date of his birth is not recorded, but legal documents indicate that Balthasar reached the age of maturity (twenty-five) between June 30, 1618, and September 13, 1619. He had been orphaned when his father, Hans, a wealthy widower, died in 1609. Balthasar then may have lived with his older sister Maria and her husband, the still-life painter Ambrosius Bosschaert (Dutch, 1573 - 1621), whose work had an impact on the precise technique and symmetrical compositions of Van der Ast's early paintings. Van der Ast seems to have accompanied his brother-in-law when he moved from Middelburg to Bergen op Zoom in 1615 and then to Utrecht the following year.

In 1619 Van der Ast joined the Saint Luke's Guild in Utrecht. While there he probably trained Bosschaert's three sons after their father died in 1621. He also taught Jan Davidsz de Heem (Dutch, 1606 - 1684). Influenced by the Utrecht painter Roelandt Savery (Dutch, 1576 - 1639), Van der Ast began to paint in a softer, more atmospheric manner and to animate his still lifes with small animals and insects. In 1632 he moved to Delft and joined the Saint Luke's Guild there. Although most of his still lifes are modest in scale, he painted a number of larger canvases during his Delft period that reflect a looser style. Van der Ast married Margrieta Jans van Buijeren in Delft on February 26, 1633; the couple had two children. Van der Ast died in December 1657 and was buried in the Oude Kerk in Delft.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

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