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Antique Italian Oil. 17th Century. Virgin, Child Jesus, Saint Elizabeth, And Young John



1 800 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Length : 21.5 cms - 8.46 in.

Width : 17 cms - 6.69 in.

Description

Delicate and moving religious scene executed in oil on copper in the Italian pictorial tradition of the seventeenth century, attributable to the Lombard or Venetian school. This refined work represents a rare but highly symbolic iconographic theme, the mystical encounter between the Virgin Mary and Saint Elizabeth, each with their child, the Infant Jesus and the young Saint John the Baptist. This variant combines the scene of "The Visitation" with that of the extended Holy Family, an interpretation that exudes tenderness and spiritual depth. Oil painting on copper emerged in Europe in the sixteenth century as an innovative technique among refined artists and discerning collectors. Copper offered a perfectly smooth and non-absorbent surface, ideal for detailing faces,

Dealer

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garments, and landscapes with a precision impossible to achieve on wood or canvas. This technique was especially appreciated in Italy and Flanders, where artists such as Elsheimer, Bronzino, and the Bassano family produced small portable works combining devotion and exquisite artistry. The painting is executed on a fine quality copper plate, notable for its thickness, original patina visible on the reverse, and excellent state of preservation. It is stretched over an old wooden frame, secured with metal hooks, and framed in a later gilded frame, probably from the nineteenth century. The choice of copper as a support is revealing, reserved in its time for private devotional works, it was used by cultivated artists who valued its smooth surface, ideal for meticulous work and vibrant colors. During the seventeenth century, the use of copper spread to private religious commissions, especially in conventual, courtly, or noble contexts. These were paintings that were easy to transport, resistant to the passage of time, and highly valued for their chromatic intensity. They were not mere decorations, often linked to pious texts, reliquaries, or even served as small domestic altars. The pyramidal composition, the serene expressions of the characters, the use of deep colors (bottle greens, intense reds, soft golds), and the delicate treatment of hands and faces point to a strong Mannerist influence. Everything suggests that this piece was created by a painter with solid training and spiritual sensitivity, perhaps as part of a set for private prayer or for a convent oratory. This support also allowed the realization of replicas of famous works, which explains why many coppers of the time reinterpret well-known compositions by Raphael, Titian, or Veronese. Its use declined throughout the eighteenth century due to its cost and the popularization of canvas, but it never lost its aura of nobility and delicacy. Today, old oils on copper are highly sought-after collector's items, both for their beauty and for their technical and spiritual history. An old handwritten inscription

adorns the back, in ink almost faded but still partially legible. It refers to Saint Catherine, Saint Anthony, and devotional passages linked to the lives of saints. It contains no signature but reinforces the spiritual dimension of the work and its intimate use in religious settings. An ideal piece for those wishing to incorporate a religious work with soul, history, and nobility into their collection. This type of painting on copper enjoys growing reappraisal in the art market, especially for its durability, pictorial quality, and intimate character. It would be perfect to reintroduce it into the Church, for use in a parish, or as a devotional image in a private oratory. It would add a touch of contemplation, tradition, and classical beauty to any space dedicated to faith. Do not miss the opportunity to acquire a unique piece, both for its technique and for its spiritual message. Dimensions: 28 x 23 cm (11 x 9 in) Visible painting: 21.5 x 17 cm (8.46 x 6.69 in)