Miguel de Pret
(Antwerp, ca.1595 – Zaragoza, 1644)

A bunch of white grapes
Oil on canvas
28 x 21 cm. (11 x 8 ¼ in.)

The artistic personality of Miguel de Pret, a Flemish-born painter who worked in Madrid, has been consolidated in recent years through the study of various signed works and the discovery of documentation sufficient to construct an account of his professional activities.

Pret entered the Flemish Royal Guard of Archers, the corps entrusted with guarding the King’s person, thanks to his nationality and the fact that his family was of noble status. He combined this role with his artistic activities. The painter Juan van der Hamen y León (1596-1631) was also a member of the Guard of Archers.

Miguel de Pret was the son of Anne van den Putte and André de Pret, a cloth merchant from Antwerp. The artist seems to have been living in Madrid by the 1620s. On the basis of a signed still life in the Abelló collection, it would seem that he was associated with Juan van der Hamen’s studio. Documents reveal that Pret also worked with the painter Francisco Barrera (1595-1658).

The number of still lifes present in the valuation of the artist’s possessions carried out by the painter Juan de la Corte following Pret’s death in Zaragoza, where he had accompanied the king in 1644, indicates that the artist specialised in that genre. Listed in one of Manuela Melchora de Pret’s rooms are two paintings of “Bunches of grapes, one white and the other red”.

The present painting depicts a hanging bunch of white grapes. It is closely comparable to the signed canvas on the same subject by Pret in the Museo Cerralbo in Madrid (28 x
26 cm; inv. 3898, fig. 1). That work and a signed *Still Life with a basket of plums and figs and a melon on a ledge with hanging peppers, grapes and quince* in the Abelló collection (fig. 2) provide the autograph references for reconstructing Pret’s pictorial corpus.

Alba and Aterido have convincingly attributed to the artist *Two Bunches of white Grapes*, also in the collection of the Museo Cerralbo (28 x 26 cm; inv. 3899), the *Still Life with two Bunches of Grapes* in the Museo Nacional del Prado (29 x 38 cm; inv. P-7906), and a *Bunch of hanging Grapes* in a private collection (31 x 26 cm).

Like the above-mentioned works, the present *Bunch of white Grapes* includes a black background that functions to emphasise the volumetric nature of the grapes, painted in meticulous detail and with enormous skill.

José Gómez Frechina

Bibliography: unpublished

Fig 1. Miguel de Pret, *Bunch of white grapes*. Oil on canvas. 28 x 26 cm. (11 x 10 ¼ in.). Museo Ceralbo, Madrid
Fig 2. Miguel de Pret, Still Life with basket of figs, basket of plums, melon and hanging fruit. Oil on canvas. 57.5 x 90 cm. (22 ½ x 35 ½ in.). Juan Abelló Collection.