

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

EDWAERT COLLIER

Breda, active before 1663 - 1708 London

Ref: BT 170

Still life with a terrestrial globe, a watch, musical instruments and books on a table covered with a mauve silk cloth



Signed upper right: *E Coljer*

Oil on canvas: 12 ½ x 10 ¼ in / 31.8 x 26 cm

Frame size: 17 ¼ x 15 ¼ in / 43.8 x 38.7 cm

Painted *circa* 1692



Artworks are sold subject to our Terms and Conditions of Sale; copies are available upon request
www.richardgreen.com

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

Provenance:

Collection of Monsieur Alain-Erik le Caruyer de Beauvais (d.2015), Neuilly, France

This painting depicts a still life on a table draped with a mauve, fringed tablecloth, a hard-stone column behind. On the table are a cased watch with a key attached on a blue ribbon, a recorder, a pommer, a terrestrial globe, and three books, one of which is opened on a 'Beschrijvinghe van[de] stad AMSTERDAM'. On the edge of the table is a note, 'VITA BREUIS ARS LONGA'.

Edwaert Collier was born in Breda in the province of Brabant, but he may well have received his training as a painter in Haarlem, where he was a guild member according to the list drawn up in the eighteenth century, on the basis of seventeenth-century records, by Vincent van der Vinne. Collier probably painted his earliest work in Haarlem where already in 1669 three of his paintings were recorded in an inventory. Dated works are known from 1661 onwards. In or before 1667, the artist must have moved to Leiden, where his residence is substantially documented from that year onwards, until 1693. Subsequently he left for London, where he appears to have remained until 1702, judging from inscriptions (on letters, documents and books) in his paintings. In 1702 he appears to have returned to Leiden, staying there until 1706, but a last known work dated 1707 is signed with the addition "fecit London". His burial in the church of St. James's, Picadilly, was recorded on 9 September 1708.

Edwaert Collier's substantial oeuvre consists mainly of three types of still lifes, in addition to a small number of genre paintings and portraits, as well as occasional history pieces. Among his still lifes, his compositions with a vanitas connotation, of which the painting discussed here is a good example, are the most frequent. Less frequently, his more 'traditional' still lifes of smoking utensils or victuals occur. Third – chronologically speaking, since Collier appears to have taken up the subject only after 1690 – are the *trompe l'oeil* paintings of letter racks and of prints displayed on a wooden board.

Edwaert Collier's earliest known work of the vanitas type is dated 1661 and derives directly from an example from 1655 by Pieter Claesz. (1597-1660), the renowned Haarlem still-life painter (fig. 1).ⁱ Also from 1661 is a vanitas still life with a skull and regalia, now in the Sinebrychoff Museum in Helsinki, a more autonomous composition, but nevertheless obviously inspired by the work of another Haarlem predecessor, Jan Vermeulen, who was active during the first half of the previous decade. On the basis of the composition he had borrowed from Claesz., Collier appears to have developed some of his standard compositions, among them the present one. Moreover, this painting is related to Collier's still life with a self-portrait, of which two autograph versions are known. The first (fig. 2) is dated 1684, while in the second version, from 1693, the artist looks older and the same goes for the woman in the drawing he is holding, probably his wife.ⁱⁱ Also, in the second the rummer has been replaced with a wineglass of a typical English model, which confirms that that version was painted after Collier moved to London. In the course of his career, Edwaert Collier often re-used compositions he had employed years earlier, with only minor changes. This might suggest that he kept records of his paintings for reference – drawings, in all likelihood – although no examples are known today.ⁱⁱⁱ

The painting is not dated by the artist. Dated variants of this composition is not extremely helpful in dating this still lifes, nevertheless it can be dated with some accuracy on the basis of several specific characteristics. The fact that the pages on which the book is opened is in Dutch, suggests that they were created during Collier's activity in Holland, probably in Leiden, so before 1693.^{iv} Dated examples showing the same pages are known from 1692 (figs. 3 and 4).^v Also, the relatively small format of this painting occurs relatively frequently, judging from dated examples, in Collier's work from the last decade of his activity in Leiden.^{vi} The signature on the painting, 'E. Coljer', occurs only

Artworks are sold subject to our Terms and Conditions of Sale; copies are available upon request

www.richardgreen.com

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

on works from 1692 and 1693.^{vii} the above characteristic suggests that the painting almost certainly originated in Leiden, probably around 1692.

The connotation of images such as the present ones without doubt concerns the brevity of life and its worldly connections. While there are no explicit Vanitas references, such as a skull, or an inscription ‘vanitas vanitatum (et omnia vanitas)’, all is vanity, the well-known quote from the Bible book *Ecclesiastes*, Collier must have had a *double entendre* with these paintings. This also becomes clear from the classical saying ‘Vita brevis, ars longa’, inscribed on a piece of paper: life (that of the artist, as well as that of the viewer) is short, but art is lasting. The globe is an obvious reference to worldly existence, and to the Heavens above, and at the same time it represents man’s curiosity about what surrounds him, and the urge to record it. The book, a *Description of the city of Amsterdam*, is an unmistakable reference to the same. The pocket watch is of course connected with the notion of the inevitable passing of time. The musical instruments, too, to some degree represent the brevity of life: as soon as a note has been played, it dies away.

Notwithstanding this somewhat grim message, by means of his craftsmanship and artistic powers, Collier has created an enchanting image that take us straight back to a table filled with books and musical instruments in the late seventeenth century. Life is short, indeed, but art remains, and while we are here, we are lucky to be able to enjoy it.

Fred G Meijer

Illustrations



Artworks are sold subject to our Terms and Conditions of Sale; copies are available upon request

www.richardgreen.com

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955



3



4

ⁱ Collier's 1661 vanitas painting appeared in sale New York, Christie's, 15 January 1985, lot 33, colour ill. Claesz.'s example, oil on panel, 88,9 x 71,8 cm, dated 1655, is no. 220 in Martina Brunner-Bulst's 2004 catalogue of that artist's work.

ⁱⁱ The first, oil on canvas, 35,3 x 30 cm, signed and dated 1684, was most recently with Johnny van Haften, London, in 2006. The second, oil on canvas, 38,1 x 31 cm, signed and dated 1693, appeared in Butterfields's sale in San Francisco, 15 May 2002, lot 3032, colour ill.

ⁱⁱⁱ In fact, no drawings by Edwaert Collier are known at all.

^{iv} Only a painting with a strengthened date, now reading 1680 (Sold Christie's South Kensington, 10 December 2004, lot 44, ill.), includes a title page 'Description of the WORLD'. In all other known dated works from before 1693 with such title pages, they are in Dutch. This suggests that the 1680 date more likely originally was a date after 1693. Paintings with virtually the same title page are in fact known from 1693, 1694, (post) 1698, and 1702 (respectively sold Christie's New York, 8 November 1984, Sotheby's New York, 28 January 2000, Sotheby's London, 13 December 1978, and Christie's New York, 25 January 2012).

^v A *Beschrijving van AMSTERDAM* appears on a painting, oil on panel, 36 x 29 cm, sale London, Sotheby's, 15 June 1983, lot 144 (ill.), its composition is a mix of the composition of the painting described here.

^{vi} Dated examples measuring about 35 x 26 cm (or a few centimeters more or less), both panels and canvases, are known from 1684, 1687, and several from 1692, including the examples mentioned in note 5. One example, on canvas, measuring 36,3 x 30,8 cm is dated 1702 (Sale Christie's New York, 25 January 2012, lot 264, colour ill.).

Artworks are sold subject to our Terms and Conditions of Sale; copies are available upon request

www.richardgreen.com

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

vii From c. 1678 to 1689, Collier often signed 'Colijer' or 'Colyer', after 1693, the most common form, 'Collier' prevails.