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NICOLAES VAN VERENDAEL

1640 Antwerp 1691

*A Glass Vase with and Ear of Corn, Roses, a Tulip, Morning
Glory and other flowers.*

Oil on Canvas, 33 x 25.5 cm.
Signed in full lower right



Provenance: With Gallery E. Slatter 1952;
Mr. John Harrison;
Private Collection until 2026.

Exhibited: Gallery E. Slatter, London, 1952, no. 23.

Nicolaes van Verendael was born in Antwerp and worked there until his death. He was apprenticed to his father the painter Willem van Verendael. He was admitted in 1657 in the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke as a son of a member. In 1669, he married Catharina van Beveren, daughter of the sculptor Matthijs van Beveren, in the cathedral of Notre Dame. The couple had ten children, however, sadly only two of them survived infancy.

Verendael was one of the last of the Flemish masters to specialize in the tradition of flower painting that began in the first decade of the seventeenth century with the flower pieces of Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625), Rolant Savery (1578-1639) and Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder (1573-1621), and continued into the middle of the century with Brueghel's pupil Daniel Seghers (1590-1661), and others.

Verendael was highly regarded in his lifetime, and collaborated with other leading masters, such as David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690), Jan Davidsz. de Heem (1606-1684) and Christiaan Luycks (1623-c.1677). Despite his early success, he fell upon hard times towards the end of his life, perhaps in part because he was apparently a slow worker. According to his eighteenth century biographer Jacob Campo Weyerman, it sometimes took him four days to complete a single flower.

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It is evident that in his early work he was much indebted to Flemish tradition of the first half of the seventeenth century. By the late 1660's however he came increasingly under the influence of the Dutch flower specialist Jan Davidsz. de Heem and by the 1670's, he had absorbed these influences into a style of his own.

The present fine flower still life is an example of Van Verendael's oeuvre at the height of his career. The painting stands as a virtuoso demonstration of the artist's technical abilities. Here, the diversity of flowers and the glass vase recall the floral arrangements of Jan Davidsz. de Heem, but Verendael's exquisitely refined brushwork and the subtle play of light achieve a certain softness and graceful informality that instantly set him apart. Distinctive is his palette of soft pinks, red, orange and blue, augmented by splashes of deep vermilion, brilliant blue and white. Another feature likewise characteristic of the painter is his choice of flowers. We often find certain combinations of flowers recurring in Verendael's paintings of a similar date. The assortment of flowers seen here, for example, including a red and white striped tulip, a carnation, roses, a red peony, a marigold, vibrant blue Morning Glory, is repeated in several paintings dating from the mid-1660-70's, including still lifes in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (obj. nr 81.1.652), the Suermondt-Ludwig Museum (GK535) and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (inv.act nr PD.94-1973).

However, unlike many flower painters of his time, Verendael rarely used the identical flower study in more than one painting. Whether Verendael intended paintings such as this one to convey any specific message is uncertain. However, in the seventeenth century, flowers, by their very nature, exemplified ideas of transience and the brevity of life. Here, the inclusion of flowers at different stages of development - ranging from tightly closed buds to flowers in full bloom, and wilted flowers - could be considered a reference to the notions of vanitas. Above all, this still life was painted primarily to amaze and delight its audience and display the virtuoso talents of its author.