



Adriaen van Utrecht  
*Still Life of a Swan and Other Birds*, ca. 1630  
Oil on canvas, 1925.255

## Still Life of a Swan and Other Birds



**Adriaen van Utrecht** (1599–1652) This Flemish Baroque artist is known for painting lush still lifes depicting vegetables, fruits and the trophies of hunting and falconry. At age 15, van Utrecht was apprenticed to a painter and as a young man traveled extensively throughout Europe perfecting his craft. He frequently collaborated with other artists. His paintings utilize dark colors, demonstrating the influence of fellow artist Frans Snyders. In addition to teaching from his own studio for 20 years, van Utrecht received patronage from Philip IV of Spain and the Austrian and German courts.

### A product of its time

This painting demonstrates the popularity of hunting and falconry among the Dutch and Flemish aristocracy. The 16th and 17th centuries were an economic Golden Age in the Netherlands, and different types of birds, like those depicted in *Still Life*, were a status indicator.

### Take a closer look

The painting contains seven different birds: a swan, a pigeon, two barnyard fowl, a young peacock, a smew, a kingfisher and possibly a Eurasian teal.

### Did you know?

The variety of poultry consumed during the 16th and 17th centuries was greater than what is typically consumed today. The presentation of birds during meals was elaborate, as the food served was representative of the family's status—the rarer the bird, the higher the status. Chefs would skin and cook the birds, then reattach their plumage before serving the meal, creating the illusion of live birds.

### On your own

The J. Paul Getty Museum Bio: <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artMakerDetails?maker=581>

Still Life Painting: [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nstl/hd\\_nstl.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nstl/hd_nstl.htm)

Food & Drink in European Painting: [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/food/hd\\_food.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/food/hd_food.htm)