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Penitent Magdalene, Giovanni Battista Castello, Called "il Genovese" (1547 - 1637)



2 497 EUR

Signature : Giovanni Battista Castello, Dit "le Génois" (1547 - 1637)

Period : 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Parchment

Width : 17

Height : 21

Description

Giovanni Battista Castello, called "il Genovese"
(1547 - 1637)

Penitent Magdalene

Tempera on parchment, 21 x 17 cm

Frame cm 26 x 22

The precious tempera painting on parchment is to be referred to the hand of the painter Giovanni Battista Castello (1547-1637), called "the Genoese" to distinguish him from the contemporary namesake, architect and painter, called "the Bergamasco". The older brother of Bernardo, a famous painter of late Ligurian Mannerism, began his activity in the field of religious goldsmith, to which he soon joined the art of miniature, art to which he ended up dedicating himself completely and with greater

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satisfaction, bringing it back to a success and a popularization that it had not known since the Middle Ages and now found in the spiritual and cultural climate of the Counter-Reformation incentive and justification.

In the sources he is mentioned as self-taught; it is certain however his assiduous attendance of the workshop of Luca Cambiaso, where he drew all the cultural baggage that this center of artistic eclecticism involved and to which he added the experience of Nordic engravers, Tuscan-Roman mannerism, Venetian and Emilian ancestry, a form of purified Baroque and, last but not least, the aspiration to evade the artificial intellectualism, preferring an unconscious need for simplicity, purity, chastity, that "primitiveness" which has been identified, sometimes, even in the period of the Counter-Reformation, with pietistic attitudes.

In the wake of the Cambiaso and the Tavarone, Castello was called to Spain by Philip II, where he illuminated for the king, in 1584, among other sacred books for the Escorial, an important Antiphonary. This commission gave him a glory of immediate reflex at home. His reputation was such that in 1606 the Most Serene Genoese Government declared him "painter "excellentem" over the other eminent, and exempted from the laws, and chapters, to which unworthily subjects in Genoa the Professors of Painting".

The corpus of his works is particularly nourished given the exceptional time span of his intense activity, all the more so since, as mentioned by Soprani, the painter used to keep "every little piece of paper, and even a simple sketch" and had filled "some books of an infinity of miniatures ... great care having that nobody went bad" also with the intention that "facilitatssero the road of who had wanted to undertake the miniature" (Soprani-Ratti, *Lives of Painters, Sculptors and Genoese Architects*, 1769, pp. 110). Alizeri also mentions that in the Genoese patrician collections, for example the Spinola collection, or

that of the Marquis Pietro Rostan, who owned eight miniatures of the Castle, there were preserved manuscripts and illuminated books, small scrolls with stories of the Old and New Testaments and tiny landscapes with architectural and animal ruins.

In the parchment examined, intended for the Genoese patrician patronage of images for private devotion, we find its typical harmonious palette and intonata, the execution is treated both in the color matter that in the design, the airy landscape is interpreted as pleasant nature and elaborated on several levels. The penitent Magdalene is depicted in the center in the foreground, surrounded by its typical iconographic elements, such as the skull, alluding to the transience of earthly existence, the scourge and the jar of ointments.

Similar works are preserved both in private collections and in museums, Italian and international. Specific comparisons can be made for example with the Baptism of Christ from the Palazzo Mazzetti collection in Asti, or with the miniature depicting the Delivery of the Keys to Saint Peter, now in Paris at the Louvre Museum.

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