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JEAN MICHEL PICART
(Antwerp circa 1600 – Paris 1682)

***Tulips, Daffodils, Carnations, Poppies, Anemones, and Other Flowers
in a Glass Vase on a Wooden Ledge***

oil on canvas

21 7/12 x 18 5/12 inches (55.2 x 47 cm.)

PROVENANCE

Villa d'Agilé, Turin

“Although almost all of [Jean Michel] Picart’s career was spent in Paris, his art remained close to the general style of flower painting practiced in Antwerp, especially that of Jan van Kessel. Most of his best pictures have a certain austerity and are quite the opposite of the extravagant and opulent treatment given by [Jean-Baptiste] Monnoyer.”¹ It is precisely this feature of “austerity” that defines this painting, fostering an impression of modernity.

No documentation exists detailing Picart’s training in Antwerp, nor was he a member of their guild. It is thought that perhaps he trained at the studio of the Francken family. By 1635 Picart was living in Paris, where he was part of a group of Flemish artists in Saint- Germain-des-Prés. In 1640 he joined the Academy of St. Luke. By 1645, although a widower twice over, he remarried. Happily, this union lasted for the next 35 years. Picart prospered in Paris both as a painter and art dealer. By the second half of the 1600s, his flower and fruit pieces were highly sought after by many French collectors as well as Louis XIV. The royal inventories included many of his works.²

Two similar works to ours in size and subject can be found in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, United Kingdom. As in this work, they too have flowers in glass vases on wooden ledges set against dark backgrounds. Fallen petals, also occur in these examples, and were “a favorite motif”.³ Other museums where the artist’s works can be found include those of Karlsruhe, Portland, Saint-Étienne and Warsaw.

¹ Christopher Wright, “Jean-Michel Picart” in *The French Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1981, p. 241.

² Biographical information taken from Peter Mitchell, “Jean-Michel Picart” in *European Flower Painters*, Interbook International B.B., Schiedam, 1981, p. 201; Adriaan van der Willigen & Fred G. Meijer, “Jean-Michel Picart” in *A Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters Working in Oils, 1525 – 1725*, Primavera Press, Leiden, 2003, p. 160; and “Jean-Michel Picart” on *rkd.nl (RKD Explore)* website.

³ Peter Mitchell, op.cit., p. 201.

It is quite fitting that this painting by Picart formerly hung in the Villa d'Agilé in Turin. Known for its gardens first planted in the seventeenth century, and continuously transformed by succeeding generations, they are now listed annually on the Registro dei Giardini Storici (Register of Historic Gardens).

We would like to thank Fred G. Meijer upon viewing for confirming this painting to be by Jean Michel Picart.