

Basic Detail Report



Title: Bowl of Peaches

Date: 1816

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@28de2

Medium: Oil on wood panel

Description: The New Britain painting exemplifies Raphaëlle's refined and beautifully painted compositions. The subject is simply a large bowl of peaches ornamented by two sprigs one placed diagonally atop the pile of fruit and another on the table directly in front of the bowl. (1) Placed in the middle of a bare marble table against a dark background, Raphaëlle's arrangement is stable and symmetrically ordered. He often limited his combinations to one or two types of fruit placed inside delicate pieces of imported porcelain or china, unlike his uncle James, who favored copious arrays of fruit spilling out of bowls and onto the table. With their expensive imported items: porcelain baskets, fine glassware and silverware and rich cakes and desserts, Raphaëlle's still lifes may be seen as reflections of the stable middle-class life and the ordered home environment enjoyed by Philadelphia's merchant class. They represent the private domestic life of the Peale family and of the collectors who purchased their works. The openwork porcelain basket in "Bowl of Peaches" is a favorite accessory that appears in several paintings of the same year, including "Still Life with Celery and Wine" (1816; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Art, Utica, N.Y.) and "Basket of Peaches with Fruit Knife and Grapes" (1816; Yale

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University Art Gallery, New Haven), as well as in several still-life arrangements by Rubens and James Peale. Raphaelle's fruit presentations also record the era's horticultural developments. Philadelphia was a center for art and science during the early nineteenth century, and the Peale family participated in related activities. Charles Willson Peale's rural estate of Belfield, which he purchased in 1810, was certainly the source of many of the fruits Raphaelle depicted. Raphaelle's fruits are often arranged in the manner of botanical illustrations; the colors of the varieties are accurate and the branches and leaves are included to further confirm identification. Furthermore, the meticulously dated legends on some of the paintings, such as the inscription on the New Britain work, indicate Raphaelle's interest in scientific precision and may even indicate the dates the fruits came into season. (2) Like this panel, a great number of Raphaelle's still lifes feature fruits: apples, grapes, oranges, blackberries, and watermelons are common. Peaches are a favorite throughout Raphaelle's career, especially about 1816. In a letter to his patron, Charles Graff, he expresses his intentions to devote all his time to the painting of "fine Peaches" and watermelon slices. (3) Although he expected his illness would prohibit him from carrying out his plans, his condition must have improved measurably soon after this letter, for he was able to complete several arrangements featuring peaches. Six of these were shown at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where he regularly exhibited. Dated September 1816, "Bowl of Peaches" may be the painting shown in October 1816 as "Fruit, Still Life, Peaches." Raphaelle also may have shown the work at the larger exhibition the next spring. (4) MAS Bibliography: John I. H. Baur, "The Peales and the Development of American Still Life," "Art Quarterly 3" (winter 1940): 81-92; Charles Coleman Sellers, "Raphaelle Peale (1774-1825): Still Lifes and Portraits", exhib. cat. (New York: Milwaukee Art Center and M. Knoedler, 1959); Lillian B. Miller, Sidney Hart, and David C. Ward, eds., "The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family", 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983-91); Nicolai Cikovsky Jr. et al., "Raphaelle Peale Still Lifes", exhib. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1988); Phoebe Lloyd, "Philadelphia Story," "Art in America" 76 (November 1988): 155-70, 195-98, 200-202; Lillian B. Miller, ed., "The Peale Family: Creation of a Legacy, 1770-1870", exhib. cat. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996). NOTES: 1 . The arrangement echoes that of "Peaches and Unripe Grapes" (1815; private collection, ill. in Cikovsky et al., "Raphaelle Peale Still Lifes", p. 17. 2. Lloyd, "Philadelphia Story," p. 161. 3. Peale to Charles Graff, September 6, 1816, quoted in Miller, Hart, and Ward, "Selected Papers", vol. 3, "The Belfield Farm Years, 1810-1820", pp. 447-48. 4. Peter Hastings Falk ed., "The Annual Exhibition Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1807-1870, Being a Reprint with Revisions of the 1955 Edition of Anna Wells Rutledge, 'Cumulative Record of the Exhibition Catalogues'", (Madison, Conn.: Sound View Press, 1988), p. 166. Dimensions: 12 5/8 x 19 1/4 in. (19 3/8 x 25 3/4 x 2 1/2 in. framed)