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PSEUDO-JAN VAN KESSEL THE YOUNGER
(Second half 17th century)

*STILL LIFE with a Large Basket of Fruits,
a Smaller Basket with Figs, Strawberries in a
broken porcelain bowl, Two Monkeys and
One Parrot in a Landscape*

oil on copper
25 x 33.5 cm; 9 7/8 x 13 1/4 in.

Provenance

Private Collection, France.

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The term "Pseudo-Jan van Kessel the Younger" denotes an anonymous artist or workshop active in the production of over two hundred still-life paintings, distinguished by their decorative, yet somewhat naïve execution. These works, none of which bear an authentic signature, feature a repetitive repertoire of motifs, arranged in compositions ranging from simple to intricate. Their Flemish aesthetic was often juxtaposed with Italian provenance, suggesting they were likely created in Southern Europe by an artist of Flemish origin or descent. Despite their initial attribution in the 2012 catalogue by Ertz and Nitze-Ertz to Jan van Kessel the Younger, close analysis reveals significant stylistic and qualitative disparities: Jan van Kessel the Younger's own oeuvre is in fact much limited in scope, markedly more refined in technique, and distinct in style. The Pseudo-Kessel still-lives, typically small and often produced in pairs or series, were predominantly executed on unmarked copper supports, as in the present case, with occasional examples on walnut panels or slate.

This *Still Life* is a classic example of this production. It features a meticulously arranged composition dominated by a wicker basket overflowing with fruit, including grapes, peaches, and berries, rendered with precision and vibrant colours. A monkey reaching for grapes and a parrot perched atop the basket add a whimsical and exotic touch, reflecting the 17th-century fascination with fauna from distant lands. A similar motive, with a similar broken porcelain bowl with strawberries, can be found in a pair of still-lives by the artist, sold at Christie's London in 2016 (Fig. 1). The rocky *grotto* in the background creates an effective contrast with the main scene (see also Fig. 2), enhancing its depth and theatricality, while the distant landscape offers a faint sense of spatial recession.

Pseudo-Jan van Kessel the Younger's variation in quality, coupled with evidence of mass production, indicates these works were likely the product of a workshop rather than a solitary artist, reflecting the commercial demand for such decorative pieces in the 17th century.

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Fig. 1. Pseudo-Jan van Kessel the Younger, *Grapes, apples, peaches in a blue and white porcelain bowl, with strawberries in a broken porcelain bowl on a stone ledge, with a monkey; and Grapes and peaches in a basket on a raised stone ledge, with a melon, figs and a turtle*, second half 17th century, oil on copper. Christie's London, 28 April 2016, lot 115.

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Fig. 2. Pseudo-Jan van Kessel the Younger, *Still life of fruit with a monkey and a dog*, second half 17th century, oil on copper.

Dorotheum, 21 October 2014, lot 67.