



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Investigation of a painting



The subject work.

*Prepared for Client XXXXX
by the Art Research Department
of Art Experts*

12 NOVEMBER, 2013



PRÉCIS

SCOPE OF WORK To determine whether the subject work is by or after Luis Egidio Mélen­dez (Spain, 1716–1780).

DESCRIPTION Oil on canvas, 48 by 60 centimeters, unsigned.

PROVENANCE KNOWN TO CLIENT The painting was purchased by the client's family in 1955.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Luis Egidio Mélen­dez de Ribera Durazo y Santo Padre was, like many artists of his time, born into an artistic family. His father, Francisco Antonio, enjoyed great acclaim as a painter of miniatures after having perfected his craft in Rome and Naples. Upon his return to Spain, the elder Mélen­dez became court painter to Philip V and honorary director of painting at the newly founded Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid in 1744. A disagreement with the founding committee led to his dismissal in 1748. His son was expelled as well, and the fiasco forever affected Luis' own aspirations to become a court painter. Despite his clear gifts, Luis Mélen­dez never achieved the kind of steady royal patronage he might otherwise have enjoyed were it not for this fatal misstep on the part of his father.

His training included a period of study with a French royal portraitist working for the Spanish court, Louis Michel van Loo, as well as a four-year sojourn in Rome. His father recalled him to Madrid to assist in the illumination of choir books for the Royal Chapel, commissioned by Ferdinand VI. The artist continued to work in miniature as well as to explore church frescos and portraiture, but it is for his still-life compositions that the younger Mélen­dez is justly famed. It appears that he set out to fill a niche left empty by his peers, as there are virtually no other Spanish still-life painters of any serious merit from the late 18th century.

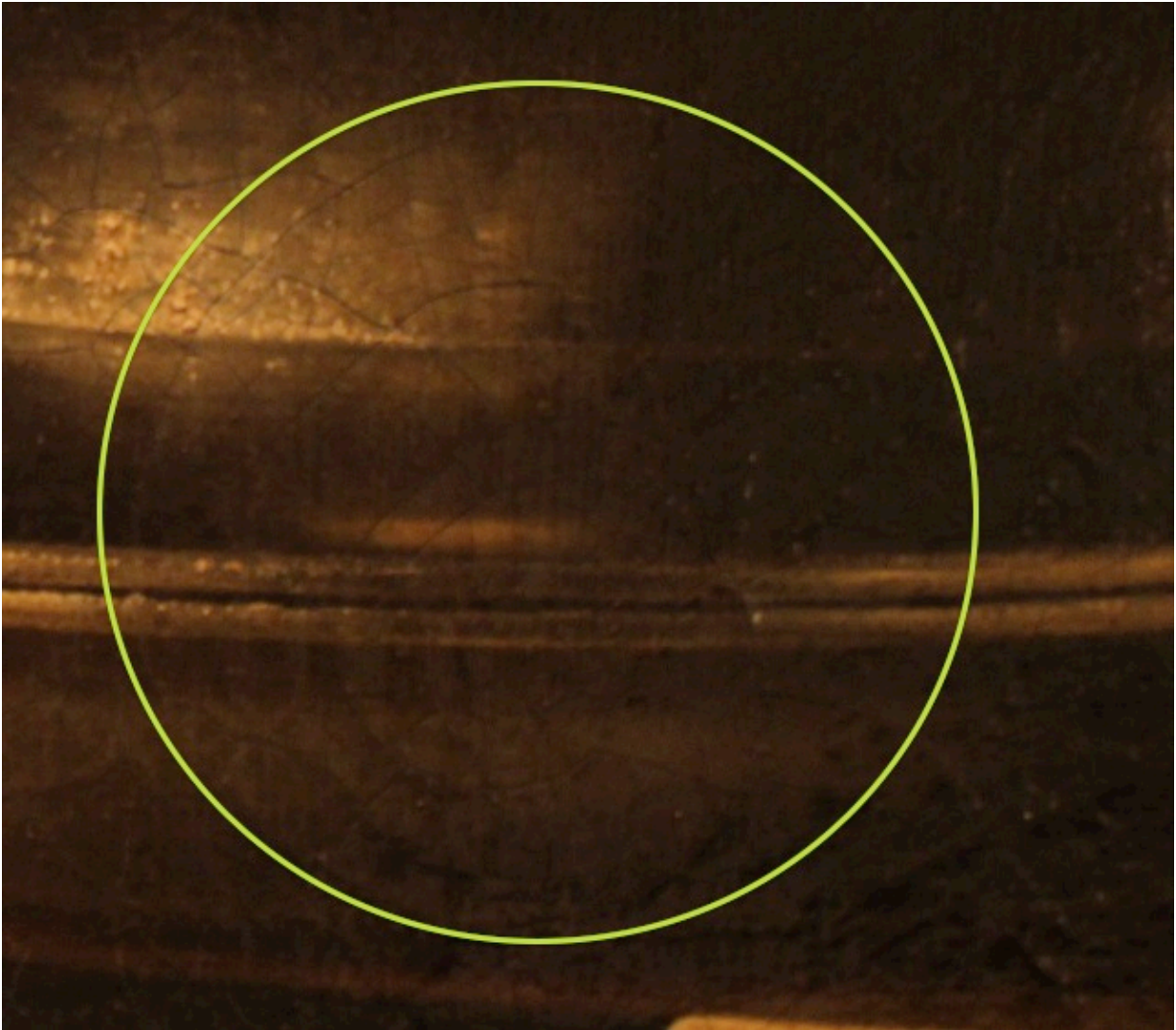
VISUAL EXAMINATION

The painting was created in oil on canvas and measures approximately 48 x 60 centimeters. It represents a still life composition of a wine jug, covered silver dish, oranges, knife, glass of red wine, silver tripod stand and a bread roll of fine white flour.



The subject work

The paint itself is well-preserved and shows no evidence of loss, only of surface cracking. In some areas these cracks have taken on a concentric pattern, while in others the cracks are more lateral.



The subject work, showing a pattern of cracks in concentric rings located at the front of the covered silver dish



The subject work, showing a more usual pattern of lateral cracks located in the silver tripod and bread roll.

The verso side confirms its very good state of preservation while at the same time clearly showing the weave of the canvas upon which the artist painted the picture. The wooden stretchers are fully intact and do not appear warped or otherwise damaged, but it is unclear whether they are original or replacements.



The verso of the painting itself bears a small oval label indicating it was at one time packed by the French art handling firm of André Chenue SA. Chenue was established in Paris in 1760.



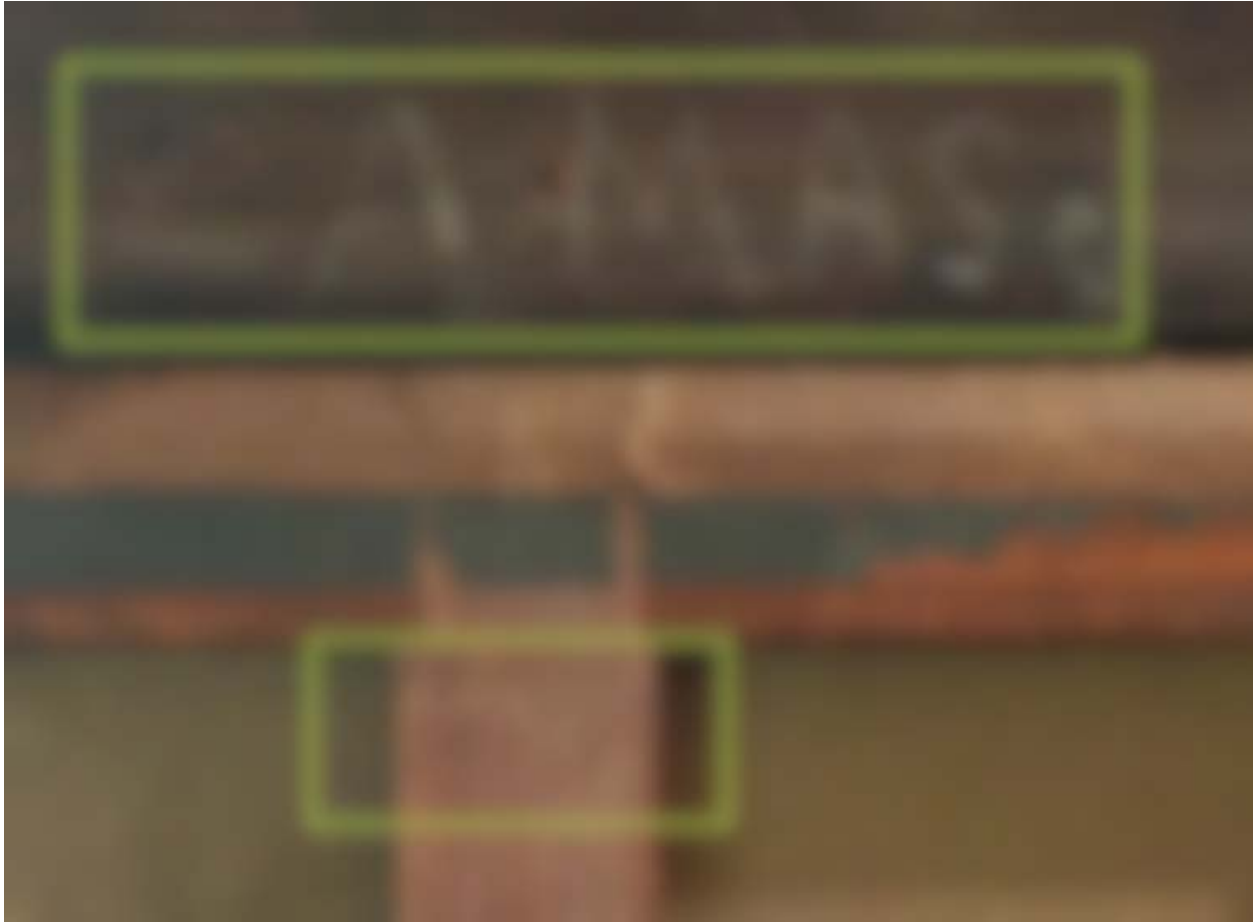
The subject work, showing a label reading "Chenue Emballage."

The verso of the frame of the painting bears the label of the Buenos Aires branch of the Wildenstein Gallery, Wildenstein Arte S.A., which was founded in Argentina in the early 1940s. It should be noted that this label is applied to the frame only and that it does not necessarily indicate the painting itself was handled by the gallery.



The subject work's frame, showing a label reading "Wildenstein Arte S.A."

It is noted that the client's name appears on both the central stretcher bar as well as the frame itself in what appears to be the same hand. It is not clear to Art Experts when the frame was applied.





RESEARCH

To complete the research necessary for a discussion of Méléndez's life and work, Art Experts relied upon monographs, articles, and a catalogue raisonné of the artist's works. A bibliography of selected resources follows below.

Cherry, Peter. "Bodegón." *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press.

Estreicher, Stefan K. *Wine: From Neolithic Times to the 21st Century*. New York: Agora, 2006.

Hirschauer, Gretchen A, Catherine A. Metzger, Peter Cherry, and Natacha Seseña. *Luis Meléndez: Master of the Spanish Still Life*. Washington [D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2009. Print.

Luna, Juan J. and Eleanor Tufts. "Meléndez." *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press. Web.

McGovern, Patrick E., Stuart J. Fleming, and Solomon H. Katz, eds. *The Origins and Ancient History of Wine*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1996.

Steinberg, Sally Levitt. ["Pictures at an Exhibition: Exhibitionist Food - Luis Melendez at the MFA and Tapas at Toro."](#) *The Arts Fuse*, April 4, 2010.

Tufts, Eleanor. *Luis Meléndez: Eighteenth-century Master of the Spanish Still Life : with a Catalogue Raisonné*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985. Print.

"Raw Appeal; Spanish Still-Life Paintings Serve Closely Observed Fruits and Vegetables at National Gallery." *The Washington Times* (Washington, DC) 24 May 2009: M22.

MÉLENDEZ AND STILL LIFE

Mélendez's earliest still lifes date to 1759-1760, at which point he had already returned from Rome. On his way back to Madrid in 1753 the artist contrived to meet with Charles III, who ruled as Charles IV of Naples and Sicily; Mélendez clearly sought royal patronage to the same degree his father had, and was met with equal disappointment. Still, he persisted, all the while continuing to work as a miniaturist, portrait artist and taking commissions for devotional works as well. Still life was considered a relatively minor artistic enterprise in the mid-eighteenth century, and although it seems surprising that one with Mélendez's aspirations would concern himself with such work, there were no other painters pursuing that particular idiom in that period. Remarkably, it was his foray into the minor area of still life that finally led to his royal summons.

María Luisa, Princess of Asturias, sent for Mélendez on the Feast Day of Epiphany in 1771 and asked that he bring all his still lifes, both finished and incomplete. The two formalized an agreement in which Mélendez would create an entire series of still lifes for the prince's New Cabinet of Natural History, a kind of natural history museum. By 1772 he had delivered thirty-seven of the forty-four paintings that comprised the finished series. In Mélendez's own words, the series represents "the four Seasons of the year, and more exactly the four Elements, with the aim of forming an enjoyable Cabinet with all of the kinds of foodstuffs that the Spanish climate produces in the said four Elements." In short, it was meant to be a kind of pictorial encyclopedia of all the best produce Spain had to offer: fruit, flowers, game birds, meat, fish, vegetables, cheese, and wine. The paintings vary in size, and some of them are arrangements of foodstuffs against a landscape while others are tabletop views. Cutlery, ceramic and silver vessels, wooden implements, napery, boxes of sweets, bread rolls, baskets of eggs, casks of olives and other trappings round out the displays, affording a variety of textures for the artist to show off his virtuoso handling of paint. Examples of this array of textures evident in his still lifes follow below.



Luis Mélenlez, [*Still Life with Melon and Pears*](#), 1772, oil on canvas, 63.8 x 85.1 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Luis Mélenlez, [*Still Life with Sea-Bream and Oranges*](#), 1772, oil on canvas, 42 x 62.2 cm, Museo del Prado.



Luis Mélenz, *Still Life with Bread and Figs*, ca. 1770, oil on canvas, 37 x 49 cm, Musée du Louvre.



Luis Mélenlez, [*Still Life with Figs and Bread*](#), 1770, oil on canvas, 47.6 x 34 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

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The realistic irregularity of the luscious figs is the very aspect that drove Art Experts to consider another artist as responsible for the subject work. The subject painting features an orange that is almost completely spherical and its surface is virtually perfect, strongly out of character with Mélenz's usual approach. He seems to celebrate the bumps, cracks, bulges, worm holes, brown spots and other hallmarks of truly natural produce, grown in an age where there were no real artificial controls against pests and in which fruit had to be picked as it was ripe. The oranges in *Sea Bream* at the Prado, shown in a following detail, contrast sharply against the orange seen in the subject work which is presented for close comparison.



Luis Mélenlez, detail from [*Still Life with Sea-Bream and Oranges*](#), 1772, oil on canvas, 42 x 62.2 cm, Museo del Prado.



Detail of the subject work.

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This contrast led us to explore the possibility that the painting might have been created by another artist. In fact, it became apparent that the work appears to have been made by either Sebastian Stoskopff, also called Sebasti en Stoskopff, or one of his circle or followers. Stoskopff, 1597-1657, was an Alsatian painter born in the Protestant city of Strasbourg. His early education took him to Germany and to Paris, and along the way he found inspiration in Flemish and Dutch still-life painting, such that he was moved to devote most of his career to the genre. Further reading on the subject of Stoskopff is provided below.

Brauner, Joseph, and Sebastian Stoskopff. *Sebastian Stoskopff: Ein Strassburger Maler Des 17. Jahrhunderts, 1597-1657*. Strassburg: s.n., 1933.

Hahn-Woernle, Birgit, and Sebastian Stoskopff. *Sebastian Stoskopff: Mit Einem Kritischen Werkverzeichnis Der Gem lde*. Stuttgart: G. Hatje, 1996.

Haug, Hans. *S bastien Stoskopff*. Lausanne: Nouvelle Sedo, 1961.

Heck, Mich le-Caroline. *Sebastian Stoskopff 1597-1657, Ein Meister Des Stillebens: [ausst.] Mus e De L'oeuvre Notre-Dame Strassburg, 15.3. - 15.6.1997, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen, 5.7. - 5.10.1997*. Paris: R union des Mus es Nationaux, 1997.

Heck, Mich le-Caroline and Sylvia B hmer. *S bastien Stoskopff, 1597-1657: Un Ma tre De La Nature Morte: Mus e De L'oeuvre Notre-Dame, Strasbourg, 15 Mars-15 Juin 1997: Suermondt Ludwig Museum, Aix-La-Chapelle, 5 Juillet-5 Octobre 1997*. Strasbourg: Mus es de Strasbourg, 1997.

M ller, Wolfgang J., and Silvia Berger. *Sebastian Stoskopff: Sein Leben, Sein Werk, Seine Zeit*. Idstein: Der Kulturring, 1987.

Stevenson, Lesley. "Stoskopff, Sebastien." *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press.

STOSKOPFF'S ELEMENTS

The wineglass, demijohn jug of wine in its wicker basket, bread roll, knife, silver or pewter salver dish and tripod are details that appear across several Stoskopff paintings. The following images are several examples of Stoskopff works that feature these details.



Sebastian Stoskopff, [*Still Life with Jug, Wineglass, and Bread*](#), 1630-1635, oil on canvas, Museum der Brotkultur, Ulm.



Sebastian Stoskopff, [Bread, Carafe of Wine, Upturned Roemer and Crayfish on a Plate with a Bowl of Soup and Glass of Wine](#), before 1657, oil on canvas, 52.7 x 63.5 cm, sold by Christie's London in 2007.



Sebastian Stoskopff, *Still Life with Flagon of Wine, a Wine Glass, a Loaf of Bread and Knife and Pies on a Pewter Plate*, before 1657, oil on canvas, 48.9 x 61 cm, on offer with Adam Williams Fine Art Ltd., New York.

STOSKOPFF AND THE SUBJECT WORK

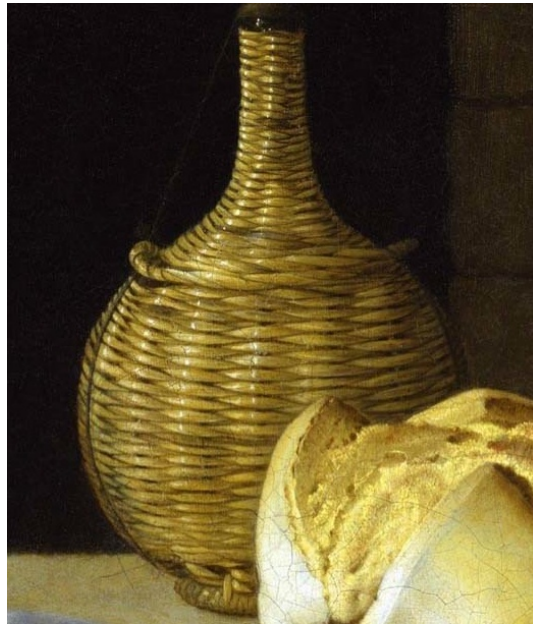
Distinct similarities between features of the subject work and that of known Stoskopff paintings are noted. Below follow close comparisons between the bread roll, demijohn wine jug, wine glass, and silver or pewter dish to allow for full visual consideration.



Sebastian Stoskopff, detail from [*Still Life with Flagon of Wine, a Wine Glass, a Loaf of Bread and Knife and Pies on a Pewter Plate*](#), before 1657, oil on canvas, 48.9 x 61 cm, on offer with Adam Williams Fine Art Ltd., New York.



Detail of the subject work.



Sebastian Stoskopff, detail from [*Still Life with Flagon of Wine, a Wine Glass, a Loaf of Bread and Knife and Pies on a Pewter Plate*](#), before 1657, oil on canvas, 48.9 x 61 cm, on offer with Adam Williams Fine Art Ltd., New York.



Detail from the subject work.

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Detail from the subject work.



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Detail of subject work.



CONCLUSION

In light of this very convincing visual evidence it is clear that the painting is not by Luis Mélenz and is instead probably by Sebastian Stoskopff or a follower or member of his circle. If it were painted by Stoskopff himself, it would date to approximately 1630-1650.

The Stoskopff depicting the upturned roemer, soup dish and crayfish on a plate sold by Christie's London and featured in this report brought a hammer price of \$268,048 USD in December 2007. A still life of a flagon of wine, wineglass, loaf of bread and small pies arranged on a pewter plate, also featured in this report, is currently on offer through Adam Williams Fine Art Ltd. in New York for an asking price of \$850,000 USD as of November 11, 2013.



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This report comprises 28 (twenty-eight) pages.

The Art Research Department at Art Experts