

RALPH GIERHARDS

ANTIQUES / FINE ART



Cat Defending its Prey from the Dog

Circa: 1715

79 x 92 cm

31.1023622047244 x 31.1023622047244"

1715

Oil on canvas

79 x 92 cm (31¹/₈ x 36¹/₄ inches)

Oil on canvas, relined

Probably commissioned by Augustus II (the Strong) or his son Frederick. The Dutch painter Dirk Valkenburg is known for his still lifes depicting exotic fruits and paintings depicting various plantation sections of the Dutch colony of Suriname in South America, which he visited for about a year in 1706 on behalf of Jonas Witsen, the then Secretary of State in Amsterdam. Valkenburg studied under the Dutch painter Jan Weenix, among others, and worked at various courts in Germany and for Prince Adam of Liechtenstein in Vienna. He also decorated the royal Dutch palace, Het Loo Palace in Appeldorn, with hunting scenes and paintings featuring plant and animal motifs. Foreign princes also tried to engage him for commissions, but Valkenburg declined. His special painting skills lay in the reproduction of movement and a wide variety of materials, which he adapted to the individual textures. This painting displays typical still life elements, which Valkenburg combined with a very lively scene of a fight between a cat and a dog over the cat's prey, making this painting a hunting piece at the same time. In particular, the bird plumage and the fur of the cat and dog, as well as the detailed, light-reflecting surface treatment of the leaves and grapes in the foreground of the painting, represent Valkenburg's painterly flair for a wide variety of materials.

Exhibition:

Portrait-format, signed version by Dirk Valkenburg: Auction 1194: Important Old Master Paintings. New York, Christie's, January 24, 2003, cat. no. 146; now Speed Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, inv. no. 2005.18

Literature:

Paul Gammelbo, Dutch Still-life Painting from the 16th to the 18th centuries
In Danish Collections, Copenhagen, 1960, p. 158 No 241, Fig. 159 (as Jan Weenix)