Anthonie Victorijns' Circle, The Sense Of Touch (from The Five Senses Series)

1 500 EUR



Signature : CERCLE D'ANTHONIE VICTORIJNS

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting on wood

Length : 34 cm

Height : 23,5 cm

Description

ANTHONIE VICTORIJNS, circleTHE SENSE OF TOUCH (from the series The Five Senses)ANTHONIE VICTORIJNS1612-1656 AntwerpenOil on panel, 23.5 × 34 cm / 9.25 × 13.4 inwith frame: 27 × 38 cm / 10.6 × 15 inOld yellowed varnish; minor age-related wear.PROVENANCE: Private collection, FranceThis refined panel belongs to the circle of Anthonie Victorijns (1612-1656) and represents a high-quality repetition of the composition known as The Sense of Touch from the celebrated cycle of The Five Senses. Despite the work's dependence on a known prototype, the execution displays a level of assurance and painterly sensitivity that clearly exceeds the expectations typically associated with commercial copywork. Even beneath the thick, yellowed varnish that

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now softens the tonal values, one can still observe the confident handling of the brush, particularly in the modelling of the sleeves of the figure to the left. The folds are rendered with a striking fluency, suggesting a painter capable of reading form through light, rather than simply replicating outlines.Equally expressive is the standing man with a bandaged arm. His face, vividly characterised and painted with an immediacy reminiscent of Adriaen van Ostade's finest genre types, differs notably from the more rigid treatment of the same figure in the Copenhagen version. The comparison suggests that the present work is not a mechanical replica, but rather an intelligent and sensitive reinterpretation of a composition whose dissemination across Flanders and the Northern Netherlands is well documented.The prototype for this painting is preserved in the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (inv. KMS771), under the title A Surgeon Operating on a Foot. The Five Senses: The Sense of Touch. Executed between 1637 and 1656, the Copenhagen panel forms part of a surviving ensemble of three allegories from the original cycle, all ultimately derived from designs by Adriaen van Ostade, conceived in the late 1630s. Of these three panels, only one bears the signature "A. Victorijns," while the remaining two are attributed to him with caution -- a reflection of the uneven quality traditionally associated with his name and the likely involvement of several hands within the broader Antwerp copying culture.The history of Victorijns's attribution is among the most instructive in the study of seventeenth-century genre painting. After Kurt Freise published the signed Copenhagen panel in 1910, he proceeded to assemble an extensive oeuvre around the painter, mistakenly incorporating works by other Flemish imitators of Ostade. The error was reinforced when a painting by Bartholomeus Molenaer in a Copenhagen private collection was misread as a second signed piece by Victorijns. Hofstede de Groot, following his systematic

method, expanded the corpus further, listing over one hundred works under Victorijns's name. Only in 1932 did Gustav Glück correctly identify Victorijns as an Antwerp, rather than Dutch, master and situate him within the bustling industry of genre painting copies that flourished in Antwerp during the mid-seventeenth century.It is now clear that the so-called "Victorijns group" consists of works by several copyists of varying ability. Victorijns himself was active as a wijnmeester in the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke between 1640 and 1641, and his participation in the Antwerp market for copies is unquestionable. Yet the differences in quality among paintings attributed to him indicate that multiple workshops contributed to the replication of popular Dutch compositions -- particularly those by Ostade, whose small, lively genre scenes were highly sought after across Europe. In this context, the present panel stands above the more routine examples: its confident modelling and characterful facial types place it closer to the signed Copenhagen panel than to the weaker associated works.The popularity of Ostade in Antwerp reflects the broader interaction between Dutch and Flemish traditions. Although rooted in distinct artistic cultures, both developed from the pictorial legacy of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and shared a common interest in everyday life, moral commentary and atmospheric space. In such compositions, light -- soft, modulated and psychologically suggestive -- becomes a primary structural tool. The exchange of motifs, workshop practices and compositional solutions across the Scheldt is therefore not surprising but characteristic of the deeply interconnected visual world of the seventeenth century.As an allegory of the Sense of Touch, the scene presents a surgical or barber-surgeon's procedure, a conventional metaphor for tactile perception in early modern visual culture. Yet the painting carries additional layers of meaning. The surgeon wears a fantastic, almost theatrical costume, sharply contrasting with the attire of the

surrounding figures. This detail is far from incidental. It directly echoes the pictorial inventions of Pietro della Vecchia (called Muttoni), the Venetian master known for his depictions of charlatans, false prophets and impostors, often clad in exotic or anachronistic garments. Such costumes signalled deception, foreignness and the precarious boundary between knowledge and trickery.The present painter clearly understood these associations. The surgeon's attire transforms the ostensibly straightforward genre motif into a reflection on trust, authority and suspicion -- themes deeply embedded in early modern attitudes toward itinerant medical practitioners. The figure also evokes a broader visual archetype: a silhouette that would, in the centuries to follow, become one of the most recognisable embodiments of seduction and moral ambiguity in European culture, without the need to name it directly.In this way, the painting reveals itself as more than a simple workshop repetition. It is a richly considered interpretation of a composition that circulated widely across Northern Europe, executed with skill and sensitivity, and enriched by an awareness of the symbolic and cultural resonances embedded within the iconography. The panel stands as a compelling witness to the Antwerp copying tradition, to the shifting boundaries between Dutch and Flemish genre imagery, and to the enduring complexity of the allegory of the senses.