

FEDE GALIZIA

Born and Died in Milan, Italy, 1578 - 1630

Fruit bowl with plums and figs and two jasmines on a table
Oil on panel, 37 x 45.5 cm

PROVENANCE

Private collection, Switzerland

LITERATURE

Sestieri, Giancarlo. *Nature morte italiane ed europee dal XVI al XVIII secolo*. Rome: Galleria Lampronti, 1989.

Caroli, Flavio. *Fede Galizia*. Turin, 1989, p.93.

Salerno, Luigi. *La natura morta italiana*. Rome, 1984, p. 60.

Fede Galizia, known as Galizia, was born in Milan in 1578. Her father, Nunzio Galizia, a miniature painter, moved to Milan from Trento, and it is from him that Fede (whose name means "faith") received her earliest artistic training.

Already at an early age, Galizia had become an accomplished portrait painter receiving several important commissions. Perhaps her father's influence as a miniaturist led to Galizia's characteristic attention to detail and the precise rendering of jewels and clothing which set her portraits apart from her contemporaries. Her corpus included not only portraiture but also encompassed religious and secular subjects, most famously her interpretations of Judith and Holofernes, a popular theme of the period, the earliest example of which survives in the Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota Florida. Her commissions extended beyond private patrons to include miniatures and altarpieces intended for convents and other religious institutions such as the altarpieces for Milanese churches including *Noli me tangere* (1616; Milan, S Stefano), made for the altar of the Church of Santa Maria Magdalena.

The style of her portraits derived from the naturalistic traditions of the Renaissance in Italy with a sharply realistic approach. Galizia's artistic skills of draughtsmanship and painting were well-received by contemporaries as demonstrated by her *Portrait of Paolo Morigia*, a Jesuit scholar and one of her earliest patrons and supporters. Morigia, also a writer and historian, was very pleased with Galizia's work, evidence by his inclusion in the *Portrait of Paolo Morigia* (1596), where he is shown writing a poem complimenting the painting in which Galizia is in the process of creating.

When not devoted to portraits, Galizia was primarily interested in painting still life paintings, a genre in which she pioneered and for which she is most famous for today despite sparse mention in contemporary sources. As evidence of her expertise, one only needs to look at her extant output, comprising forty-four still life paintings out of sixty-three catalogued works. Moreover, one of her

signed paintings of this group, made in 1602, is said to be earliest dated still life produced by an Italian artist thereby attesting to her reputation in this new style of painting.

However, it was not until the 20th century when special attention was accorded to her work in studies of 1963 and 1989 that her oeuvre finally received the recognition it rightly deserved. Galizia's still lifes are among the earliest examples of painting in a new genre in which women excelled, partly because they were excluded from other genres of painting.

Galizia demonstrates a style related to the Lombard mannerism of the late 16th century, which was centered in Mantua but spread internationally, especially in France. Her still life paintings differ from her father's works mainly in their increased attention to detail and heightened color palette. Most of these works featured fruit centerpieces in simple, frontal arrangements. They were often composed of a basket or bowl filled with a single type of fruit, such as peaches or pears, with a few others, sometimes sliced, scattered at the base of the bowl. Many of her works had fresh flowers or fruits set on the counter to provide a noticeable contrast and scale as seen in her work titled, *Still-life with Peaches and a Porcelain and a Bowl*. Galizia's drew parallels with such works as Caravaggio's *Basket of Fruit*.

After associating herself with the more restrained style of the Counter Reformation, she did not explore the more lavish compositions and forms taken up by many of her contemporaries working in this genre. Galizia preferred to use a stricter, more restrained style like that seen in Francisco de Zurbarán's slightly later still life paintings.

Her paintings were deft with detail, perfectly balanced, and her attention to shadow, light, and texture was unrivalled for her time. She was particularly successful at creating plausible interiors within her paintings. Her compositions are not crowded but rather give the impression that one could reach out and touch the fruit, grasp it, and pull it from the scene without making the entire composition unbalanced. Moreover, her graceful, flowing arrangements were natural and poetic, unlike the sheer abundance of her predecessors.

The work exhibited here with the effective square shaped table-top, the arrangement of leaves, and chromatic counterpoint of the jasmines, escapes the essential frontality of the more archaic Galizia that suggests the painting was completed later in her artistic career. Luigi Salerno, who published the work, stresses that the detailed attention attributed to flowers and fruits elevated the simple objects into a higher, noble subject.