



PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

The Death Of Abel, 1799



6 500 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Très bon état

Description

Trompe-l'oeil painting on copper - French or Genevan School, late 18th century. Oval frame in blackened wood, Directoire-Empire period.

Trompe-l'oeil painting on copper depicting Cain killing his brother Abel, according to the biblical account in Genesis (4:8). The composition shows Cain, naked, brandishing a club above the prostrate Abel, who is pleading with him. The chiaroscuro treatment, the matte finish of the flesh, and the raking light create a striking illusion of bas-relief. The bodies appear sculpted in ivory against a reddish-brown background, in the purest Neoclassical tradition. Frame: original molded blackened wood, as is. Some dents and open at the back. Painting: on copper, in perfect condition, with no varnish damage or lifting of the paint layer. Dated 1799 (Year VII), this work

Dealer

Collection

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belongs to the Directory period, marked by a pronounced taste for moral and heroic subjects inspired by Antiquity. French and Genevan artists, following in the footsteps of David and Stouf, developed illusionistic paintings seeking to imitate antique sculpture. The choice of copper as a support reinforces the preciousness and durability of the work. Museum comparisons: o Jean-Baptiste Stouf (1742-1826), *The Dying Abel*, 1785, marble, Louvre Museum. The original model of this tragic composition inspired numerous pictorial and decorative variations. o Trompe-l'oeil paintings, Gallery of the Candelabra, Vatican Museums (circa 1780-1795). The Vatican wall panels present a similar illusionistic effect: ivory figures on a brown background, imitating antique bas-reliefs. The work under study adopts these conventions in a private cabinet format. Estimate (2025) Given its pictorial quality, its precise dating (1799), and its direct relationship to the models in the Louvre and the Vatican, this trompe-l'oeil painting on copper is estimated at between 5,000 and 8,000 euros, potentially reaching up to 10,000 euros in a museum setting or at a specialized international auction. Summary A rare and refined work from the late 18th century, *The Death of Abel* illustrates the encounter between painting and sculpture during the Neoclassical period. This copper plaque testifies to the virtuosity of illusionist artists capable of reproducing the appearance of marble using only paint. The painters of the Vatican trompe-l'oeil (1785-1788) The trompe-l'oeil in the Gallery of the Candelabra of the Vatican Museums were executed between 1785 and 1788 during the pontificate of Pius VI Braschi (1775-1799), as part of the development of the Museo Pio-Clementino. The architectural project was directed by Michelangelo Simonetti and Giuseppe Camporesi, while the painted decorations were entrusted to several Roman artists specializing in imitations of antique bas-reliefs. o Giuseppe Cades (1750-1799): a Roman Neoclassical painter, he designed several

cartoons of mythological and moral compositions for the illusionistic panels of the gallery. His drawings, executed in tempera in ivory tones on an ochre or reddish-brown background, served as models for decorative painters. o Domenico Corvi (1721-1803): a major figure of the Roman school, he participated in the pictorial program of the Museo Pio-Clementino, notably for the grisaille friezes and scenes in the antique style. Several sources attribute to him the design of the main trompe-l'oeil painted panels depicting ancient gods and heroes. o Bernardino Nocchi (1741-1812) and Tommaso Conca (1734-1822): documented collaborators in the archives of 1787, they contributed to the physical execution of the panels and ornaments with a relief effect. Thus, the Vatican trompe-l'oeil paintings of 1785-1788 resulted from a collaboration between Cades, Corvi, Nocchi, and Conca, under the direction of the architect Michelangelo Simonetti. These works constitute the most direct reference for understanding the style and illusionistic purpose of the 1799 copper painting entitled The Death of Abel.