

# COLNAGHI



JAN VERMEULEN

(active in Haarlem before 1652 - in or after 1655)

*VANITAS STILL LIFE with a Skull, an Hourglass, Money Bags, a Crown, a Watch, a Telescope, Spectacles, a Violin, a Flute, a Candle, a Manuscript, and Other Objects, on a Black Cloth with a Gold Trim, Covering a Stone Plinth*

signed lower right: 'J. vanderMeulen'

oil on panel

69.3 x 55.9 cm.; 27¼ x 22 in.

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## Provenance

Anonymous sale, Laren N.H., Christie's, 28 October 1975, lot 280;  
Private Collection, UK.

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LONDON

NEW YORK

MADRID

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Very little is known about prolific Dutch still-life painter Jan Vermeulen. A painter 'Johannes van der Moolen' is registered for the first time in the Haarlem guild records in 1651, and vanitas still lifes by 'Vermeulen' are found in Haarlem inventories from 1652. He clearly specialised in *vanitas* still lifes, of which the present work is a fine example. He appears to have been a leading vanitas painter in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Haarlem and his works were highly regarded for their immaculate realism. Here we see the artist's remarkable ability to replicate the effects of light on various surfaces, absorbed by the smooth, porous surface of the bone and dry, curling papers while in contrast reflecting brightly from the gleaming watch and the jewelled crown with its shimmering pearls.

In the present painting, the skull, hourglass, extinguished candle and pocket watch all reinforce the inscription that is illuminated on the manuscript in the centre: *mors omnia vincit*, 'death conquers all'.

A similar work by Vermeulen, which replicates certain objects in the present painting, was sold in New York, Sotheby's, 31 January 2013, lot 149 for \$98,500.