



Engraved Champlevé Enamel Crucifix. Limoges, France, Circa 1200.



16 200 EUR

Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Copper

Description

Engraved Champlevé Enamel Crucifix. Limoges, France, circa 1200. Measurements: 21.2 × 11.7 cm. Copper, engraved and champlevé enamelled, with traces of original gilding. Custom bronze display stand included. This cruciform copper plaque is decorated in champlevé enamel with engraved figurework and retains traces of its original gilding. Executed in a typically Limousin palette of cobalt blue, emerald green, ochre yellow, white, red, and black, the composition centres on a depiction of the crucified Christ engraved directly onto the copper surface. Christ is shown in the *Christus patiens* mode, his head inclined gently to the right, eyes closed, with fine engraved lines delineating the ribs, abdomen, and musculature. His arms are extended across the horizontal beam and his feet placed side-by-side

Dealer

Belle Histoire

Early European sculpture, works of art and jewellery

Tel : +44 (0) 7906 300197

58 Davies Street

London W1K 5LP

on a low suppedaneum. He wears a long, flowing perizonium with carefully rendered pleats, and is framed by a cruciform halo enamelled in radial segments of turquoise, red, black, yellow, and white. The terminal above bears the gilded monogram "IHS". The surrounding field is filled with circular and lozenge-shaped champlevé motifs, arranged symmetrically along the arms and shaft of the cross. Small drilled holes indicate the plaque was originally affixed--likely as part of a processional cross, altar cross, or book cover.

The reverse is plain, as is typical for such mountable elements. Iconographic and

Typological Context This crucifix belongs to an early group of Limoges enamels in which the figure of Christ is engraved into the metal ground, rather than cast in relief or composed of enamel.

This typology predates the more common later 13th-century format in which fully modelled gilt-copper Christ figures were applied to enamelled plaques. The present work is a rare example in which the entire figure is incised into the copper substrate, rather than rendered in enamel or with separately applied head or torso.

Nonetheless, its overall design and proportions closely mirror a group of crucifix plaques produced around 1200 and associated with the abbey of Grandmont. In particular, the object aligns compositionally with two celebrated examples:

- o Central Plaque of a Cross, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, c. 1185-95 (inv. 17.190.409a; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917). The figure of Christ is rendered in champlevé enamel within an engraved outline, the composition closely matching the present crucifix. See *Enamels of Limoges*, no. 62, pp. 232-33.
- o Central Plaque of a Cross, Musée du Louvre, Paris, c. 1185-95 (inv. OA 7284). The Christ figure is similarly composed in champlevé enamel with analogous anatomy, pose, and facial orientation. See *Enamels of Limoges*, no. 65, p. 237. Perhaps the closest technical parallel is:
- o Book Cover: Crucifixion, Musée du Louvre, Paris, c. 1210-30 (inv. OA 673). In this work, the

figure of Christ is engraved onto the metal plaque--exactly as in the present example--while the head is separately cast and applied. The body follows the same elongated form, with similar rib delineation and long perizonium. See *Enamels of Limoges*, no. 87, p. 280. Together, these works demonstrate a consistent Limousin crucifixion idiom around 1200, in which anatomical stylisation, linear incision, and bold enamel palette converge in devotional metalwork of refined liturgical function. The present piece is significant for preserving the early engraved variant in its entirety, without later additions or reconfiguration. Comparisonso Sotheby's, London, *Old Master Sculpture & Works of Art*, 10 December 2015, lot 304. A nearly identical crucifix from the Keir Collection, with engraved corpus, enamelled cruciform halo, identical iconography, and similar dimensions. Formerly in the collections of Dr. Philipp Lederer, Ernst and Marthe Kofler-Truniger, and Edmund de Unger. Sold Sotheby's New York, *The Keir Collection of Medieval Works of Art*, 20 November 1997, lot 71.

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/old-master-sculpture-art-115233/lot.304.html>
o The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Central Plaque of a Cross*, c. 1185-95. Inv. 17.190.409a. Christ engraved within an enamelled silhouette; nearly identical proportions and facial expression. (*Enamels of Limoges*, no. 62, pp. 232-33). o Musée du Louvre, Paris, *Crucifix Plaque*, c. 1185-95. Inv. OA 7284. Similar anatomy and stylised engraving of the perizonium. (*Enamels of Limoges*, no. 65, p. 237). o Musée du Louvre, Paris, *Book Cover: Crucifixion*, c. 1210-30. Inv. OA 673. Christ engraved into the copper with separately cast head. Very closely related in technique. (*Enamels of Limoges*, no. 87, p. 280). o Musée du Louvre, Paris, *Death of the Virgin*, c. 1200. Inv. MRR 243. Included for compositional and palette comparisons, showing similar enamel work in circular fields. (*Enamels of Limoges*, no. 78, pp.

266-67).