

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Baldassare De Caro (1689 - 1750)

A 'Cacciagione' with a hare, snipe, plover, mallard, partridge and other birds

oil on unlined canvas

36 ½ x 46 ins. (92.8 x 117cm.)

De Caro was a specialist still life artist who came from Naples. Having apprenticed under the decorative and fashionable painter, Andrea Belvedere, his first commissions were for flower paintings. However, by the mid-1720s his subject matter and style had changed. De Caro's palette of colours became darker, and his richer tones were well-suited to his speciality, the *cacciagione* or hunting trophy.

These gamepieces often featuring hunting dogs with hares, rabbits and birds were in fact more influenced by the seventeenth century still life painters in his native Naples, like Giacomo Recco and his extended family, all of whom continued the tradition until the end of the century.

The warm grey and brown tonality in De Caro's game pictures, so prevalent in our example too, suggest that he had developed his own interpretation of those earlier still lifes. The numerous pictures by him still in Neapolitan palazzi and museums elsewhere in Italy would suggest that he received a steady series of commissions from the city's emerging *bourgeoisie*. Indeed, put together in the late nineteenth century, there are almost two dozen paintings by De Caro in the Pinacoteca d'Errico in southern Italy's ancient citadel, Matera – better known today for the motorbike and car chase in the James Bond film, *Spectre*.