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Est. 1760



Franciscus Gysbrechts

(Antwerp, 1649 – after 1676)

A trompe l'oeil of a wall cabinet with a violin, a hunting horn, writing implements, silver gilt dishes and engravings, the glass doors half opened

signed (lower right): *F. Gysbrechts*
oil on canvas

82.2 x 118.8 cm.;

32 3/8 x 46 3/4 in.

Provenance

Private collection, Belgium, for at least 30 years.

Exhibited

Bruges, *Private Collections in Bruges*, 1970, cat. no. 10 (as Cornelis Gysbrechts, according to a Witt library mount).

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The present painting is an elaborate example of Franciscus Gysbrechts' *trompe l'oeil* still lifes. Here, Franciscus has chosen to portray a quintessential collector's cabinet, which almost mimics a *Wunderkammer* on a more personal scale. Engravings of landscapes are plastered to the left-hand cabinet door, a hunting horn dangles from its corner, a violin hangs on the other side, and ornately carved silver and gold plates can be noted towards the upper right, nestled among other objects of intrigue.

The use of the half-opened cabinet motif was characteristic within Franciscus' corpus and had been passed on by his father, Cornelis Norbertus Gysbrechts (1625/1629 – after 1675), who also specialised in the genre (see, for example, fig. 1). His father's use of the clever conceit tended to be somewhat simpler, while Franciscus took the compositional device a step further, often producing more complicated and detailed arrangements, as the present work demonstrates. This subtle distinction helps art historians to differentiate between the two artists' works, in addition to the fact that Franciscus' brushwork is generally more soft and fluid.

Cornelis and Franciscus' decisions to depict these cabinets with at least one door opening outwards into the viewer's space was intended to create the illusion that these objects were tangible and therefore real. Both artists were without doubt the most inventive painters of their time in the art of *trompe l'oeil*, which literally translates to mean 'deceiving the eye'.

A very similar composition by Franciscus, with small differences and of comparable dimensions, is in the Schloss Fasanerie, Eichenzell.¹ Other works depicting half-open wall cabinets by Franciscus were with C. Frank, London, 1954 and sold at Galerie Koller, Zürich, 20-23 March, 2007, lot 3054.

We are grateful to Dr. Fred Meijer for confirming the attribution to Franciscus Gysbrechts upon examination of colour photographs.

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Biography

Franciscus Gysbrechts was born to Cornelis Norbertus Gysbrechts and his wife Anna Moons in Antwerp in 1649.

It seems highly likely that Franciscus accompanied his father on his travels to Denmark. The notion that he too had contact with the Danish court is supported by the fact that one of his signed and dated (1672) paintings appears in inventory lists, dated 1689 and 1737, of the court's Kunstkammer.

Our Franciscus is probably identical with the Franciscus Gysbrecht who was active in Leiden between 1674 and 1676/77, having been elected a member of the guild of Leiden in 1674. The last recorded mention of him is in Antwerp in 1676, when he joined the Guild there.

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Figure 1. Cornelis Norbertus Gysbrechts, *Trompe l'oeil. An open cabinet of curiosities with a Hercules group*, 1670. National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen

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Footnotes

¹ (Fulda, inv./cat. no. FAS B 539t; see M. Braun, *Cornelis Norbertus Gijsbrechts und Franciscus Gijsbrechts*, Berlin 1994, pp. 190-191, no. 2.2.14, reproduced).