PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Frans Van De Casteele (kasteels) Known As Francesco Da Castello (brussels, Around 1541 - Rome, 16



17 000 EUR

Period : 17th century
Condition : En l'etat
Material : Other
Width : 23,5 cm
Height : 28,5 cm
Depth : 1,5 cm

Description

Frans van
de Casteele (Kasteels) called Francesco da
Castello (Brussels, ca. 1541 - Rome,
1621) Adoration of the Shepherds Crowning with
Thorns First decade of the 17th
century. Tempera and gold on parchment, 290 x
240 mm (with frame).
Original
wooden frame with cut-out silver leaf
applications; in the corners, medallions
with the four evangelists. This beautiful pair of
Agnus Dei is made up of two
oval miniatures on parchment representing the
Adoration of the Shepherds and
the Crowning with Thorns, framed by
contemporary frames of perforated silver
sheet, on a blue taffeta background, inscribed in

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turn in frames of ebonized
wood. In the corners of both frames of cut silver,
there are four medallions
with miniatures of the Evangelists on a gold
background, while in the center of
the side margins four angelic heads and three
silver rosettes are applied
respectively. The two miniatures The central
panels, perfectly preserved,
represent a joyful and a painful episode in the life
of Jesus Christ. The first
shows the Holy Family surrounded by shepherds
in an attitude of worship,
offering gifts to the Child Jesus. The shepherd in
the foreground, kneeling and
with his back to the viewer , he rests one hand on
a wide-brimmed hat and with
the other he offers a basket. Another shepherd
hands him a sheep with its legs
tied, a symbol of the Christian sacrificial lamb,
while a third plays the
panpipe accompanied by four other characters
and a long-snouted dog. The scene
takes place outdoors, next to a stable from which
their heads the ox and the
donkey, before a hilly landscape with the ruins of
a temple. In the upper
central part, an angel in a luminous glory holds a
phylactery with the text
"Gloria [...]". The Virgin shows tenderly to those
present the Child
wrapped in a white cloth, while Joseph leans on a
pillar behind her. The
miniature, with bright and vivid colours enhanced
with chrysographies, has at
its bottom the characteristic pile of dark earth
with a small branch,
unmistakable signature of the artist that appears
in all his landscape
miniatures. The Crowning with Thorns is an
episode of the Passion cycle that
follows the flagellation and precedes the Ecce
Homo, after which Christ was led
to crucifixion. The scene takes place in a

courtyard, in the center of which
Jesus, seated on a A platform and dressed in a
purple cloak illuminated with
chrysographies, he wears the crown of thorns and
holds a reed in one hand like
a scepter. Two soldiers place the crown on
Christ's head with two reeds that
when crossed form the symbol of the cross,
making his forehead bleed, while
another henchman kneels before him to mock
him. In the background, some guards
with characteristic turbans watch the scene under
a green curtain lined in red,
while in the lower area there is a hole opened in
the pavement that It is a
characteristic motif of the artist, present in all his
miniatures set in
interiors. Both miniatures, of great artistic quality,
are undoubtedly the work
of Francesco da Castello, the Italianized name of
Frans van de Casteele
(Brussels, ca. 1541 - Rome, October 23, 1621).
Francesco da Castello, painter
and miniaturist, came to Rome during the
pontificate of Gregory XIII (r.
1572-1585) and specialized very early on in the
"small manner", as Giovanni
Baglione recalls in the biography dedicated to the
artist: "At that time
Francesco da Castello came to Rome from
Flanders, already having some knowledge
of painting. But here in Rome he continued to
improve, and delighting in
working on a small scale, to which he felt
inclined, genius led him in that
direction." , becoming a good miniaturist, and
produced beautiful works, which
went to Spain, as well as working for various
personages and great princes, and
carrying out things that brought him great praise.
He also painted on a large
scale, with success, and made many works for the
Spanish nation. [...] This man
painted few things for public places, because he

was very busy making
miniatures, which he carried out excellently, and
he was paid a good price for;
and many of his works have remained in hands of
private individuals, and some
of the most beautiful were sent to other parts of
the world" (cfr. G. Baglione,
Le Vite de' Pittori..., Rome 1642, pp. 86-87). In
Rome Francesco da Castello
developed a brilliant career, was portrayed by
Hendrick Goltzius and associated
with important Flemish figures and scholars,
including Philips van Winghe,
Abraham Ortelius and Hendrick de Raeff of
Delft, called Enrico Corvino, who in
1603 married his daughter Caterina. Associated
with the Congregation of the
Virtuosi of the Pantheon, from 1577 he was a
member of the Academy of Saint
Luke, of which he was consul in 1588 and in
1591. His house soon became a
meeting place for artists where many of his
compatriots found hospitality and a
valuable point of reference to introduce
themselves to the Roman environment.
In addition, together with Francesco da Castello
they learned "the good way to
paint small", appropriating of the essential
features of the master's style, as
Baglione narrates about his German disciple
Sigismondo Laire (ca. 1552-1639),
who specialized in "coloring small figures on
copper" and who "painted on
various jewels, such as lapis lazuli, agates,
emeralds, carnelians, and other
things" (cfr. ibidem, p. 353). From these reports it
is clear that Francesco da
Castello was an artist appreciated by his
contemporaries and well integrated
into the Roman artistic and cultural environment.
In recent years, the
catalogue of works by the Flemish artist, best
known for his large altar
blades, has been expanded with new miniatures

preserved in museums and private collections around the world. Among his most beautiful miniatures is the Adoration of the Virgin Mary. of the Magi from the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Madrid, characterized by a bright chromaticism with iridescent effects and a descriptive preciosity typical of the Flemish style. Another miniature, with the Annunciation, previously in the Luigi Koelliker collection, is the reworking of a widespread iconographic model. derived from the famous 13th century fresco of the Annunciation in the church of the Santissima Annunciata in Florence, in which the face of the Virgin, which according to tradition had been painted by angels, was particularly venerated and considered miraculous. In the mid-15th century, the sacred image acquired a special value for the Medici, who prohibited its reproduction at least until the early 16th century, when, due to continuous requests from influential figures of the time, permission was granted. to copy it. In 1584 Alessandro Allori painted a replica of it on behalf of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, to send as a gift to Philip II of Spain, which is still preserved today in the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. A delightful image of the Guardian Angel, recently found in a private collection in Valencia, in addition to fulfilling a devotional function -typical of this kind of work- it gave protection to whoever owned it. The cult of the saints, ratified in the XXV and last session of the The Council of Trent (1563) had firmly spread the belief that her intercession was increased by reciting the prayers in the presence of her relics or her images, especially if the latter had been in contact with her remains or

had been blessed by the
Pope. . Relics and sacred images were often
associated with the power to grant
or transmit indulgences to those who possessed
them. This aroused the desire of
the powerful to have numerous relics and
increased the production of devotional
images that often represented especially
venerated themes or considered
miraculous, like the antiquae madonnas of the
Roman basilicas. A flourishing
art market thus developed, largely made up of
small sacred images of medium or
high quality, the most prestigious examples of
which were kept in reliquaries
or finely framed, intended for a Catholic clientele
not only in Italy but also
abroad. Among the recipients Among these
objects were numerous representatives
of the most important noble lineages of Spain,
eager to imitate the extraordinary
devotion of Philip II for the relics that the
monarch kept by the thousands in
the Monastery of El Escorial and which he adored
and kissed with the utmost
reverence. A complex portable altar in ebony
made up of various compartments
with miniatures, sold at Sotheby's with an
erroneous attribution to Giovanni
Battista Castello the Genoese (Genoa,
1549-1639), is however most certainly the
work of Francesco da Castello. The central
miniature represents The Virgin of
the Rosary with the Child and Pope Sixtus V (r.
1585-1590) kneeling at her feet
with various saints in adoration, among whom St.
Catherine of Siena and St.
Dominic can be distinguished in the foreground.
The central scene is Surrounded
by the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, the Last
Supper appears at the bottom
and the Angelic Paradise at the top of the frame,
while in the corners are the
four evangelists followed by two other

compartments with the apostles Peter and Paul. In relation to the examples cited, the two refined miniatures of the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Crowning with Thorns are works from the artist's full maturity, datable to the first decade of the 17th century, characterized by formal simplification and pure colors in the workmanship of the clothes which stand out against the ivory complexions of the figures. Among the numerous motifs comparable to those of other miniatures by Francesco da Castello, the small medallions with the Evangelists barely outlined on a gold background, closely recall the miniatures, of reduced dimensions, inserted in the compartments of the frame of the small altar with the Mysteries of the Rosary, as well as those of another small painting with compartments with the Tree of Jesse preserved in the Valencia Institute of Don Juan de Madrid, of which there is another period version earlier and with a marked Flemish influence with a reliquary frame currently in the Museum of Fine Arts in Valencia. In addition, another version of the Crowning with Thorns, rectangular in format and slightly weaker in workmanship, was sold at Christie's with an erroneous attribution to Giovanni Battista Castello the Genoese, although the miniature must certainly be attributed to the "Romanized" Flemish master Francesco da Castello. . Thanks to Ms. Elena De Laurentiis, PhD, University of Genoa, for carrying out the study.

· Size: 23,5x1,5x28,5 cms