Vanitas With Skulls And Candle - 17th Century Flemish School



14 500 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting on wood

Width : 33

Height : 42

Description

Oil on panel. Flemish School, 17th century. This intimate work, painted on wood, belongs to the vanitas tradition, an emblematic genre of 17th-century Flemish and Dutch painting. In a Europe marked by religious wars, epidemics, and social upheaval, vanitas paintings offered a space for moral reflection. They were often intended for private interiors where they served as a focus for meditation. Our painting, with its modest size and quiet intensity, fully embodies this function. Vanitas paintings are symbolic still lifes that remind us of the fragility of life and the vanity of earthly possessions. They draw their origins from Christian thought and biblical texts, particularly Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Our composition, austere yet deeply evocative, depicts two skulls on the ground, one of which is

Dealer

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overturned, symbolizing the Fall, and a slender candle in a dark niche. The realism of the rendering, the limited palette, and the flickering light of the flame invite silent meditation on the finitude of existence. Unlike some more opulent vanitas paintings, our work is distinguished by its sobriety, and its starkness reinforces its spiritual significance. The burning candle symbolizes the passage of time, while the rising smoke evokes the soul leaving the body. In representations of this theme during the Classical period, death is not linked to images of horror as it was in the Middle Ages. On the contrary, in vanitas paintings, it is associated with an accumulation of wealth and knowledge, an aspiration to power, and the pursuit of pleasure in a relationship that is often complex. The genre is represented by painters such as Pieter Claesz, Harmen Steenwijck, David Bailly, Edwaert Colyer, and Jan Davidz de Heem. Our precious painting is elegantly set in a 17th-century Venetian frame with an inverted profile, made of blackened and gilded wood. Dimensions: 27 x 17.5 cm - 42 x 33 cm with the frame. Sold with invoice and certificate ofauthenticityBibliography: - Tapié, Alain, Les Vanités dans la peinture au XVIIe siècle, Catalogue de l'exposition du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen en 1990, RMN, 1990 - Schneider, Norbert, The art of the still life, Taschen, 1994 - Kelly, Raymond, To be, or not to be. Four hundred years of Vanitas painting, Flint Institute of Arts, 2006 - Lanini, Karine, Dire la vanité à l'âge classique. Paradoxes of a Discourse, Champion collection Lumière classique 67, 2006. - Van der Willigen A., Meijer Fred G., A dictionary of Dutch and Flemish still-life painters working in oils, 1525-1725, Primavera Press, 2003 - Sterling Charles, Still Life from Antiquity to the Present Day, Pierre Tisne, 1959 - Schneider Norbert, Still Lifes: Reality and Symbolism of Things, Taschen, 1990