

J. L. JENSEN  
1800–1856

## 55. *Basket of Flowers and Fruits*, 1833

(Opstilling med druer, ferskner, figner, vindruer og granatæbler i en kurv på marmorplade,  
hvorpå georginer, liljer og snerler)

Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{2}{3}$  x 36 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (73 x 92 cm)

Signed and dated lower right: I.L. Jensen 1833

PROVENANCE: Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 483, 1986, lot 50, ill. p. 25.

EXHIBITED: Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, *Danish Paintings of the Nineteenth Century from the Collection of Ambassador John Loeb Jr.*, 1994, no. 11; Bruce Museum of Art and Science, Greenwich, Connecticut, and The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, New York, *Danish Paintings of the Nineteenth Century from the Collection of Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr.*, 2005, no. 4, ill.

LITERATURE: Peter Nisbet, *Danish Paintings of the Nineteenth Century from the Collection of Ambassador John Loeb Jr.*, Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994, p.6.

The full and compact arrangement consists of a basket of fruit on a marble plinth on which there is a pumpkin and a bunch of flowers: lilies, dahlias and a succulent-like blue flower. The cracked pomegranate is reminiscent of a Dutch still-life painting, where it often symbolises immortality or fertility. Grapes, fig leaves and peaches betoken exotic fruits, so the picture could have been painted during the artist's visit to the south of France and Italy, which he started in 1833. He may have seen Caravaggio's *Basket of Fruit* (now in Ambrosiana, Milano) or perhaps, like every other Scandinavian, he was merely fascinated with the glorious sweetness of the fruit.

It is difficult to know whether any message lies hidden in the images, couched in the flower language of the time, i.e. the symbolical language implicit especially in bouquets presented to the chosen one. Care has to be taken, however, not to force works of art into a fixed pattern in the nature of a picture puzzle.

Cheeks as soft as peaches is still a phrase used today. In the 19th century, the peach also symbolised full lips. The apricot asks: Were you always as content as you are now? The pumpkin symbolises determination. The white lily, the Virgin's flower from the annunciation symbolises purity, humility and a woman's dignity.

Jensen exhibited sixteen different flower and fruit pieces at Charlottenborg in 1833.

M. T.

*The following flowers and fruits are seen in the picture:*

IN THE BASKET, FROM THE LEFT: Lily buds, grapes, *malus baccata* (L.) Moench. (?), "Siberian crab"; *Ficus carica*, "fig"; *Prunus persica* Batsch, "peach"; *Punica granatum* L., "pomegranate." On the plinth, from the left: *Lilium candidum* L., "madonna lily"; *Dahlia hybrida* (?), "dahlia"; *Sedum telephium* L. (ssp. maximum?), "Stonecrop"; *ipomea tricolor* Cav. Syn.: *Ipomea rubrocaerula* (?) "waterlily"; *Cucurbita pep* L., "pumpkin."

T. T.