

COLNAGHI



GIOVANNA GARZONI
(Ascoli Piceno 1600-1670 Rome)

STILL LIFE WITH PUMPKINS

later 1640s

tempera on vellum

22 x 34,5 cm; 8 2/3 13 1/2

Provenance

With La stanza del Borgo Gallery, Milan;
Private collection, Turin.

COLNAGHI



LONDON

NEW YORK

MADRID

COLNAGHI

Colnaghi is grateful to Dr Sheila Barker for confirming the attribution of this work to Giovanna Garzoni through a digital photograph.

This enticing still life was painted by at the height of her career as a miniaturist.

Despite only depicting two Pumpkins, Garzoni infuses the entire scene with dynamism through a series of compositional contrivances. The exploitation of the larger pumpkin's leaves to elegantly fill white space, the cut of the smaller pumpkin (which draws the eye into the larger one) and the depiction of three seeds apart from the two gourds all serve to keep the eye moving across the artwork.

Giovanna Garzoni can probably be considered the greatest Italian miniaturist of the seventeenth century. Born in the Marche region to a family of Venetian artists and artisans, she was trained in Venice in the studios of Palma Giovane and Tiberio Tinelli, who became her husband for the short period of their unhappy marriage. After their divorce, she settled in Rome for a brief time and then moved to Naples (at the court of the Spanish Viceroy), Turin (at the Savoy court), London, and Paris, among other European countries. She also worked for the Medici in Florence and in 1651 finally moved again to Rome, where in 1670 she died both wealthy and renowned.

Her first still lifes date from the Turin period (1632-1637), when she came into contact with the works of Lombard painters like Fede Galizia and Panfilo Nuvolone and Flemish artists, whose works were abundant in the Savoy collection. Her following stay North of the Alps also allowed her to directly observe the work of French miniaturists, as well as other still lives by Flemish and Dutch painters. It is certainly in this moment that Garzoni acquired her taste for the accurate depiction of minute details and the almost analytical research she conducted on every single object she painted, as if to unveil its inner secrets.

When she arrived in Florence in 1642, Garzoni – who is sometimes recorded in the documents of the time as *Flemish* or *French* – was a mature and accomplished artist, gifted with an extremely refined technique and an absolutely personal and original style. The Medici fell in love with her work and remained, even after her relocation to Rome, her main commissioners.

Though dating Garzoni's still lifes can prove problematic, certain contextual clues in the painting can certainly place the work after the mid-1640s, and therefore in her later Florentine or Roman periods. During this time in her career, Garzoni accrued much acclaim for her witty compositions, which reached their peak in works such as *Still life with a bowl of citrons* (Fig. 1). A dating of around this time is proposed by Dr Sheila Barker, who suggested the quality and freshness of the composition were close to the apex of her career.

COLNAGHI



Fig. 1. Giovanna Garzoni, *Still life with a bowl of citrons*, late 1640s.
Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum.