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Battle Between Knights '600



7 900 EUR

Signature : Pieter Hofmans

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 65

Width : 125

Description

In this interesting 'Battle between European Militia' (oil painting on canvas, 65 x 125 cm unframed and 85 x 145 cm), the author balances the inventiveness between the fullness of the clash in the foreground on the centre left, in which a knight on horseback with a sword tries to strike a soldier on foot who, in turn, tries to unseat him, while even closer we can see a dead knight and a horse with a terrified look trying to get up and run away: in the background there is an opening on the left against a mountainous background with a city, while on the right an interesting perspective opening opens and lengthens the painting, giving it the right balance.

A scheme typical of Jacques Courtois, known as Borgognone, who was an undisputed leader of

Dealer

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this genre, not only in Rome and Florence where he completed his most famous works, but also for all other Italian and even foreign 'battaglists', for whom he was a primary point of reference.

However, the figurative manner of our author, even if in the wake of the aforementioned leader of the school, appears more acerbic and crude, although it does not lack the qualities of a specialist in the field with a loose and decisive manner in the delineation of the horses and in the gestures of the combatants, even with effective foreshortenings such as the steed seen from behind on the right side, whose knight in red jacket has his sword in his right hand ready to strike.

Turning to the typological, and at the same time stylistic and pictorial examination of the painting, I believe it can be assigned to the Flemish artist Pieter Hofmans known as the Janissary (c. 1642 Antwerp - Rome 1692), who was recalled by the biographer Luigi Lanzi (*Storia pittorica dell'Italia*, 6th edition, Milan 1823, II, p. 225) as his only direct follower. 225), as his only direct follower, based firstly on a comparison with the two large 'Battles between European and Turkish armies', already in the Sciarra collection, and later in the Almagia collection (see catalogue edited by R.E. Spear, *Renaissance and Baroque Painting*, Bozzi ed, Rome 1972, nos. 37-38, pp. 74-75), which constituted the first essential evidence for the recovery of this 'battaglista', as I expounded in the volume I edited on *I Pittori di Battaglie. Maestri italiani e stranieri del XVII e XVIII secolo*, De Luca ed., Roma 1999, pp. 354-355). In fact, there are very close parallels in the delineation of the horses between the painting examined here and the 'Almagià' pair.

Pieter, after having been a pupil of Nicolas I van Eyck in his homeland, left for Italy around 1660, settling in Rome where he married Margherita Gambari in 1682. But he had previously travelled

to Turkey, apparently with the landscape painter Zurniter; an experience from which he probably derived his nickname in Janitzer's Roman Bent, although N. Houbraken, who included him in his poem on the Bentvueghles, writes that the nickname was given to him because he stood up straight like a Swiss janissary.

However, the cognition of this overlooked 'battler' can be broadened with new recoveries to his hand of convincing relevance. In particular with the pair of remarkable small paintings that I was able to examine directly - a nocturnal 'Battle' and a 'Flag-waver', later sold at Sotheby's in Milan in 2004 - on the original frame of which is the coeval inscription 'Di Monsieur Giannizzaro Scolare del Padre Giacomo' (as we know, Jacques, in Italian Giacomo, entered the Society of Jesus in 1658), and which might otherwise have been mistaken for works by Courtois.

However, even though it is certainly not yet possible to fix a developmental path for Hofmans, I believe that the present 'Battle' should belong to the early years of his Roman phase, as it is still linked to a figurative imprint of Nordic taste.

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