



PROANTIC

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Silver-gilt And Enamel Figure Of A Sailor From A Nef. German, Early 17th Century

1 280 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Vermeil



Description

Silver-gilt and Enamel Figure of a Sailor from a Nef German (Augsburg or Nuremberg), early 17th century, c. 1600-1630 Materials and techniqueCast silver, parcel-gilt and enamelled in polychrome, with twisted silver wire rope.

MeasurementsHeight: 5.3 cmWeight: 31.75

grams DescriptionA finely cast and parcel-gilt silver figure of a sailor, originally forming part of the deck ornamentation of a Renaissance nef. The mariner is modelled in lively stance, holding a coiled rope in both hands which falls in a naturalistic spiral at his feet. He wears a brimmed and gilt-edged cap, a red enamelled doublet with chased detail, and voluminous green enamelled trunk-hose, his boots and gloves parcel-gilt. The enamelling is preserved with vivid translucency, showing minor surface wear and losses

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commensurate with age. The rope is separately made, formed from twisted silver wire, and held within the sailor's hands. Context and interpretation

Figures of this type once animated the decks, rigging and crows' nests of elaborate silver-gilt nefs, produced as centrepieces for the princely table. Nefs served multiple ceremonial roles: as extravagant salt cellars, drinking vessels, or automata propelled along the banquet table to deliver wine to guests. Beyond their function, they were symbols of maritime power, dynastic prestige, and the theatre of courtly display. The present sailor, engaged in handling the rigging, would have stood among a full crew of similarly enamelled figures, some striking bells, others manning ropes or climbing shrouds, transforming the nef into a miniature ship brought to life for festive occasions.

Comparisons

British Museum, The Mechanical Galleon by Hans Schlottheim, Augsburg, 1580-1590 (inv. 1866,1030.1), with deck figures of sailors.

Victoria and Albert Museum, nef by Esaias zur Linden, Nuremberg, before 1628 (inv. M.425-1956), with enamelled mariners.

Victoria and Albert Museum, nef, Regensburg, c. 1610 (inv. M.15-1954), with related figures.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ship (Nef), Nuremberg, c. 1609-1620 (inv. 17.190.319), showing similarly enamelled crew.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ship (Nef), Augsburg, Heinrich Winterstein, c. 1620 (inv. 17.190.318).

British Museum, nef, France/Switzerland, c. 1530 with later additions (inv. AF.3059).