

# HOOGSTEDER & HOOGSTEDER

*Specialists in Old Master Paintings. Trade - Consultancy - Art Historical Research - Exhibitions - Loans.*

JOHANNES FIJT  
(1611 - Antwerp - 1661)  
AND JOHANNES HERMANS named MONSU AURORA  
(active in Antwerp and Rome, before 1654 - after 1665)

*Fruit Still Life with Hunt Bag,  
a Parrot, a Cat and a Dog*

canvas, 113 x 129 cm

Painted : c. 1640-50  
Attribution : Fred G. Meijer  
Provenance : D. Hermsen Collection, The Hague;  
Sale Amsterdam (F. Muller), 28 June 1960, lot no. 32;  
Private collection.  
Literature : general about Jan Fijt:  
E. Greindl, *Les peintres flamands de nature morte au XVIIe siècle*, Sterrebeek 1983, pp. 95-107;  
general about Johannes Hermans:  
F. Zeri, *La natura morta in Italia*, Milano 1989, vol. II, pp. 797-801.

## *Biographies*

### **Jan Fijt**

We are well informed about the life of the famous animal and still-life painter Jan Fijt. He was the son of the merchant Peter Fijt and Esther de Meere and was baptized on 15 March 1611 in Antwerp. He received his training from Hans van den Bergh and the well-known Flemish still-life painter Frans Snijders.

In 1630 Fijt became a member of the Antwerp St Luke guild of painters. A year later he left the city to travel via Paris to Rome and Venice. The painter returned to Antwerp in 1641, but again only stayed there for a short period. In the following year namely he got a visa to travel to Holland. After his return he married Johanna van den Zande in 1654 and from then on lived and worked in Antwerp.

Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder BV  
Lange Vijverberg 15  
2513 AC The Hague, The Netherlands  
tel. +31 (0) 70 361 55 75  
fax +31 (0) 70 361 70 74

www.hoogsteder.com  
info@hoogsteder.com  
KvK nr. 119 670 – vat,  
btw NL.009 290 692 B01  
Member VHOK, CINOA

# HOOGSTEDER & HOOGSTEDER

*Specialists in Old Master Paintings. Trade - Consultancy - Art Historical Research - Exhibitions - Loans.*

Jan Fijt specialized in still lifes. Surveying his oeuvre it is apparent that within this genre the artist painted a large variety of pictures. In contrast to many other 17th-century painters, who restricted themselves to only one specific subject - such as an "ontbijtje" ("breakfast"), a fruit still life or a vanitas still life - Jan Fijt combined several subjects within one painting.

## **Johannes Hermans named Monsu Aurora**

The earliest mention of Johannes (or Joannes) Hermans dates from 1644 when he started his training with Adriaen Willenhoudt in Antwerp. From 1657 until at least 1665 he was in Rome, where he cooperated in the decoration of the Palazzo Doria Pamphili. In Italy he was nicknamed *Monsù Aurora*.

Hermans specialized in still lifes. From his Antwerp period only one signed painting is known (see further in the text and ill. 2), which is based on different Antwerp examples. The still lifes he made in Italy show the influence of painters such as David de Coninck, Giovanni Paolo Castelli and Pietro Navarra. For Don Camillo Pamphili Sr. he painted one large and 38 small still lifes with birds, five of which have been preserved there.

### *Fruit Still Life with Hunt Bag, a Parrot, a Cat and a Dog*

The first impression of this still life by Jan Fijt is already imposing because of its baroque beauty, the careful rendering of texture and the rich use of colour. On a tabletop beside a classical column a large wicker basket is placed containing several kinds of fruit. Near it we see a precious porcelain bowl with wild strawberries which were both then and now a true delicacy. The fruit still life is combined with dead game in the form of a hare and two partridges. A dog and a cat clearly have their eyes on the hare, while a tufted parrot watches conceitedly.

The painting makes a rich impression with its exuberant colours and great variety of objects and animals. The manner of painting is also flamboyant. The animals in particular are painted with quick accurate brushstrokes and thus not only seem very realistic but also very lively. The upper and lower edge of the still life are handsomely framed by a broadly hung curtain and a rich tablecloth, which have both been painted in the same deep shade of green. Another picture by Fijt which is similar in composition dates from the 1640s and is in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (ill. 1). The painting discussed here can probably also be dated in the same period.

As was custom in Flemish painting at the time, Jan Fijt closely cooperated with his pupils and other assistants in his studio. Such a cooperation between master and

Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder BV  
Lange Vijverberg 15  
2513 AC The Hague, The Netherlands  
tel. +31 (0) 70 361 55 75  
fax +31 (0) 70 361 70 74

[www.hoogsteder.com](http://www.hoogsteder.com)  
[info@hoogsteder.com](mailto:info@hoogsteder.com)  
KvK nr. 119 670 – vat,  
btw NL 009 290 692 B01  
Member VHOEK, CINOA

# HOOGSTEDER & HOOGSTEDER

*Specialists in Old Master Paintings. Trade - Consultancy - Art Historical Research - Exhibitions - Loans.*

pupil often occurred in the 16th and 17th century. In Antwerp for instance the studio of Rubens was a well-known institution with a strict allocation of tasks. The master put the outlines of the composition on the canvas and painted the most essential parts of the picture. The rest of the painting was subsequently done by one or more pupils. However, the master kept the ultimate responsibility for the finished picture and the painting always left the studio in his name.

In this painting the tasks have also been divided. The composition as a whole is an invention of the master himself, who also painted prominent parts of the picture, such as the beautifully rendered dead hare, the two partridges and the nosy dog. The finish of the painting was left to a studio assistant. Usually this assistant remained anonymous, but in this case he has been successfully identified as Johannes Hermans. In a signed and dated work from 1653 by this Antwerp painter the same tufted parrot can be seen while the fruit is also rendered in an almost identical manner (ill. 2). Until now it was not known that Hermans worked in Fijt's studio, but the painting discussed here is convincing proof.

This type of flamboyant and colourful hunt still life was very popular in Flanders. In the 18th and 19th century English collectors in particular were attracted by this genre.

## Illustrations

- 1 Jan Fijt, *Still Life of Fruit with the Result of the Hunt*, signed and dated 164(4 or 7?). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 2 Johannes Hermans, *Still Life of Fruit, Flowers and a Buste of Ceres*, canvas, 119 x 174 cm, signed and dated *J Hermans / 1653*. Location unknown.

Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder bv  
Lange Vijverberg 15  
2513 AC The Hague, The Netherlands  
tel. +31 (0) 70 361 55 75  
fax +31 (0) 70 361 70 74

www.hoogsteder.com  
info@hoogsteder.com  
KvK nr. 119 670 – vat,  
btw NL 009 290 692 B01  
Member VHOK, CINOA

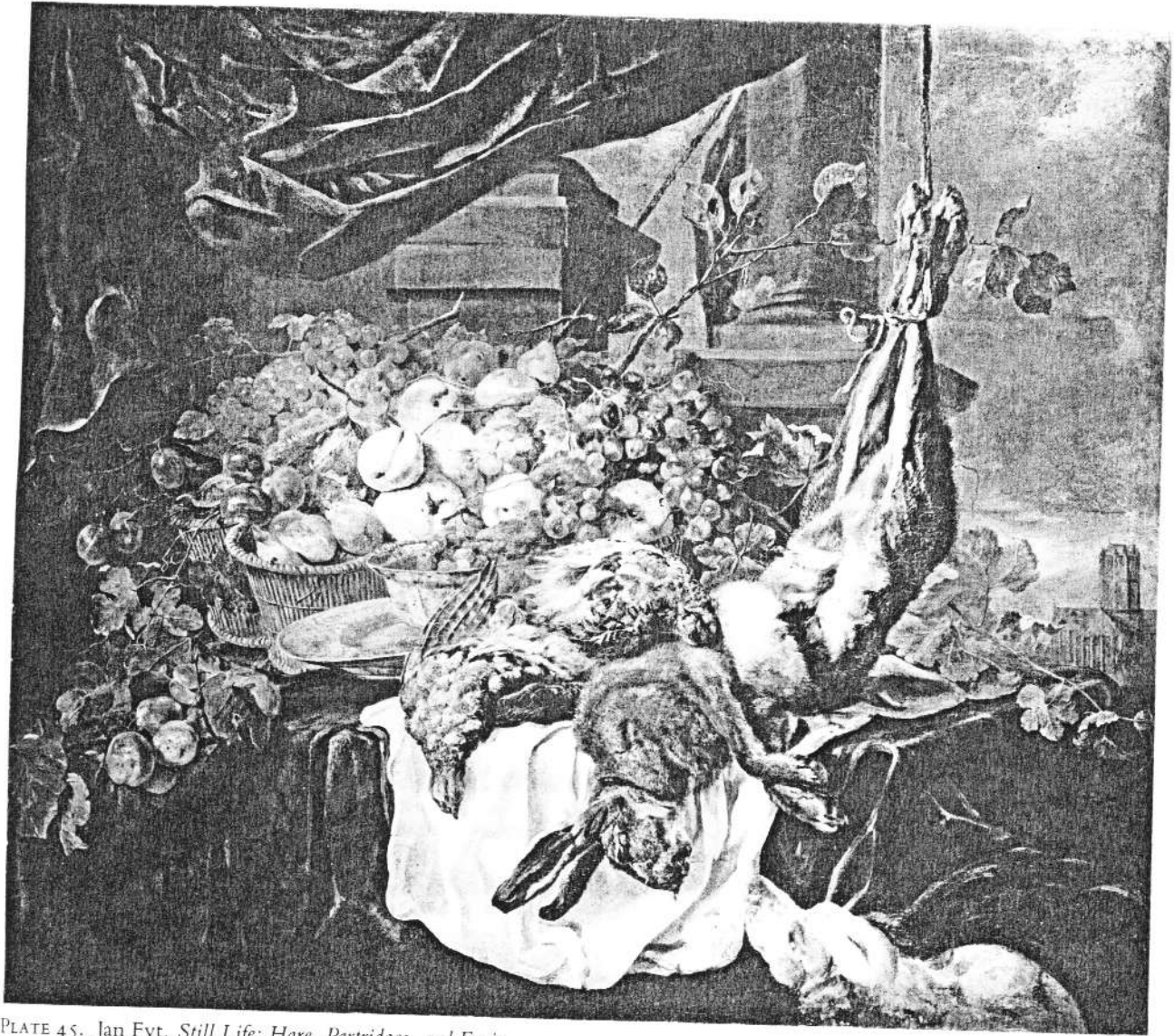


PLATE 45. Jan Fyt. *Still Life: Hare, Partridges, and Fruit*

