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Juan van der Hamen,
Still Life with Basket of Fruit, 1622-1623

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JUAN VAN DER HAMEN
(Madrid 1596 - 1631)

STILL LIFE WITH BASKET OF FRUIT, 1622-1623

Oil on canvas.
55 x 104 cm; 21 5/8 x 41 in.

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. 50-52 and p. 126, reproduced.

Exhibited

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

On long-term loan to the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya until 2024.



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This controlled bodegón, attributable to Juan van der Hamen in his early Madrid years, compresses the entire arrangement into the narrow ledge of a stone windowsill. The side jambs are omitted, reducing the setting to a shallow stage and directing attention wholly to the objects. At the centre sits a wicker basket filled to excess with velvety peaches, two of which have rolled forward to occupy the space directly before it with deliberate precision.

On either side, fruit-laden stalks hang from thin cords: to the left, five blushed pears; to the right, a cluster of pale, translucent grapes rendered with precise observation of their powdery bloom and the fall of light across the skins. At the lower left, fig leaves and ripe figs fill the remaining space on the ledge, preventing any sense of visual vacancy and filling every part of the composition, as is typical of his works from this period.

The composition follows the scheme Van der Hamen developed between 1622 and 1624: a central basket, pendant motifs at the flanks, and calibrated intervals of negative space. Comparable works include *Still Life with Basket of Fruit and Birds* (private collection, 1622) and *Basket of Peaches, Figs and Hanging Grapes* (Naseiro Collection, c. 1623, Fig. 1). The treatment of the peaches and the glassy skin of the grapes aligns closely with both. The inclusion of leaves on the hanging stalks connects the picture to Van der Hamen's early engagement with the austere naturalism of Juan Sánchez Cotán, a device he abandoned after 1626 when he adopted more elaborate, shelf-based structures.

This compositional model - a central basket bracketed by hanging fruit - quickly gained traction among other still-life painters. Alejandro de Loarte adapted it in his signed *Still Life with a Basket of Grapes and Fruit* (Arango Collection, 1624), albeit with markedly different handling. Miguel de Pret employed the same underlying structure in his *Still Life with Basket of Plums, Figs and a Melon on a Windowsill with Peppers, Grapes and Hanging Quinces* (Abelló Collection). Its rapid uptake indicates how strongly Van der Hamen's formula influenced the development of Spanish still life in the early seventeenth century.

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Fig. 1. Juan van der Hamen, *Basket of Peaches, Figs and Hanging Grapes*, c. 1623, oil on canvas. Naseiro Collection.

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