



# Peter Mühlbauer



**Carstian Luycks**

**Vanitas Still life with earth globe**

1623 Antwerp – 1675

France, c. 1660

oil on canvas

131,5 x 107,5 cm

Counterpart to still life with celestial globe

Carstian Luyckx (1623-1675) is one of the most important Antwerp still life painters of the 17th century.

He became a master of the Guild of St. Luke in 1645 and was appointed court painter to the King of

Spain a year later.

In the subdued atmosphere of a cabinet of curiosities, the painter guides the viewer's curious eye through a composition filled with symbolism, featuring scientific and naturalistic “wonders” framed by ruby-red drapery.

In the center of both paintings is the globe, symbolizing global expansion of power and a thirst for conquest. It symbolizes openness to the world, power, and new scientific knowledge.

An architect's set square and compass, as well as a painter's tools, brushes, and palette, testify to the pursuit of knowledge and eternal fame that transcends earthly death. The hourglass symbolizes the finiteness of human life, while the skull with the evergreen plant symbolizes immortality.

In contrast to this are the sword, the bag filled with gold coins, the dice and playing cards. These symbolize the transitory joys of power, luxury, and wealth.

Thus, both paintings are also a testimony to a new worldview and view of nature, as well as a tribute to one of the greatest astronomers, astrologers, and alchemists of his time—Tycho Brahe. They are intended to encourage the owner of the paintings to constantly expand his knowledge and engage with the latest scientific theories. Paintings by Carstian Luycks can be found in major European museums, such as the Szépművészeti Museum in Budapest and the Birmingham Museum of Art.

They enchant not only with their iconography, which reflects the idea of vanitas, but also with their rich colors and the texture of the numerous naturalistic shells, exotic sea snails and coral branches in dazzling colors, which the artist highlights vividly with masterful, oblique lighting.

**Prov.:** Private collection, France