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Flemish School, Wooded Landscape With Castle And Hilltop Town By The River, Early 17th Century

4 800 EUR



Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 95cm

Height : 75cm

Description

Flemish School, wooded landscape with castle and hilltop town by the river, early 17th century
Oil on canvas, 75 × 95 cm

This painting opens with a wide wooded landscape, built through the rich variety of greens typical of early 17th-century Flemish Mannerism: cool greens in the foreground, warmer and copper-tinged tones in the mid-ground, and silver-green passages dissolving into the distance. The composition follows the visual language of northern landscape specialists. A river flows at the bottom of the scene, beside a castle placed near the water, while higher up rises a fortified hilltop town with pointed towers, continuous walls and terraced slopes descending toward the valley.

The refinement of the foliage, the depth of the

Dealer

Antichità di Alina

Peintures anciennes - Art nouveau - Art déco,
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atmosphere and the layered construction of the scene indicate the hand of a painter trained in the complex landscape tradition of the Flemish School. The figure of Mary Magdalene, seated near the grotto with her traditional attributes--the skull, the book and the ointment jar--is handled differently: simpler in touch, more direct in modelling. It was very common at the time for landscapes to be executed by a specialist and the figures by another master, and this painting clearly reflects that practice.

This leads to an important question: is the hilltop town a real place or an invention?

The answer falls between the two extremes. The structure of the town, the profile of the castle and the overall organisation of the architecture are strongly connected to the Central European visual vocabulary used at the turn of the 17th century.

The pointed towers, the irregular defensive walls, the stepped slopes and the relationship between the lower castle and the elevated town all recall numerous settlements of historical Bohemia and the former Hungarian territories.

This resemblance naturally evokes the artistic culture that developed in Prague under Emperor Rudolf II, where city views, fortified hill towns and layered territories were frequently combined into complex constructed landscapes. The colour range and the spatial organisation also echo the aesthetic found in the *pietre dure* views produced by Castrucci, whose compositions--though realised in hardstone--share the same fascination for castles set on lower plateaus, elevated towns, winding paths and exceptionally rich tonal transitions of green. This does not imply a direct dependence, but rather that both artists drew from the same Central European visual world.

In these years, some painters and craftsmen could indeed study landscapes and architecture directly--as Castrucci himself occasionally did--yet it was impossible to visit every place represented. Artists therefore combined firsthand observation with the vast repertory of printed views circulating across Europe. The most

influential of these sources was the monumental *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, published in six volumes between 1572 and 1617 and containing over 540 views of cities, castles, river landscapes and ports. To this were added the engraved series by Aegidius Sadeler, Willenberg, Hoefnagel and other masters active between the Low Countries, Germany and Bohemia. These collections formed a true visual library, providing reliable models for towers, walls, bridges, rivers and fortified towns--elements that painters could combine freely.

The present landscape follows precisely this graphic vocabulary:

- the hilltop town mirrors several Bohemian views from the Rudolfine period;
- the castle near the river corresponds to fortified complexes of Central Europe;
- the boats, the wooden bridge with travellers, and the terraced slopes reflect motifs widely disseminated in these prints.

Condition

The painting was acquired with a 19th-century lining, removed during restoration, which revealed the original early canvas with its thick, hand-woven structure and large irregular threads. A small retouch is visible in the upper right corner. The paint surface is otherwise well preserved.

The work belongs to the Flemish School of the early 17th century, informed by the Central European graphic tradition and by the visual culture circulating between the Low Countries, Germany and Prague at the beginning of the Seicento.