

# COLNAGHI



Joris Van Son  
*A still life of a Swag of Fruit, 1655*

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JORIS VAN SON

(Antwerp 1623 – 1667)

*A STILL LIFE of a Swag of Fruit hanging before a stone Alcove containing a Roemer,*  
1655

Oil on canvas

53.8 x 45.5 cm .; 21 1/4 x 17 13/4 in.

Signed and dated in the stone cartouche (upper centre): *J. Van son f./1655*

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## **Provenance**

Private collection, Scotland, until 2021;

Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, London, 9 December 2021, lot 149;

With Johnny Van Haeften;

Private collection London.

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A superb example of mid-17th century Flemish still life painting, this work demonstrates the refined sensibility and technical sophistication of Joris van Son, one of the most accomplished followers of Jan Davidsz. de Heem. Suspended from a stone surround by elegant blue ribbons, a swag of fruit - including grapes, apricots, peaches, medlars, and wild berries - is rendered with exquisite attention to detail and texture. A large glass roemer, half-filled with white wine, sits within the recessed alcove, while a cockchafer beetle and a cabbage white butterfly lend a note of naturalistic animation. A similar yet more elaborate arrangement can be found in Van Son's *Allegory on Human Life*, now at the Walters Art Museum (fig. 1).

Though not formally documented as a pupil of de Heem, van Son's style was heavily influenced by the Utrecht-born master, evident in his use of compositional devices, sophisticated colour harmonies, and illusionistic effects. This work is a fine example of van Son's smaller-format fruit still lifes, which he began to produce in greater number during the 1650s - likely for the open market. Notably, the Antwerp dealer Matthijs Musson acquired several such works for export to Paris between 1657 and 1658.

The painting exhibits the artist's exceptional ability to depict a variety of textures - from the milky bloom of grapes and the velvety skins of peaches to the reflective surface of the roemer glass, which captures the light from the studio window. The carved stone niche, inscribed with the artist's name and date, enhances the trompe l'œil illusion, further accentuated by fruit that appears to project beyond the painted stonework and into the viewer's space.

Such details, alongside the finely calibrated colour palette of warm reds, golds, and greens, underscore van Son's reputation among his contemporaries as a master of fruit and flower painting. According to the 17th-century chronicler Cornelis de Bie, van Son's talent was comparable to that of the sun itself - a poetic play on his surname.

Joris van Son was born in Antwerp in 1623 and baptised at the Church of Our Lady. Though his early training remains undocumented, he joined the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke in 1643 and was active as both a painter and teacher. He trained several pupils, including Jan Pauwel Gillemans II, and his work was admired by fellow artists and collectors alike. Van Son died in Antwerp in 1667 and was buried in the Cathedral of Our Lady.

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Fig. 1. Joris van Son, *Allegory on Human Life*, c. 1658-1660, oil on canvas, 124.7 x 92.7 cm. Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum.

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