



Early 18th-century Russian Icon, Volga Masters (circle) The Crucifixion



2 200 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Bon état

Width : 15

Height : 28

Description

This exquisite and exceedingly rare early 18th-century Russian Staurotek icon depicts The Crucifixion of Christ with an assemblage of saints, together with a 19th-century copper-cast eight-pointed cross, inserted in the central recess. Due to the exceptional nature of this piece, we consulted Ilya Kushnirskiy, the Director of the Russian Icon Collection, who in turn contacted Anastasia V. Likhenko, Curator at the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Ms Likhenko kindly provided a detailed essay, in which she concluded that "this Staurotek, with its copper-cast cross, possesses significant historical, artistic, and collector's value." Her paper will be included with the sale. Staurotek icons, also known as Staurotheke, are specific to Eastern Orthodox Christianity and often depict a Crucifixion scene,

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with an elaborately decorated cross set within the image. Popular during the 18th and 19th centuries, metal icons offered both portability and durability, enabling the owner to carry a token of their faith at all times. They often survived continual use and, as such, were passed down through generations of the same family. Here, in this early example, the figures are especially finely rendered and include, from left to right, a woman in a pink maphorion, the Mother of God, St. John the Theologian in a pink himation, and St. Longinus in a silver armour and a green tunic. They're standing before a view of Jerusalem, and beneath a greenish sky with two seraphim and 'luminaries' (the sun and moon). It's extraordinary that the original gilding is still present on the robes of the saints and the wings of the seraphim, while the armour of St. Longinus retains its original silver. The cross itself is cast in copper and depicts Christ's crucifixion with various associated symbolism. Above, is the image of God, together with a dove, to represent the Holy Spirit. At the foot lies the skull of Adam. The various inscriptions have been translated in Ms Likhenko's paper, which also contains an attribution as follows: "The elegance of proportions, the incredible subtlety of the painting, and the unique work with gold and silver indicate that the master who painted the scene of the Crucifixion from this Stavroteka was well acquainted with high-class examples of the Volga, and possibly Moscow art (for example, the Yaroslavl icon of the Crucifixion from the middle of the 17th century in the Andrei Rublev Museum, Moscow, or the Yaroslavl Crucifixion from the 1680s in a private collection, Moscow)."

Medium: Tempera on wood with silver and gilt
Overall size: 6" x 11" / 15cm x 28cm
Year of creation: c. 1720
Provenance: With Richardson & Kailas, Specialist in Icons (2001) / Private collection, UK.
Condition: Cleaned. Areas of fine and settled craquelure. The paint layer is stable. Various scuffs, abrasions and losses as expected given its use.

Our references: BRY2091

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