



## View Of An Italian Port, Panel In Scagliole, Italy, Mid-18th Century



5 500 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Other

Width : 22 cm

Height : 18 cm

### Description

This exquisite port scene in scagliola, created in the 18th century in Italy, embodies the refined aesthetics of Grand Tour art and the technical excellence of Italian workshops of the period. Blending decorative art with illusionistic painting, the composition presents a sunlit harbor animated by picturesque figures, coastal architecture, and graceful sailing vessels. The balanced composition, delicate treatment of light, and harmonious tonal palette lend the scene both a lively rhythm and a contemplative atmosphere. Such idealized visions of the Mediterranean world were highly prized by 18th-century European collectors,

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inspired by a classical and pastoral imagination. Scagliola--a decorative technique developed in Italy in the 17th century--was devised to imitate marble and hardstone inlays using a mixture of plaster, glue, and natural pigments, then polished to achieve a lustrous, stone-like finish. The technique allows for remarkably pictorial effects, offering a richness of detail, subtle coloration, and luminosity that neither painting nor traditional marquetry can fully replicate. In the hands of highly skilled artisans, scagliola reached a striking level of refinement here: the perspective, the figures, and the water reflections all point to the expertise of a masterful workshop.

The flourishing of scagliola in Tuscany is closely linked to the activity of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, founded in Florence in 1588 by Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici. While the institution was originally established for the intricate inlay work of hardstones (*commesso di pietre dure*), it also fostered the development of scagliola as a more affordable but equally virtuosic alternative. By the mid-17th century, artists such as Enrico Hugford--a Camaldolese monk and pioneering figure in the field--had introduced a painterly visual language into scagliola, combining architectural motifs, idealized landscapes, and allegorical scenes. These works were destined for a cultivated aristocratic clientele, both Italian and international, often connected to the cultural circuit of the Grand Tour. The style, subject matter, and craftsmanship of the present panel suggest a strong link to this Florentine tradition, which reached its artistic zenith between 1720 and 1780.

Such panels were typically intended to decorate aristocratic interiors, often incorporated into tabletops, consoles, or presented as independent works of art, as in this case. They reflect the elite taste for visual illusion, the evocation of travel, and the celebration of the Italian landscape. Remarkably well preserved, this piece offers a window onto the idealized and picturesque world of Mediterranean ports--hubs of trade, culture, and exchange.