Jan Davidsz. de Heem 1606-1684
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4 Antwerp 1636-1656

Jan Davidsz. de Heem moved to Antwerp because ‘there one could have rare fruit of all kinds and sizes, plums, peaches, cherries, oranges, lemons, grapes, and others in finer condition and state of ripeness to portray from life’, according to Joachim von Sandrart, writing in 1675. This remark must have been prompted by familiarity with de Heem’s work from the 1640s and after, rather than that it was based upon inside information. The artist’s work from the years prior to his move in 1635 (or early 1636 at the latest), which was discussed in the previous chapter, does not yet reveal any specific interest in a proliferation of exotic fruit in lavish quantities. The odd pomegranate or apricot he chose to depict around that time was undoubtedly as readily available in the Northern Netherlands as it was in Antwerp, and he could probably dream up a lemon at any given time.

In view of his production during the years prior to 1635, de Heem was working hard and must have been fairly successful. Unlike in 1631, his financial situation is not likely to have been a prime incentive to try his luck elsewhere. While Amsterdam – presuming that that city was indeed his residence during those years – did perhaps not provide the most eager market for still-life paintings, de Heem must have been aware of the fact that Antwerp abounded with excellent artists producing still lifes and that the competition would be fierce for a new arrival who still had to establish himself. By that time the artist had a family to support, so we must assume that he was either quite sure of his chances of success in Antwerp or desperate enough for a new market for his work to make the plunge and hope for the best. It may be that Jan Lievens, whom he must already have been acquainted with in Leiden and who settled in Antwerp in 1635, persuaded him to try his luck there. It is less likely that de Heem already became acquainted with Adriaen Brouwer during the latter’s Dutch years, since Brouwer had left Amsterdam by the time de Heem left Leiden. Whatever the case, the first firm record of de Heem’s presence in Antwerp concerns him and Brouwer witnessing a contract between Jan Lievens and a pupil in March of 1636.

Paucity of works 1636-1638

While a number of documents (marking his registration as a member of the guild of St Luke, as a citizen of Antwerp and recording the tuition of several pupils) attest to de Heem’s firm settlement and, presumably, to a certain degree of success during his first years in Antwerp, the paucity of extant works from those years is puzzling to no small degree, and remains unexplained. While for almost every year of de Heem’s long career an almost continuous production flow of paintings can be established, only two or three paintings from those early Antwerp years appear to have come down to us, and even those raise several questions. This is the more confusing since it is during this period that de Heem must have made a name for himself in Antwerp and built up to the degree of success that made way for the monumental rich still lifes of the early 1640s, which could only be produced by a well-established, successful artist. He will not have attained such a position by simply making merry with his fellow artists, as Brouwer’s painting from c.1636 in New York might suggest (fig. B 1 24).

We have to pause briefly here at a painting already mentioned in the previous chapter, Guilliam Gabron’s (free) copy (fig. A 1) of de Heem’s dated still life from 1635 (cat. no. A 044). Little is known about Gabron (1619-1678), who was registered as a master in the Antwerp guild in 1640 and who is known to have travelled to Rome in the mid-1640s. Born in 1619, he had probably started his training as a painter by the mid-1630s. This suggests that his copy after de Heem was painted roughly
between 1637 and 1643. Another painting by Gabron, his work in the Museum Mayer van den Bergh in Antwerp (fig. A 2) is also related to de Heem’s work.  

![Image of Gabron's painting](image1)

A 1 G. Gabron after J.Dz. de Heem, Still life with a pewter tankard, signed, oil on canvas, 52.1 x 68.6 cm. Location unknown.

![Image of Gabron's painting](image2)

A 2 G. Gabron, after J.Dz. de Heem?, Still life with a silver cup, turbo shell and roses, signed, oil on canvas, 54.5 x 70.2 cm. Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, inv. no. 486.

A 3 Anonymous, seventeenth century, Still life with roses and a turbo shell, bears monogram “PLDL”(?), oil on panel, 53 x 50.5 cm. Oslo, Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design, as by J. van Dalen.

The flat pewter dish, the silver cup and the slick lemon peel are all typical mid-1630s de Heem motifs. Gabron’s handling of the peel enticed Claus Grimm to implicitly suggest that the painting with a de Heem signature in Stuttgart (fig. ULA 52) might also be Gabron’s work. Interesting works in connection with this group of still lifes are paintings in the Nasjonal Galleriet in Oslo, by an unidentified hand (fig A 3), and in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Valenciennes, attributed to Jacob Foppens van Es (1596-1666) (fig. A 4). The first (fig. A 3) features most of the motifs from Gabron’s Antwerp still life, but the silver cup has been replaced by a lemon and a rummer adorned with vine leaves. The painting appears to be period, but clearly has the qualities of a copy. This suggests that an original still life of this composition by de Heem did exist.
The second (fig. A 4) combines the dish, knife and roses in Gabron’s Antwerp picture with de Heem’s 1635 lemons. The present attribution to Jacob Foppens van Es is convincing as a tentative suggestion, as much as dating it to c.1640 appears to be. It is interesting, too, to note that a settled artist like van Es based a composition on the work of a newcomer. Gabron’s copy after the still life from 1635, and the painting by Gabron in Antwerp and its copy, as well as the still life attributed to Jacob van Es suggest that de Heem’s originals were available for copying in Antwerp during the late 1630s. This might suggest that de Heem either painted these works there, or that he had brought some of them with him to Antwerp. The first option would lead to the conclusion that de Heem had already settled in Antwerp by 1635 and initially continued working in the style he had developed up north. In any case, there must have been a keen interest in Antwerp in Dutch still lifes of the ‘monochrome’ type, judging from the countless copies by Cornelis Mahu (c.1613-1689) and from that artist’s studio of some compositions that Willem Claesz. Heda painted in Haarlem around 1637. Heda’s originals must have been brought to Antwerp almost immediately after they were finished. From that point of view, the apparent Antwerp interest in still lifes in a Dutch style may have been an incentive for de Heem to settle there.

The single known dated still life by Jan Davidsz. de Heem from 1636 (cat. no. A 046) would have been difficult to place, had it not been dated. With its vertical composition, specific palette and choice of motifs it belongs firmly to the 1630s, but the crisp execution of the white napkin – although excellently done – has no equivalent in any other work by de Heem. We must assume that it
represents a fabric of a different, much finer weave than the rather heavy cloth de Heem portrayed in his works of 1635 (cat. nos. A 044 and 045) as well as in later examples such as cat. no. A 050. The fine linen contributes to the fact that this still life has less of the monumental sturdiness that even the smaller panels of the first half of the decade possess. This is the first time, too, that de Heem used a fine, transparent tall wine glass (Dutch: *fluitglas*) as an important vertical motif, which he would do again many times in the course of his career. The rummer depicted here, however, is virtually identical to the rummers shown in earlier examples. This tazza, in contrast, is an object that does not reappear in any other de Heem still life. The tazzas he usually depicted are silver objects, but the dark grey colour and rather coarse modelling of this piece suggest that it is perhaps a pewter example. The stem of the clay pipe as we see it now is without doubt a misapprehension by a later restorer: judging from the position of its bowl, the pipe lies under the silver cup and under the napkin and the stem should not be visible. Taking these observations into account, the date 1636 would indeed appear to be fitting for this still life. While some of its characteristics connect with work from the previous years, such as cat. nos. A 044 and 045, it also steps away from those in several respects. While it seems to confirm de Heem’s new preference for less sturdy compositions, it stands very much on its own between the paintings from the mid-1630s and the forerunners of the large luxury still lifes from the last years of that decade.

The second dated painting from this period, a still life with a prominent bouquet of flowers in Prague (cat. no. A 047), presents similar uncertainties. Although the museum’s restorers initially believed the signature to be a later addition, upon close inspection it appears to be genuine but strengthened. The pewter plate, as a motif and in its rendering, as well as the fruit, connect properly with earlier examples such as cat. nos. A 032 and 043. The meticulously executed bouquet of flowers is a new feature, however. It is the first time after ten years (i.e. after cat. no. A 005) that de Heem included a bouquet in a still life and the effort presents a big step forward in quality after that early example. A problem, however, is that this bouquet was most probably not painted in one go, but appears to possess various later additions and changes. The morning glory and peas at lower left in particular, appear to be substantially later additions. Such peas only start to appear in De Heem’s floral bouquets in the late 1650s and the execution of the ones shown here is fully similar to those examples. The same is true for some of the foliage. This would mean that this painting remained in de Heem’s studio – perhaps as an unfinished experiment – for at least another twenty years.
That it is not a later painting in its entirety appears to be confirmed by the fact that the bouquet – ! minus the later additions, but including the apricots, shifted to the left of the vase ! – was included in a female portrait that can be dated to c.1640 on the basis of the costume worn by the sitter (fig. A 5).228 This connection presents another problem: the portrait in question appears to be a Dutch work, presently it is tentatively attributed to Jacob van Loo (1614-1670), who was working in Amsterdam at that time.229 The fact that de Heem’s still life appears not to have left his studio until much later complicates matters even more. It would seem that for the moment the connection between the portrait and the still life will have to remain unexplained. Hypothetically, this could be a portrait of Aletta van Weede, Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s wife. Her birth date is not known, but the fact that they married in 1626 suggests that she was born not much later than de Heem himself, and thus would be in her early thirties in about 1640.230

The Poznan portrait is not the only painting by another artist that the 1638 Prague still life is related to. In a still life of a vase of flowers, a skull and smoking utensils with a monogram CVB (fig. A 6), the central rose in the bouquet and some of the white jasmine flowers appear to have been modelled on de Heem’s examples.
This painting has been presented as a work of the Middelburg painter Christoffel van den Berghe (active before 1618-1628 or after), but it must be the work of a different hand, most likely an artist working in Antwerp in de Heem’s circle. Most probably by the same hand is an unsigned repetition of the vanitas half of this composition. It was on the American art market in 1995 (fig. A 7). Again, the exact same skull, the nautilus shell and two very similar clay pipes as in fig. A 5 occur in a painting attributed to Andries Benedetti (active 1636-after 1648), who was registered as a pupil of Jan Davidsz. de Heem in 1638. Possibly the same skull appears in a small vanitas still life in Stockholm, signed with a de Heem monogram (fig. A 8). That painting, too, is difficult to place. The monogram iDH, previously incorrectly interpreted as that of (a non-existent) David de Heem, was used a few times by Jan Davidsz. in the late 1630s and in the 1640s (cf., among others, cat. no. A 082), occasionally in addition to a full signature (cf. cat. no. A 051), but the execution of this small vanitas still life is so substantially different from de Heem’s, that it cannot be by the artist himself. It might be the work of a talented pupil that he signed, but unfortunately it cannot be properly connected with the work of any such pupil known to us. In any case this small group of still lifes appears to support the date of 1638 (or thereabouts) for the Prague painting.

Three more de Heem paintings can be dated to the late 1630s. All are undated, but in view of their style and execution, they belong in between the secure works of the mid 1630s and the first dated large luxury still lifes of the early 1640s. Cat. no. A 048, a privately owned still life with a silver tazza, silver-gilt columbine cup, silver beaker and slender Westerwald jug, surrounded by fruit, is reminiscent of a work from 1635 (cat. no. A 045) that includes the same tazza, a similar but less refined cup-and-cover and a lemon peel draped in a similar way. The composition of cat. no. A 048 is more elegant and less sturdy and cluttered than the still life from 1635. As such, the painting is a forerunner of de Heem’s mid-size compositions of the first half of the 1640s. The inclusion of a column in the composition foreshadows the luxury still lifes that de Heem would soon start to produce. The column was perhaps painted out at some point and in the present state it has a slightly ghost-like appearance, but in the copy of this composition in Bamberg (fig. A 8) it has a strong presence. This sizable, but broken column also adds a vanitas connotation to the painting. While in its details cat. no. A 048 is a high-quality work, the artist has not fully succeeded in establishing unity in his composition: the left and right half of the painting almost function as two separate still lifes. And while the columbine cup, also in earlier compositions such as cat. nos. A 029 and 045, usually assumes the role of an elegant yet monumental vertical motif, here it is belittled somewhat by its position between the sturdy Siegburg jug and, in particular,
the tall wine glass. Interestingly, in the Bamberg copy the wine glass appears to have been painted out, which adds to the unity of the composition.

More successful, in terms of a unified composition, is a still life that probably originated somewhat later, presumably early in 1639 (cat. no. A 049). Again, this still life unites features from earlier
works and from somewhat later examples, which suggests that it must be situated in between those in terms of chronology. The rendering of the foliage to the left and that of the rummer is still strongly reminiscent of works from the earlier 1630s, while the treatment of the fruit is extremely close to that in the work that would follow it, a large still life in New York, with which it also shares the spouted pewter jug (cat. no. A 50). The engraved silver beaker might be the same object that is shown in the previous painting, cat. no. A 048. There are also similarities in the rendering of some of the fruit with the large luxury still life from 1640 in the Louvre (cat. no. A 051), while the columbine cup is the same object as the one in that painting, save for a few minor details that can easily be attributed to the painter’s freedom of rendition. To a degree, de Heem may have been inspired for this composition by still lifes with a ham from the Haarlem school, such as Willem Heda’s painting in Philadelphia from c.1637 (fig. A 10).238

A 10 W. Cz. Heda, Still life with a ham, oil on panel, 42 x 53,5 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, inv. no. 644.

De Heem’s first elaborate luxury still life
A large still life in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (cat. no. A 050), although published in recent decades as a work of Jan Davidsz.’s son Jan Jansz. de Heem (1650-before 1695?), is without any doubt the work of Jan Davidsz. de Heem himself.239 Dating it to 1639 is tentative, but can be sustained on the basis of the following observations. Like the two still lifes assigned to 1638 and 1639 above, it shares several features with earlier work, the most obvious being the rendering of the white cloth, which is particularly similar to that in both works from 1635 (cat. nos. A 045 and 046). A tablecloth with gold or silver fringes and borders embroidered in silver and/or gold had already appeared in a still life from 1633 (cat. no. A 037) and would continue to appear in de Heem’s richer compositions. Here, its decoration is echoed in the curtain to the right. As already mentioned, the spouted silver ewer would appear to be the same object as in cat. no. A 049, discussed above, while the treatment of the lemons and the grapes in both paintings is also very similar. While de Heem draws on the monumentality of a still life such as cat. no. A 044 and elaborates the ‘stepped’ composition that he first experimented with in catalogue nos. A 035 and 039, here he increases his distance to the arrangement. He clearly defines the setting in which the central still life is presented, introducing for the first time a view in the background, of sky and trees, past a monumental hard-stone column. He also creates depth in the foreground by placing a chair sideways in front of the table that holds the central still life. By this particular positioning of the elaborate ewer and basin on the chair, he directs the gaze of the spectator towards the centre of the composition, to which it is also drawn by the bright red colour of the lobster.
De Heem was not the first to place still-life motifs in a larger space and to surround the central arrangement with other objects that help defining the space. Already early in the century, Frans Snijders (1597-1657) had started to produce large still-life compositions, elaborating on Pieter Aertsen’s and Joachim Beuckelaer’s kitchens and market stalls. Snijders, too, painted large displays surrounded by some space, suggesting market settings or well-stocked kitchens or larders. Often, such images are enlivened by one or more prominent figures. Although the contents of Snijders’ still lifes mostly consist of fresh game and vegetables, his settings, with draped tables and elegantly dressed figures, often suggest a display in a richer room than a kitchen or larder (fig. A 11).

In Antwerp – and probably elsewhere prior to his arrival there – de Heem must have seen a fair number of Snijders’ works. Obviously, his aim was not to emulate or imitate Snijders, but that artist’s
high quality of execution and the lavishness of his compositions must certainly have impressed and inspired him.

A 12 A. van Utrecht, *Kitchen interior with a still life*, signed and dated 1629, oil on canvas, 195 x 280 cm. Museumslandschaft Hessen-Kassel, inv. no. GK 156.

Still lifes by Adriaen van Utrecht (1599-1652) will have been another source of inspiration. Van Utrecht’s early work (starting c.1625) shows that he was inspired by Snijders, as well as by paintings he must have seen on his journey to Italy in the early 1620s. A large kitchen interior from 1629 by van Utrecht in Kassel has a spatial construction and display in the left foreground that clearly forebodes de Heem’s later luxury still lifes (fig. A 12).240

A 13 A. van Utrecht, *Still life with ceramics, glass ware and elaborate metal vessels around a perched parrot*, signed and dated 1636, oil on canvas, 117 x 154 cm. Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels, inv. no. 4731.
Even closer to the luxury still life, in terms of contents, comes a display of ceramics, glassware and elaborate metal vessels around a perched parrot, with an alchemist in the background (a composition representing the element Fire?) from 1636 in the Royal Museums of Fine Art in Brussels (fig. A 13). Whether or not de Heem knew one or more of the above paintings, he must have been aware of van Utrecht’s work and, as we shall see, there was definitely an interaction between the two artists during the 1640s.

In Snijders’ and van Utrecht’s works mentioned above, still-life motifs are placed in an interior as part of it, while also there is often an anecdotic element provided by more or less prominent figures. In contrast, de Heem’s central motif is the still-life arrangement itself, around which he defines the space. A rare earlier example of the placement of a still life on a table in a (more or less) defined space, interestingly, can be found in the oeuvre of Jan Jansz. den Uyl, in a painting from 1633, which already figured in the discussion of de Heem’s Amsterdam period above (fig. ULA 30, above). A large luxury still life by Willem Claesz. Heda from 1638 is set before a plain white wall, but the artist created depth in a similar manner as de Heem did later, by placing a wine cooler holding a silver ewer on a small, low table in front of the central still life (fig. A 13). While it is unlikely that de Heem knew Heda’s painting, and Heda in his turn may or may not have seen de Heem’s earlier still life with a stool in front of a table (cat. no. A 035), these paintings show that both in Flanders and in the North Netherlands there was a tendency to create more complex still-life compositions in which spatial features play a more important role than they had done in earlier compositions. Again, de Heem’s role in this development was significant.
Into the 1640s; the large rich still lifes

If the large still life in New York discussed above can perhaps still be considered as an experiment, de Heem completely overstepped that qualification when he produced the impressive luxury still life dated 1640 that is now in the Louvre museum in Paris (cat. no. A 051). Neither the composition nor the contents of the Paris still life differ very much from the one in New York, but the one in Paris is larger, although not substantially so. De Heem has increased his distance from the central still life, thereby enhancing the monumentality of the painting. Bergström (1956) has pointed out the compositional significance of the diagonal from lower left to upper right in the Louvre painting. In the one in the Metropolitan Museum it also plays a role. Both diagonals divide the composition into a crowded (lower) and a relatively empty (upper) section, and at the same time in a (lower) section with an abundance of light and colour and one that is more subdued. In the Paris composition de Heem has, again, opted for a central still life on a table with a view outside in the left background, draperies to the right and behind, a high structure behind it to the right and an object that serves as a répoussoir in front of it. However, instead of obscuring part of the table by a chair, as he did in the painting in New York, he opted for a low table with a wine cooler holding some bottles – much like the solution Willem Heda (fig. A 13) had chosen two years earlier. This solution also allows for the white cloth draped down from the table in the centre to play a more important, and highly effective role. It draws the gaze of the viewer to the table and its contents. A large vine leaf, attached to a branch draped over the wine cooler, stands out partly before it. Its shape and positioning are reminiscent of an open hand gesturing to the viewer, presenting the still life, as it were. The central still life itself is less cluttered than the one in New York, while it does not possess such a strong accent of colour as provided by the lobster in the latter painting. Accents of yellow and red are scattered evenly throughout its surface. Also, the vertical shapes of the columbine cup and the glasses, enhanced by the upright basin on the chair, that have a poignant effect in the composition in New York, are less prominent in the Paris picture, which adds to its elegant monumentality. Much more than in cat. no. A 050 in New York, de Heem has created a suggestion of depth in the still life in Paris. The répoussoir of a wine cooler in front of the table suggests a certain distance between the viewer and the still life upon the table, while the receding top of the structure in the background
suggests substantial depth behind it. 246 This suggestion is enhanced by the dark blue sky with white clouds behind the wall in the far background. It is interesting to note that de Heem may have reverted to the example his presumable master, Balthasar van der Ast, for the motif of the Wanli dish, resting obliquely in the basket of fruit, a frequently recurring motif with that artist.

During the first years of the 1640s, as far as we know, de Heem painted three more such very large still lifes, at an average of one per year (cat. nos. A 054, 065 and 971). I will discuss them here as a group, before moving on to his production of small and medium-sized still lifes from those years, since they form a separate class within his oeuvre.

The largest by far, measuring 171 x 262 cm, is a painting in the Brussels Municipal Museum (Broodhuis) from 1641 (cat. no. A 054). 247 This impressive piece could be called Still life in an interior rather than simply Still life. De Heem has zoomed out even more here than on the painting in Paris, with the result that the central still-life arrangement is almost dwarfed by the surrounding space. 248 The répoussoir in the foreground, consisting of a single chair in New York and of a small table with a wine cooler in Paris, has been replaced here by an almost autonomous second still life that includes a celestial globe, books, various musical instruments and a chair upon which a costly silver-gilt dish has been placed. To a degree, this composition in the foreground recalls de Heem’s book still lifes of some twelve years earlier, such as the Amsterdam book still life with a lute (cat. no. A 014). Additionally, in the Brussels painting a monkey holding a bunch of grapes sits on top of the celestial globe. In the tradition of his Antwerp predecessors, de Heem has included the figure of a servant in the composition, a young black page wearing a feathered beret. The execution of this figure can be attributed to Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert, with whom de Heem appears to have been befriended. 249 At top right, a parrot and a cockatoo are perched. This is the first, but certainly not the last time that such showy birds appear in de Heem’s work. 250 That area of the canvas appears to have suffered somewhat, but particularly the head of the parrot is characterised very well. The birds have been placed next to a mirror hanging on the column and like the mirror they must probably be regarded as symbols of vanity. The monkey makes a first and only appearance of its species in de
Heem’s work. It is quite possible that it was painted by Willeboirts Bosschaert as well; the modelling appears to be that of a specialized figure painter rather than that of de Heem.251

The basic setup of the still life on the table is identical to that of the Louvre painting: a tazza with some brightly coloured fruit, adjacent to a higher metal object followed by a lower object (the pie in Paris and the lower tazza of fruit here), to the right of which there is a high columbine cup that forms the centre of the display. To its right is a larger, wider construction that includes a large porcelain dish at an angle, in front of which there is a group of smaller objects. While, like in the two previous examples (cat. nos. A 050 and A 051), de Heem placed the view into the open air to the left, here he included a view into a landscape to the right, partly obscured by the column, a stretch of drapery, the figure and the parrots. This landscape view provides a bright area at upper right, as does the construction with a globe on top in Paris. In this painting in Brussels, the fringe at the top of the (almost unrealistically wide) backdrop curtain leads the eye out to that area along its oblique line, while the dark page bending forward allows a view into the landscape behind his back.

Adding an air of luxury, but at the same time distracting somewhat from the display on the table because of its prominent pattern, is the oriental tapestry.252 Of the group of large luxury still lifes from the early 1640s, the display on the table itself is the least crowded here. Also, the array of luxury items has been more horizontally spread out. The columbine cup is essentially the same model as the one in the Louvre still life from the previous year, but it sports different ornamentation.253 While the cup on the painting in Paris has the same parakeet (or some such bird) on top as the one in New York, this cover is crowned with a figure, possibly a soldier or an archer, shown from the rear. The details of the decorations of the stems vary as well.254 The Wanli porcelain dish in this picture and the Paris example may be the same objects, but all other displayed items appear to be different, be it, like the wicker basket, similar examples.

De Heem’s large luxury still life from the following year (cat. no. A 065) has clearly benefited from the artist’s experience in producing the previous examples. According to a note in a sale catalogue from 1783, probably concerning this painting, its first owner purchased it from the artist for 1220 guilders, an enormous sum of money. Less likely, it may have been part of a rich collection of a burgomaster of Goes, in which a ‘groote fruytage met een pot met roosen’ (a large fruit piece with a pot of roses) was estimated in 1662 at 1000 guilders. In any case it must have been a highly valued work in its time. Here de Heem has attained a greater monumentality by moving closer up to the still life on the table again, and by a better integration of the background and the still-life display. The horizontal emphasis rendered to the composition by the table top that stretches out across most of its width is counterbalanced by three large hard-stone columns in the background and to the right of the composition, while the dark drapery coming down to the left closes off the composition on that side. The still life on the table itself, however, is somewhat less complex in its arrangement than its predecessors and evokes less depth. De Heem may well have opted for this less complex arrangement in favour of the overall balance in the painting. Again, a second still life (of sea shells) has been arranged upon a footstool in the right foreground, and this time it is counterbalanced by an arrangement of musical instruments on a chair to the left. The way the composition has been built up is more complex than in the earlier examples, as I shall demonstrate in the next paragraph, analysing the lines the composition follows. Nevertheless here, too, the diagonal from lower left to upper right is important, be it not strictly linear, but created by a sequence of red accents: the red shawl draped over the lute, the pomegranate, the lobster, the red wine in the flute, the bouquet of roses on the table, and at top right, the rose bush in a flower pot. While again the large Wanli salver and the basket appear to be very similar to, but not necessarily the same as in the earlier pictures, and the
tazza appears to be the same object as in the Louvre still life, the other objects are new arrivals. The cup screw with a putto for a stem, however, had already appeared in at least two smaller still lifes, cat. nos. A 055 and 060.

In 1643, de Heem painted the last of his large-scale luxury still lifes of this type, a previously unpublished work in a private collection measuring 154 x 207.5 cm (cat. no. A 071). For this work, de Heem has moved up closer to the still life again and kept the composition fairly simple. There is only a single répoussoir, in the left foreground, a wine cooler containing two bottles, standing on a small table or stool together with some smoking paraphernalia. The still life on the table is once more concentrated around a silver-gilt columbine cup that stands behind a cut fruit pie. To its left is an elaborate vessel consisting of a silver-mounted turbo shell adorned with a large ruby, with a gold camel-shaped spout and topped with a ram-like figure that a modern viewer will easily associate with
extraterrestrial beings from science-fiction films. The tazza lying to the left of it is almost identical in shape and pose to the one in the work from 1642 (cat. no. A 065). To the right of the columbine cup is a large basket containing fruit and, like its predecessors, a large, Kraak-porcelain salver inserted obliquely into the basket. A lute and several flutes and recorders have been placed to the left of the basket. One recorder is still contained in a case that is apparently designed to hold several such wind instruments. There are also a large pipe-lighting taper and a clay pipe. Fruit is spilling from out of the basket onto the lute and onto the table, which holds several pewter plates upon and around which lie pieces of fruit – figs, peaches, lemon, cherries, grapes –, shrimps, a crab and a small crayfish. Here too, there are several large stone columns in the background from which dark draperies are suspended. To the left there is a view into a hilly landscape. On the edge of the table to the right there is a large document signed ‘V. E otmoedigen/ J.D heem’ (your Honour’s humble J. de Heem). This inscription might square with the iconographic tendency of such still life: to propagate modesty by displaying opulence. On the other hand it may indicate that the painting was done on commission for a high-placed individual.

**Geometry of the compositions of the large luxury still lifes.**

It is interesting to analyse the geometry of the compositions of de Heem’s five large luxury still lifes (figs. A 15 – A 19).
A 16 Composition geometry of cat. no. A 051 (Paris, Louvre)

A 17 Composition geometry of cat no. A 054 (Brussels, Broodhuis)
Horizontally, each of these paintings shows a distinct division into three bands of equal height, of which the middle one contains the still life on the table, while as such it is also the most variegated and crowded. The line between the two lower bands coincides with the edge of the table, apart from in the largest example, the Brussels painting, where the table’s edge is situated slightly higher. It may well be, however, that that painting was reduced at the top. With an additional 20 to 30 cm at the top, the painting would gain in balance and monumentality, and such an addition would also bring it in keeping with the other examples in terms of the ratio height : width, which is consistently 3 : 4 (fig. A 20). It is interesting to note that in each case optically (as the illustrations make clear) the central band gives the impression of being narrower than the upper and lower ones, which is probably due to the fact that those outer areas contain several undisturbed vertical lines and larger shapes. In most of the five paintings there is also a vertical division into three, but rather than being equal, the bands are in the proportions of $1 : 2 : 1$.260
While in the first two paintings (cat. nos. A 050 and 051, figs. A 15 and A 16) the diagonal from lower left to upper right plays a dominant role, as Bergström (1947/56) had already concluded for the Louvre painting, other oblique lines turn out to be of equal or even greater importance. In all except catalogue A 065, the opposite diagonals of the vertical halves, running from the lower centre of the picture plane to the upper corners play an important role. Within the V shape they make up, the most dense part of the still life on the table is concentrated. In the Brussels painting (cat. no. A 054, figs. A 17 and A 20), the other diagonal of each half is also prominently present, particularly to the right – the composition can almost be divided into two separate vertical compositions with their own diagonals and vertical axis. This is even more convincing when applied to the ‘enlarged’ composition (fig. A 20), which can serve as another argument for the assumption that the painting has lost a strip of about 25 centimetres at the top. When the vertical divisions in the composition are considered, the left quarter of the canvas is left without any substantial number of objects, while the three quarters to its right are quite full. In the case of the large still life from 1642 (cat. no. A 065), de Heem has followed a reversed composition scheme: here the right-hand quarter of the painting is much less crowded than the other three. The image has been concentrated there, within an octagonal of which the oblique sides to the left are indicated by the division between light and dark areas on the lute and by the drapery at upper left, while the oblique lines to the right coincide with the halves of the diagonals of the right half of the painting. For the last of the great luxury still lifes (cat. no. A 071), de Heem returned to a simpler, more sturdy composition scheme mainly based on a vertical division into three and a central V. It is true, though, that he left the left-hand third of the composition relatively devoid of objects, which sets this still life apart from the earlier examples with such basic compositions (cat nos. A 050 and 051).

Lineair perspective, as far as the overall space is concerned, does not play a prominent role in the composition of these still lifes and despite the profusion of objects, de Heem’s tables barely suggest any substantial depth. Depth and space are mainly suggested by the vistas into landscapes in the background and by the additional still-life motifs in the foreground that serve as répoussoirs and, of course, by the immaculate rendering of the individual perspective of each separate object. Colour
and light are also amply applied to attain a suggestion of depth: red lobsters, yellow lemons and white napkin pull their part of the composition forward, grey back walls, blue skies and dark shadows push the background away. De Heem was a master in the concept of ‘houding’.

Iconography of the large luxury still lifes.

For none of de Heem’s five large luxury still lifes from the first half of the 1640s the full provenance can be reconstructed. The Louvre painting (cat. no. A 051) was in the collection of the French king Louis XIV by 1683, but it was not painted for the French court forty-three years earlier. Everhard Jabach (1610-1695), whom Louis XIV bought it from in 1671, was also most probably also not its first owner. Similarly, the suggestion made in some literature that cat. no. A 065 can be traced back to the personal collection of the British King Charles I must be refuted. It may, however, be the still life that, according to a 1783 auction catalogue, was painted for a Brussels nobleman, who paid 1220 guilders for it. The earliest possible identification of the rich still life from 1641 (cat. no. A 054) is in the top-level collection of Guillelmo Potteau in Antwerp, by 1692. Consequently we do not know with any certainty who were the first owners of these still lifes – and thus, neither the persons who commissioned the paintings. As a result we are unaware of the position, ideas, status and stature of those first owners. It is most likely, in view of their large sizes, that these pictures were indeed commissioned, perhaps even for specific locations, but the consistency of their motifs and strong individual treatment suggest that de Heem himself was substantially, if not entirely, responsible for the choice of motifs and their arrangement. All of these pictures show abundant luxury with an undertone of vanitas through the inclusion of clocks and watches (time ticking away), a globe or a map (an actual presence of the temporary world in the picture, or a reminder of heaven in the case of a celestial globe), musical instruments (the fleeting character of music) or ominous clouds over the landscape in the background. The painting in Paris, cat. no. A 050, is the first in de Heem’s oeuvre to include a watch on a (blue) ribbon, a motif that he would repeat often, until 1653. While references to at least three of the Five Senses may perhaps be recognised in most of these pictures (Taste: the food and wine, the monkey; Smell: the fumes of a pipe; Hearing: the musical instruments), only in the example in Brussels all five appear to have been included (Sight: the mirror; Touch: the page?).

Equally, representations of the Four Elements appear to be present, but in not one of the pictures as a complete combination of all four (Air: birds [only in the Brussels painting] or perhaps sky and clouds in the back-ground landscape; Earth: globe, map [only in Paris], the fruit as product of the earth; Water: sea shells, water in the back-ground landscape; Fire: a pie and the costly metal vessels as products of fire, smoking paraphernalia). The costly objects on display can also be regarded as reminders of the temporary character of our life on earth: none of this wealth can be transposed to the next world. At the same time, all these motifs are part and parcel of a tradition of imagery in still-life painting and do not necessarily bear profound meanings. Iconographic depth, thus, appears not to have played any role of substance for de Heem and his patrons.

Large luxury still lifes from de Heem’s circle.

Apart from the fully autograph large luxury still lifes by Jan Davidsz. de Heem a fair number of such works was painted in the first half of the 1640s by other Antwerp artists, most of whom were, or must have been closely associated with de Heem. Their works provide a frame of reference for de Heem’s paintings.
Andries Benedetti

The most significant among them is Andries Benedetti (1615/18?-1649 or after), who was a pupil of the obscure artist Vincent Cernevael in 1636 and subsequently, from 1638 on, Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s pupil. In the administrative year 1640-1641, he was registered by the Antwerp guild of St. Luke as an independent master. He, too, painted some five known large luxury still lifes, most probably during the first half of the 1640s, obviously inspired by intimate knowledge of de Heem’s examples. Unfortunately not one of them is dated, so it is difficult to connect them accurately with de Heem’s paintings. Benedetti did not base any of his known compositions directly on any of de Heem’s, and neither do we find any common props in the works of both artists, which suggests that Benedetti was working independently and not as an immediate satellite of his teacher. However, having entered de Heem’s studio as a pupil in September 1638 and registering as an independent master in 1640/41, he will have witnessed the development of de Heem’s earliest large luxury still lifes from up close. His largest and most impressive painting, measuring 168 x 240 cm, is in Budapest (fig. A 21).

It appears to bear some relationship with De Heem’s painting from 1641 in Brussels: the white napkin hanging over the chair to the right in both paintings, the compositional use of the column and the way in which part of the drapery hangs down obliquely are very similar. Particularly in the Budapest example, but also in his painting in Vienna, Benedetti seems to have made a point of overruling De Heem in the opulence of his still lifes. The painting in Budapest includes two smaller still lifes as répoussoirs in the foreground: a wine cooler to the left and a chair to the right, on the seat of which is a branch of lemons and a Westerwald stoneware jug, on the floor to its left stands a tilted kraak porcelain dish with large mushrooms. On the table is a wide variety of victuals: bread, oysters, fruit of various kinds, a pie and no fewer than three boiled lobsters on top of the basket of fruit. A silver beaker, a silver-gilt columbine cup and various costly wine glasses are placed upon the table. A clay pipe, at the foot of a column to the left, provides a sharp white accent, but it is not as
integrated and effective in the composition as similar pipes in cat. nos. A 054 and 071. While Benedetti’s Budapest example possesses a similar spaciousness as de Heem’s paintings from 1641 and 1642 (cat. nos. A 054 and 065), the Vienna example is closer in composition to the one from 1643. At the same time, Benedetti’s chair, in the way in which it has been placed beside the table, as well as the background landscape with a small sailboat appear to have been borrowed liberally from de Heem’s painting from 1642 (cat. no. A 065).

**Andries de Coninck**

Another artist who produced a number of large luxury still lifes in de Heem’s style is Andries de Coninck (active c.1643-1659), who was registered by the Antwerp guild of St. Luke as a pupil of Jan Thomas (1617-1678) in 1643/44 and as a master in 1645/46. Curiously, his registration as a master in the guild, also at the time of his death in 1659, was as a dealer (‘koopman’), and not as a painter. His known production, however, is barely smaller in number than Benedetti’s. His style and handling approach those of Benedetti’s very closely, up to the level that for some paintings one could hesitate about an attribution to one artist or the other. The compositions of de Coninck’s large luxury still lifes vary little, but in what is arguably his best work, also in terms of quality of execution, he has attempted a variation of his own by placing a small table with a large wine cooler prominently in front of his still life and by turning the chair to the left with its back to the table (fig. A 22).

De Coninck, too, appears not to have used any props that also appear in de Heem’s still lifes, although some of his objects show strong similarities. The decorated silver ewer in a painting formerly in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, for instance, is very similar to an example that occurs in a still life by de Heem from c.1654 (cat. no. A 188). De Coninck’s silver-gilt cup with a bird on top would appear to be the same example as the one we find in several of Benedetti’s still lifes. Although de Coninck was registered as a pupil of the history painter Jan Thomas, the fact that his style was largely dependent on that of Benedetti, as well as the fact that he was married to Christina Benedetti, probably that artist’s sister,
suggests close connections between the two, perhaps up to the level of sharing a studio. Apart from these large compositions, both Benedetti and de Coninck also painted smaller still lifes in de Heem’s style, none of which is dated either. The quality of their work is high and occasionally impressive, but it never really approaches that of de Heem himself.

**Jan van der Hecke I**

Among de Heem’s followers and epigones, as far as we can tell from their extant oeuvres, Benedetti and de Coninck have been the most productive in the range of large luxury still lifes, but others have made their contributions to this area of still-life painting as well. Jan van der Hecke I (1619/20-1684) can be considered as one of the most talented among them. Two examples of his luxury still lifes are dated, the first somewhat indistinctly, but probably 1643 (fig. A 23), while a somewhat smaller example is dated 1645.

![A 23 J. van der Hecke I, Luxury still life, signed and dated 164(3), oil on canvas, 121 x 173 cm. Present location unknown.](image)

Van der Hecke appears to have known de Heem’s Brussels still life from 1641 (cat. no. A 054) as well as the one from 1643 (cat. no. A 071), with which his largest example appears to share its general, more austere composition. From the Brussels painting, van der Hecke borrowed the motifs of the prominent oriental tapestry and of the sub-still life of musical instruments, books and documents at front right as well as, perhaps, the bulky lobster which in fact became a feature motif in most of his luxury still lifes. A painting in Budapest, today of more modest dimensions, was probably at one time also a fairly large example of van der Hecke’s luxury still lifes. This piece includes an oriental tapestry and it features a small bouquet of roses, like de Heem’s work from 1642 (cat. A 065), as well as a lemon peel hanging down in front of the table. In the left foreground we see part of a large sea shell that looks almost identical to the one de Heem depicted in his 1642 luxury still life and in a large still life from the following year (cat. no. A 070). While van der Hecke’s still lifes are closely related to those of de Heem, he does not appear to consciously have imitated them or to have depended strongly on de Heem’s inventions. In a later work, probably from the 1650s, now in the Wallace Collection in London, van der Hecke created an entirely individual variant
of this type of still life, choosing his setting in the open air and incorporating a live monkey and a quantity of vegetables.\textsuperscript{272}

\textit{Adriaen van Utrecht}

Apart from by de Heem, for the painting mentioned above, van der Hecke was probably inspired to a degree by the work of Adriaen van Utrecht. Earlier in this chapter, I have already mentioned Adriaen van Utrecht’s work as a probable source of inspiration for Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s large luxury still lifes (fig. A 12 and 13, above). Van Utrecht continued to produce large sumptuous compositions and it would appear that after a few years an interaction started to take place between the two artists. The fact that a red lobster on a white dish became a central motif in van Utrecht’s exuberantly sumptuous still life of game and fruit from 1642, now in the Prado Museum, Madrid, may very well have been inspired by de Heem’s luxurious displays.\textsuperscript{273} De Heem’s impact on van Utrecht is even more clear in another ostentatious composition, from 1644, now in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (fig. A 24).\textsuperscript{274}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{A24.png}
\caption{A 24 A. van Utrecht, \textit{Luxury still life with a parrot, dog and monkey}, signed and dated 1644, oil on canvas, 185 x 242,5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-C-301.}
\end{figure}

In that painting, van Utrecht included a paraphrase of a de Heem still life from probably the same year (cat. A 080). Moreover, he included a silver-gilt columbine cup-and-cover and a chair holding a large silver-gilt salver, both of them motifs that are as common in de Heem’s compositions as they are uncommon with van Utrecht himself. Adriaen van Utrecht continued to produce large display still lifes until his death in 1652, but the emphasis in his images would be on a combination of game, fruit and live animals, rather than luxury items such as silver-gilt cups, ewers and salvers.\textsuperscript{275}

\textit{Other artists}

While de Heem’s own production of this type of large luxury still life already ceased before the middle of the 1640s, other artists continued to produce them and as a result, this type of still life was painted until well into the 1660s.
Jan Pauwel Gillemans the Elder (1618-1675 or later) was not recorded as a pupil of de Heem, but his paintings show a close affinity with the master’s work. It is most likely that Gillemans, who became a member of the Antwerp guild during the administrative year 1647/48, had some immediate connection with de Heem. Two large paintings by Gillemans that can be considered as early works were clearly strongly inspired by de Heem’s examples. In both of them, Gillemans included motifs similar to de Heem’s, such as a lute on a chair, a musical score, a lobster, a basket of fruit, heavy stone columns and a background view into a landscape. Gillemans’ painting in Leipzig is the most accomplished of the known examples and the largest work in his known oeuvre (fig. A 25).\(^{276}\) It was most probably painted during the second half of the 1640s.

![Image of J. P. Gillemans I, Luxury still life](image1.jpg)

A 25 J. P. Gillemans I, Luxury still life, signed, oil on canvas, 134.5 x 171.5 cm. Leipzig, Museum der bildenden Künste, inv.nr. 1627.

![Image of J. van Son, Luxury still life](image2.jpg)

A 26 J. van Son, Luxury still life, oil on canvas, 116 x 167 cm. Amsterdam/Rijswijk, Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), inv. no. NK 2388.
Joris van Son (1623-1667), like Gillemans, was strongly inspired by de Heem’s still lifes, but was also not registered by the guild of St. Luke as his pupil. He was admitted as a master in 1643. A large still life with the features of de Heem’s luxury pieces was long attributed to the latter, but its execution is in fact characteristic of van Son (fig. A 26).\textsuperscript{277} The painting probably originated in the early 1650s. An example in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, is even closer in type to de Heem’s work and was probably painted in the second half of the 1640s.\textsuperscript{278}

Carstian Luyckx (1623-well after 1658) was born in the same year as Joris van Son and became a pupil of the flower painter Philips de Marlier at the age of seventeen, switching to the studio of Frans Francken III in 1642. Nevertheless, the work of Jan Davidsz. de Heem had a firm impact on Luyckx’s style, particularly during the first decade of his career. Luyckx, however, was never a mere imitator, but an artist who liberally subjected the influences he underwent to his own artistic licence. An excellent example is a large luxury still life by Luyckx, now in the Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio (fig. A 27).\textsuperscript{279}

Luyckx’s composition is reminiscent of de Heem’s large luxury still lifes, but while he left space around the still-life arrangement, Luyckx omitted \textit{répoussoirs} in the foreground. Like de Heem, he employs a drapery at the top and makes effective use of the tablecloth and the white napkin. There is a window in the background providing light, but it is placed high up and does not offer a view of a landscape, while, contrary to windows in de Heem’s back walls, it does not run parallel with the picture plane, but stands at an angle, which provides an enhanced sense of depth. For motifs such as the flute standing upright, the halved peaches, the cut pie and the sharp accent of the white clay pipe, Luyckx is surely indebted to de Heem, but generally he chooses his own objects, rather than borrowing from de Heem’s still lifes. The silver-gilt cup and cover, the cup screw and the nautilus shell, among other objects, all occur in various other luxury still lifes by Luyckx. Among them, however, this one, which should probably be dated around the year 1650, is indebted the most to de Heem in terms of style and composition.
We have no information concerning the life data of the artist who signed ‘W. MERTENS’, but he, too, was probably active in the 1650s and produced at least two large luxury still lifes that draw their inspiration from de Heem’s works from the 1640s. Mertens, however, omitted de Heem’s stone columns and background vistas. Apart from the large luxury still lifes from the first half of the 1640s, Mertens appears to have also been inspired by later variants, such as a painting from 1649 (cat. no. A 121), which supports a date of origin for his works in the 1650s rather than in the 1640s (fig. A 28). Mertens’ work clearly shows the difference in quality with de Heem’s work: his compositions are ambitious, but additive and lacking depth and unity.

A 28  W. Mertens, *Luxury still life*, signed, oil on canvas, 118,8 x 181, 2 cm. Present location unknown.

A 29  J. Marrel, *Luxury still life with a parrot*, oil on canvas, 127,7 x 185,2 cm. Present location unknown.

Jacob Marrel (1613/14-1681), who had already produced several copies after a de Heem original from 1646 (cat. no. A 099) in 1649, produced a large, almost overloaded paraphrase
of de Heem’s large luxury still life late in his career, including a chair with musical instruments and a stone column, but without a landscape background (fig. A 29). Judging from the handling, Marrel probably produced this painting during the 1660s or even 1670s, well after his return to Frankfurt am Main. As such, it is probably one of the last seventeenth-century works inspired directly by de Heem’s large examples from the 1640s. Marrel’s painting demonstrates that de Heem’s influence on his contemporaries was not restricted to Antwerp. While still lifes in the Northern Netherlands never attained the baroque opulence of de Heem’s examples, it seems quite obvious that some of Pieter Claesz.’s larger works, such as a canvas from c.1648 measuring 136 x 206 cm, and in particular one from 1653, measuring 150 x 200 cm, including a lobster, musical instruments on a chair and a large bellarmine as a répoussoir in front of the table, are indebted to de Heem’s work at least to some degree. Pieter de Ring (active 1640s-1660), a Leiden still-life painter who is reported to have been apprenticed to de Heem, produced an impressive large luxury still life (fig. A 67) during the last year of his life, 1660, which will be discussed below, in connection with de Heem’s work from the first half of the 1650s.

An interesting work in the context of the impact of de Heem’s large luxury still lifes is a large still life signed by Gregorius de Coninck, (previously?) in an Italian private collection. De Conick was born in Amsterdam in 1633 or 1634 and was recorded in Rome in 1668, but he was back in Amsterdam by the next year. In the administrative year 1665-1666, however, a Gregorius de Coninck was registered as a master painter by the Antwerp guild of St. Luke, paying the fee of a master’s son. Perhaps he was related to Andries de Coninck? In any case, the composition of the large painting in Italy appears to be strongly related to de Heem’s example from 1643 (cat. no. A 071), while the handling unmistakably squares with that of other still lifes signed by Gregorius de Coninck with dates in the 1650s, which are more Dutch in character. Its Italian location might suggest that de Coninck’s painting was done in Italy, inspired by his Antwerp sojourn. If this hypothesis is true, it would point to a late interest in the large luxury still life by de Coninck and his Italian client in about 1668.
Additionally, two large still lifes in the collection of the Prado Museum, Madrid, deserve special mention here (figs. A 29 and 30). Their recorded history goes back to 1746 when they were mentioned in the inventory of Isabel Farnese in the Granja Palace, Segovia, as belonging to a set of five. Two of the five can no longer be traced, a third is also in the Prado collection, now convincingly attributed to Andries Benedetti. It has been on loan to the Spanish embassy in Lima, Peru, since 1948. All three remaining paintings measure about 121 x 145 cm and we may assume that the two missing ones had the same measurements. It is imaginable that they were imported from Flanders as a group shortly after they were painted, but it looks as though the Benedetti was cropped to the left and possibly at the top, probably in order to match the others in size and to make up a uniform group to decorate a room with. Perhaps this was done specifically for installation in the Granja Palace.

The Prado Benedetti is more accomplished in style and quality than his Budapest and Vienna paintings mentioned above and as such it probably is a somewhat later work, perhaps from the later 1640s. The other two from the Granja Palace group, however, are close in style to de Heem’s large luxury still lifes from around 1640. Their handling is similar to de Heem’s and the quality is rather high, but they are without doubt the work of a different hand. The palette is not dissimilar to that of the early luxury still life in New York (cat. no. A 050) as is the handling of the white tablecloth. Their compositions are of a different nature, however. Like de Heem’s paintings, they show a horizontal division into three equally wide bands, but in contrast with de Heem’s compositions – and those of Benedetti – diagonals and other oblique lines barely play a role. While these two works betray intimate knowledge of de Heem’s luxury still lifes in the choice of motifs, such as a prominent silver-gilt cup-and-cover, a wicker basket of fruit, a large metal dish on a chair and draperies, a sturdy stone column
and a vista in the background, their arrangement is somewhat static and their handling, although by no means without skill, is a little dull compared to de Heem’s.

It is interesting to note that several second-tier artists were apparently able to produce such elaborate paintings successfully while such works must have been a serious investment on the painter’s part and holding a risk in terms of the possibility of selling such expensive work rapidly. Apparently they could confidently invest time and costly materials in their production. In part they may have worked in commission for private buyers, drifting along on the waves of de Heem’s success, but it is also quite possible that part of their production was intended for export by such art dealing firms as Forchoudt who may have acted as employers and financiers for the artists. In any case, the Prado paintings also confirm once more that there is a host of as yet unidentified Antwerp painters whose names may or may not be found in the Antwerp guild records, but who worked virtually anonymously for the thriving Antwerp art market. Their success with the adaptation of de Heem’s formula of large luxury still lifes may have been an incentive for de Heem himself to abandon the subject and to shift his attention to other areas of still-life painting.

*Other larger still lifes 1640-1644*

While de Heem’s large luxury still lifes from the early 1640s are his most eye-catching efforts, he painted a wide range of smaller still lifes, some of which are still quite substantial in size. In view of maintaining a clear perspective, I will discuss the remaining works in two more-or-less consistent groups, first the larger ones and then the smaller ones. The latter consist almost exclusively of horizontal compositions, with a height of about 60 centimetres or less. The paintings discussed below are exclusively still lifes of victuals and other objects on a table. Other types of images from this period will be discussed separately below, specifically a ‘barn’ still life from 1643, and de Heem’s earliest floral compositions.
The group of larger still lifes from the early 1640s starts with a painting measuring 97 by 120 centimetres, which is signed and dated (cat. no. A 053). The date is difficult to read, but appears to be 1640, which date would certainly fit within de Heem’s stylistic development. In some ways, this work is reminiscent of a painting I have tentatively dated to 1638 (cat. no. A 048). It has several motifs in common with that work, such as the sliced-open melon, the juxtaposition of a columbine cup and a German stoneware jug, be it that the objects depicted in both pictures are not the same. They also share the motif of a stone column on one side, which in both paintings is only indicated in a cursory manner, almost as if that part of the painting remained unfinished. In contrast, the motif of the clay pipe providing a sharp and bright, slightly oblique accent in the composition is a new feature here, and one that recurs regularly in paintings from the following years, such as the large luxury still life in Brussels (cat. no. A 054) already discussed above, to mention just one of them. The rather dense arrangement of this still life, and the use of the white napkin as a vertical accent also places it squarely in (or very close to) 1640.

Apart from the large Brussels painting and three smaller works (cat. nos. A 054, 055, 056 and 058), two still lifes by de Heem can be assigned to 1641 with some certainty, while 1642, with no fewer than four smaller dated works and one dated large luxury piece known to us, appears to have been quite a productive year for the artist. A still life with a high degree of finish, in a private collection (cat. no. A 057) must have originated in or around 1641, however. It was dated by de Heem, but as a result of cropping (before 1812) of the panel, which consists of one impressively large piece of oak, the last two digits of the date have disappeared. The painting as it appears now most probably had some more space around the entire still life, it probably lost a few centimetres all around.

The central motif is a large boiled lobster, virtually identical to the one in cat. no. A 053 discussed above, and similar to the one in cat. no. A 067. It has received the artist’s meticulous attention, which resulted in a rendering in great detail and a subtle use of many shades of red combined with creamy white. The fruit, and particularly the grapes, both in the basket and on the pewter plate at front right, have lost some colour. The handling of the objects to the right, the glasses, as well as the silver tazza and the silver-gilt cup-and-cover is extremely successful. On the tazza, de Heem has even subtly simulated scratches in the silver. The white cloth to the right is reminiscent of several other such cloths in de Heem’s still lifes from the period, compare cat. nos. A 050, 065, 068 and 070, for
instance. The bread roll in this painting was probably based on the same study as that in de Heem’s large still life in Paris (cat. no. A 051). It is interesting to note that there are several repentirs in this painting. De Heem appears to have changed the left background, some of which is still (or again) visible.\textsuperscript{289} He also changed the arrangement at front centre with the lemons and the pipe, replacing one lemon with a walnut, which allowed more convincing space for the pipe stem to pass through. The bird upon the silver-gilt cup, now facing left, appears to have been facing to the right initially. In view of the motifs and handling a date of execution in or around 1641 for this painting appears to be the most plausible, but it is of course a great pity that the date, which was originally present on the painting, can no longer be verified. The high degree of finish as well as the elaborate signature appear to indicate that de Heem considered it to be an important work.

Closely related to the previous work is a still life in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Cambrai (cat. no. A 058). It features the same silver-gilt cup, but without the cover, as well as the same tazza, in a similar position. The reflections in the tazza have been fully adapted to this composition, however. The pewter dish with grapes has the same configuration, while the two lemons from the previously discussed painting have been moved onto it at the left. In the right background is a stone column much like the one in cat. no. A 057, discussed above. The concept of a silver cup partly covered by a napkin is similar to that in cat. no. A 060, while similar nautilus shells can be found in other de Heem still lifes from 1642 and 1643. In all, this suggests that the Cambrai still life probably also originated in or around 1641. A large upright still life (cat. no. A 066), which is signed but not dated, can be assigned to 1642. Probably due to the fact that on the whole its execution appears not to be as refined as other de Heem still lifes from the period, its attribution has been questioned in the past.\textsuperscript{290} However, the rather complex composition and the handling of several details, such as the silver cup, the nautilus shell, and the white napkin draped over the edge of the table firmly point to de Heem’s authorship.

Judging by its extremely low vantage point, the painting was obviously intended to be hung in a high spot – the table’s edge must be placed above eye level for proper viewing. The fact that it was not intended to be viewed from close by may also have occasioned the less refined handling of most details. While this still life is clearly related to the large luxury still lifes, not only in the choice of motifs but also in size, its construction is different (fig. A 32). Diagonals barely play a role in its
composition and there is a firm division between the lower and upper half of the image; the table’s edge marks the middle of the picture plane.

The second most important imaginary line is the one dividing the composition vertically, in a ratio of 1:2, running along the side of the oriental tablecloth and alongside the silver cup. In addition, the still life upon the table has been constructed within a triangle formed by the table cloth and by the lines running down obliquely from the top centre of the composition. If anything, in terms of composition this painting is related to the left half of the Brussels luxury still life (cat. no. A 054, compare figs. A 15 and 19). Additionally, the white cloth draped from the edge of the table to the right is strongly reminiscent of the one seen in cat. nos. A 054, 065 and 070.

In various respects, cat. no. A 068, in Chalon-sur-Saône, is something of an exception in between the other works from this period. The painting is dated, but the last numeral of the date is indistinct. The date has been published as 1647, but upon personal close inspection, I eventually concluded that the last numeral is certainly not a 7, but most likely a 2. The painting shares motifs with earlier pictures

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(such as the cherries and the halved peach, which is a recurrent feature from 1639 onwards), and also shows strong similarities with dated examples from 1642, such as the draping of the white napkin (cf. cat. no. A 060), the detailed handling of, and the light effects upon the silver cup (cf. cat. no. A 063) and the halved peach, again, in cat. no. A 061. Also, the handling of the white grapes is very similar to that in cat. nos. A 064 and A 065. In other motifs it appears to anticipate work from the following years, but to date it to 1642, as suggested by the lecture of the date on the painting can by all means be defended. Its composition, however, is unusual. To a degree, it comes across as a juxtaposition of two individual vertical still lifes; the arrangement to the left, in particular, could feature as an individual composition. This combination of finely painted, highly detailed elegant objects forms a true unity. The rather plump basket of fruit to the right contrasts with the subtlety of the area to the left. However, the painting was most likely reduced somewhat to the right and slightly so at the top, and it may be that the artist had originally planned a branch of leaves above the basket, but never executed it. With an additional three or four centimetres to the right and one or two at the top, the composition regains its natural balance: in that proposed shape, the vertical axis runs precisely between the basket and the columbine cup. When we assume that the horizontal axis runs across the aperture of the silver cup and through the centre of the lemon in the basket, this would add two or three centimetres at the top. Such additions would also result in equally convincingly situated diagonals and lines dividing the composition vertically in three equal sections. Whatever the case, with this painting, de Heem was clearly experimenting with a novel type of composition, be it perhaps not entirely successfully. The quality of the execution of the details, however, particularly in the left half, is extremely high, even for de Heem.

Closest to the large luxury still lifes in type and size is a painting in a French private collection (cat. no. A 070). The most important difference with the former is that the artist has not allowed for any space around the still life and that he has also omitted the background view, which renders a rather different character to this work. For the composition of this still life, de Heem harked back to – and improved upon – the stepped composition that he had experimented with in 1633 (cat. nos. A 035 and 039). Here, for that purpose and for the first time, he has introduced a casket for wine bottles to the right, upon which he placed several objects. Such a bottle casket would become a recurring motif in de Heem’s still lifes, up to the end of his painting career.
In addition, he has placed a shelf in the upper right corner in this painting, upon which there are two clay pipes and a short candlestick. Apparently he decided in the case of later still lifes that such a shelf was unnecessary or taking things too far, since this is the only painting into which he has introduced it. This work shares the clutter of mostly smaller objects upon the table with the luxury still life from the same year, cat. no. A 071. It also includes (probably) the same polished nautilus shell as cat. nos. A 058, 065 and 066, while the large shell at upper right, a *Strombus Gigas*, also appears in cat. no. A 065 and again in cat. no. A 074. Looking at this painting and others from the period that include a pomegranate (such as cat. nos. A 063, 065 and 073), one wonders whether de Heem had the actual fruit at hand to portray on every occasion, or whether he was working from memory while executing its details. Occasionally, the pomegranate looks more like a tennis ball filled with red crumbs than like the actual fruit. Just as in the large luxury pieces, de Heem has placed a large Wanli porcelain salver of fruit on top of the basket in the centre, while the texture of the white cloth is quite similar to that of the ones shown in those works.
The two diagonals play the most important role in the composition (paralleled by a series of deviating oblique lines playing around the diagonal from lower left to upper right, such as the clay pipe and the flute). Horizontally, the division is 1:2:1 (rather than 1:1:1 as in the large luxury still lifes), while the central axis also has been given some emphasis.

The fact that Jan Davidsz. de Heem was playing around, if not consciously experimenting with various types of compositions during this period is demonstrated by a still life that shows almost the opposite in approach to the one just discussed. Cat. no. A 069 has all the characteristics of the large luxury still lifes but, in contrast, has a vertical format, while the artist has stepped even further away from the table with the still life than in those larger pieces, and has chosen for a relatively small size. When we isolate the central horizontal section of this still life, however, we end up with a composition that fully matches two examples that are both dated 1643 (cat. nos. A 076 and 077), which firmly suggest that this work originated in 1643 as well. Rather than an explicit view into a landscape, de Heem has introduced a high window here, through which a brightly lit, cloudy sky is visible. This device has a similar visual effect as the landscape views in terms of enhancing the sense of depth in the painting, but it distracts less from the central subject. Nevertheless, this appears to be the only occasion on which de Heem has opted for this solution in a larger piece.

A 080

A large still life with a lobster as its central motif, in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow (cat. A 080) represents a further development of the composition after cat. no. A 070, discussed above. Here, de Heem also employs the device of the bottle casket to the right as a platform to lift some objects up upon. The eye is drawn directly to this corner because the artist has partly covered the casket with a white napkin on top of which a branch of bright yellow lemons has been placed. This branch also serves to unify the group of objects up high to the right with the rest of the composition since, visually, the lemons cascade down into the centre, leading the eye towards the red lobster and further to the left, to a pair of bright yellow lemons upon a pewter plate.

A branch of vine hanging down behind the branch of lemons strengthens the visual flow downwards into the centre. The two bright lemons in the left foreground are balanced by a cluster of
fruit, including a half-peeled lemon, at the far right of the composition. Although the lobster takes pride of place, the still life is in fact grouped around a large nautilus shell with its opening turned towards the viewer. Catalogue nos. A 069 and 075 include similarly placed shells. As noted earlier, Adriaen van Utrecht employed part of the composition of the Moscow still life in a work dated 1644 (fig. A 24, above). His still life is a very clever amalgam of his own motifs and of compositional constructions used by de Heem in his large luxury still lifes, and the construction used here. Of substantially lesser quality, but of interest from the point of view of de Heem’s production is a fairly large still life in the collection of the Musée de Brou in Bourg-en-Bresse (fig. A 33). Its execution is reminiscent of early works by Jan Pauwel Gillemans the Elder, suggesting a possible attribution to that artist. Many features in this painting are related to de Heem’s still lifes from around 1643. Moreover, the basket of fruit and a porcelain dish appear to have been modelled directly on this motif in cat. no. A 071, while the dish of lemons to the left (and perhaps the melon) appear to have been copied from cat. no. A 080. To the least, this appears to confirm that those two still lifes were painted close in time to each other and that they – or studies for them – were available (in de Heem’s studio?) to the copyist simultaneously.

A 33 Circle of J. Dz. de Heem, *Still life with fruit and oysters*, oil on canvas, 107 x 164 cm. Musée de Brou, Bourg-en-Bresse inv. no. 853.4.
Of yet a different character is another rather large, colourful still life, now in Richmond, Virginia, that features a mound of fruit – mainly grapes – on a huge pewter salver, flanked to the left by a perched African Grey parrot, and a dish of red-boiled crayfish to the right (cat. no. A 073). While the composition is relatively simple, it is a clever construction, employing a combination of lines and colours. At lower right there is a density of grapes, other fruit and crayfish. This cluster is concentrated below the diagonal that runs from lower left to upper right, and which is emphasized by a thick branch of grapevine in the centre. Above this diagonal, there is a bright area consisting of a pomegranate, two bright-yellow lemons and, most of all, the soft-green leaves of the vine, which are reflecting light. The opposite diagonal, from upper left to lower right, is one consisting of a sequence of colour: the vertical pole of the perch catching warm light, the parrot’s red tail, two oranges, a walnut, a cluster of yellowish peaches and finally the red crayfish. The latter, as a bright accent at lower right, balances the dark body of the parrot at upper left.
Furthermore, de Heem enhanced the suggestion of depth by having a pewter dish of walnuts stick over the edge of the table, by a spiralling lemon peel and some red cherries dangling in front of the table, next to the bright blue ribbon of a watch, which in itself presents an interesting contrast with the red of the crayfish. The suggestion of depth was enhanced further by positioning some glasses and a silver cup behind the display of fruit. Moreover, together with the parrot’s perch, these motifs provide vertical accents in the composition. The painting is not dated, but its handling and the motifs it has in common with other works from and around 1643 (such as the crayfish, pomegranate, and the watch) place it firmly within this period.

It is interesting to note that two copies exist of this canvas, at least one of which must have originated in de Heem’s studio since differences occur that cannot be explained if either one or both of the copies originated later and independent of each other. Copy a, as far as the known illustrations allow judgment, is of a rather high quality (fig. A 34). It may well be that de Heem participated in its making. Instead of the parrot, however, it includes a view through a window in the background to the left. Other differences with the Richmond painting include a peach instead of the peeled lemon, a plum instead of one of the peaches to the right and a difference in the vine leaf to the left.

Copy b is closer to copy a than to de Heem’s original in many details, but does not include the view or the plum, while the peach that replaces de Heem’s lemon is positioned differently (fig. A 35). It would appear that in the original in Richmond, de Heem himself changed a peach into a lemon and added the parrot, its perch and the branch of cherries as afterthoughts, perhaps after painting out a window in the background. The changes in the large vine leaf to the left also appear to have been made in order to accommodate the composition to the arrival of the parrot. The question as to who could have produced the copies – which are apparently by two different hands and of differing quality – must remain open. The only de Heem pupil registered at the time by whom we know any paintings, Alexander Coosemans, upon detailed comparison, is not a likely candidate, while it is unclear whether the other recorded pupils, Michiel Versteylen, Lenaert Rougghe and Thomas de Clerck, ever reached the level of individually producing paintings. The organization and scope of de Heem’s workshop remains unclear due to lack of evidence in the form of paintings or
documents. It is interesting, however, to find that such paintings as copy a, and perhaps b, based upon cat. no. A 073 were apparently produced there.

Last in the group of larger still lifes that can be assigned to 1643 is a somewhat enigmatic painting (cat. no. A 074), which is obviously a fragment of a larger work. It appears to be related to the previous still life through motifs and handling, as well as to the large luxury still lifes from the first half of the 1640s, cat. no. A 071 in particular. The painting was obviously reduced in size, and cut into the present ornate shape, probably in order for it to serve as an overdoor decoration.³⁰² It is difficult to envisage how much the painting has lost precisely, but the main loss probably occurred to the left. The bright area on the back wall suggests that perhaps this painting, too, possessed a landscape view through a window and it seems logical to assume that the recorder and the lute, of which now only the headstock is visible, were shown entirely. Perhaps the original measurements of the painting approached 120 x 170 cm, which would have made it an intermediary between the large rich still lifes and the other larger formats discussed in this passage.

**Smaller still lifes 1640-1644**
In addition to his large and more prestigious canvases, de Heem produced a number of smaller, but mostly no less exquisite still lifes. Looking at them as a separate group, it becomes clear that they show a distinct, steady chronological development. For this intimate type of still life, however, de Heem apparently was not as eager to experimentally explore new types of compositions as he was for his larger compositions.
From 1640, only one small example survives (cat. no. A 052). Like most works of this type until 1642, it features a display upon a wooden table partly covered with a dark-green cloth. The basic composition of this type of still life includes a high object on one half of the picture plane, surrounded by an arrangement of smaller objects on the table. These smaller works may be regarded as liberal outtakes from the larger compositions. The set-up of the small painting from 1640 is not very different from, for instance, the arrangement on the left corner of the table in the large painting in the Louvre (cat. no. A 051) or in the Brussels luxury still life from 1641 (cat. no. A 054): a silver tazza with a lemon, a half-peeled lemon to the left of the tazza, and to its right a whole one and a pewter dish holding some objects.

Cat. nos. A 055, 056 and 060 are similar compositions – although the arrangement has been reversed in cat. no. A 060 – but the still life has become slightly more crowded and complex. In all three, de Heem introduces the sharp linear accent by means of a clay pipe, a device he had first employed in cat. no. A 053 and repeated in A 054, but in these smaller still lifes the result is much more effective. In most of these compositions, reflections in metal and glass play an important part. In addition to the accents of colour provided by the crayfish, the crabs and the bright yellow lemons, these reflections provide a brilliance to the image. The most successful examples, such as cat. no. A 063 are balanced syntheses of these elements.

The two smallest examples from 1642, cat. nos. A 061 and 062 are slightly more experimental in terms of composition. In the first (cat. no. A 061), de Heem has introduced a window with a landscape view, much like in the large luxury still lifes. However, perhaps because of the small scale of this painting, the effect is not entirely convincing. Moreover, due to the strongly
emphasised window frame, the viewer may get the impression of looking at a landscape painting hanging behind the still life, rather than at an actual view.

Because of the almost square format of the painting, we must assume that the view is part of the original composition, which is also confirmed by the fact that it has been painted directly on the cream-white ground. In a painting now in Heidelberg (cat. no. A 062), de Heem used a stepped composition or répoussoir, placing a halved peach on a ledge in front of the main arrangement. He appears to have used these two devices – the window and the stepped composition – only once each in a small still life. In these two paintings, as well as in several others of the small still lifes from 1642, de Heem has shifted the focus of the composition more towards the centre. In cat. nos. A 063, 064 and 067, de Heem has shifted the highest point in his composition more towards the centre or even entirely to the centre in the case of cat. no. A 063.
A 36a Ph. de Neef, Still life with fruit, crayfish and a silver cup, signed and with signature ‘J de heem fe A 1642’, oil on panel, 49 x 61 cm. Milan, Castello Sforzesco, inv. no. 1216.

A copy of cat. no. A 063 by Philip de Neef (active before 1644-1659 or after) approaches de Heem’s original extremely closely in many details. De Neef’s signature (‘p. de Neef fec’) is on the edge of the table at lower right, but the painting also bears a signature and date ‘J de heem fe A’ 1642’ at upper right. The exceptionally high quality, compared to other work by de Neef, who was registered as a master in 1644, might suggest that in 1642 the young artist was studying with de Heem, who in that case may well have contributed substantially to this copy. It would appear that De Heem altered the white grapes and added the black grapes and the vine leaves in cat. A 063 at a later stage. Their handling fits much better among works from the later 1640s, while, judging from the copies by de Neef and another period copy (see catalogue), they were originally not included. Also, the original highlights on the stem of the wine glass are clearly visible through the black grapes in front of them. Most likely, the painting remained in the artist’s possession for several years and he decided to ‘modernise’ it slightly after some five years.

A 075

In 1643, de Heem generally opted for slightly larger formats, also for his smaller still lifes. For the better part, this is obviously due to the fact that he also opted for more complex arrangements. Five smaller still lifes can be assigned to 1643, two of which are dated. The first two, cat. nos. A 075 and 076, show several similarities with work from the previous years, 1641 and 1642, such as the prominent lemons and the sharp white accents of the clay pipes.

It is interesting to note that Jan Pauwel Gillemans the Elder (1618-1675 or later), who may well have trained under de Heem and who became a master in the Antwerp guild in 1648, produced and signed a free copy of cat. no. A 076, most probably early in his career (fig. A 36).307 Gillemans shifted a few motifs around, and omitted and added others, but basically stuck to de Heem’s composition.

A small still life in a private collection probably also dates from 1643 (cat. no. A 079). Like the two still lifes that were just discussed (cat. nos. A 075 and 076), it bears some similarity with works from the previous year, while the handling of the grapes approaches that of the large luxury still life from 1643 (cat. no. A 071), and the way the lemon peel was draped, and the clustering of the fruit are similar to those features in cat. no. A 076.
All four horizontal smaller paintings from 1643 have compositions that are distinctly divided by one of the diagonals of the picture plane into an almost empty upper half and a rather crowded lower one. This device is much more dominant in these smaller works than in the larger ones.

In catalogue nos. A 077 and 078 the area under the diagonal is somewhat more crowded than in the case of cat. nos. A 075 and 076. Also, their arrangement is more lively, while the objects in cat. nos. A
075 and 076 have been arranged rather randomly and are kept in context by a few horizontal (cat. no. A 075) or oblique (A 078) accents. In view of their higher general quality and more accomplished composition, A 077 and 078 must be the later examples of the four.

The image of cat. no. A 077 is distorted somewhat by the fact that a column and drapery have been added in the background, most likely by a later hand.\textsuperscript{308} The fact that cat. nos. A 077 and 078 are the later works in the group appears to be confirmed by the fact that cat. no. A 078 in particular is very close in style and handling to de Heem’s painting in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow (cat. no. A 080), which most probably dates from late 1643 or early 1644, since it would appear to have succeeded the works from 1643 and obviously precedes Adriaen van Utrecht’s large still life in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, which was in part based on its composition and which is dated 1644 (fig. A 23, above).

Not counting the floral compositions that will be discussed below, only one small still life that can be assigned to 1644 survives, cat. no. A 084.\textsuperscript{309} At this point, it can only be assessed on the basis of a small illustration of modest quality from 1954, but it clearly possesses similarities with de Heem’s larger still life in Moscow which, as we have seen, can be dated rather firmly to (early) 1644, while at the same time it is close in style, choice of motifs and handling to a dated still life from 1645 (cat. no.A 086), which similarities place in late 1644 or perhaps early 1645.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{A078.png}
\caption{A 078}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{A084.png}
\caption{A 'barn' interior from 1643}
\end{figure}
As observed above, Jan Davidsz. de Heem painted one of the earliest examples of the barn-interior still life in 1629 (cat. no. A 017) but apparently never became productive in that genre. Only one further example, painted a few years later, is known (cat. no. A 021), after which de Heem apparently abandoned the subject. However, in 1643 he appears to have been enticed into producing one more interior of this kind (cat. no. A 072), this time in collaboration with David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690). It would appear that Teniers contributed only the three figures and the dog to it, while de Heem provided the interior with still-life motifs. Although Teniers most probably inserted his figures after de Heem had finished his work on the panel, it seems likely that this painting was intended as a collaborative work from the outset. The setting is a kitchen (there is an oven to the right) or larder, where a man wearing a fur hat and a fur-lined coat – who appears to have Teniers’ own physiognomy – is giving instructions to a young servant, while an old maid is looking in from behind a half-open door. The contents of the interior is something of a mishmash of goods. Some can be expected to belong to the usual inventory of a barn, such as the hayfork and the large milk jugs, while the large copper kettle is certainly a kitchen utensil. Other objects, such as the slippers, the elegant wine cooler and the pewter piss-pot that stands on the barrel, as well as the clock hanging by the door appear to be somewhat out of context. The smoking and drinking utensils stored on the shelf next to the door remind us of a tavern interior, rather than of a kitchen or barn. The displayed victuals are also varied, ranging from the common, plain beets and cabbage to the more exquisite grapes, melon and lemons. Perhaps the painting was commissioned by a patron who cared less about having an image that was true to life than about having a good example of the range of painting skills of de Heem and Teniers. It would be insightful to know for whom and why such an exceptional painting was done, but between its genesis in 1643 and its first appearance on our radar in Amsterdam in 1810, it could have been anywhere in the Netherlands or even anywhere in Europe, while in view of the wide-spread reputations of the two painters it was not necessarily painted for a local patron. Had the painting not been dated by de Heem, it would not have been easy to situate it chronologically, since both subject matter and scale differ substantially from any other work from this period. The rendering of the grapes, however, approaches that in the large still life with a big sea shell discussed above (cat. no. A 070), and the wine cooler is quite similar to the one in cat. no. A 071, including the lions’ claws it has for legs.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s first paintings with prominent floral motifs
Apart from a first small bouquet in a still life from 1628 (cat. no. A 005) and another in the still somewhat enigmatic still life in Prague from 1638 discussed above (cat. no. A 047), Jan Davidsz. de Heem was apparently not particularly drawn to flower painting during the first fifteen years of his
career. Even the small bouquet of roses amidst the sumptuous display in his large still life from 1642 (cat. no. A 065) – echoed by a second, less conspicuous bouquet on the ledge at top right – appears to have been included as a rather obligatory motif. From the year before that, 1641, however, stems a small, privately owned still life featuring a simple but prominent bouquet of a few roses, a blue hyacinth, a red lily and a sprig of cherries in a glass bottle (cat. no. A 059).

It is flanked by an array of oysters, a pipe, an orange, two apricots, some cherries and a pipe-lighting taper and some matches. The arrangement of the flowers is highly similar to that in the larger painting, but here the floral bouquet is the prominent motif in the composition, even more so than the one in the Prague painting from 1638 (cat. no. A 047). The combination with oysters and smoking utensils that de Heem has opted for here is a novelty. Still-life painters in the Northern and Southern Netherlands, such as Balthasar van der Ast and Jacob van Hulsdonck, had been combining floral bouquets with fruit – in baskets or on dishes – but de Heem’s mix with oysters and smoking paraphernalia is unprecedented. One may wonder whether this modest composition was purely an experiment on de Heem’s part, or whether it might have been the result of a specific commission. The painting does not appear to have any particular iconography, although we might recognise the senses Smell and Taste: the sweet scent of the flowers and fruit, the poignant smell of tobacco smoke and the delicate salty taste of the oysters, to the left, and the taste of the fruit to the right. Whether or not an experiment, the painting appears to have been a first step towards what would grow into a prolific production of flower paintings some fifteen years later.

From probably the next year a somewhat similar work is known (cat. no. A 082). A bouquet of roses and some smaller flowers features prominently in it – much more prominently than the bouquet in the painting just discussed. To its left are a half-peeled lemon and a bread roll and to the right crawls a sizeable garden snail. The painting is on copper, an unusual support with de Heem and, probably partly as a result of this, the execution is much smoother and more refined than in the earlier bouquet. The flowers, as well as their leaves, were built up with extensive glazes. Also, this painting shows the first signs of a diagonal arrangement of the bouquet, a feature that would become fashionable in the following decades, in particular with Dutch flower painters such as Willem van Aelst (1627-1683/84) and Simon Pz. Verelst (1644-1710/17). With de Heem, however, the diagonal would never become as dominant as in the work of those artists. This little painting may have been a specific commission or a special gift from the artist. The back of the copper plate is inscribed ‘Casepeel’ (fig. A 37), perhaps in de Heem’s own hand, which undoubtedly refers to the Antwerp dealer in objets d’art Jan Casspeel, who had been appointed guardian of de Heem’s children.
after Aletta van Weede’s demise in 1643. Perhaps it was Casspeel who provided the copper plate for which reason he or de Heem may have marked it specifically with his name.

In 1645, de Heem painted another small floral bouquet, this time with a more varied choice of flowers: in addition to pink roses there are red lilies, marigold, a white rose, larkspur, a sprig of rosemary, and apple blossom (cat. no. A 087). The role of edibles at the foot of the vase has diminished once more: here we find only a small fig and one single shrimp. The artist was clearly searching for the proper rendering of flowers and leaves during this period, for again there are differences with the previous piece. The glazing has remained, but he has opted for a denser arrangement and rather than rendering the leaves in a fairly uniform hue, he now shows them reflecting the light, particularly at the edges. While he placed the previous bouquet free in space, here he created depth by placing the vase of flowers directly before a wall upon which it casts a shadow. A sprig of rose leaves touches the tabletop and its lower leaf casts a sharp shadow which, however, is partly interfered with by the light that is supposedly falling through and focussed by the glass bottle and the water that it holds.

Close in style and handling, and consequently from the same period or slightly earlier, are two garlands of flowers, the first of which is hanging above a still life on a table (cat. A 081). This still life is stylistically related to several pieces from 1644 and 1645, such as cat. nos. A 080 and 085. The handling of the lobster, the silver cup and the vine leaves and grapes is highly similar, while treatment of the leaves and the roses is closely related to that of the little bouquet just discussed. Obviously the painting, which was incorrectly attributed to Joris van Son when it appeared on the art market in 1984, was not originally an octagonal. Most likely, it was originally a horizontal format, but even then the concept is so unusual, that we cannot even be certain of that. Apart from the four corners, the painting appears to have lost areas on all sides, in view of the present asymmetry more so on the right than on the left. It may well also have lost its signature in the process. While it demonstrates, like cat. no. A 059 discussed above, how de Heem was experimenting inventively with the inclusion of larger arrangements of flowers in his compositions, it also reveals where, at least in part, he found his inspiration.
Garlands such as the one included in cat. no. A 081 can be considered as the invention of the painter and Jesuit priest Daniel Seghers (1590-1661), who had been a pupil of Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625) and became a master in the Antwerp guild in 1614. However, his career as a flower painter only appears to have taken on in 1627, after he had spent a few years in Rome, as the list he drew up of his own works seems to confirm. From then on, he developed an entirely individual, highly naturalist style of arranging and painting flowers. Next to a relatively small number of bouquets in vases, the majority of his works are garlands and festoons of flowers surrounding a central subject, usually a religious motif, often en grisaille, imitating sculpture or a sculpted relief (fig. A 38). Occasionally, he painted single garlands, a form that he can probably be credited with the invention of, at least in oil painting (fig. A 38).

While Seghers himself only included sculpted reliefs with his garlands around a central subject (or, in most cases, had them painted in by such specialists as Erasmus Quellinus II or Cornelis Schut), de Heem presented this and a second single garland (cat. no. A 083) in front of such a sculpted relief.
Interestingly, he included a stylised grotesque mask in cat no. A 081 as an additional motif. This choice is yet another example of how de Heem never slavishly followed his sources of inspiration, but playfully and inventively added motifs of his own. It should be added, however, that the idea of painting such garlands and festoon most probably derived from floral decorations of sculpture and architectural motifs in churches during festivities.

A large painting of flowers in a vase next to a skull and crucifix and with a letter and fruit at the base of the vase (cat. no. A 093) in a private collection was most likely his earliest effort to produce a still life with a prominent, large bouquet of flowers. A painting in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich, with a very similar composition (cat. no. A 094) was probably produced almost simultaneously but is, considering the improvements in the composition, the later of the two paintings. The still lifes at the foot of the vase in both paintings place them securely between de Heem’s dated works from 1643 and 1646, and somewhat closer to the latter, which suggests a date of 1645 for both paintings.

There are no known dated works from 1644 and the small dated flower painting from 1645 (cat. no. A 087) would appear to predate these two more ambitious efforts, while the calligraphy of the signature on the Munich painting closely matches that of the several dated paintings from 1646, the still life in the Toledo Museum of Art (cat. no. A 101) in particular.

The major difference between the Munich painting and the privately owned one, however, consists of Nicolaes van Verendael’s ‘contribution’ to the Munich painting. In earlier literature this has always been considered to be the result of an actual collaboration between Jan Davidsz. de Heem and Verendael, who signed the painting at upper right. This cannot be the case, however, if only because of the dating of both painters’ share in the work. De Heem’s part, as comparison with cat. no. A 093 and other work from the mid-1640s unequivocally shows, can be dated quite accurately to 1645. Nicolaes van Verendael was about five years old at that time and attained the level of quality he displays in this painting no earlier than in the early 1660s, while a more likely date for his contribution should be considered to be around 1670 (fig. A 40).
It is not uncommon that earlier paintings were considered dull and old-fashioned at some point in time, while their intrinsic quality was still recognised. It is understandable that the art-buying public by 1670 had become accustomed to De Heem’s later lavish bouquets would consider this arrangement somewhat austere by the late 1660s. That Verendael was asked to modernize the bouquet, and not De Heem himself, may well have been due to the fact that the latter was working in Utrecht by that time, while the painting had remained in Antwerp. De Heem has constructed a rather natural-looking bouquet in which the flowers could indeed probably have been placed in a vase in this manner, since they all bloom during the summer season. The relative profusion of green leaves also provides a natural impression, as this is the case for other early examples (cat. nos. A 059 and 082). The large green leaf to the left in the Munich bouquet is most probably not a Verendael addition, but appears to have been added by De Heem as an afterthought and not as part of the composition he had originally planned. The handling has his robustness and strength and is very similar to that of the leaves in the other version (cat. no. A 093). Interestingly, the addition of this large leaf gives a strong impetus to the accentuation of the diagonal, which was strengthened by Verendael through the addition of the prominent tulip. In some way the emphasis of the diagonal seems to premonition such compositions by such artists as Willem van Aelst and Simon Verelst, produced during the third quarter of the century. Although it is difficult to imagine the Munich bouquet without Verendael’s additions, it already appears to have less prominent foliage than cat. no. A 093. Apart from adding glazes to several of de Heem’s flowers and leaves, Verendael added the large tulip and the sprigs of jasmine and morning glory flanking it, as well as the African marigold in the centre and some of the smaller flowers spread all over the bouquet. It is interesting to note that in particular by means of the tulip, Verendael rendered a strong diagonal effect to the composition, thus making the painting more fashionable for the late 1660s or early 1670s.

The (original) composition of these two flower paintings, like the de Heem’s other early floral forays, is a most original one. To combine a large bouquet of flowers with a still life of fruit and such poignant vanitas motifs as a skull and a crucifix was unprecedented. It is the first time, too, that de Heem returns explicitly to the theme of vanitas after his still lifes with books from the late 1620s. The iconography of this painting is more complex, however, and appears to be open to interpretation. A
crucial motif is the text that de Heem inscribed on the piece of paper at the lower left in both paintings, ‘Maer naer de allerschoonste blom daer en siet men niet naer om’ (But to the most beautiful flower no-one pays attention).\textsuperscript{318} To begin with, the identification of this ‘most beautiful flower’ presents some problems. In the Munich bouquet, the white lily (or sprig of lilies) is placed most prominently and appears to apply for the title of most beautiful flower. In the earlier version, the lily shares its prominent position with the sunflower, but even more so than in the Munich bouquets with Verendael’s additions, the majority of the other flowers appear to turn their heads away from the lily, including the sunflower which is often regarded as a symbol of reverence since it is always turned towards the sun (aptly expressed by its French name ‘tournesol’). The white lily is the common symbolic flower for the Virgin Mary, but why, then, as de Heem states in his inscription, does no-one pay attention to Mary and why would this be the subject of a painting? Segal (1991) identified the Lily as ‘Mary, or the Church’ and concluded that ‘apparently in daily life people did not pay attention to the spiritual values they represented and emphasized the material aspects’.\textsuperscript{319} He continued to suggest that at the same time the lily can refer to Christ. The fact that the inscription is placed at the foot of the crucifix might support such an interpretation. This, however, would infer that no-one pays attention to Christ. In fact, for an explanation it is not necessary to identify one of the flowers with Christ or Mary if we read the inscription as a controversy between the actual flowers showing off their beauty and the ‘spiritual flower’ of Christian religion. In that case, de Heem informs us that man is more interested in outward beauty than in spiritual depth.\textsuperscript{320} In view of de Heem’s personal religious ambiguity such rather firm religious allegations will probably not have sprouted from his own concern about a lack of devotion, but was rather the result of a commission. The choice of motifs and the composition will no doubt have been his, however. The vanitas character of the image appears to be a little overemphasized by the addition of the watch in the Munich version, but that, too, appears to be have been added by Verendael.\textsuperscript{321} Whatever the exact iconography of these two paintings, it is clear that around 1670 the Munich painting was considered first and foremost as a work of art that needed some ‘modernisation’ in order to keep up with appreciation of such works at the time.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{flower특별.jpg}
\caption{A 41 D. Seghers (and E. Quellinus II), \textit{Flowers around a statue of the Virgin and Child}, signed and dated 1645, oil on canvas, 151 x 122,7 cm. The Hague, Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen Mauritshuis, inv. no. 256.}
\end{figure}
Since the then owner apparently sought to have the visual beauty of the painting improved, we may wonder whether he fully appreciated the iconographic contents of the work.

In the course of the second half of the 1640s, de Heem’s output of flower paintings appears to have dwindled again. Only a small festoon of flowers from 1648, now in Vercelli (cat. no. A 114) is known. After the larger exercises from 1645, this is a rather modest piece, but in it de Heem has attained a high degree of naturalism. His handling, as in other works from those years, has changed to a more ‘fleshy’, less transparent rendering of the flowers and leaves, as opposed to a more ‘papery’ handling in the earlier flower paintings. The treatment of the roses and the ivy leaves in particular is highly similar to that in the large cartouche of fruit and some flowers around a chalice from the same year in Vienna (cat. no. A 116). Perhaps the little festoon was a gift of the artist to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614-1662), in order to seek his patronage.\(^{322}\) And while this small festoon could have been taken straight out of one of Daniel Seghers’ larger compositions (cf. fig. A 40), no such individual festoons of flowers appear to have been painted prior to this one by any other artist. In Seghers’ own oeuvre they do not occur. Such a work can barely serve any other purpose than a purely decorative one – as it is true for the earlier garlands of flowers. The development of de Heem’s floral compositions continued in the early 1650s and will be discussed further on.

**Still lifes, 1645**

In 1645 and 1646, Jan Davidsz.de Heem harvested the fruit of his stylistic developments from the previous years. He was obviously prolific and particularly by 1646, his style and handling had become quite consistent. Twenty-one paintings can currently be assigned to 1645 and 1646 with a degree of certainty, grouped around a framework of two distinctly dated still lifes from 1645 and three from 1646, while on two further examples the last digit is somewhat indistinct, but most likely a 5.

![A 086](image1.jpg) ![A 088](image2.jpg)

The first of the dated works from 1645 (cat. no. A 086), a still life in the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, is slightly problematic, however, since the overall quality is limited, compared with that of other works from the period, while the state of preservation is below average.\(^{323}\) Since the painting shows some similarities with several earlier works, such as cat. nos. A 076, 078 and even 060, this may have been a painting that had lingered in the artist’s studio for one or two years before being finished, signed, dated and sold. In any case its signature and date are fully authentic and in keeping with other signatures from the period in terms of calligraphy.

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\(^{322}\) The mention of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm refers to a historical figure, but without further context, its relevance to the artist’s work is unclear.

\(^{323}\) The quality and state of preservation are critical factors in discerning the authenticity and historical context of an artwork.
An upright still life in a private British collection, cat. no. A 088, fits perfectly in between the dated works from 1643 and 1646, so even while the last digit of the date is somewhat indistinct, it can be placed rather firmly in 1645. Moreover, the calligraphy of the signature is virtually identical to that on the painting in Ghent (cat. no. A 086). As such, it is a firm landmark for the dating of other still lifes by de Heem to 1645. Characteristic are the strong, fluent brushwork, and the firm, confident modelling, combined with the artist’s usual meticulous attention to detail. Particularly for highlights and brighter parts, de Heem has used a well-loaded brush. The painting’s iconography is rather explicit, since the artist included a sheet of paper at upper right, inscribed with the following text: “Bacchus Ciraet (the gem of Bacchus)/ Thus Bacchus deceives [lit.: disguises] the eyes/ Both with grapes and vine/ Thus he has cheated many/ Who do not open their eyes/ [signed:] The lovely [?].” In combination with the large wine jug with a rummer hanging on its spout, the painting could be explained as an admonition against excessive consumption of wine. In another fashion, the deception of the eye mentioned in this text, may just as well refer to the illusionistic merit of the painting itself, in which case de Heem is referring to his own deceptive abilities. The landscape background obviously harks back to similar landscape backgrounds in paintings from the previous years. It is also reminiscent of the landscape to the right in cat. no. A 095, which painting can be considered as a reduced variant of the earlier large luxury still lifes, but which otherwise has many similarities with work from 1645, such as the treatment of the foliage as well as the landscape background, while it also shares motifs with other paintings from this year, such as the fig and the shrimp at the foot of the small flower painting dated 1645 discussed above, and the silver-gilt cup-and-cover with several other works, such as cat. no. A 090. In view of both composition and handling, it is also clearly related to cat. no. A 096. Some six years later, de Heem would employ a similar scheme for a still life, cat. no. A 133. It is interesting to note that in both paintings, as well as in cat. no. A 186 (in Vienna) the glass of the rummer reflects a window, while in the painting it is situated outside, where it is very unlikely to reflect an interior space.

In terms of execution, cat. no. A 085, in a private collection, is also clearly related to the dated example, cat. no. A 088, while in terms of composition, it still shows some similarity with earlier examples such as cat. nos. A 060 and 076, which suggests that it may have been painted fairly early in 1645 or even that de Heem started working on it somewhat earlier.
A still life in a private collection, cat. no. A 089, shares its silver-gilt cup-and-cover with various other examples. This object is in fact a recurring motif in still lifes by de Heem from 1642 until the late 1640s. The halved peach behind the lemon is the same one encountered earlier in cat. nos. A 061, 062 and 068. The turbo shell placed at front right is a new feature, but one that recurs in several still lifes from the following years. In later still lifes, up to the mid-1660s, it can be found occasionally as well, but usually in a different position. This painting also shares several motifs with cat. no. A 078 (such as the ham, the oyster to the right and the cuppa of the Venetian-style wine glass), which is more crisp in its execution in that painting. On the whole, the combination of motifs and handling suggests that a date of execution of cat. no. A 089 in or around 1645 can be assumed.

Although a vertical format, the construction of cat. no. A 090, in a private collection, is similar to that of cat. no. A 089. The flowing lines in both compositions suggest a similar cascade from upper right to lower left. Additionally, the branch hanging down at the right is instrumental in suggesting depth in
the composition. Like cat. no. A 089, A 090 features feature a large shell with its opening turned towards the viewer, a lemon in the centre and a flat oyster lying to the right, and in both paintings some shrimp are placed to the left, near the edge of the table.

The spatial construction of both paintings is very similar, too. In other respects, cat. no. A 090 is quite similar to cat. no. A 088, which is also a vertical composition with a prominent rummer in the centre and a landscape view to the left. The handling of the folds in the table cloth is highly similar in all three still lifes, which supports the dating of both cat. nos. A 089 and 090 to 1645, although it also shows similarities, particularly in the sweeping branches with large vine leaves, to cat. nos. A 095, 104 and 105.

A still life in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, from the collection of Cosimo de’ Medici (cat. no. A 091), was suggested in the literature to have been bought from de Heem at the occasion of the archduke’s visit to Utrecht in 1669. However, rather than to fit within de Heem’s oeuvre from the late 1660s, this still life ties in with his work from the mid-1640s, such as cat. no. A 090, in the choice and handling of various motifs, such as the rummer, the lemon peel, the turbo shell, and the shrimps. Virtually the same cup screw had appeared in cat. no. A 067 and reappears in cat. no. A 095. The flowers to the right in this composition may be the work of a different hand. Their handling is rather stiff, and the composition has become overcrowded by their presence. If indeed Cosimo de’ Medici acquired this still life during his travels to the Netherlands in 1669, it will probably have not been directly from de Heem himself, and after the flowers had been added.
A similarly painted dark green table cloth as in cat. nos. A 090 and 091 is found in cat. no. A 092, in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Like cat. no. A 090, it offers a background view of a wooded landscape through a window. Probably for composition purposes, de Heem has narrowed the view by several centimetres by extending the curtain that partly shades off the window. Its composition is reminiscent of those of cat no. A 085 and 086 (in reverse), but with the addition of the curtain and the view. While some motifs and their handling, such as the branch of cherries and the crabs eyeing the viewer, are reminiscent of earlier still lifes dating back as far as 1640, the handling of the tazza – as well as the object itself – is close to those in slightly later works such as cat. nos. A 097 and 098, which supports a date of origin for cat. no. A 092 in 1645.

Several similarities in the handling of details can be found between the painting in Montreal (cat. no. A 092) and a larger still life, cat. no. A 095, of which the composition harks back to some degree to the large luxury still lifes from the early years of the 1640s. The composition of this still life is also strongly related to that of cat. no. A 089, be it in reverse, and with an open background. With that painting, as well as with several others, it shares its silver-gilt cup and cover. Another important motif in this painting is the masterly rendered cup screw holding a rummer. Its features appear to have been based upon the same object that he had rendered earlier in cat. nos. A 067 and 091. Like I have observed concerning other works from this period, in this painting too, de Heem combines features from earlier works with motifs that are newly introduced. The white napkin, for instance, is obviously related to examples seen in works from the earlier 1640s, and so are the silver beaker and related baskets of fruit. Other details, such as the fresh walnuts in their green peels are new to de Heem’s work. They would reappear only rarely, however. It is interesting to note how de Heem ‘invented’ motifs in his paintings, sometimes the most simple objects, and allows them to return in a number of his still lifes during, usually, a restricted period of time. One such motif is the slice of lemon at lower left in this picture. Similar slices already can be found in works from 1642, but either lying flat or turned at an angle towards the viewer. Here, for the first time, de Heem shows it entirely from the side and tilted upwards on the right. Subsequently, it can be found in the same
position in three still lifes for each of the two following years, 1646 (cat. nos. A 100 and 102) and 1647 (cat. nos. A 108 and 109), with no occurrences in the years after that. A few years later, in 1651 and 1652, such slices can be found again, but with a very different rendering of the texture. The halved peach at front, on the pewter plate on the left, reappears in a small still life from 1646 (cat. no. A 102).

A 42 Circle of J. Dz. de Heem, Luxury still life with a silver-gilt cup-and-cover, with signature ‘I D Heem’, oil on canvas, 86 x 121.5 cm. Present location unknown.

Interestingly, the plate of fruit in cat. A 095 returns in its entirety in a large still life that was on the art market in the 1980s, initially as attributed to Jan Dz. de Heem himself, and later as by Jan Jz. de Heem (fig. A 42). Most likely, this painting originated in the vicinity of Jan Dz. de Heem, probably in the late 1640s, since it draws on work by de Heem for its motifs, mainly on paintings from the second half of that decade. Apart from the plate of fruit, the crabs and shrimp to the right appear to have been inspired directly by cat. no. A 095, discussed above. The decorated silver ewer lying on its side here, can also be found in various de Heem still lifes, but in different positions. The nautilus shell is reminiscent of the one in cat. no. A 090 — but it is not the same object. Similarly posed lemons occur in still lifes from 1647, and the bunch of grapes to the right and the vine leaves are not dissimilar to such motifs in works from 1648. The dark red drapery is akin to draperies found in de Heem’s backgrounds from 1642 (cat. no. A 066) onwards, and closest to the ones from 1645 and 1646. Other motifs, such as the unusual silver-gilt cup-and-cover, the ornamented shawl, and the silver dish that carries the grapes are alien to de Heem’s known oeuvre, while the rendering of the flowers is also distinctly dissimilar to de Heem’s flowers. Moreover, for de Heem, the composition is too full and disorganized. Although the position of the cup-and-cover coincides with the vertical axis and the diagonal from upper left to lower right is clearly emphasized, there are too many other lines at various angles playing a part in the composition for it to look balanced: the painter of this work did not have de Heem’s natural understanding of ‘houiding’. Although this painting must have been executed by a skilled artist, it feels more like an amalgam of quotations than like a consistent narrative. As such, it is an interesting example of a work that displays de Heem’s impact on artists in what must have been his immediate circle. Even if it was not initially marketed as an autograph de Heem, general connoisseurship was obviously not too discriminate and such a painting probably
acquired the status of an autograph work early on – a status which it would keep for centuries to come.\textsuperscript{340}

Returning to cat. no. A 095, it is obvious that that painting’s composition, too, is geometrically balanced. Both diagonals, but particularly that from upper left to lower right, play an important role, just as the vertical and horizontal axis do. The first coincides with the tall flute glass, the highest object in the painting, while the horizontal axis passes along the top of the silver cup and along the division between light and dark in the background landscape. Both divide the composition into a full and a (relatively) empty half. By letting the edge of the table contrast with the shining surface of the water behind it, and by allowing the viewer’s gaze to wander into the landscape in the background, and through a unity of light, de Heem created a convincing image with great depth.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{A 43 Circle of J. Dz. de Heem, \textit{Still life with a lobster and a back-ground view}, oil on canvas, 85 x 120 cm. Present location unknown.}
\end{figure}

An anonymous painting that has been on the German art market in the previous century as a work of Jan Davidsz.’s son Cornelis de Heem is clearly related to cat. no. A 095 in terms of composition and contents (fig. A 43).\textsuperscript{341} The painting is presently known from a relatively poor reproduction only, reproduced here, which makes it very difficult to properly judge its status. The attribution to Cornelis holds little ground, but it is unlikely to be a work of Jan Dz. de Heem himself either. The left part of the painting appears to come close in quality, but the lobster and the rummer in particular do not fit in de Heem’s idiom. In any case, this still life most likely originated close to de Heem in or shortly after 1645.

In a still life in the Swedish Royal collection, cat. no. A 096, the highest point of the composition has been shifted towards the centre of the painting and to the far back of the arrangement, while the huge red lobster at front centre is its undisputed focal point. The painting is dated, but the last numeral has disappeared, while the third is indistinct. It does, however, fit in best for 1645 or perhaps early 1646: the vine leaves in particular are treated similarly to those in cat. no. A 090, while the handling of other motifs also is similar to other works from 1645 and slightly earlier. The treatment of the grapes, however, is very similar to that of slightly later works, such as cat. nos. A 097, 101 and 104.
With the second, which is dated 1646, it also has other similarities, such as the plums and the cascading vine branch, while the arrangement of the crabs and the shrimp on the plate on both paintings must derive from the same study. The vine branch sweeping down is related to that in cat. nos. A 104 and 105 in particular. The general palette of the picture tends towards the blonder, brighter palette that de Heem employed in 1646. De Heem has chosen to include a rummer with a stem with thorn-shaped prunts here, which must have been a rather old-fashioned drinking glass at the time. Until c.1640, the stems of rummers were usually fitted with prunts in the shape of thorns. The still lifes de Heem painted before 1640 invariably show such glasses. From 1642 on, he usually shows them with the blackberry prunts.\textsuperscript{342}

\textit{Nails and bricks}

Until 1645, the back walls in Jan Davidsz. de Heem's still lifes were usually plain, rendered in subtle shades of grey, moderated by the light falling in. From about 1642, he gradually started to define the back wall more precisely by adding conspicuous details.

In the little flower painting from 1641, cat. no. A 059, there is a red wax seal on the wall, holding a small scrap of paper, as if a document had been attached to the wall by means of the wax, and was subsequently torn away, leaving its corner and the wax seal behind. The same device is found in another small flower painting, cat. no. A 082. In cat. no. A 088, such a seal secures the sheet of paper with the Bacchus poem to the wall.

Cat. no. A 080, in Moscow (which can be dated firmly to [early] 1644), shows an angle in the back wall, at about two-thirds of the width of the image, which is indicated by the shadow de Heem depicted there. The wall itself, however, does not appear to edge away on either side of this corner, unless we assume that we are looking at a (shallow?) wide niche to the right.\textsuperscript{343} A similar shadow or corner can be found in cat. no. A 084 and, less emphasized, in cat. no. A 092. In cat. no. A 099, in Berlin, the back wall actually appears to include two corners: at about two-thirds it comes forward and turns to the right again at about three quarters of the picture’s width. In cat. no. A 104, the still-life is actually clearly arranged in the corner of a room. In his still lifes from the following decades, de Heem would regularly feature some kind of (suggestion of a) corner or angle in the back wall.\textsuperscript{344}
In cat. no. A 089, for the first time, de Heem features a nail hammered into the back wall. Its shadow indicates the direction of the light falling in and its presence helps define the viewer’s position in relation to the wall. Additionally, de Heem shows some masonry at upper left, where the plaster on the wall has worn or dropped away. Both features add to the viewer’s understanding of the spatial relationships within the image. In cat. no. A 093, the large flower piece in Munich, there is also a nail in the back wall, but that was probably added there by Nicolaes van Verendael, along with that artist’s other additions to the painting, in order to make it ‘more de Heem than de Heem’. Both versions of this floral composition (cat. nos. A 093 and 094), however, include a dent in the plaster of the back wall, by means of which de Heem himself defined its surface more precisely. Such a dent can also be found at upper left in the picture in the Swedish Royal collection, cat. no. A 096, as well as inside the niche in cat. no. A 098, from early 1646. Particularly during the early 1650s, de Heem would develop the nails, bricks and bruises and ‘corners’ in the back wall almost to the level of trademarks.

**Still lifes, 1646**

Three distinctly dated still lifes from 1646 (cat. nos. A 097, 098 and 101) provide a secure framework for the dating of five further still-life paintings to this year. Cat. nos. A 097 and 098, both dated 1646, were originally probably virtually the same in size and composition. They are also very similar in the handling of the paint and treatment of light. The images are too similar, however, to allow the suggestion that they would have been produced as pendants, but we may assume that they were on de Heem’s easel almost simultaneously.

Even more refined in its treatment of the details is a large still life, now in Berlin (cat. no. A 099). In a way, it can be viewed as an elaboration of the composition of cat. no. A 096, built up higher and with the drapery as an addition. Here, de Heem has almost overloaded his dish of fruit and some of the fruit appears to be balancing somewhat insecurely, in particular the white peach in the centre. De Heem has succeeded excellently in suggesting depth and volume through the use of light, colour, and by weaving branches through the fruit and other objects. While the similarities with the dated cat. nos. A 097 and 098 suggest 1646 as date of origin, other motifs appear to link it more closely with slightly later works, such as cat. no. A 117 (Mauritshuis, The Hague).
The ewer made up of a mounted turbo shell, was clearly modelled after the same object as the one in cat. no. A 051 (Paris). The fact that there are some differences in its details seems to point to the fact that de Heem worked from studies of such an object, rather than from the object itself. 348


In any case, it must have been painted before (or at the latest in) 1649, since in that year Jacob Marrel painted and dated a copy of it (cat. no. A 099, copy a, fig. A 44). Marrel annotated that he painted his copy in Utrecht, which appears to indicate that de Heem’s original was there by 1649. 349 Marrel also produced a second and perhaps even a third copy of this painting (cat. no. A 099, copies b and c). Perhaps Marrel handled de Heem’s still life in his capacity as art dealer and had access to it as such. Whatever the case, Marrel’s copy appears to indicate that de
Heem had connections with Utrecht already during the second half of the 1640s. Such copies also illustrate the wide impact of de Heem’s work in its own time. Of the still life with a tazza with lobsters, cat. no. A 098, de Heem’s former pupil Alexander Coosemans produced a liberal copy, probably around 1650 (cat. no. A 098 copy a). Coosemans had become an independent master in 1645, so before de Heem painted this still life.

Laurens Craen

An interesting case in this respect is that of Laurens Craen (active before 1646-1663/70). This still-life painter is presumed to have been a native of The Hague, but by 1649 he had settled in Middelburg. From his earliest known dated works on, he was clearly strongly inspired by Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s still lifes from about 1645 and 1646. A case in point is a still life that was on the Dutch art market in 2004 (fig. A 44) which shows a strong impact of such still lifes as cat. nos. A 097 and 098.

A 45 L. Craen, Still life of fruit in a niche, traces of signature, oil on panel, 61,8 x 47,2 cm. Present location unknown.

The similarities are striking to such a degree that one must conclude that Craen studied under de Heem for some time during those years, but no archival source has been found thus far that actually points to an Antwerp sojourn of Craen. Laurens Craen carried on painting still lifes in de Heem’s style of the mid-1640s until well into the 1660s. The similarity in handling between Craen’s still life and cat. no. A 099 in Berlin corroborates the date of origin of the latter as 1646.

More spacious and somewhat more painterly in its treatment than cat. no. A 099 is de Heem’s third still life dated 1646, cat. no. A 101, in the Toledo Museum of Art. In essence, its composition is related to those of the larger luxury still lifes from the early 1640s, but due to its size it possesses an intimacy that is similar to that of, for instance, cat. nos. A 090 and 902 discussed above. In its balanced composition, the main cluster of objects has been concentrated under the diagonal from lower left to upper right, while the view occupies precisely half of the height and one third of the width of the painting. Also, the curtain cuts through the right side of the image half-way the height and covers two-thirds of the top, while the ratio of height to width of the panel itself is about 2:3. The focus of the composition is the highly-polished silver mustard jar (the diagonals intersect at its top), which contrasts in a clever way with the ham in front of it, as well as with the more subdued sheen of the silver beaker behind it.
Around it, a strip of yellows and reds (apricots, lemons, meat, crab and melon), occupying precisely one quarter of the height, carries the weight of the still life. A multitude of short, oblique lines within that strip directs the eye to the second cluster of yellows and reds, the fruit in the basket. Arching over it, the vine leads the viewer’s eye back to the centre of the picture as well as to the background view. There, we see a choppy sea just outside the walls of a town, the large church of which is situated close to the shore. Although well painted, this view is not of exceptional quality and I see no reason to attribute it to any other artist than Jan Davidsz. de Heem himself, despite the mention in a Rotterdam inventory, recorded in April 1673, of ‘Een fruittafel van de Heem met een zee daerin geschilderd van Porcellis’ (A table of fruit by de Heem with a seascape painted in by Porcellis). Whether or not identical with cat. no. A 101, the attribution of the seascape to Jan or Julius Porcellis is impossible, as much as is the attribution to Bonaventura Peeters, which has also been forwarded. It may well be that the robust church bears some degree of symbolism, but we must be wary of over-interpretation, in my view.

Due to the many similarities in composition, handling and palette with the previously discussed work, cat. no. A 104, a still life in a private collection which is signed but not dated, can be situated close in time to cat. no. A 101 and can consequently also be dated to (c.)1646. The tazza is virtually the same object as that in cat. nos. A 092, A 097 and 098, viewed from a slightly different angle. The mastery of its execution is entirely that of Jan Dz. de Heem himself. The most substantial difference between the two pictures is the handling of the vine leaves, which appear to have a denser substance here. They must probably be regarded as another one of de Heem’s many and constant efforts towards improvement of his rendering. At the same time, this superfluous attention to detail in this painting – like in cat no. A 099 in Berlin – probably indicates its importance: it may well have been intended for an important patron. Unfortunately, we have little or no information on to what extent de Heem painted his still lifes in commission, but the varying degree of detail suggests that he put more effort into some than into others, probably in the expectancy of a higher price, whether or not agreed upon in advance with a prospective buyer. The highly detailed execution of cat. no. A 116, to be discussed later, which was most probably done for Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, was probably also related to the importance of the patron. This seems to underscore the probability that more detailed works were produced for more important and/or wealthy clients.
Much more modest in execution, size and in composition, are cat. nos. A 100 and 102, in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and in a private collection, respectively. Many details, among them the handling of the dark-green tablecloth, the vine leaves and the lemon (peel) in both, are highly similar to those of cat. no. A 101, the dated example in Toledo. There can be little doubt that these two pictures originated around the same time as that dated still life.355

Cat. no. A 105, in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, too, is closely related to the paintings discussed above, in particularly to cat. no. A 104, with which it has many similarities in execution and motifs. At the same time it also is related to cat. nos. A 092 and 096, discussed above, of which the latter is particularly close in its handling. A date of origin in 1646 or perhaps late 1645 for this picture is, consequently, more than likely.356 The dilapidated hard-stone column in this painting is a quaint feature. It is strangely crammed in between the table and the back wall and can barely have any real volume. It was obviously added at a later stage: the light and dark grey on the back wall that indicate the in-falling light, continue into the base of the column, which itself ‘evaporates’ just above and to the right of the pewter salver. The construction and perspective of the column, moreover, are not of the level of de Heem’s autograph quality. It was probably added fairly early during the painting’s existence, presumably at the request of a seventeenth-century owner in
order to lift the image up to a higher level in terms of iconography. The broken column strongly suggests a vanitas connotation which is not obvious in the still life itself.

In addition, the base of the column is inscribed with the words: “NB SVLCKE . MAECH . SVLCKE . COST” (Such stomach, such food), which seems to indicate that the stomachs of rich people require expensive food of the type displayed here – more or less the opposite of the vanitas content. In all, it is very unlikely that de Heem himself included the column and the inscription, in view of the quality of the execution and since it diversifies the iconography of the image far too much. The fact that the column was added later appears to be supported by a bright line coming down in the back wall, behind the tazza, covered by later paint, but shimmering through the surface. This line is likely to be the remnant of a window sill that was painted out or that was perhaps never executed save for in the underpaint.

There even appears to be a suggestion of ivy growing in the opening: compare such windows in other examples, such as cat. nos. A 101 and 104. Also, in comparison with those paintings, the still life of cat. no. A 105 also has very little space to the left, which suggests that it was reduced, probably by
some fourteen centimetres. This would leave room for a curtain to the left, in analogy with that in cat. no. A 104, resulting in an image that is very similar to that still life. If we impose the image of cat. no. A 105 upon that of A 104, we get a rather good impression of how the former may have looked originally (fig. A 46).

A small landscape painting by Jan Davidsz. de Heem and related works

In 1932, a small landscape painting signed ‘I.D. Heem’ appeared on the art market (cat. no. A 103). The same signature can be found on three dated works from 1643, 1645 and 1646 (cat. nos. A 072, 087 and 097), as well as on a coastal winter landscape (cat. no. A 231) and since the image shows distinct similarities with landscape views in Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s larger still lifes, there can be little doubt that it is indeed his work, while similarity with the view through the background window in cat. no. A 104 supports dating it to c.1646. Like those views, this little landscape clearly has a Flemish feel to it – compare, for instance, landscapes and landscape backgrounds by David Teniers II from the 1630s and 1640s – but the artist also appears to have been inspired to some degree by the work of Jan van Goyen, who was working in Leiden in the years prior to de Heem’s departure from that town. With de Heem’s background views, this landscape shares its sky with rather heavy clouds and light on the horizon, situating the scene in the early morning or late afternoon. As much as de Heem was not a talented figure painter, as we have seen in the painting in Oxford, cat. no. A 008, he was also not a landscape painter by nature, judging from this rare example, which he may have produced for some special occasion. When he painted his later winter landscape (cat. no. A 231), to be discussed below, his skills in this area appear to have developed further.

In addition to cat. no. A103, a small upright nocturnal landscape with a bridge, with a signature ‘IDHeem’, which was auctioned in Vienna (fig. A 47) is recorded. The tiny illustration in the 1981 auction catalogue does not allow proper judgment of it, which is why it has not been included in my catalogue of de Heem’s works, but it should certainly not be excluded that it is indeed the result of a, probably relatively early, landscape experiment by him. The signature is of a type that he used several times during the 1630s. If indeed by de Heem, it was probably painted in the second half of the 1630s.

Even more interesting, in this context, is a print of a shepherd with a goat and sheep in a landscape, which is part of a series representing the times of day, executed by the Antwerp engraver Frans van den Wijngaerde (1614-1679), who became a member of the guild in 1636. This small print, entitled ‘LE MATIN’ is inscribed ‘Johan de heem inuentor’ and ‘Frans van den wyngaerde fe et ex’ (fig. A 48). No exact date is known for this series, but it was probably executed around 1640. The print
representing *Midday* was engraved after J.P. Gouwy (c.1610-after 1644), that of *Evening* after David Teniers II. A print representing *Night* is not recorded. There is no reason to assume that ‘Johan de Heem’ mentioned on the plate was not Jan Davidsz. de Heem. However, de Heem’s authorship for the design of *Morning* appears to be the only sign of any activity of the artist in this area.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem as a poet?

An inscription ‘I.de Heem’ is also found as the presumable signature of a poem entitled ‘Venus Lusthof’ (Venus’ garden of love) after a painting by Peter Paul Rubens, now in the Prado Museum in Madrid. The poem consists of six verses of four lines, discussing the intentions of the various couples. The print is dedicated to Jan van Weerden, probably Jan Jacob van Weerden (1589-1661), who was an alderman of Antwerp in 1646, 1647 and 1650, who was knighted by Philip IV in 1655 and who was a burgomaster of Antwerp during the last two years of his life or, perhaps even more likely, to his son Jan Baptist van Weerden (c.1620-1689). As the author of the poem, it would seem that de Heem was involved in this dedication.

Still lifes, 1647

No dated works from 1647 by Jan Davidsz. de Heem have come down to us. There are several of still lifes, however, which in several respects fit seamlessly in between the group from 1646 and the cluster of securely dated works from 1648. They share a rather broad, fluent and painterly handling,
which the artist already had started to develop in work from 1646 discussed above. The first three, cat. nos. A 106, its twin A 107 and A 108 share several motifs, such as a pewter platter of oysters, a half-peeled lemon – the peel hanging in a bow in front of the table –, and an orange with a crease in its skin, rendering it the shape of a peach, at least to some degree. Other similarities can be found in the soft, rather bright, yellowish white grapes and in the sharply creased tablecloths of a heavy fabric. The rendering of the vine leaves and the foliage of the apricot branches in both is also highly similar.

The lemons and, in the smaller composition, cat. no. A 107, the vine branch hanging in front of the table are reminiscent of those motifs in cat. no. A 105 in Cambridge, discussed above. Of cat. no. A 107, a second version exists (cat. no. A 106) in which the painter appears to have omitted the decoration of the bowl and although the second version is not signed, there are no substantial differences in quality between the two. It is interesting to note that in both paintings the leaves in front of the table appear to have been added after the motifs behind them (the edge of the table, the bread roll, and the pewter plate) had been finished. This is evident since the leaves have become slightly transparent over time. The back wall of cat. no. A 108, the larger of the two compositions, however, differs substantially from that in cat. no. A 107 (and 106). In the upper left corner, it holds a cartouche on which the artist’s name is inscribed. To the right of it, the wall recedes into a square niche, coming forward again at about three quarters of the width of the painting. The rendition of the recession to the left is rather weak and the motif in itself is disturbing, rather than helping the composition. The construction in itself appears to be original to the painting, but perhaps it was painted out and reconstructed at some point in time. De Heem seems to have played with his relatively new invention here of giving more texture to the back wall by showing cracks, bricks and also by including a nail, although its shadow is not as firm as in other cases, but this may be due to the fact that it is included at the back of the niche and much more to the right than usual. The dish of oysters, the vine leaves, and the orange and parts of orange to the right in cat. no. A 109 are very similar to those in the two compositions discussed above. From that point of view, inclusion in de Heem’s oeuvre appears to be fully justified. The grapes, however, deviate from the artist’s manner.
This may be due to the condition of the surface. If indeed by de Heem, its traditional attribution that I am prepared accept at least until the painting presents itself for inspection, this painting must date from (c.)1647, which suggestion is strengthened by its relationship to cat. no. A 110, in Kassel. The broader handling of cat. no. A 109 is particularly similar to that of cat. no. A 110. Moreover, several motifs in both paintings are virtually identical: the dish of oysters, the parts of an orange to the right, and several of the vine leaves, while the handling of the bottle chest in both is very similar – apart from the fact that both chests share their lock plate. The doubts that have been cast upon the attribution to de Heem of the Kassel still life are unfounded, even though the composition is somewhat overloaded.

Apart from strong similarities with cat. no. A 109, as well as with cat. nos. A 106, 107 and 108, the tazza with figs and other fruit, for instance, is not only the same object, but also close in its rendering to that in the painting in Cambridge, cat. no. A 105. The silver-gilt cup-and-cover shows strong similarities with the one in, for instance, cat. nos. A 089 and A 095, and may well derive from studies of the same object.
Catalogue no. A 111 also fits within the same pattern of similarity in handling and shared motifs. The large pewter dish with an ox’s tongue is the same as in cat. no. A 105 in Cambridge, while the turbo shell and the smaller, orangey shell placed next to it show the same configuration as in cat. nos. A 089, 099 and several somewhat later works, but here the opening of the turbo shell is turned downward, rather than facing the viewer. The view past a dark-red curtain through a window is strongly reminiscent of similar views in cat. nos. A 092, 101 and 104. The cup screw, interestingly, appears to be an amalgam of parts of objects (cup screws, tazzas and silver gilt cups) found in earlier still lifes from the 1640s, such as cat. nos. A 064, 086, 097, 098 and 110. The table leg is very similar to that depicted in cat. no. A 108.

The last picture of the group that can be dated to 1647, cat. no. A 112, in a private collection, is the largest. Through its large format and composition, it is more reminiscent of the large luxury still life from before 1645 than to the still lifes just discussed, but in essence it is less exuberant than those
early examples. Several motifs and the handling thereof connect this painting with the works proposed above for 1647. The lemon, with its peel encircling it, is closely related to the lemons in those still lifes. The vine leaves to the right have their appearance in common with those in cat. no. A 108. The ornate ewer in the centre of the composition had first appeared tucked away under a large salver in cat. no. A 104. The tablecloth is perhaps slightly closer in its execution to tablecloths from the previous year, which might suggest that this still life originated fairly early in 1647 or may even have been started in the previous year.

Three drawings, probably from de Heem’s studio, and related paintings.
No signed or securely documented drawings by Jan Davidsz. de Heem are known and except for one, probably from the second half 1660s, which will be discussed in the following chapter, no drawings could thus far be attributed to Jan Davidsz. de Heem with any degree of conviction. Several drawings, however, have been catalogued as his work not too long ago, three of which merit closer attention since they may well have been done in de Heem’s studio around the mid-1640s. All three are somehow related to known paintings that appear to have originated in de Heem’s studio or at least in his close vicinity. These three drawing are on sheets of about 208 mm high and 274 to 291 mm wide. All three have parts of figure studies on the reverse, which suggests that they have their origin in common. The figure studies in verso may be after prints and are not of very high quality. They are certainly not by the same hand as the still-life drawings in dorso.369

A 49 Circle of J. Dz. de Heem, Still life with a lobster, oil on canvas, 70 x 98 cm. Present location unknown.
The first drawing represents a still life on a table, arranged around a large lobster, and with a tasseled drapery hanging over it (cat. no. D R 01). A painting with a closely related composition was auctioned in Berlin in 1933 (fig. A 49). In his 1993 catalogue of drawings in the collection of the Amsterdams Historisch Museum (now Amsterdam Museum), Ben Broos accepted the attribution of the painting to de Heem and concluded that drawing D R 01 is a study by de Heem for the painting in question. Judging from good photographs, the painting is closely related to work by de Heem from 1642 and 1643 in terms of composition and in the rendering of various details, such as the oysters, the grapes, the bread and the dishes. It is certainly a work of good quality, but on the whole, it does not hold up to the standards of de Heem’s autograph paintings, while some details are more reminiscent of the work of other artists in de Heem’s circle, such as Andries Benedetti for the vine leaves and Jan van der Hecke for the grapes. In view of the close relationship to de Heem’s work, it is quite likely that the painting originated in de Heem’s close vicinity, probably in his studio, and under his personal scrutiny. While the drawing shows virtually the same composition as the painting, there are some differences in details: the pomegranate is missing, the orange has been substituted by a whole lemon, and generally, the fruit and oysters to the right of the lobster have been arranged differently, while the modeling and positioning of the lobster itself also differ. These discrepancies seem to suggest that the drawing is not a copy after the painting. There are too many weaknesses in the modeling and arrangement – the basket appears to be flat, the positioning of the rummer is awkward, while in the painting it is excellent, for instance – and on the whole the image lacks strength. Also, the rendering of the still-life motifs in the drawing is rather diminutive. These features thus also exclude it as a preparatory drawing. In any case, the quality of the drawing is not such that it can be by Jan Davidsz. de Heem himself. Perhaps both the painting and the drawing refer to a missing work by de Heem himself.

The second drawing (cat. no. D R 02), in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Besançon, appears to be by the same hand and has similar weaknesses. It is, however, not heightened in white, but the heightening in cat. no. D R 01 may well have been done by a later hand. The composition is highly similar to that of a rejected painting which in its turn is related cat. no. A 112, which is datable on stylistic grounds to 1647. In fact, the images of the drawing and the painting are virtually identical, except for the upper left. Instead of the shells on top of the casket and the fortress in the background in the drawing, the painting copies those motifs from the related painting, cat. no. A 112. This indicates that all three works originated in each other’s close vicinity, so logically in de Heem’s studio.
A third, loosely sketched drawing (cat. no. D R 03, fig. A 50), in the Leiden print room, is also directly related to a known painting. That painting was catalogued in the collection of Schloss Ehrenberg in Coburg as Flemish, c.1650 and associated with de Heem by Horst Gerson (fig. A 51).

Judging from the photograph, however, it can be attributed to Laurens Craen, as a relatively early work. The handling is very similar to that of a work by Craen dated 1646, in the Hofje van Aerden, in Leerdam. Assuming that this drawing, too, originated in the studio of Jan Davidsz. de Heem, this would support the assumption that Craen worked there in about 1646. This drawing is more likely a preparatory sketch for the painting than a ricordo of it, even though in this case the two images show fewer differences. However, the basket is turned slightly more towards the viewer in the drawing, the melon is tilted in the opposite direction and the details of the silver-gilt cup-and-cover differ substantially. These are no deviations that would be expected in a copy. Moreover, to the right, changes are clearly visible in the drawing, where a bottle casket with objects on top appears to have been erased. Unfortunately no secure drawings by Laurens Craen are known for comparison. This leaves us with the problem of the authorship of these drawings, of which the first two may be by the same hand, and which appear to have originated in de Heem’s studio in the course of several years, c.1643 to 1647. The fact that all three have similar figure studies on the back, as observed above, suggests a common origin. The lack of accuracy in the modeling and in the awkward placement of some of the objects, in any case in the first two, exclude the possibility that these are models done by de Heem himself to guide his students. Nevertheless, they are closely related to paintings by
various hands, related to de Heem’s still lifes and done over a number of years, which appears to place them in de Heem’s studio. For the time being their authorship will have to remain undecided.

**Still lifes, 1648**

In 1648, Jan Davidsz. de Heem dated three extant paintings, one of which, the small festoon of flowers in Vercelli (cat. no. A 114) was already discussed above, in connection with de Heem’s flower paintings from the 1640s. A second, a large garland around a chalice, in Vienna (cat. no. A 116) will be discussed below, in conjunction with a related collaborative work (cat. no. A 118). All three paintings belonged to the collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm.371

Beautifully signed and dated is a still life in the collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein, cat. no. A 115. Its forceful execution is closely related to that of the group placed in 1647, discussed above, although its size is more modest than that of most of those paintings. Similarities in details, such as the figs and the vine leaves and the dryly painted tablecloth, can be found with cat. no. A 110 in Kassel, as well as with the dated garland in Vienna, A 116. In fact, the bunch of white grapes is quite similar in its construction to the one at lower right in Vienna. It is interesting to note how different the attention to various details is within the Liechtenstein still life. The wine glass and the grapes have been rendered with much refinement and so has the chiselling of the silver cup, while the cup itself, the vine leaves and the larger fruit have been executed in much broader – be it no less effective – strokes. The blue-and-white jug in the background makes an even coarser impression. This, however, is mainly due to later retouching. De Heem appears to have often employed small blue for his rendering of blue-and-white ceramics, or a discolouring mixture with ultramarine.

Smalt has a strong tendency to fade to grey and such faded decorations have often been retouched later by lesser hands with a stronger blue pigment, but ultramarine can discolour as well if not used properly. The same jug (or a somewhat free variant of it) is depicted in other works, as we will see, often with similar poor retouches. In cat. no. A 184, in Zurich, the decoration has not been touched up and is still grey. De Heem appears to have used ultramarine more successfully for the rendering of porcelain in most earlier examples, such as cat. nos. A 051, 057, 065, 071, and 099, while in A 107, in Budapest, there is clearly a later retouching on top of faded smalt, be it only on the side of the depicted bowl; the decoration on the rim is still grey.372
A larger still life that can be dated with some certainty to 1648, cat. no. A 117, in the collection of the Mauritshuis, The Hague, is strongly reminiscent of cat. no. 47.04 in type and composition, but the handling of the fruit and foliage is very similar to that in the dated garland from 1648 in Vienna, which will be discussed below. The pair of shells to the left is the same as in cat. no. A 099. With that painting cat. no. A 117 also shares an uncommon motif for de Heem, namely the medlars. Both paintings also include a very large salver, here of chased silver, in Berlin of Kraak porcelain, which is, however, barely visible due to the abundance of fruit placed upon it. In both of these paintings as well as in others, de Heem appears to have varied the features of his bottle chests at will. Usually, they are covered in blue satin or silk and possess a silvery fringe lining the cover. Their heights and the heights of the covers vary, however, and the shape of the lock plate is always different and occasionally it is invisible. Often there is a key (or set of keys) in the lock, often not. De Heem appears to have introduced this motif in 1643, in cat. no. A 070 or 071, upon which introduction it soon became wide-spread, particularly among Antwerp still-life painters. De Heem himself continued to employ it throughout his career (cf. cat. no. A 225). It is for the first time since 1643 – and the last for a few years to come – that de Heem included a musical instrument in one of his still lifes. The recorder, placed prominently against the bottle casket to the left, undoubtedly represents a vanitas aspect. The next times that he would include such a flute, in 1652, would be in explicit vanitas still lifes (cat. no. A 156 and 157). One may wonder whether in this case the instrument might have been included at the request of the person who commissioned the painting – or for whom the painting was intended. Jan Davidsz. de Heem must have had connections in the Antwerp musical world, due to the fact that his wife, Anna Ruckers, whom he had married in 1644, was the daughter of Antwerp’s leading harpsichord maker. Nevertheless, this recorder is the first musical instrument he appears to have painted since his marriage.

Two large paintings for Archduke Leopold Wilhelm and a festoon of fruit
De Heem’s catalogue for 1648 also includes two paintings that were both, in all likelihood, executed for Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, who was residing in Brussels as governor of the Southern
Netherlands (cat. nos. A 116 and A 118). Both were described in the Archduke’s inventory in 1659, after he had returned to Vienna with his collection.

Cat. no. A 118 is a very large altar painting of an enthroned Madonna and Child, a collaborative effort of de Heem and four other Antwerp artists, including David Teniers II, who was appointed court painter and keeper of the Archduke’s collection in 1650. The 1659 inventory informs us about who painted what: “Das Liebefrawenbild ist ein Original von Gerardo Seghers, die Blumen Original von Johann de Heim, die Waffen Original von Paulo de Vos, der Grundt Original von Cornelis de Vos vnd die Schlacht auff der Seithen Original von Davidd Teniers”. It would be interesting to know how this collaboration was organized. Did the Archduke select the participating artists himself, or was it his court painter, Jan van den Hoecke (1611-1650), who took that task upon himself? Or was the commission given to one painter – in view of the primary subject, to Gerard Seghers? – who then selected his collaborators? Or could the painting have been a personal initiative of the painters themselves, in order to draw the Archduke’s attention to their work? In that case, the commission for de Heem’s garland of flowers and fruit (cat. no. A 116) could have resulted from this effort. However, in view of the substantial dimensions of the altar painting, which alone must have made its production a costly undertaking, it is more likely that it was commissioned for a specific spot, presumably the chapel in the Archduke’s Brussels residence, the Coudenberg palace. The painting’s iconography and motto inscribed at the top, in any case, suggest that this work was commissioned either by or for Leopold Wilhelm. In fact, it is more likely that de Heem attracted the attention of Leopold Wilhelm by presenting him a small festoon of flowers: cat. no. A 114, now in Vercelli and already discussed above, and which can be identified in Leopold Wilhelm’s inventory of 1659. Such an exquisite small work would have been an ideal gift to a prospective patron and it may have led to de Heem’s participation in the altar piece and the commission of the garland around a chalice and host, cat. no. A 116. In any case, both those works include roses that are very similar to those in the small festoon. It would appear that de Heem’s flowers and fruit were inserted on the large altar painting after completion of the parts by Seghers (and Cornelis de Vos?). De Heem’s contributions were, however, clearly accounted for in the preparation of the ground. They specifically involved him as a painter of flowers and fruit, while until that time he had barely manifested himself as a flower painter. For the flowers, he appears to have referred, at least in part, to studies he had made earlier. The branch of white lilies in the garland at the top appears virtually identically in the large bouquets from c.1645 (cat. no. A 093 and particularly 094), while the two orange lilies at top left in that garland are identical to the pair in the small dated bouquet from 1645 (cat. no, A 087). The globular pink roses in this picture are particularly similar to those in the dated festoon from 1648 in Vercelli (cat. no. A 114) and in cat. no. A 116 but they are not identical to any of them. For the fruit, there appear to be no such similarities either, but it may well be that de Heem felt more at ease as a painter of fruit, and as such had no particular need to refer back verbatim to existing studies or earlier work.

Like the previous painting, the garland of fruit and flowers around a niche with an elaborate silver chalice with the Host above it (cat. no. A 116), which is dated 1648, also can be traced back to Leopold Wilhelm’s 1659 inventory, which makes it most likely that the painting was commissioned by the Archduke’s during his residence in Brussels, while the specifically Roman Catholic subject of the Host certainly suggests that it was painted for Leopold Wilhelm himself, who was also bishop and prince-bishop of several cities.
The execution of both paintings is so similar that it is impossible to tell which is the earlier of the two. De Heem may well have been working on both at the same time.³⁷⁹ This is the first time that de Heem tackled this type of composition, which in itself may be an indication that the painting was the result of a specific commission. De Heem surely knew such compositions by Daniel Seghers firsthand. Seghers, however, composed his garlands solely of flowers. Adriaen van Utrecht had painted a hanging garland of fruit as early as 1634, but did not specifically produce garlands of fruit around a central subject.³⁸⁰ Jan Breughel the Elder’s garlands of flowers and fruit around, for instance, the Holy Family in a landscape are of a different nature. In terms of composition, de Heem’s garland in Vienna is strongly reminiscent of, for instance, Daniel Seghers’ cartouche still life around a statue of the Virgin in the Mauritshuis, The Hague, which dates from 1645 (fig. A 41, above). The niche, sculpted relief and stone support are rather similar to that in de Heem’s picture.³⁸¹ In terms of iconography, de Heem’s painting seems to connect the blood and body of Christ (the wine and the Host) with prosperity and fertility. Previously, an inscription “Bacchus et alma Ceres caelestia pabula signant, Imperium signant et Leopolde tuum” was present on the lower ledge. It appears to connect the Archduke with the prosperity of the land in the form of agricultural products and wine. Leopold, like Bacchus and Ceres ‘illuminates the land’.³⁸² Bacchus and Ceres are obviously well represented in de Heem’s arrangement. Two bunches of wheat, bound together with blue ribbons, prominently flank the chalice. Above and below them are lush bunches of grapes, while a wide variety of fruit has been placed in the garland: oranges, lemons, plums, peaches, berries and cherries. Also, there are cobs of corn, gherkins and poppy seedlings. Ivy and vine weave through the composition. Although many of the pieces of fruit are attached to branches, others appear to have been stuck in unattached. While de Heem’s construction looks convincing, it would probably take substantial effort to arrange it stably in such a way in reality. The artist has carefully distributed his accents of colour by
means of the red, orange and yellow fruit. The pink roses jump out at the sides of the chalice, in particular because they have been placed adjacent to the receding blue of the ribbons. The cool tone of the silver of the chalice and the shining white of the Host contrast effectively with the warm tones of the flowers and fruit.

A 113

Clearly, festoons and garlands were settling in de Heem’s repertoire in the course of the second half of the 1640s. A festoon of fruit in the Centraal Museum in Utrecht (cat. no. A 113), is a rather unusual piece in de Heem’s oeuvre, for which a date in or close to 1648 appears to fit best, however. It is signed and/or inscribed “J.D.De heem . utraject[us?]// fecit.”, but the inscription has at least been strengthened substantially. The painting was obviously acquired by the Utrecht museum because of the reference to Utrecht in this inscription. There can be no doubt, however, that the painting was done in Antwerp. It was most probably reduced, in any case at the top and to the left. It was done on a previously used panel. X-ray photography has revealed that it was painted on top of a fragment of a still life which, as far as the X-ray allows judgment, is by a much weaker hand and which may well have originated outside of de Heem’s studio. The handling of the vine leaves in this festoon is similar to the rather broad treatment in still lifes from about 1647 discussed above, in particular cat. no. A 110 in Kassel. That of the white grapes, however, matches that of the grapes in the dated garland from 1648 in Vienna (cat. no. A 116). Most of the other fruit appears to have suffered too much over time to allow proper judgment and comparison. The ‘rhythm’ of the branches that run through the composition, particularly to the left, can also be found similarly in the works mentioned above. In view of its shape and size, the Utrecht festoon may have been intended as an overdoor decoration. Like in the case of the festoon of roses in Vercelli (cat. no. A 114), the painting appears to have had no other than a decorative purpose.

Still lifes, 1649

The core work for the year 1649, cat. no. A 121, is a highly detailed, signed and dated still life possessing the air of luxury of de Heem’s large still lifes from the first part of the 1640s, but which is substantially smaller than those works. Here, de Heem has completely abandoned the broader brush of 1647 and part of 1648 in favour of the detailed handling that he had already regained in the cartouche still life now in Vienna, cat. no. A 116. The image is unusually crowed and appears to be a sample card of the artist’s abilities to render a wide variety of shapes and textures. The elaborately decorated silver ewer to the right does not appear anywhere else in de Heem’s oeuvre. It may have been included at the specific request of a patron.
The silver-gilt cup-and-cover and the silver tazza appear to be close variants of such objects found in many other examples of de Heem’s work. The tazza with the ribbed base of the dish may, however, have been a specific, existing object, since it returns in a still life from the second half of the 1650s, now in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (cat. no. A 191). The first fruit pie is the first one that de Heem depicted after including such pies in two of his large luxury still lifes, cat. nos. A 051 and 071. He may well initially have borrowed the motif from Haarlem examples from the 1620s and 1630s by such artists as Pieter Claesz. and Willem Claesz. Heda. He would depict it a few more times in the early 1650s (cat. nos. A 139, 140 and 174). Among his Antwerp followers such as Andries Benedetti (discussed above), and Joris van Son and G° van Deynum (the latter two to be discussed below), it became a frequently used motif.

In 1649, de Heem appears to have decided to opt consistently for a more precise, fine manner of painting, which in the following year, 1650, he changed to a slightly more painterly but still highly detailed manner. In 1649, so within this year of change, three more still lifes can be situated. Cat. no. A 119, in a German private collection, is somewhat smaller than A 121, and less cluttered with objects. In several respects it still connects with the still lifes from the previous years.
The shiny silver beaker is similar to the one in the Liechtenstein painting, cat. no. A 115, and the plate with a fried pike is strongly reminiscent of that same motif in cat. no. A 108. The salt on which it is placed, appears for the first time here, conveniently equipped with putti with shields on the corners, upon which the platter rests. The oyster to the left of the silver cup was clearly modelled upon the same study as one of the oysters in cat. nos. A 108 and 109.

The representation of the green tablecloth is similar to that in the dated still life, cat. no. A 077, while that of the curtain closely resembles that in cat. no. A 117 in the Mauritshuis. The hard-stone column is fully integrated into the image, while the backdrop coming down on both sides evokes a stage-like impression. This, again, is evidence of de Heem’s constant search for different solutions to his compositions and arrangements. Although the column and the curtains already do a lot to define the background, here too, de Heem has chosen to show bricks in the back wall, where some plaster has disappeared.

More modest, and almost equal in size are two smaller panels, cat. nos. A 120 and 122. Both are very refined in their execution, like the dated still life, cat. no. A 123. Cat. no. A 120, in the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, shares the rendering of its foliage specifically with cat. no. A 119: rather sharply accented veins and a great variety of shades of green, occasionally bordering on brown or yellow. While the rendering of the vine leaves is fully different from slightly earlier work such as cat. no. A 115 in Liechtenstein, that of the black grapes is highly similar, with their shades of red and blue shifting between grey and brown. The Venetian-style wine glass has also been rendered similarly to the one in the Liechtenstein painting, be it slightly less painterly. It would appear that de Heem had a renewed opportunity to study pomegranates since he had last rendered the fruit, for the one included here has a much more natural appearance than examples from the previous years. The
back wall in cat. no. A 120 has been kept relatively simple, but de Heem re-introduces the shadow edge that had appeared earlier in cat. no. A 080 (Moscow), and in cat. no. A 084, for instance. The figs in this still life appear to have been the result of renewed study. While most of de Heem’s earlier figs are fairly round, these have more of an elegant, tall pear shape and also their texture and skin colour have been rendered more elaborately. Jan Davidsz. de Heem appears to have made a series of studies of these figs (or perhaps even one single example), since they return regularly in still lifes from the following years. The exact same fig standing upright reappears in cat. nos. A 125, formerly in Saintes, and A 129, in Dresden.

The other smaller panel from 1649, cat. no. A 122, is closest in style and handling to the dated painting, cat. no. A 121, but a more modest composition. De Heem, however, has crowded the picture plane more than in the still life in Karlsruhe, discussed previously, with which it has the vine leaf lying to the left, on the table, in common. There, it supports some cherries and the pomegranate, here two crayfish have been deposited upon it. The treatment of the crayfish is identical to those in the dated example, with their saturated scarlet colour, modelling glazes in darker reds and highlighted details in light greys and white. Also similar in the treatment of the bright green white grapes, with multiple layers of glazing and rather soft highlights, very similar to the grapes in cat. no. A 119, in a private collection. The sprig of apricots in that still life is also strongly reminiscent of the one rendered here.

The strong blue of the table cloth – a blue layer, probably of ultramarine, glazed upon a white ground – is a novelty, but a motif that de Heem would repeat several times in the following years. The light on the back wall suggests a high window to the left, partly shaded off. A strong ray of light falls in past a nail, but it has faded before it reaches the right-hand side of the picture where, like in cat. no A 120, an edge in the wall has been suggested, but this time it remains barely defined.

**Still lifes, 1650**

The first half of the 1650s ranks among the most productive and most successful in terms of quality of Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s entire career. In 1650, he dated three known paintings and another six still lifes that are closely related in style and handling will have originated during the same year. The emphasis during this year lies on large arrangements of fruit around a central motif, and on smaller still lifes in which fruit is the predominant motif.

![A 126](image1.jpg) ![A 127](image2.jpg)

The date 1650 can be found on a relatively small panel kept in the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh (cat. no. A 127). The arrangement of the two crayfish to the right in this still life is closely related to that of the pair in cat. no. A 122, discussed above. The manner of rendering the peach and
the plums is similar to that still life as well. A similar pair of crayfish had already appeared in cat. no. A 121. These similarities suggest that the still life in Edinburgh originated early in 1650. Cat. no. A 126 has virtually the same composition as cat. no. A 127, but several details differ. The arrangement of the fruit, the crayfish, the table and the tablecloth are the same in both paintings, but the foliage above the still life differs substantially, while also the background differs slightly and details such as the branch of the plums and the pips and crumbs on the plate are quite different. Similar deviations between autograph versions of one composition were discussed above (cf. cat. nos. A 024 and 025, A 028 and 029, and A 106 and 107). The differences between the leaves may well be due to a development in de Heem’s search for a proper rendition of vine leaves. Those in cat. no. A 126 are still quite close to the rather smooth leaves in his still lifes from the late 1640s, while those in cat. no. A 127 are the crisp, ‘bubbly’ type that is characteristic for his work from 1650 to circa 1655, which suggests that cat. no. A 127, the one in Edinburgh, is the second version of this composition.

Two other small still lifes that can be assigned to 1650 also share motifs: cat. no. A 123, a small still life of fruit and oysters on a table, and cat. no. A 124, a small festoon of fruit, hanging from a nail and bound by a blue ribbon. They share an exact same fig – with two tiny figs on the same branch – as well as the same branch of three ripe apricots and an unripe one. De Heem has added a small, fifth, unripe apricot in each picture to each branch, but in a different spot. The arrangement of four oysters to the right returns in another still life, cat. no. A 137, while the foremost oyster is repeated from cat. no. A 199. Once again, we must assume that de Heem worked from studies he kept in his studio, but he appears to have reconsidered the details anew in every version.

Another recurrent motif featured in cat. no. A 123 is the triangular fold in the tablecloth, with two parallel oblique creases within the triangle. This feature can be found for the first time in the dated still life from 1649, cat. no. A 121 (between the two pewter plates), and it reappears in many of de Heem’s still lifes from 1650 to 1653, after which it disappears from the artist’s repertoire. The same fold occurs in cat. no. A 125, previously in the Musée du Présidial in Saintes and presumed lost after having been stolen in 1997. Here de Heem repeated a fig he already depicted in cat. no. A 120, be it that he shows it split open here. Measuring 22 x 17 centimetres, cat. no. A 125 is one of de Heem’s smallest known still lifes.

Another, even slightly smaller piece can also be assigned to 1650, although dating it to (early) 1651 would also be plausible: a little still life of fruit, including grapes, a plum and a fig, on a stone ledge (cat. no. A 128). In front of the fig, two snails are featured prominently and on the stem of the bunch of grapes a large dragonfly has alighted.
In terms of handling and motifs, this little painting comes close to the much larger garland of fruit and flowers in Berlin, dated 1650 (cat. no. A 130). Although the small painting is not (distinctly) signed and was presented as ‘école des de Heem’ when auctioned in 1961, its quality places it securely within Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s oeuvre.

In addition to the six relatively small still lifes just discussed, three cartouche still lifes of fruit and some flowers can also be assigned to 1650, two of which are in fact dated: cat. nos. A 129 (dated distinctly), A 130 (last numeral of the date indistinct, but always recorded as 0), and A 131 (not signed or dated). The composition of the first, a garland around a rummer of white wine, was undoubtedly modelled on such compositions of (mainly) flowers around a central subject by Daniel Seghers from the 1640s. Like Seghers’ flowers, de Heem’s fruit has been arranged upon a hard-stone sculpted relief above a ledge. Seghers’ reliefs were probably usually painted by the artist who also provided the (mock) sculpture in the centre. De Heem was surely capable of painting his own background reliefs, but appears occasionally to have worked with Erasmus Quellinus II (1607-1678), who specialised in painting such trompe l’oeil sculpture, providing it regularly to, among others, Daniel Seghers himself.
Since the handling of the stone relief in cat. no. A 129 is not characteristic of Quellinus, it may well have been done by de Heem himself. Curiously, de Heem’s relief in cat. no. A 129 ‘stands’ upon two lion’s claws, and so do those in cat. nos. A 130, 131 and 239, to be discussed below. As I will demonstrate, those were more likely done by Quellinus. The pair of lions’ claws, however, appears to be a feature characteristic of such cartouches almost exclusively done for or by de Heem. Instead of Seghers’ central religious images – often provided by another artist – de Heem has placed a rummer of white wine in the centre of cat. no. A 129. Thus, this painting could be interpreted as an allegory of plenty, the fruit and flowers representing the rich supply provided to mankind. However, the painting’s iconography may in fact be more complex. Just above the rummer, an arrow protrudes from the sculpted relief, from which a drop (of wine?) is about to fall into the glass. In case this refers to some specific martyrdom, it remains unclear which. The suggestion that in this painting and in cat. no. A 138, also a cartouche still life with a rummer, de Heem may be referring to the Eucharistic connotation of wine as the blood of Christ is probably too far-fetched. That white wine could represent the blood of Christ seems illogical, but nevertheless often accepted. Rather than in its traditional connotation as arching towards God, the withered sunflower at the bottom of the composition should properly be regarded as a pure vanitas symbol. In addition to the butterflies and caterpillars, which could symbolize the Resurrection, he included a cockchafer and grasshoppers, notable scavengers. The most noted connotation of the sparrow – at the lower right – is that of sensuality or lust. In the end the painting appears to be open to multiple interpretations and is mainly a display of de Heem’s proficiency in representing various fruit, flowers and creatures.

The second cartouche still life from 1650, cat. no. A 130, is closer in handling of the details to dated work from 1651 and 1652 and as such must have originated later in the year. With two prominent winged cherubs on the sides, the sculpted cartouche is more prominent than in cat. no. A 129 and in this case it may very well have been painted by Quellinus. It is quite likely that the painting originally contained a central image en grisaille, also by Quellinus, which was later cut out and replaced. It was later used as the frame for a mirror. When the painting entered the Berlin Gemäldegalerie, it contained a Madonna by Carl Begas (1794-1854). The winged cherubs suggest a religious central subject, but without the central image, no proper connotation of the still-life motifs can be suggested. Again, however, the profusion of fruit and stalks of wheat appears to suggest Plenty, while the grapes and wheat may have a Eucharistic connotation. The roses and white lilies could refer to Mary and/or Christ. The arrangement is more lavish than in the previously discussed painting and the attention to detail is extremely high. Even though the still life motifs have been arranged on a relatively flat surface, de Heem succeeded to suggest substantial depth by having stems and stalks of wheat pass behind or stick out in front of other motifs and by other instances of overlapping. The use of colours and of light also adds substantially to the suggestion of depth. More than in earlier work, de Heem has populated this painting with numerous bugs, butterflies, and snails. In the following years, many of his still lifes would entertain such a population.

One more cartouche still life, cat. no. A 131, can tentatively be dated to 1650, in view of its less elaborate handling more likely to the beginning of the year. The painting was originally catalogued in the Brukenthal collection in Hermannstadt (now Sibiu) as by Abraham Mignon, later as from the circle of Jan Davidsz. de Heem and more recently as by Joris van Son. Upon close inspection, however, the overall quality matches that of Jan Davidsz. de Heem himself, while the cartouche and the central ‘sculpture’ of a Holy Family are the work of Erasmus Quellinus II, fitting properly for that artist’s work from about 1650. While there is some similarity with the dated example, cat. no. A 129,
the handling of the details also can be connected with somewhat earlier work, such as the cartouche painting from 1648 in Vienna and other work from that year.

A 51 G. de Vries, Cartouche still life with Christ at Emmaus, signed, oil on canvas, 163,2 x 177,5 cm, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, inv. no. 2290.

The composition of cat. no. A 131 is closely related to that of the only known signed painting by Guilliam de Vries (active 1645-1678) in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (fig. A 51). The stone cartouche and the scene of Christ at Emmaus in the centre appear to be the work of Quellinus, like in de Heem’s painting. For the still life, the lesser master was obviously inspired by de Heem.397

Still lifes, 1651

Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s next cartouche still life, cat. no. A 138, is clearly dated 1651. Like cat. no. A 129, discussed above, it represents a rummer in a stone niche within a sculpted cartouche and surrounded by garlands of fruit and flowers. It is can be considered as the most accomplished and successful example of de Heem’s works of this type. The clear, bright light provides the image with an enticing brightness. As a result, it possesses a clarity that distinguishes it from the relative sobriety of catalogue A 129, from the previous year. While in that painting there is an arrow above the glass, here we see an eye spreading light, symbolizing God’s providence. 398 As such, the painting’s iconography is more straightforward than that of the earlier example. Nevertheless, it does remain multi-interpretatable.399 But here too, de Heem’s illusionism can be considered as the main theme. Unlike the earlier examples, this cartouche is not resting on lions’ legs, but between the lower festoons, a sculpted relief that is strongly reminiscent of a lion’s head appears. The overall spatial effect in the painting is extremely convincing. De Heem has employed both actual overlapping and colour perspective to suggest depth. The festoon at lower right is a good case in point: the warm orange-red pomegranate and apricots overlap the bunch of blue grapes and are themselves being overlapped by white grapes, rendered in a bright green, which in turn are partly superimposed by bright yellow lemons. Tall stalks of wheat stretch across this cluster of fruit and branches of hop and of gooseberries stick from under the fruit.
The rendering of the many textures is extremely meticulous, de Heem has portrayed every little detail with great care. The sparrow at lower centre in itself is a feat of illusionism, and so are the many insects and bugs spread throughout the painting.

With fourteen paintings of a variety of measurements that can provisionally be assigned to 1651, this year is one of de Heem’s most prolific, while the general quality and attention to detail in these paintings are very high. Of these fourteen paintings, four are actually dated, providing a firm framework for dating other still lifes, together with the dated works from the previous and following years, three from 1650 and five from 1652. Apart from the cartouche still life discussed above, and a small flower painting, all paintings from 1651 are of still lifes upon a table.
A small flower painting (cat. no. A 145) is not dated and unfortunately only known from a black-and-white photo, reproduced here. It was sold from the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in 1928 and has not resurfaced since. It can be considered as de Heem’s first attempt to paint an individual flower piece since his first forays in the mid-1640s. While the treatment of flowers in work from the second half of the 1640s is rather compact, resulting in a ‘waxy’ texture of the petals, flowers in paintings from 1650 and 1651, such as the cartouche still lifes cat. nos. A 129 (Dresden), 130 and 138 (both in Berlin) have a more natural, loose and ‘papery’ substance. The handling of the rose, as well as that of the leaves of the rose and that of the cherries is extremely similar to that of such motifs in cat. no. A 138. While the composition has a similar free ‘rhythm’, it is not as balanced as de Heem’s later efforts would turn out to be. In all, to situate this little flower painting in 1651 is highly plausible.

A dated still life from 1651 in a private collection, cat. no. A 133, harks back to earlier examples in terms that it possesses a (restricted) view into a landscape through a window, partly obscured by a tasselled, dark red curtain, draped to the right. Its composition is somewhat reminiscent of cat. nos. A 088 and 090, but the handling of the details fully squares with that of other dated work from 1651. Its most eye-catching motif is a large glass with numerous prunts and an elaborate cover. It is inscribed “NieT hoe veel”. This motto is already discussed by Desiderius Erasmus and in an emblem in Roemer Visscher’s Sinnepoppen, it is elaborated as “Niet hoe veel, maar hoe eel” (not how much, but how noble), it is not the quantity that counts, but the quality. Visscher show us a single, well-tempered lute, next to a collection of noisy peasant instruments such as a bagpipe, a horn and a rommelpot. In view of later reactions, De Heem does not appear to make his point entirely clear, however. Already Samuel van Hoogstraeten, in his Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der Schilderkonst (1678) referred to de Heem when admonishing young painters not to overload their compositions, “… that you do not overburden your work with unnecessary things: because Niet hoe veel, maar hoe eel wrote de Heem. An abundance of images [or: figures] that have no purpose is revolting”. Segal suggested that de Heem referred to moderation, in food and drink or in general, while advocating quality over quantity. In his view, the lemons, which were used to moderate the taste of the wine, add to the probability of this explanation. We may wonder, however, whether de Heem was such a moralist himself and whether his rich Antwerp clients cared much about moderation or, for that matter, cared much about being reminded of having to be moderate. Instead, one might wonder whether de Heem was suggesting a comparison between the two glasses in the painting. But in that case, which one is ‘veel’ and which ‘eel’, the humble rummer of white wine to the left, or the elaborate glass-and-cover, both of which are well-filled, although not immoderately. The large glass may in fact be a ‘portrait’ of the prized possession of a patron who commissioned the painting. More likely, the inscription is simply intended as an advertisement for the quality of the painting itself: everything in it is noble (‘eel’) as opposed to in works by others. And, in keeping van Hoogstraten’s advice, it is not overloaded.
In the treatment of several details, cat. no. A 132, in the collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein, is very similar to that in the dated example just discussed, cat. no. A 133, but there is also similarity, particularly in the handling of the grapes, with cat. no. A 129 (Dresden), which is dated 1650, and with cat. no. A 131 (Sibiu), as well as a formal similarity to, for instance, cat. no. A 120 (in Karlsruhe). There is less connection with other works from 1651, which suggests that this painting was started before 1651, and was finished early in the new year. The pattern of folds in the table cloth is fully typical for this period, but its rather dull brownish grey colour is unusual. Mostly, de Heem used a dark copper green for his table cloths and often opted for blue in smaller still lifes. Occasionally, a reddish tone occurs. It may be that in this case the table cloth is missing a glaze of red lake, or that de Heem for some reason omitted to apply a green glaze here.

While (early) 1651 appears to be the most likely date of origin, this painting must in any case have originated before the end of 1654, since a dated copy of the right half of the composition by G* van Deynum is known from that year (fig. A 52). It is worth while to discuss the work of its author briefly here.

**G* van Deynum**

The painter of this partial copy after cat. no. A 132 is only known through his signature, ‘G. van Deynum’. His first name is unrecorded, but often (probably) incorrectly given as Guilliam, a confusion with an earlier Antwerp painter and miniaturist of that name, possibly an ancestor of this still-life painter, who is not included in the records of the Antwerp guild as they have come down to us. However, he must have worked in de Heem’s immediate vicinity, if not in his studio, at some point during the first half of the 1650s. Not only did he
produce a liberal copy of the right half of cat. no. A 132 (fig. A 53), but also of the left part of that composition (fig. A 54). The latter has a pendant that does not derive from a known de Heem composition, but that includes a blue plum which can be found in several of de Heem’s compositions from 1651, 1652 and in one from 1654.\footnote{405} The plum recurs, together with de Heem’s lemon from cat. no. A 140 in Frankfurt, in a painting by van Deynum of which three virtually identical versions are known (fig. A 55).\footnote{406} Moreover, a signed copy by van Deynum after cat. no. A 140 is also known (fig. A 56), while two further copies may also be his work (copies b and c). Van Deynum did leave out the elaborate cup-screw, however, replacing it with a tall wine glass, while in the signed version he added a pipe and pipe-lighting taper to the left.

Closer to de Heem’s original is van Deynum’s signed copy after cat. no. A 144 in Madrid.\footnote{407} In all, these immediate connections between works by de Heem and van Deynum allows the conclusion that probably in 1651 and perhaps during the following years, van Deynum will have worked in de Heem’s studio and was perhaps trained by the master. Whether he produced his de Heem adaptations to be sold from the studio as cheap(er) alternatives for the master’s products is unknown. While some of his paintings bear de Heem signatures, those appear to have all been added later, so it is unlikely that van Deynum’s still lifes were originally sold under de Heem’s own name. If van Deynum produced these (semi)copies in de Heem’s studio, the fact that they were signed may have served specifically to distinguish them from autograph works by the master himself.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figA53}
\caption{A 53 G. van Deynum, \textit{Still life of grapes, a wine glass and a crab}, signed, oil on panel, 32 x 24 cm. Warsaw, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figA54}
\caption{A 54 G. van Deynum, \textit{Still life with a lemon and oysters}, oil on canvas, 33,6 x 45 cm. Private collection.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figA55}
\caption{A 55 G. van Deynum after Jan Dz. de Heem, \textit{Still life with a pie}, oil on canvas, 59 x 75 cm, signed. Location unknown.}
\end{figure}
Signed copies after de Heem were also painted outside of the studio: examples by Jan van Kessel the Elder are known, compare, for instance his copies after cat. no. A 148. Whether van Deynum was still working with or around de Heem when he produced his signed painting from 1654 cannot be established, since no biographical information concerning the artist appears to have come down to us.

A still life by Jan Davidsz. de Heem with a large lobster in a private collection, cat. no. A 134, is reminiscent of work from the (mid)1640s in terms of composition, but fits entirely for the early 1650s in terms of handling of the details. It is the largest known still life on a table from this year, the previous and the next. De Heem has utilised several of his ‘tricks’ to suggest space and volume. The large red lobster, visually, jumps out to the viewer, while the peel of the lemon hanging down in front of the table defines its edge. The nail in the back wall, with its oblique shadow, and the shallow niche in that wall define the far end of the space, while the two wine glasses reflect the light from a window, standing well in front of the niche. The rummer on the blue bottle casket, placed in a darker area itself, also reflects the window. A lighter, spatial effect was also attained by the positioning of the white napkin and the two piled dishes of Wanli porcelain carrying an orange. These two dishes, like much of the porcelain de Heem included in his still lifes, are Chinese export ware from the early seventeenth century. Particularly the plate on top is of an early type, probably produced before 1600.408

The same pair of dishes is included in a later work, cat. no. A 183 in Munich. While de Heem often appears not to have been very accurate in rendering the decoration of the porcelain he depicted, here he appears to have studied his models closely, even more so in the still life in Munich. A third, intriguing painting also contains this pair of porcelain dishes, carrying the same orange.409 While it is a work of rather high quality in the handling of the details, it is clear that none of them were executed by de Heem himself, but rather by an excellent copyist. The peach at the back of the pile on top of the wooden box to the right also appears in cat. no. A 134, while the one in front is the same peach as in cat. nos. A 126 and 127. The composition as a whole, however, is extremely crowded, and the cluster of dead game to the left is completely alien to de Heem’s art, as
are the artichoke in the centre and the oriental tapestry covering the centre of the table. However, those motifs, too, were done rather skilfully, and they were not added at a later stage. The game appears to have been done by the same hand, but also in that area no painter in Antwerp active around 1651 comes to mind as a possible candidate. For the moment, the authorship of the painting must remain unsolved, but it is obvious that it will have originated in de Heem’s vicinity.

A total of nine further still lifes on a table can be dated to 1651. All are medium-sized, the smaller ones on panel (six paintings), the somewhat larger ones (three paintings) on canvas. Of the latter, the first two, cat. nos. A 139 and 140, are closely related, also in terms of composition. Both are dated and in both the exact same fruit pie is featured in the centre, with a ladle resting in the opening and an orange lying on the edge of its plate. Both paintings also share the large vine leaf hovering to the right. The rendering of the fruit and other details is close to that in the dated garlands, cat. nos. A 130 and 138. Cat. no. A 139 is the more subdued of the two; the fruit and the pie are the main motifs. The strongest colour accent is the lemon to the right, with its – unnaturally long – peel.

The variant in Frankfurt am Main, cat. no. A 140, is more opulent, through the inclusion of a silver-gilt cup-screw and a silver tazza. The cup-screw is similar to the examples encountered in some of de Heem’s still lifes from the 1640s (cat. nos. A 067, 091, 095 and 111). The details of all those cup-screws differ slightly and also the differences with the example depicted here may be due to de Heem’s artistic freedom, rather than to him using different models. The most conspicuous difference here, is that the clasps for the glass have taken the shape of animals with long horns, instead of winged horses in the other examples. Here, the ornaments around the stem have more clearly assumed the shape of (sea)horses. While it is possible that de Heem owned such a cup-screw as a prop, it is more likely that he used preparatory sketches that he kept in his studio. In contrast with the cup-screw, the tazza depicted in cat. no. A 140 does not appear in any other de Heem still life. Apart from the fact that, partly due to the light it attracts, it leads the eye of the viewer into the composition, it has been rendered in great detail. The chiselled details have been rendered minutely and the silver marks in the rim are legible (I and A). Judging by the bulbous base of its dish, this tazza is a Hansje-in-de-kelder, (little John in the cellar), which was used to announce a pregnancy: when filled, a little figure (floating on a cork) emerged in the centre, symbolizing the expected birth of a child. It may be that the tazza was a proud possession of the person who commissioned it – and who even may have seen cat. no. A 139 and asked de Heem to paint a version including his tazza. To suggest that the painting may have been commissioned to commemorate the pregnancy it announced is certainly taking speculations too far, in my view. The suggestion itself that the painting was commissioned may be less speculative and is supported by the unique appearance of
the tazza. On the other hand, the fact that several more-or-less contemporary copies are known, among them one by G. van Deynum, suggests that the painting was available to students and/or other copyists, perhaps even in de Heem’s studio, which is less likely when it would have been hanging in a private collection. Nevertheless, a copy made before the painting was delivered to the patron may also have served as a model for further copies.

![A 135](image1)

A tazza is also prominently featured on a panel kept in the Prado museum in Madrid (cat. no. A 135). Its composition is related to earlier examples, such as cat. nos. A 101, 110, 117, 121 and even A 133, but it is more modest in size and contents. The focal motif is the tazza, even more so than in cat. no. A 140. This tazza has a figurine of a walking satyr as a base and an elaborately chiselled dish, which are both shown to their full advantage. The tazza lies half on top of a shiny pewter plate, which sticks over the edge of the wooden table. While the tazza is surrounded by a cased watch, a high-quality Venetian-style wine glass and other glasses, de Heem has specifically highlighted the orange to its left, the oyster in front and the peeled lemon to the right, which, as a result, draw the most of the attention, together with the tazza itself. Like in most works from this year, de Heem has given meticulous attention to details and to texture: the shiny hardness of the metal and glass, the transparency of the juicy grapes, the roughness of the coarse wall behind, and the softness of the drapery and of the tablecloth.

![A 136 and A 137](image2)

Smaller and more modest in their composition, but otherwise closely related, are cat. nos. A 136 and 137, both of them still lifes of fruit, the latter supplemented with a prominent group of oysters. These oysters are virtually identical to those in cat. no. A 123, also in execution. The lemons, grapes and foliage in cat. nos. A 136 and 137 are very similar; the paintings could easily have served
as pendants, had they been the exact same size. In cat. no. A 137, de Heem has introduced a reference to transience with the gnawed holes in the leaves of the plums and the worm hole in one of the hazel nuts.

A small panel, showing a Wanli dish of fruit on a table in front of a niche (cat. A 142) also includes a hazel nut with a worm hole. For a long time, the date on this painting was not properly visible, until restoration in 2015 revealed the date as 1651. As such, the painting appears to anticipate similar compositions from the following years, such as cat. nos. A 158 and 162, and A 179. In the following years, a prominent branch of apricots would also become a common feature in de Heem’s fruit still lifes, but the branch of blackberries, reminiscent of the one in the cartouche still life in Berlin, cat. no. A 138, here makes its unique appearance in a still life of fruit on a table by the artist.

Cat. no. A 143 is only known from the somewhat indistinct illustration in a 1918 auction catalogue. Judging from that illustration, several details are not of very high quality, which suggests that it is perhaps a good copy rather than an original. On the other hand, the modelling is accurate and as such convincing as de Heem’s work. The composition is closely related to that of cat. no. A 147 in the Louvre in Paris. Eventually it may very well turn out that cat. no. A 143 is a work by de Heem in a rather poor condition and I have retained it in the catalogue of autograph works giving it the benefit of the doubt. The painting has been quoted by Bergström (1956) because of the cartouche at top right with an inscription ‘modicum et bonum’. Through the combination with the inscription, Bergström concluded that the watch indicated temperance – not only here, but also in other still lifes. From the illustration, however, it would appear that the cartouche and the inscription (as well as the unusual signature below it) are later additions. In any case, they look rather poorly painted and they disturb the composition. Other than as a luxury motif, and as an excuse to introduce a blue accent by means of the attached ribbon, the watch may carry its usual symbolism of the passing time, as in countless vanitas still lifes.

Similar in composition, but with a horizontal format, is cat. no. A 146. This painting also shares motifs with, and is similar in treatment to several other works from 1651 discussed above, as well as being related to some work from (early) 1652 which will be discussed below. Two slices of orange, like those on the left in this painting, were already included in some still lifes from 1647 and the motif recurs in work from 1652 and 1653 in particular. The palette in this painting is similarly subdued as that of others from 1651, such as cat. nos. A 132 and 135.
A still life of fruit in the Museo del Prado in Madrid (cat. no. A 144) bears a signature ‘J.DCoosemasf’ that has clearly been tempered with. Following the signature (but ignoring the initials and the missing n in ‘mans’) the painting has been included as by Alexander Coosemans in the museum’s catalogues. It has little in common with Coosemans’ work, however, and as far as inspection with the naked eye allows conclusions, it looks as though the signature may well have been changed from a proper de Heem signature. Many details fit in well for de Heem and 1651/52, such as the bunch of white grapes, the plums, the foliage and the butterflies, while the peach in front is virtually identical to that in cat. no. A 143. Other motifs appear to deviate somewhat, however. The tablecloth is a little stiff, compared with de Heem’s tablecloths from this period, the model of the wineglass is unusual, but it’s rendering consistent, and the black grapes are slightly coarser in their handling than usual. It must not be excluded that this painting is the result of a collaboration with a talented pupil or studio assistant. Two contemporary copies of this composition are known, one signed by G* van Deynum, the other by an unidentified, perhaps somewhat later hand. As argued above, van Deynum was most probably active in de Heem’s close vicinity in 1651, which provides a further argument for the dating of cat. no. A 144 to that year. In view of van Deynum’s usually rather sharp handling, it seems unlikely that he was de Heem’s collaborator on cat. no. A 144, however.

A still life now in Sankt Gallen, cat. no. A 141, is not very easy to place. The composition, because of the column to the right, a blue-and-white jar and a prominent silver cup, is somewhat reminiscent of cat. no. A 119. The jar appears to be the exact same object as the one in that painting. We must assume that de Heem portrayed an existing, probably Netherlandish (Delft? Haarlem? Antwerp?) model. The elaborate reflections in the silver tumbler behind it are similar to those in the examples in cat. nos. A 115 (Liechtenstein), 151 (Tatton Park), and in particular cat. no. A 119. The
ladle standing in it, with a horse’s hoof at the end of the stem, can also be found in cat. no. A 140 (Frankfurt), 149 (Prague) and others. The bread roll looks like the one in, for instance, cat. no. A 167, which also includes a very similar shaker, and in cat. no. A 168, but the handling is smoother here than in both those paintings. The column is similar to such columns in earlier examples, and has been painted convincingly, but it is (again) a different model. The droopy rose in the small bouquet of flowers is the same as in cat. no. A 145, and the larger rose is similar to that in cat. no. A 150, which flower painting also includes a branch of pea pods. However, the handling in cat. no. A141, both of the flowers and of the bouquet itself is somewhat less forceful. Other motifs, such as the white napkin, the shaker and the pewter plate also are softer in their execution than usual with de Heem in this period. The greyish tone of the rummer is unusual and, while very well painted, the glass does not seem to sit properly upon the napkin. So while the composition and many of the motifs and at least part of the execution speak in favour of de Heem’s authorship and a date around 1651, and while the signature also appears to be authentic, certain aspects of the painting do not fit properly, even though the quality of their execution is high. It may be that the painting was set up by de Heem and in part executed by him, but that it was finished in collaboration with a very talented pupil. A possible candidate may be Johannes Hannot (1633-1683), who will be discussed at some length further on.

Still lifes indoors, 1652
In the following year, 1652, Jan Davidsz. de Heem appears to have been as successful and as productive as in 1651. In 1652, de Heem dated four or five known still lifes (the last two numerals of cat. no. A 156 have disappeared), while some thirteen others can also be assigned to the same year, either upon immediate comparison with the dated examples, or because they fit best between dated examples from 1651 and 1653.

A 147
A 56 D. Teniers II, Interior with the collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, signed and dated 1653, oil on canvas, 70,9 x 87,6 cm (detail). Present location unknown.

A relatively small still life now in the Louvre, Paris, cat. no. A 147, still shows close similarities in execution to dated examples from the previous year, such as cat. nos. A 139 and 140, and dating it to
1652 rather than 1651 is somewhat arbitrary. The lemon, the pewter plate and part of the bunch of white grapes are virtually identical to the same motifs in cat. no. A 139. Whether painted in 1652 or still in 1651, this still life was in the collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in Brussels by 1653, when David Teniers the Younger painted an interior with a choice of pictures from his patron’s collection (fig. A 56). While it is only shown in part, to the left, it is clearly recognizable. In contrast with cat. no. A 114, which may have been a promotional gift from de Heem to Leopold Wilhelm, and A 116 and 118, which must have been painted in commission for the Archduke, this still life is without any apparent reference to the Archduke or to religion or power, and was presumably bought for the collection specifically because of its artistic merit. In 1652, de Heem continued to produce such relatively small, high-quality still lifes of plates and dishes of fruit, occasionally combined with oysters and/or other sea food, three of which are dated. They share various motifs, but also each have their own individual character.

The composition of the example in Prague (cat. no. A 149) is very similar to that of the Paris painting (cat. no. A 147), but the panel is somewhat smaller and the composition’s appearance is less monumental (and more intimate). The table has been situated lower in the composition and the attention of the viewer is dispersed more by the various accents of light and colour (next to the lemon, which is the focal point in Paris, the red strawberries, the two pink roses and the oyster, which receives more light than in the Paris example). While the two still lifes share several motifs, such as the bowl of strawberries, the oyster and the pewter plate, there are many differences in detail, which suggest that de Heem took pride in paying full attention to each detail in each individual work, even when basing his motifs on a preparatory study for the second or third time.

A dated still life in the Statens Museum in Copenhagen, cat. no. A 148, is somewhat reminiscent of earlier compositions, such as cat. nos. A 120 (Karlsruhe) and 122, in its horizontal, pyramidal composition. However, now de Heem consciously appears to have left a void in the centre of the composition. The half-peeled lemon to the left attracts the most attention, followed by the crab and crayfish to the right, not in the least due to the pointed claws of the latter sticking out to the right. While the two peaches in the centre also represent an accent of colour and light, it is less strong, because the yellow is more subdued and they have been placed further to the back, behind the bright reflection in the rim of the pewter plate. The orange hues of the apricots cleverly lead the eye in a swirl to the two peaches in the back. While the left peach is a recurrent feature from cat. nos. A 134 and 136, this dated still life from 1652 shares the plum to the left with various examples from 1651. Although cat. no. A 148 is a fairly modest example of de Heem’s art, it was copied at least twice by Jan van Kessel the Elder (1626-1679), who signed and dated those copies in the following
year, 1653. Contrary to most other still lifes from this period, the Copenhagen example does not include any creatures such as caterpillars or butterflies, which, interestingly, the copies do.

The third dated still life from 1652, catalogue no. A 151, in Tatton Park house, possesses substantially more monumentality. The shiny tumbler cup in the centre, although half-hidden behind various fruits, immediately attracts the viewer’s attention. The lines in the array of the fruit and the positioning of the individual pieces all point towards the cup, which is crowned by the lavish foliage of vine. To the left of the cup stands a Venetian-style wine glass. This glass first appeared in de Heem’s work in 1651, in cat. no. A 139, to be precise, and the artist included it several times during the next two years. Its details vary between pictures, but this is more likely due to artistic freedom than to the use of different models of the same design. In any case, de Heem rarely shows the foot of the glass, which allowed him to vary its height at will, according to what the composition he was constructing required. In cat. no. A 151, it is either standing on a hidden elevation, or is unrealistically tall. The vine leaves hovering over the tumbler are very similar to those in earlier examples, and particularly so to those in cat. no. A 149 in Prague. The plum to the left, with its crooked branch, we have already encountered in cat. no. A 133 and in various subsequent examples. The bunch of white grapes to the left was also based on an earlier study: it had already appeared in cat. nos. A 136 and 137. De Heem must have been quite content with this cluster of grapes, since he included it for a fourth and a fifth time in cat. nos. A 160 and 170. Last, the study of this bunch must also have been the model for the central one in cat. no. A 187, the only known dated example from that year which, incidentally, also includes another appearance of the plum with the crooked branch to the left. It is interesting to note how, in the various versions of the grapes, de Heem varied on their texture and even slightly changed the layering and spacing of the individual grapes if he thought it necessary.

While pendant still lifes from the seventeenth century are rare, it would appear that de Heem painted cat. no. A 151 as a pendant to cat. no. A 152, of which the present location is unknown. Both still lifes are on copper, an unusual support with de Heem, of virtually the same size (according to the dimensions provided) and their compositions are a perfect book match. While cat. no. A 152 has been reported in the twentieth century to be dated 1660, from a point of view of style and handling, it fits much better for c.1652. The fact that a dated pair of still lifes from 1652 on copper, from the collection J. Platteborse, of which the description fits these two works, was offered at auction in Brussels in July 1774, makes it very likely that they were indeed painted as a pair, perhaps as the result of a specific commission.

In 1652, Jan Davidsz. de Heem returned to explicit vanitas still lifes for the first time since the two versions of a floral bouquet with a skull he painted in 1645 (cat. nos. A 093 and 094). In a small
still life (cat. no. A 155) most of the skull, to the right, is hidden. The composition of this painting is unusual and unique in de Heem’s oeuvre. The pink rose is the same as that in the dated example, cat. no. A 149, discussed above.

The snail is very similar to the pair in cat. no. A 153 in Munich, which also includes a similar corn cob. Such a corncob is also to be found in cat. no. A 138 in Berlin. The coarsely shaped lemon is not dissimilar to the pair in that painting. The columbine (both flowers) is virtually identical to the one in the small bouquet, cat. no. A 145, and so is the red rose behind the pink one. Considering the combined motifs and similarities, a date of 1652 for the origin of this unusual still life indeed appears to be the most plausible.

The second vanitas still life (cat. no. A 156) is of a much more traditional type. Of its date, reported as 1652 early on, and legible as such on old photos, only the first two numerals remain visible (16..). The niche, with a cartouche below it, is similar to such niches found in cat. nos. A 097 and 098, while the double rosebud is closely related to the one at centre left in cat. no. A 130 in Berlin. The clacker lying to the left is fully identical to the one in cat. no. A 157 in Brussels, to be discussed below. The watch appears to be the same object that can be found in several other de Heem still lifes from the early 1650s: cat. nos. A 135, 143, 174, as well as cat. no. A 156. The folds and creases in the attached blue ribbon are never the same, however. The iconography of the painting is obvious. The inscription on the piece of paper pasted to the top of the niche with wax seals reads “Hoe dat je pypt of hoeje fluyt/ o Mensch, dit is/ u Erve,/ t’sij ryck arm geleert of bott,/ dat leeúen heeft, moet sterúe” (Whichever way you pipe or whistle, o Man, this is your heirloom. Be it rich, poor, learned, or stupid, what has life must die). The recorder in the centre is doubtlessly connected with this inscription. The letter with a wax seal in the lower centre, although largely illegible, also leaves no doubt about the painter’s intentions, the last words being “Memento Mori”. The pocket watch – time ticking away – and the roses, bound to whither, as well as the snuffed candle, all admonish the viewer of the fact that life is only temporal. The clapper, an attribute of the leper, announcing his proximity, and the money purse, attribute of the rich, indicate the uncertainty of man’s fate in life. In the skull, the viewer can recognize his or her own destiny, underlined by the inscription ‘spiegel’ (mirror) in large capital letters in the cartouche under the niche.

A large vanitas still life in Brussels (cat. no. A 157) includes several of the same elements and motifs. For the clapper, de Heem has obviously used the same study and this also goes for the pocket watch. The skull, too, may be the same as in cat. no. A 156, despite some differences in detail: in both skulls there are only two teeth to the left and the coronal suture is not flat, but somewhat sunken. The
painting also contains several inscriptions: “Navolging:Christi” and ‘BIBLIA’ on the books to the left, “Aqua vitae” on the bottle, “Rekeningh” on the folio behind the skull, and a partially legible oblong manuscript with de Heem’s signature. Like in other examples where he signed on a letter, de Heem has imitated the drying salt (or sand) with a grainy pigment. The writing is partly rubbed and only sparsely legible. It seems to allude to man’s indebtedness to God. The composition of this still life partly follows the tradition of de Heem’s large luxury still lifes from the 1640s, but is somewhat more complex.

The setting of the still life is not entirely clear. A drapery to the left is attached to a column or wall in the centre and behind the drapery another wall appears to rise up, but is for the most part kept out of sight. Between the two walls, there is a view into a forest landscape and to the right we see a stream in a rocky landscape, with a city in the background. On the elevation to the far right there are three crosses with figures on them, alluding to Christ’s crucifixion at Golgotha. Probably in connection with that scene, the city has been suggested to be Jerusalem but this seems to make little sense in view of the Western churches in its profile. One might expect the city to be Antwerp, but most probably the skyline sprouted from de Heem’s fantasy. Dating this painting is not easy, but the immediate connection with cat. no. A 156 points in the direction of 1652. The treatment of the stalks of wheat and that of the ivy around the skull is identical to that in cat. no. A 153 which is not dated but, as I will argue below, will also have originated in 1652. The poppy pod at lower right in Brussels is also almost identical to the one in cat. no. A 153 (but not rendered as well-detailed). The flowers around it, however, are somewhat puzzling, since they do not quite appear to fit with the handling of de Heem’s flowers around 1652 – while the cherries to their left, again, do. The flowers were prepared in the original paint, however, so it is unlikely that they are additions by a later hand.

Around cat. no. A 160, a dated still life of fruit in a private collection, a group of five other still lifes on panels of a similar subject, size (about 35 x 50 cm) and handling can be grouped: cat. nos. A 154, 158, 159, 161 and 162.
In all except for cat. no. A 158, a pewter plate is a central motif. In the first, cat. no. A 154, which is slightly smaller than the others, the plate holds some chestnuts. Next to it is a Venetian-style wine glass, crowned with a wreath of ivy. The same motif is found in cat. no. A 161. These wreaths are similar – also in execution – to that around the skull in cat. no. A 157 discussed above, and as such may have a vanitas connotation, not uncommon to ivy. This may be underscored by the fact that on the wreath, there are a butterfly and a caterpillar, which combination, like the ivy that always keeps growing and is always green, stands for the eternal cycle of life and death and subsequent resurrection, and in this context for everlasting fame. Alternatively, in cat. nos. A 154 and 161, the wreath may also allude to the Dutch saying ‘goede wijn behoeft geen krans’ (good wine needs no promotion), meaning, more in general: something (or someone) of good quality needs no promotion. Intrinsically, de Heem may well have referred to his own quality as a painter. On the other hand, according to the saying, by placing the wreath on the wine glass, the painter would indicate that the wine is not of good quality. An ivy wreath around a Venetian-style wine glass can also be found in cat. no. A 159, but the motif is less prominent here. The pewter plate in this painting, holding apricots, is also less prominent. It is overruled by the elaborate silver dish in ‘kwab’ style, decorated with two heads, of which a laughing jester is facing the viewer, with two dog-like animals on the side. De Heem most likely portrayed an existing dish here, perhaps at the request of its owner. It must have been a precious collectors’ item, probably produced in Utrecht by Christiaen or Adam van Vianen, around 1627, so it was about 25 years old when it was portrayed here. In this painting, the combination of vine, ivy and other leaves forms an arch over the still life that was built up more or less in the shape of a pyramid.
A similar construction is seen in cat. nos. A 158, 162 and in the dated example, cat. no. A 160. It also connects this group with cat. no. A 151, in Tatton Park, discussed above. In addition to the pewter dish that plays a central role in most of them, the artist has consistently chosen for a wooden table, partly covered by a dark cloth, to display his still life upon. The perspective is similar in all of these, but there are variations in the back wall, which is sometimes almost flat, or includes a niche or angles in other examples. Despite their strongly related compositions, these still lifes all have a character of their own, mainly through the choice of motifs. While they share several species of fruit, such as lemons, cherries, apricots, peaches and figs, the placement is different, but through it, de Heem provides a balanced distribution of colour accents in the composition. His main aim clearly is to please the eye with an attractive image and a meticulous rendering of detail that leads to a feat of illusionism.

Outdoor still lifes of fruit, 1652 and the following years

Probably also in 1652, Jan Dz. de Heem produced the first of a new type of still life: the still life of fruit and objects in a landscape. De Heem was not the first to situate fruit in a landscape, but his approach is different from that of any predecessor. In cat. no. A 153, in Munich, de Heem presents the viewer with an interesting combination of motifs: freshly harvested bunches of grapes, melons, peaches, corncobs, celery, as well as nuts and plums and cherries on branches. These are placed around a pewter (?) bowl and next to a small, shinningly polished copper cauldron. In the right foreground are a poppy seed pod and some plants, flanked by some frogs and a snake, the latter with a rather devilish countenance due to a pair of ears and an arrow-shaped tongue. Furthermore, the scene has been enlivened with various butterflies insects, bugs, and snails. At front centre crawls an earthworm. To the left of the grapes, there is a pair of rosebuds on their stem. The landscape in which the still life has been placed appears to be a rather barren mountain ridge, with the remains of a dead tree to the far left.

Other than as a result of de Heem’s usual aim towards verisimilitude and overpowering detail, the purpose of this new type of still life, as well as of this particular example remains unclear. The snake
at lower right is without doubt a symbol of evil, the same animal – also with ears and arrow-shaped
tongue – is twisted around the foot of the crucifix in cat. no. A 173, to be discussed below. The entire
atmosphere is somewhat reminiscent of the vanitas still life in Brussels, cat. no. A 157, discussed
above. It is probably pure coincidence that the opiate poppy seed – inducing sleep – is in the same
spot in both paintings, but its combination with the devilish snake here is most probably intentional.
The fruit and vegetables provide proof of a successful harvest, while motifs such as the ivy and the
butterflies and caterpillars can be seen as representing the cycle of life, as has been argued for cat.
no. A 154. Cat. no. A 190, in St. Petersburg, which is also a similar type of still life, includes butterflies
and caterpillars, but no ivy. The snakes in that picture appear to have been killed. There is an actual
head of a devil or satyr in that still life, a sculpted one, but it is caught under the heavy stone slab
that carries the fruit and vegetables. Evil appears to have been vanquished there. The resurrection
theme appears to be enhanced in that painting through the inclusion of the inscription ‘phenix’ on
the flower pot to the left, a reference to the mythical phoenix, rising from its ashes, and considered
as a symbol of resurrection through the ages.

Somewhat later than cat. no. A 153, but clearly related, is cat. no. A 176, also in Munich. It does
include ivy and butterflies, but no caterpillars to emphasize the life cycle. Also, there are no snakes
or, apart from a single grasshopper, any scavengers, which makes that image a lot less ‘creepy’ than
this one. A close variant of this painting, cat. no. A 177, is set in a grotto, rather than in the open air, rendering a more subdued atmosphere to the image. It includes several butterflies, but no caterpillars, snakes or other scavengers.

A tiny still life of fruit in the open air, probably the smallest still life painted by Jan Davidsz. de Heem, 14 x 17.5 cm, is part of a gallery painting in the British Royal Collection (cat. no. A 178) which is signed by Jacob de Formentrou (1620/25-after 1659). Although some authors have argued differently, there can be little doubt that the paintings in this gallery have been contributed by the various artists who signed them, among others Erasmus Quellinus II, Joris van Son, Jan van Kessel I, Hendrick Andriessen and Peeter Boel. Each painting is not only an authentic composition – while in many other such gallery interiors the paintings are copies of existing works – they all are in the characteristic handwriting of the artists in question and they also have been executed in the respective artists’ characteristic choice of pigments. It is unlikely, if not impossible, that a single painter could have emulated all these characteristics of so many different artists so meticulously. As a collaborative work, which probably travelled from studio to studio, the painting must have taken some time to finalize. The painting is dated on the cartouche over the fireplace, but the last digit is uncertain. White (2007) read the date as 165[9?]. While Magnus (2012) proposed 1659 in full, I tend to believe that 1654 is the most likely date. Neefs’ church interior in the painting is dated 1654 and Hendrick Andriessen, who painted and signed the vanitas still life at lower centre, died in 1655. Form a point of view of style and choice of motifs, de Heem’s contribution can be dated to 1653 or 1654. It is closely related to cat. no. A 176, among others. Even if the entire painting took longer to be finished, 1659 would be rather late for the date of finalization.

A group of related fragments, 1652-1653
The last three paintings catalogued under de Heem’s works from 1652 can best be discussed in connection with works catalogued under 1653. Cat. nos. A 164, 165 and 166 are all fragments, possibly of one single painting, or perhaps of two or three, although this seems less likely. Cat. no. A 166 is clearly the lower centre of a cartouche still life. It is signed and dated 1653, which fits well chronologically: the handling of the details and the choice of motifs are similar to those in dated works from 1652-53. Close comparison with other dated examples is possible for the fruit, the stalks of wheat, the crisply handled leaves and also the tiger moth, which is very similar to the one in cat. nos. A 151 and 152. Another fragment, cat. no. A 164, in a British private collection, is clearly the top centre of such a composition. It represents a festoon of flowers, predominantly roses, flanked by winged angels, very similar to those in cat. no. A 131 in Sibiu. A third fragment, a vertical festoon of
fruit now in Linköping, clearly formed the centre right of such a composition. In the stone relief it has a corn cob, just like the Sibiu cartouche still life. At its upper left, part of the original canvas has been replaced. Mounting the three fragments together photographically, together with a mirror image of the Norrköping fragment, the result is rather convincing (fig. A 58).
Apart from the fragment of a cartouche painting discussed above, de Heem dated another eight or even nine still lifes in 1653, adding up to a total of nine or ten dated examples, many more than from any other year and twice the number from 1652. This group of dated works provides a firm stepping stone for the dating of further still lifes, also from the years before and after. Like in 1652, de Heem’s style and handling appear to have been quite consistent throughout 1653.

There are two small still lifes by Jan Davidsz. De Heem dated 1653, one in Reims (cat. no. A 1712), the other at an unknown location (cat. no. A 169), each no larger than a regular sheet of paper. The painting in Reims is very well preserved and, judging from a photo, this is also the case for the other small still life. Both the palette and the handling of the Reims still life are forceful, despite the painting’s minimal size. The reds of the crayfish and the plums, the yellow of the lemon peel and the wine, the white and cream of the oysters and the green of the table cloth are strong, but well-balanced. The details are meticulously handled, as can be expected from such a small piece that automatically invites close inspection, but nevertheless the modelling remains rather painterly. By means of the strongly highlighted tendril of the vine that arches elegantly over the grapes and the crayfish, de Heem provides a strong suggestion of depth to his composition. As an afterthought, it would appear, he has prolonged the branch of the plums in front of the lemon peel, the effect of which is less convincing, however. Very close in style, handling and size to the previous two works are a still life in Moscow (cat. no. A 170) and a work of which the location is unknown, cat. no. A 163. Like the first two, these small still lifes are of fruit on a wooden table, partly covered with a dark cloth. Both have been catalogued – in my view incorrectly – as by Cornelis de Heem, while the handling is fully similar to that of the two pieces just discussed.
Moreover, the still life in Moscow is signed with a monogram IDH f. Since this is not a monogram commonly used by the artist and since a C had been added before it, it had not been recognised as a work by Jan Davidsz. de Heem until recently.\(^{437}\) Only the butterfly in this little still life has been done too coarsely to be by Jan Davidsz. de Heem himself. It may be an addition by a different hand, also because it fills up the space too much.

Two further dated still lifes from 1653, if not for their slightly differing measurements, could almost serve as pendants to each other. The first, now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (cat. no. A 167) is in many ways an elaboration on a somewhat larger scale of, in particular, the still life in Reims (cat. no. A 171): the Venetian-style wine glass is virtually the same (but stretched somewhat in height here), while the handling of the back wall loosing some plaster, and that of the oysters, including the salt water dripping out of the shells, is absolutely similar.

The creased table cloth of heavy fabric with its characteristic V-shaped fold, too, is the same as in many other examples found during this period. Here as well, de Heem employs highlighted branches and tendrils to create depth in his composition, much more so than he did in earlier still lifes of this type. Cat. no. A 168 possesses many of the same characteristics. Here the most eye-catching motif is the sliced herring, head up, rather similar in treatment to the one in the still life in the Liechtenstein collection, cat. no. A 132.\(^{438}\) The glass of beer and the onions must have been included specifically to go with the fish.\(^{439}\)

Cat. no. A 172, a painting in the Musée Crozatier in Le Puy-en-Velay is an unusual and undoubtedly experimental work. The central motif is a hard-stone bust of a young woman, her head covered, with a garland of flowers and fruit draped around the shoulders, and crowned with a
wreath of white lilies. The bust is probably a representation of the Virgin and may well have been done by Erasmus Quellinus II, the specialist in this area of painting. To the left are two parrots and a cockatoo, with stalks of wheat in their beaks, and a parakeet. The two parrots, a scarlet macaw and a blue-and-yellow macaw are indigenous of South America. While they were still a rare curiosity at the time, they must already have been imported to Europe early on. At lower left we see two melons, a large snail climbing onto one of them. To the right, a grape vine with large bunches of white grapes grows up against a wall. Between the grapes and the bust there is a view into a mountainous landscape. The flower garland includes various types of roses, morning glory and columbine, a stalk of wheat, a branch of cherries and a branch of oranges. Although reminiscent of the traditional cartouche still lifes, de Heem’s approach here is completely innovative. In a way, this still life ties in with the fruit still lifes in a landscape, started (probably) in 1652, but the focus is different. It may have been the result of a special and specified commission. Since the lilies and the roses do indeed suggest that the bust represents the Virgin, the fruit may be a metaphor for her fertility, and parrots are also occasionally connected with Mary.

Whether or not de Heem was pleased with the result, he did not produce any other paintings in the same vein. Due to the fact that it is unconventional, it is not easy to date the painting accurately. The handling of the various details points to a date in or around 1653, however. That of the flowers is similar to that of the fragment of a cartouche still life (cat. no. A 164), but the texture is less waxy, and more transparent, more like the flowers in bouquets from the second half of the 1650s and early 1660s. While such motifs as the melons can not be found in any other work, the grapes are strongly reminiscent of those in cat. no. A 173, another unusual work, now in the National Gallery of Ireland, which is dated 1653. A free copy of cat. no. A 172 was painted by Jacob Marrel (fig. A 58), probably in the 1670s, when he was living in Frankfurt am Main. Marrel must have travelled extensively and it is quite possible that he saw the painting elsewhere, but on the other hand he may have owned it himself, if only temporarily, in his capacity as art dealer. Marrel also copied the macaw and the melons in a forest-floor still life, around the same time.
Like the painting in Le Puy-en-Velay, Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s painting in Dublin (cat. no. A 173) may well have been the result of a special commission, in view of its profound iconography. It is different from works with a prominently decorative character that the artist would have been certain to be able to sell. While the image is dominated by a large, certainly decorative, festoon of fruit, the prominent presence of a crucifix and a skull characterize it as a vanitas still life with a religious connotation. The crucifix and the skull are reminiscent of those in the two early floral still lifes from c.1645, cat. nos. A 093 and 094. Although details vary, in all three paintings the cross itself is made of a rough, plain branch, erected upon a little grassy mound, mounted upon a square plank. In the paintings from 1645, the cross has a short wooden support behind it, here it appears to rest against the skull. The snake curled around the base of the cross is a symbol of evil, either as the cause of, or vanquished by Christ’s death on the cross. The bread and the glass of wine have been suggested to represent the Eucharist – Christ’s body and blood. The fact that this is white wine, not red, makes
this somewhat unlikely. The grapes and the stalks of wheat in the festoon can be connected directly with the Eucharist. The pomegranate may have been included not only because of its shape and colour, but also – although less likely – because of its symbolic value. Whatever any individual viewer might have recognized, however, it will have been enough to recognize the dialectic of life and death. It is interesting to note de Heem’s visual rhyme of the burst-open fig and pomegranates, however. Less easy to explain is the sculpted relief of three putti carrying a large basket of fruit, at upper right. Perhaps, together with the festoon, they indicate the richness of human life grace to Christ’s suffering? In terms of quality of execution, this painting belongs to de Heem’s best works from the period, and as such we may assume that it was the result of a well-paid commission.

**Cornelis de Heem’s earliest still lifes**

In the following year, 1654, Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s eldest son, Cornelis de Heem, painted a work with a very similar composition, clearly deriving from Jan Dz. de Heem’s painting from 1653 (fig. A 60). Cornelis has not copied his father’s piece verbatim, however, and he has created his own festoon. At first sight, he does not appear to have produced a simpler version of his father’s painting from 1653, but upon closer inspection, this is in fact the case, particularly from an iconographical point of view. He has omitted the skull, as well as the relief with the putti. The snake in his painting has received a much more anecdotic connotation since it is hissing at a lizard that Cornelis appears to have introduced for that purpose. He also omitted the figs and the stalks of wheat, but introduced an aubergine and a corn cob, as well as oranges, and has moved the festoon to the centre of the composition and given it the most light, thus giving his version a much more decorative character.

Cornelis’ version is somewhat smaller than his father’s, while the festoons themselves are about the same size. Cornelis’ 1654 festoon is his earliest known dated work and it shows him to have been a fully matured artist by that time, at the age of about 23. Festoons of fruit, often combined with some flowers, would become a favoured subject with Cornelis de Heem.
Undoubtedly, Cornelis was trained as a painter by his father from an early age and he must have had every opportunity to develop his inherited talents. It is not easy to get a proper picture of Cornelis’ early production of still-life paintings, which would appear to have started in the early 1650s. There are very few paintings that can be firmly pinpointed as early works by Cornelis de Heem.

A rather convincing example appears to be a painting in the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo (fig. A 61). The painting is signed CDHEEM (D through H). It appears to derive in particular from the style and manner of Jan Davidsz. from c.1647-1648; it is rather close in type and handling to cat. nos. A 109 and 115, while the lemons seems to derive from such paintings as cat. nos. A 106, 107, and 110. If painted by Cornelis in 1647 or 1648, it would have been done at age 16 or 17, which seems rather early, also in view of a virtual absence of other early work that can be situated around it. Perhaps the rather broad handling is due more to the young painter’s inexperience than to an immediate reliability on his father’s examples. Although somewhat broadly painted, the Tokyo still life is an accomplished piece in terms of composition and lighting, for which Cornelis may well have received assistance from his father.

A large still-life painting in the collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein is traditionally ascribed to Jan Davidsz. de Heem (fig. A 61), but while the handling is slightly less accurate and meticulous, the composition and motifs fully point to an origin in de Heem’s studio sometime during the early 1650s. This painting, which is not signed, is an excellent candidate for reattribution to Cornelis de Heem as a work from c.1652/53, in my view. It stands in between the Tokyo still life and Cornelis’ earliest signed works from 1654 and 1655, to which I will pay more attention in connection with work by Jan Davidsz. de Heem. Another candidate for attribution to Cornelis de Heem is a still life in a German private collection, previously attributed to Jan Davidsz. (fig. A 62). It appears to be fully inspired by works of the father from 1652-53, such as cat nos. A 151 (Tatton Park) and A 167 (Los Angeles), but is somewhat less strong and less certain in its execution, be it very close to Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s own quality.
A 61 attributed to C. de Heem, *Still life of fruit and a lobster*, oil on canvas, 83 x 118 cm. Vaduz, Princes of Liechtenstein.

A 62 Attributed to C. de Heem, *Still life with a melon, oysters and smoking utensils*, oil on panel, 36,4 x 55,5 cm (including additions/repairs of 1 cm at the bottom and a few mm. at the top). Private Collection, Germany.

Signed and dated by Jan Davidsz. de Heem and dated 1653 is a medium-sized, but exquisite still life with a pie, a plain silver and a silver-gilt tazza (cat. no. A 174). With a pie and a lemon on a plate as prominent motifs, it is reminiscent of earlier examples such as cat. nos. A 139 and 140, but by moving the lemon to the front centre and by choosing a lighter and more articulated background, de Heem has created greater depth in the composition. The watch and its ribbon appear to derive from the same study as the one in cat. no. A 152, but for the sake of the composition, the artist has omitted the lid. The two tazzas make a unique appearance in this still life. This might suggest that they were provided specifically by the person who commissioned the painting, but de Heem may just as well have come across them in a collection or with a dealer and have portrayed them once. Particularly the silver-gilt one standing up, decorated with a gesturing cherub, appears to be a rare example, probably German-made and at the time a fairly modern object. It is interesting to note that a similar pair of tazzas (not the same, however) features in a miniature still life by Cornelis de Heem in a cabinet painting from 1666 (fig. A 63).452 The cluster of vine leaves hovering above the pie in cat. no. A 174 is once more closely related to that in several examples from the previous years, while the red admiral butterfly that has alighted on them had by then become almost a signature motif for de Heem.
This butterfly had made its first appearance in cat. no. A 109, but less meticulously studied. In cat. nos. A 116 (Vienna) and A 121, de Heem began to give it the shape and detail in which, from then on, it appears in many, perhaps one out of three, of de Heem’s still lifes. Its execution in the still lifes from the late 1640s is still somewhat painterly, from 1650 onwards, Jan Dz. de Heem executed his red admirals in meticulous detail. De Heem has devoted attention to the wall behind the still life in cat. no. 53.08 even more than in other examples. At the centre of it is a (shallow) niche, to the left of which the structure of the bricks shows. One of de Heem’s trompe-l’œil nails sits in the wall to the left, and top-left of the centre de Heem has painted a hard-stone cartouche which contains his signature and the date. The fact that the cartouche can not have been attached properly to the wall since for the most part it sits in front of the niche appears not to have bothered the artist.

A larger still life, catalogue no. A 175, in the Wallace Collection in London, is dated indistinctly, but the last digit of the date can be read as a 3, which secures it for 1653. It shares several motifs with other still lifes by de Heem from the first few years of the 1650s. The lemon on a pewter plate to the left is very similar to those in cat. nos. A 139, 147 (Paris), and 168. The rendering of the rummer is
close to that in, for example, cat. nos. A 134, 138 (Berlin), and 173 (Dublin). The bread roll in the latter picture is not dissimilar to the one included here, as is the one in cat. no. A 167 (Los Angeles). Cat. no. A 134 also includes a similar large lobster, as well as a bottle casket, which motif, as observed earlier, was first introduced by de Heem in cat. no. A 070. The Wanli bowl of strawberries might derive from the same study as the one in cat. no. A 149 (Prague). The nautilus shell, contrary to the one cat. no. A 090, which was the last example he had previously depicted, has not been polished, but has retained its tiger-stripe pattern on the outside. Baskets of fruit and hams had both featured regularly in de Heem’s still lifes from the 1640s, but these are the first to appear in work from the 1650s. The mustard jar to the right, which supposedly accompanies the ham, appears to be the same object that de Heem had depicted in cat. no. A 101 (Toledo), which suggests that it may have been an object used in de Heem’s own household. Interestingly, it clearly reflects the artist sitting at his easel.\(^{453}\) De Heem relished in painting reflections, particularly of windows in wine glasses. From that point of view, it is curious that there appears to be only one other certain reflection of the artist himself at work, in the vase in cat. no. A 255 (Leipzig). A very uncertain candidate for such a reflection is in cat. no. A 188 (Sarasota), in the lower central bulb of the silver-gilt cup-and-cover. Like in cat. no. A 117 (The Hague), de Heem has placed the bottle casket with the rummer on top to the left. While in that painting the weight of the composition lies to the right, as usual with de Heem, through the presence of the drapery, here the balance rears to the left. Thus far, we can only point out one probable pair of pendants in de Heem’s oeuvre (cat. no. A 151 and 152), and no known painting can serve as a pendant to the Wallace Collection one, but nevertheless its composition does seem to invite a companion piece.

A group of three smaller still lifes by de Heem, cat. nos. A 179 to 181, follow up on several of the characteristics of such works from the previous years (such as cat. nos. A 142, 158 to 162) and can as such be situated in or around 1653. The arrangement of fruit around a Wanli dish in the centre of the composition is reminiscent of cat. no. A 158, but the handling is somewhat softer and the palette is more outspoken. In cat. A 181 particularly the grapes and the foliage appear to have lost glazes and detail, which makes it difficult to assess properly.

Cat. no. A 180, in Oberlin, has a similar variegated palette as the previous work, but the handling is somewhat smoother. The rendering of the pomegranate and of the foliage is still reminiscent of, for instance, that in cat. no. A 173 in Dublin but also in comparison with that still life, the general handling is slicker and smoother. As such, it seems to precede cat. nos. A 182 to 185, which are quite similar in handling, but generally have a more restrained palette again. The quality of the execution is certainly up to de Heem’s standard and the composition appears to have been
appreciated highly by other artists, since a number of copies as well as more liberal derivations exist, mostly from the period.  

A variant on copper, cat. no. A 181, which is signed at upper left, may have originated around the same time as cat. no. A 180. Jan Davidsz. de Heem was most probably responsible for the composition and a the majority of the details and it may well be that Cornelis de Heem had some part in its execution – differences with known work by Cornelis from 1653/54 may be due to the fact that this painting is on copper and not on panel or canvas. Next to some weaknesses, the painting includes very well-painted details, such as the pewter plate and the knife, the white grapes, the parts of an orange and the lemon. The modelling of the pewter dish and of the porcelain bowl (which has lost some blue) is excellent. The draping of the tablecloth with its rather rigid fringes is a feature found in many of Cornelis’ later still lifes. Several motifs, such as the flowers and the fig, were clearly added by a later hand, and were partly removed in 2015.

Still lifes, 1654
In 1654, Jan Davidsz. de Heem appears to have been much less productive than during the previous years. Just one dated work from this year is known, while about six further still lifes can be considered to have originated in 1654.

Cat. no. A 182 was probably painted shortly after cat. nos. A 179 to 181 discussed above. It is slightly smaller than cat. no. A 180 (Oberlin) and it was also painted on canvas rather than on panel, which for both still lifes can partly explain the apparent differences with most other works of a similar size from this period, which have mostly been painted on panel. Also, cat. no. A 182 differs somewhat in
the choice of motifs from other works from this period, but it includes the standard Venetian-style wine glass and the ribbed beer glass found in cat. nos. A 154 and 168, among others, as well as the characteristic tablecloth with its standard V-shaped crease. The background niche is very similar to that in cat. no. A 174, which composition also includes the beer glass, while the lemons in both paintings have also been rendered rather similarly. The knife with a chequered handle is not found in many de Heem still lifes, but it also occurs in cat. no. A 180 (Oberlin) and reappears in several later still lifes. From 1630 onwards, knives with such handles are frequently found in compositions by the Haarlem still-life specialist Willem Claesz. Heda, whose work inspired de Heem during an early phase (cf. cat. nos. A 019 and 020). It may well be that de Heem’s inclusion of this specific motif was inspired by Heda’s still lifes as well.

A knife with a chequered handle also features in cat. no. A 183, in the collection of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in Munich. This, too, is on canvas, and the largest of this group of still lifes. It shares various motifs with other works from the first half of the 1650s. The two early Wanli dishes on top of each other to the left already appeared in cat. no. A 134, and the split apricot is the same as in cat. no. A 179 and 181. The string of pea pods and the wild strawberries are unusual motifs, however, even though pea pods already featured in cat. no. A 150. The halved peach on the Wanli plates is also a motif that is not frequently found with de Heem. It would appear that during 1653 and 1654 the artist was regularly experimenting with ways to render grapes, since their handling tends to vary from painting to painting. The restless curving of the pea stems and strawberry stems across the other fruit appears to have been a one-time experiment. De Heem must have realized that it was not beneficial to the unity and strength of the composition.
Most probably painted around the same time, is a related still life in the Kunsthaus in Zürich, cat. no. A 184. It shares several motifs with cat. no. A 182, such as the ribbed beer glass, the Venetian-style wine glass, the dried fruit, a pair of (large and small) oranges and the bread pretzels. Like in cat. no. A 174, there is an ornate stone cartouche in the background, this time with an inscription and the signature. The inscription refers to fasting: “Memoriael/ Dit is dat ons de vasten past/ Maer, tis niet; so ghij niet vast/ van sonden, quaet en eijen lust/ Tis niet geúast, tot sielens Rúst/ I.De Heem F” (Take note/ It is correct that fasting suits us, but it is no use [to fast] if you do not abstain from sin, wrong and your own lust, [for then] you will not fast for the peace of your soul). If not for this inscription, no one would not connect this image with fasting any more than many other examples of de Heem’s still lifes. The same is true for cat. no. A 185, an unsigned work in a private collection, which shares several motifs, such as the sweetmeat, almonds, pretzels and the paper bag, as well as the rather smooth finish with the painting in Zürich.

Johannes Hannot
The painting in Zürich (cat. no. A 184) shows many similarities with a still life in the collection of the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn that was attributed to de Heem, until during cleaning around 1980, the signature and date ‘J Hannot Ao 54’ appeared (fig. A 64). Johannes Hannot, who was born in Leiden in 1633 and died there in 1684, is not recorded to have spent any significant period of time in Antwerp, but his known oeuvre, the painting in Bonn in particular, suggests a sojourn in the close vicinity of de Heem in about 1653-54. Hannot shows two oranges in a similar position as in de Heem’s still life in Zürich, the bread roll is reminiscent of that in cat. nos. A 167 and 168, and de Heem’s ribbed beer glass and the Venetian-style wine glass are also present in Hannot’s still life, while the setting (niche, partly covered table) is highly similar to that of cat. no. A 174. Hannot’s lemon is reminiscent of that on top of the jug in cat. no. A 184 (Zürich). The handling of the painting in Bonn is somewhat dryer and less fluent than de Heem’s, but the overall quality is higher than that of any other still life by Hannot, which seems to suggest personal guidance by de Heem himself.

A 64 J. Hannot, Still life of fruit, signed and dated 1654, oil on canvas, 48 x 63,5 cm. Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum, inv. no. 35.256.

No dated work by Hannot from before 1654 is known, but some of his still lifes must have originated earlier, such as a still life of fruit in the Ward Bequest in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Hannot may have been a pupil of the Leiden de Heem follower Pieter de Ring (active before 1648-1660) and may have come to Antwerp for a period of time in order to improve his style and technique in de Heem’s studio. The painting in Bonn is very close in...
style and handling to a still life that is presented as a de Heem in the Toledo Museum of Art (fig. A 65).

A 65 J. Hannot (with J.Dz. de Heem?), *Still life of fruit and a lobster*, with signature J D.De heem f. Oil on canvas, 63,5 x 84 cm. The Toledo Museum of Art, inv. no. 55.25.

A 66 J. Hannot, *Still life with sweetmeats and drinking vessels*, with (indistinct) monograms, oil on panel, 50 x 67,5 cm. Present location unknown

It has the same warm, orangey palette in common with Hannot’s signed and firmly attributed still lifes, includes several of the same motifs and the handling of the details – grapes, leaves, bread, tablecloth – is highly similar to that of the still life in Bonn.

**Pieter de Ring**

As much as Hannot’s relationship with Jan Davidsz. de Heem remains unclear, so does that of Hannot’s possible Leiden teacher, Pieter de Ring, who died on 22 September 1660.  

According to a written report, de Ring was originally trained and working as a mason, and had a passion for drawing, but could not afford training as a painter. A patron who recognized his passion furnished the funds for de Ring to train under Jan Davidsz. de Heem.  

It remains unclear, however, when this training took place. De Ring’s parents married in September 1605, so he may have been born as early as 1606, in which case he could have been de Heem’s pupil before the latter left Leiden in 1631, when both artists were, in that case, about 25 years old.
However, De Ring’s earliest known work stems from the mid-1640s and appears to have been influenced by the work of Jan Jansz. den Uyl and Willem Claesz. Heda, rather than by de Heem. De Ring must have been active as an artist by 1648, since he was one of the founding members of the Leiden painters’ guild in that year. Direct contact with de Heem around the year 1652 appears to be substantiated by a still life marked with a ring in a private collection (fig A 67). In a very de Heem-like composition, it reunites close variants of the bowl of strawberries from cat. no. A 149 (Prague), of the lemon in cat. no. A 152 (Paris) and of the pair of figs at lower right in cat. no. A 138 (Berlin). It is virtually impossible that de Ring could have gathered these motifs in one painting outside of de Heem’s studio and at a different time than (early) 1652. While the handling of these motifs is close to that of de Heem, de Ring’s hand is confirmed by the handling of the table cloth and its fringe, by the handling of the grapes, and by the small crab lying on its back, almost a feature motif in his work, which does not occur with de Heem himself. That de Ring was not in de Heem’s studio as a pupil in 1652, is borne out by the quality of, among others, a vanitas still life in Berlin, which is dated 1650, and a fully mature work. Many of Pieter de Ring’s still lifes are emulations of the type of composition of the upright still life from 1652, while several others, such as de his larger still life in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, with a lobster and a silver-gilt cup and cover, and a large luxury still life from 1651 in Antwerp, appear to draw their inspiration from somewhat earlier examples by de Heem, such as cat no. A 110 (Kassel), which might point to an apprenticeship around the mid-1640s. A luxury still life by Pieter de Ring from 1660 can rank among the most impressive emulations of de Heem’s large luxury still lifes from the early 1640s, due to its quality and size (fig. A 69). In this work, too, Pieter de Ring combined de Heem-like motifs with own inventions, such as the vegetables in the left foreground.
Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s dated work from 1654, cat. no. A 187, is a forcefully painted, but meticulously detailed still life of fruit, arranged around a pewter dish holding a half-peeled lemon. The bunch of white grapes included in it is directly related to that in several somewhat earlier works (cat. nos. A 136, 137, 151, 160, 169 and 170). The plum to the far left is also a recurring motif (see also the discussion of G. van Deynum’s work above), while the apricots do not occur in the same form, but very similarly, for instance in the still life from 1652 in Copenhagen (cat. no. A 148) and in others that can be grouped around it.

The colours of this dated still life are somewhat stronger than those in de Heem’s work from the previous years and it also has a lighter background than most. The same is true for the two large still lifes that can tentatively be dated to 1654, those in the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna (cat. no. A 186) and in The Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida (cat. no. A 188). Both can be counted among the most successful works de Heem produced in his career. The first, cat. no. A 186, is de Heem’s largest and most ambitious individual work since the large luxury still lifes from the first half of the 1640s, particularly when we take into account that it was probably reduced somewhat at the bottom, and perhaps all around.462
The second, cat. A 188, is only slightly smaller, but an upright format. The subject matter of both paintings is very similar: a luxurious still life with a scarlet macaw, which in the one in Sarasota is accompanied by an African grey parrot. Both have an architectural background with a vista and a dark-velvet tasseled drapery, and feature chased silver and silver-gilt vessels. Fruit plays a dominant role – grapes in a bunch, melon, pomegranate, peach, lemon, and orange are present in both – and the painting in Vienna features a juicy ham, while in the one in Sarasota there are a red-boiled lobster and some large sea shells. Both include dishes of oysters and some shrimps. Both paintings, particularly that in Vienna, are first and foremost showcases of de Heem’s virtuosity. In them, he renders a great variety of textures: metal, paper, the skin of various types of fruit, textiles, ceramics, shells and so on, in a fully convincing manner. While some vanitas references can be found and in
both the Four Elements can be recognized, neither of the two appears to have a profound iconography.\(^{463}\)

To the left in the painting in Vienna, there are two sheets of paper with partly legible texts. The largest and best visible can be recognised as a love poem to ‘The greatest beauty my eye ever saw’.\(^{464}\) In the second, only partly legible text there is a reference to ‘Heaven’s blessing’, while it ends with ‘good luck [or: happiness], hope nor prosperity’, just above the artist’s signature. As in other instances, de Heem has imitated the drying salt (or sand) of actual writings with a grainy pigment. This ties in with the verisimilitude that the artist was continuously striving for and with the bravura that these paintings emanate. In terms of composition the painting in Sarasota has a greater unity than that in Vienna.

Of that painting the two-thirds at the right form a proper unity to which the array of papers, a recorder and drinking vessels to the left is organically connect, while the festoon of fruit at upper left not really connects with the rest of the composition. It provokes the feeling that it was added on second thought, in order to fill an unexpected gap in the composition, while in the end it feels a bit over weight, and is perhaps drawing more attention than intended. In the Sarasota painting, the still life is concentrated around the diagonal from upper left to lower right, leading the eye. Objects placed along this diagonal are also arranged from far back (the clouds and the tassel) to close by (the sea shells). Following the diagonal, it is halted regularly by opposing oblique lines: the parrot’s tail, the lobsters claws, the spout of the ewer, the slanted plate of oysters, the open melon and the obliquely posed large sea shells, while it is not particularly distracted by the sky, the drapery in the background, or the dark-red table cloth. Depth is attained by placing objects behind and in front of each other, by use of colour – for instance the red lobster upon the blue bottle casket – and by placing a stool with some sea shells in front of the table, like earlier in the large luxury still lifes. Through the combination of all these features, the result is extremely successful.

**A collaboration with Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert**

In 1998, a large painting of a bacchanal of putti, cat. no. A 189, appeared on the art market. The figures, at least for the most part, are the work of Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert, who died in 1654. The landscape appears to be by another, as yet unidentified hand. It may be that the painting was finished by other hands (shortly) after the artist’s death. Judging from the style and handling, the still-life motifs were painted by Jan Davidsz. de Heem, perhaps with some assistance, and connect well with other work from 1653 to 1655, specifically cat. nos. A 176, 186 and 190. The dish to the left appears virtually identically in a still life by Cornelis de Heem from 1655 (to be discussed below, fig. A 69), but the handling here is slightly sharper and more accurate. Of the fruit to the right, the branch of oranges and the white grapes are fully characteristic of de Heem’s work of around 1654, but the melon has been painted rather coarsely, which might suggest involvement of another hand, perhaps Cornelis, or a studio assistant.

A copy of the painting, without the still-life motifs, in Kassel, Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, was considered to be Willeboirts Bosschaert’s original prior to 1998.\(^{465}\) To some degree, the concept of cat. no. A 189 is related to earlier collaborations of Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snijders, compare for instance examples in Munich and Vienna.\(^{466}\) It seems less likely that Willeboirts Bosschaert was directly inspired by such examples, however, while de Heem’s contribution to the painting bears no immediate relationship with Snijders’ work.
From 1655, only one dated painting by Jan Davidsz. de Heem is known, an outdoor still life now in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (cat. no. A 190), which was already briefly discussed above (p. 181) in connection with de Heem’s outdoor still lifes from the first half of the 1650s. In it, de Heem combines fruit with flowers and vegetables, and included various creatures: butterflies and caterpillars, a cricket, snails, snakes and lizards, as well as little bugs, flies and ants, some of the latter parading in the mid-foreground.

The handling of the fruit and vegetables is rather similar to that in, for instance, cat. nos. A 151, 176 and 187, dated still lifes from the previous years. In the image, de Heem has also included a terracotta flower pot, a Wanli porcelain bowl and a shiny iron bucket, objects with individually very different textures, which allowed him to exhibit his skill in their rendition. The treatment of the roses
is similar, although somewhat thinner, as in cat. nos. A 155 and 172, for instance. The one at the centre in the flower pot probably derives from the same study as the roses in cat. nos. A 149 and 155, while the one centrally above the rim had already featured in cat. nos. A 141 and 145, which again shows how de Heem would creatively return to models used in previous years. A motif from his indoor still lifes that reappears here is that of the nail in the wall, shown to the right here. The two nails primarily indicate the direction of the light falling in, while de Heem also used another trick to suggest depth and perspective: a small stick protrudes forward from the side of the wall, indicating the angle of that side, which is out of view. Depth and movement is also suggested by the stalks of wheat de Heem has woven through the composition, more so than in earlier compositions where he employed them in such a manner, like the cartouche still lifes from the early 1650s and cat. no. A 172.

The painting’s underlying iconography, which can be connected with the cycle of nature and with resurrection, was already discussed above (p. 181). The orange branch, with the oranges in all stages from bloom to ripened fruit may well be connected with the same idea. Despite the relatively large size, the detail of the execution of this work is very high, which suggests that the artist considered this an important piece from the outset, perhaps one intended for a wealthy patron.

Cornelis de Heem in 1655 and in the following years
Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s son Cornelis de Heem signed and dated several still lifes in 1655 and the following years, which are among his most accomplished works. They are closely related to the work of Jan Davidsz. de Heem from the previous years in style, choice of motifs, and execution. Above, Cornelis’ variant of his father’s festoon with vanitas motifs, cat. no. A 173, has already been discussed (p. 189). From the attestation of 1st March 1669, listing payments by Jan Dz. de Heem to his son over the years, it appears that in 1653 to 1655, Cornelis spent substantial periods of time outside of Antwerp, most of which time appears to have been spent in Brussels. His production of paintings during those years appears to have been restricted, probably in part due to his travels, but what he produced was of a high level of quality. His father must have guided him closely and must have allowed him all the time and effort he needed to produce high-quality still lifes. A case in point is a large luxury still life, measuring 127 x 152 centimetres, which has appeared on the art market several times in recent decades (fig. A 70). Its composition was clearly inspired by the father’s large and medium-sized luxury still lifes from the previous ten years: a table loaded with luxury items, a view through a window to the left and a back-drop curtain to the right. Some of the props in this painting can also be found in still lifes by Jan Dz. de Heem, such as the salt cellar in the centre and the blue bottle casket. The large dish of oysters must have been inspired by the one in cat. no. A 188, in Sarasota, while the curtain is strongly reminiscent of the one in the large still life in Vienna, cat. no. A 186. It is noteworthy that an excellent copy of Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s still life in Sarasota (cat. no. A 188) exists, which most probably originated within a minimal span of time from the original (fig. A 71). While the overall quality of this copy is very high – it has generally been accepted as an autograph version in the past and has even been confused with the original in the literature – the handling is less fluent and confident than in de Heem’s original. Upon comparison, it turns out that in this copy there are several similarities in motifs and their handling with Cornelis de Heem’s 1655 still life discussed above, for instance in the pomegranate, the melon and the oysters.
The initials of the signature on the copy appear to have been abraded, while the calligraphy of ‘De heem’ is virtually identical to the original. The initial does not appear to have been a ‘C’, however, and moreover, as far as I can tell, Cornelis de Heem always signed his family name in capital letters from the outset of his career. It may well be that this copy was sold from the de Heem studio as an original, which in view of its quality must have had Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s approval.

Cornelis de Heem dated several known still lifes in the year 1656, all of which are of excellent quality. The first is a festoon of fruit that is still closely related to his painting from 1654, inspired by the father’s work in Dublin from the previous year, discussed above, but which has a less exuberant composition and without the vanitas motifs and the bread and wine. The handling
has become more forceful than in the earlier work. A further step towards Cornelis’ later characteristic style and handling is a festoon that must have originated later in the same year, since it is also dated 1656 (fig. A 72). 470

A 71 C. de Heem, Festoon of fruit, signed and dated 1656, oil on panel, 56.5 x 42 cm. Present location unknown.

It combines the choice of fruit from the other festoon with some roses and convolvulus at the top. 471 This same arrangement of flowers reappears on the table in a still life by Cornelis de Heem from the following year, now in the Städelscbes Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt (fig. A 73). 472 It is only slightly smaller than the painting from 1654 discussed above, but the composition is similar, while the artist has ‘zoomed in’ somewhat closer to the still life. Some motifs are strongly reminiscent of the work of Jan Davidsz. – compare, for instance the melon with the one in his painting from 1655 in St. Petersburg (cat. no. A 190) – but there obviously also is a lot of input from Cornelis himself, such as the flowers, already mentioned above, the mirror and the copulating sparrows.

A 72 C. de Heem, Luxury still life with copulating sparrows, signed and dated 1657, oil on canvas, 94 x 118 cm. Frankfurt am Main, Städelscbes Kunstinstitut, Inv. no. 708.
Also in Frankfurt and dated 1658, is an out-door still life by Cornelis de Heem, for which was he undoubtedly strongly inspired by his father’s example from 1655 (cat. no. A 190) (fig. A 74). 473

A 73 C. de Heem, Outdoor still life, signed and dated 1658, oil on canvas, 68 x 84 cm. Frankfuth an Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Inv. no. 721.

While Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s still life is set in a desolate landscape, Cornelis placed his in a civilized garden, with a view of a peaceful riverbank to the left. In its present form, we do not entirely see the original setting: the garden wall topped with an urn with fruit is clearly a later addition, probably by a different hand. 474 Motifs such as the melon, the celery, the endives, the corncob, the chestnuts, and also the walnut in its shell seem to derive directly, but in a creative way, from cat. no. A 190.

Cornelis de Heem would register not earlier than two years later as an independent master with the Antwerp guild, during the administrative year 1660-1661, between the months of September, but with the still lifes discussed above as well as with other, not dated, works from the period he established himself as a fully qualified artist of a high standard.

The painting in the Hermitage (cat. no. A 190) remained, as far as we know, Jan Davidsz. de Heem’s last dated work for the next twenty years, which makes the subsequent development of his work less easy to follow. It can be divided roughly into three periods, the ‘transitional’ years 1656 to c.1660, by which year the artist had permanently settled in Utrecht, 1660 to 1672, his Utrecht years, and 1672 to 1684, his last years in Antwerp. The following chapters will discuss those three periods.