

COLNAGHI

Pedro de Camprobin
Pair of Vases with Flowers, 1667



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PEDRO DE CAMPROBIN
(Almagro 1605 - 1674 Sevilla)

PAIR OF VASES WITH FLOWERS, 1667

oil on canvas
62 x 45 cm; 24 3/8 x 17 3/4 in (both).

Both signed on the table: "Po de Camprobin Passano 1667 als. / Po de Camprobin Passano [...]67"

Provenance

Private collection

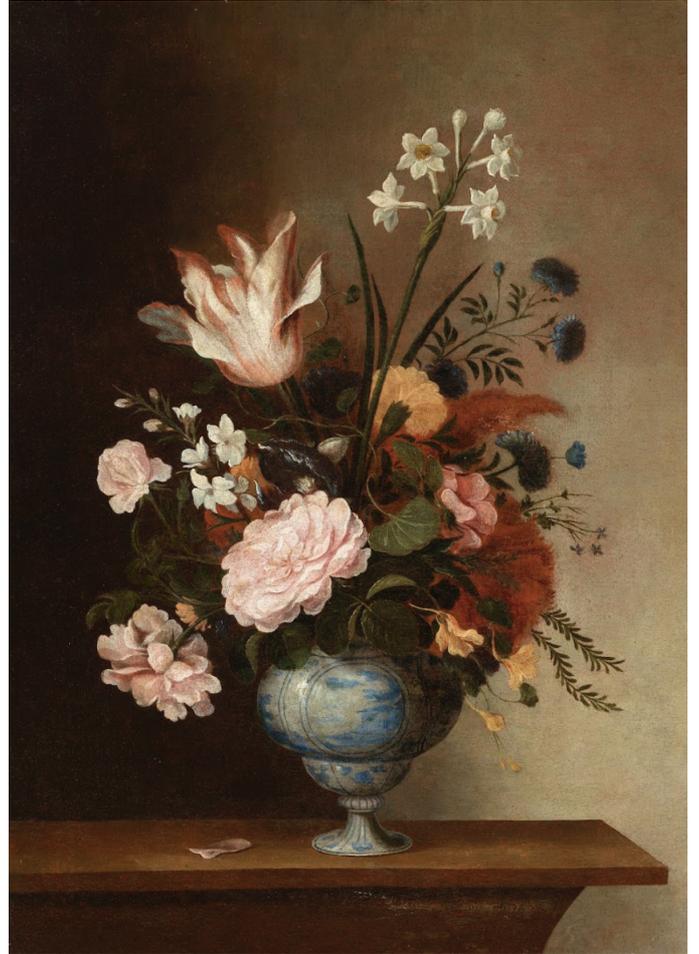
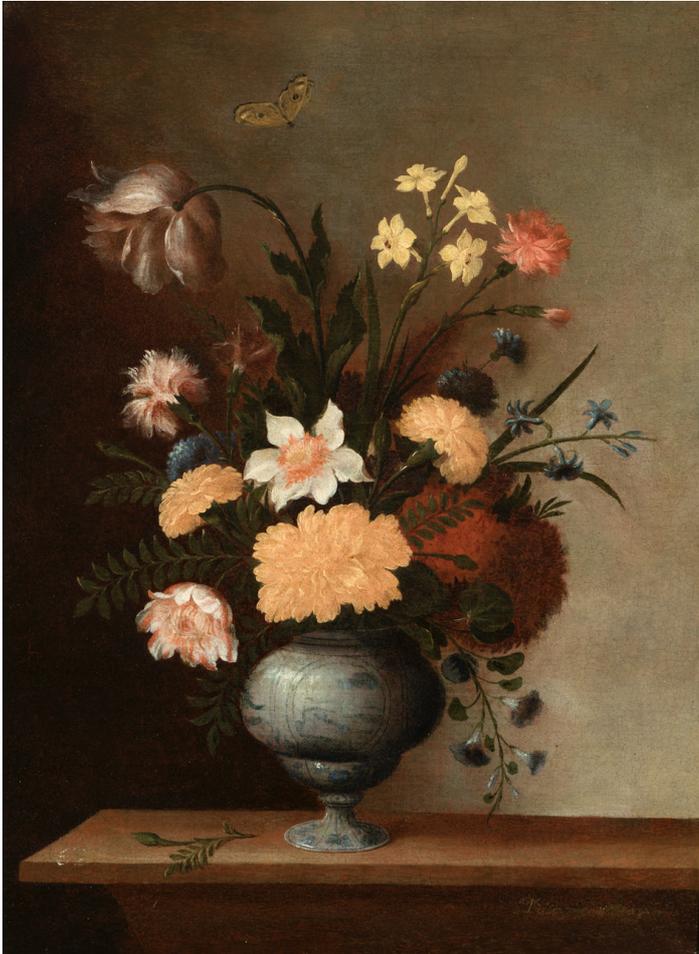
Literature

A. Marí, F. Q. Corella, J. Y. Gaso et al. *Incólume. Bodegones del Siglo de Oro*, exh. cat., Barcelona 2015, pp. 92-95 and pp. 134, reproduced.

Exhibited

Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, *Incólume. Bodegones del Siglo de Oro*, 9 October 2015 - 28 February 2016.

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These two bouquets, arranged in blue-and-white ceramic vases and placed on simple wooden ledges, belong to the refined tradition of floral still life developed in Seville and Madrid in the mid-seventeenth century. Each composition rises in a loosely pyramidal spray against a softly modulated ground: lilies, tulips, peonies, gladioli, carnations in red, yellow and purple, zinnias, cornflowers and other blossoms intermingle with feathery foliage, their colours ranging from warm creams, pinks and yellows to cooler blues and greens. The touch is light and controlled, attentive to the differing textures of petals, leaves and stems and to the gentle fall of light that models their forms. Small incidental details - the butterfly hovering above the bouquet in the left-hand canvas and the single fallen petal in the right-hand one - introduce a note of immediacy and accentuate the sense of transient natural beauty. The angle of vision is deliberately low, reflecting the fact that both paintings were conceived to hang above doorways or windows.

The blue-glazed vases, associated with the pottery of Talavera de la Reina, serve as anchoring elements and a unifying visual motif within the pair. Such vessels appear frequently in Sevillian and Madrilenian flower pieces from the 1640s onwards. Here, the ledges set parallel to the picture plane provide a sober architectural support that counterbalances the more animated rhythms and subtle asymmetries of the blooms above.

The pictures are by Pedro de Camprobín, as indicated by the signatures at the base of each canvas and confirmed by the style and by a number of recurring features in his floral oeuvre. The selection of flowers is relatively restrained yet highly elegant, a characteristic that enhances the refined character of his still lifes and helps to explain the effective monopoly he enjoyed in the field of flower painting in contemporary Seville. Camprobín's bouquets seem to "breathe": they are surrounded by air and imbued with a quiet, contemplative atmosphere, far removed from the densely packed arrangements of objects and accessories favoured by Juan de Arellano and other painters working for the court.

The bunches of flowers are rendered with descriptive precision, the product not only of Camprobín's refined draughtsmanship but also of his subtle and varied handling of colour. Camprobín habitually chose luxurious receptacles for his bouquets in order to heighten what might be termed the "humble richness" of nature's garden. In so doing he sets up a suggestive interplay of concave and convex curves and, as in other works, deliberately avoids metal - especially bronze - vessels in favour of sumptuous china, much as Juan de Zurbarán did in some of his still lifes. He generally places the vases centrally within the composition but close to the edge of a table or shelf, either as independent works or, as here, as one of a pair conceived as a single decorative ensemble.

Whereas in other compositions he sometimes introduces a landscape or architectural background, in this instance Camprobín opts for a neutral ground, consistently shading the left-hand side and illuminating the right in both canvases. These flower pieces, though undoubtedly intended to gratify the eye and to decorate an interior, are nonetheless open to religious or metaphorical readings. From a strictly botanical perspective, such arrangements would be considered artificial, since they bring together species that bloom at different times of the year. Combined with the absence of human figures and a slight air of neglect, the fragile butterfly, the scattered petals and the fallen stalk with a budding flower on the table subtly allude to the fleeting nature of earthly pleasures and the transience of life.

COLNAGHI

COLNAGHI *London*

26 BURY STREET, LONDON SW1Y 6AL
UNITED KINGDOM

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM-6PM

+44 (0)20 7491 7408

contact@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *Madrid*

CALLE GENERAL CASTAÑOS 9
PLANTA BAJA, DCHA.
28004 MADRID

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
BY APPOINTMENT

spain@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *New York*

23 EAST 67TH STREET, FOURTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10065
USA

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM-6PM

+1 (917) 388-3825

newyork@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *Brussels*

RUE JACQUES JORDAENS 30
1000 BRUXELLES
BELGIUM

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

brussels@colnaghi.com