



PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Large Terracotta Relief Of The Flight Into Egypt - Lombardy, First Half Of 17th Century



35 000 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Terracotta

Width : 85

Height : 91

Description

Large Terracotta relief of the flight into Egypt Lombardy, first half of 17th century Painted terracotta 91 x 85 x 11,5 cm This event in the early life of Christ is recounted in the Gospel of Saint Matthew (2: 13-15). Joseph was warned in a dream that Herod was intent on killing the child Jesus and so he took Mary and the baby to Egypt for safety. This episode, both poignant and hopeful, has been portrayed many times. The artist does not deviate from traditional iconography: Maria seated in a frontal position carrying the Child occupies the central position; the Angel assist in guiding the Holy Family and Joseph, behind the donkey closes the composition; the procession is followed by angels between the clouds. The palm tree, symbol of fertility in Egypt, is the miracle tree of the desert

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regions. The baby Jesus is represented as a newborn baby carried in the arms of his mother. Unlike other episodes in the Childhood cycle, where Jesus is shown as an active subject; here, on the contrary, it is represented as a designated target and becomes an object in relation to the forces which surround it. The main couple is the Virgin and the Child and the asymmetry is total between the four protagonists of the Flight: Mary represents the triumphant aspect of the episode, Joseph its share of humility and obedience; one is covered with noble linens, the other with rustic rags; in a frontal position and in motion on the donkey's back, Marie and the Child share a fusional relationship. It is interesting that the artist chose to represent Maria with the Child almost in the round; Joseph, in profile is also carved in very strong relief, his head completely detached from the background while for the Angel, the palm tree and the clouds, the artist has chosen a more delicate relief. The backgrounds are treated in antique relief and the foreground figures, almost detached, in the round. The theme of flight, both religious and universal, is an empathetic subject capable of arousing feelings of pity among the faithful. This large high relief shows affinities in style and in composition with the Flight into Egypt sculpted by Gian Andrea Biffi for the apse of the Duomo in Milan, of which exist a terracotta version listed by Federico Zeri. We find in both works a balanced and solemn composition, where emotions are controlled and the objective is to highlight reason instead of senses. Imbued with the Mannerist ideal of grace, these works are marked by the subtle penetration of the ancient world, reposed as nostalgia for solemn beauty. This trend reflects the political situation in the north of the country and more generally in the entire peninsula. The Milanese and Lombard scene of the second half of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century must be analyzed taking into account the particular position of the city: if for the Spanish Empire it represented a strategic military outpost,

it was at the center of the conflict between the Catholic Church and the Reformed Church. As a result, the greatest contribution has been given by religious art in the face of an inferior civil artistic and architectural production. By the last decades of the 16th century the refined, courtly style known as Mannerism had ceased to be an effective means of expression, and its inadequacy for religious art was being increasingly felt in artistic circles. Renouncing the independence acquired by humanism, for its autonomous and purely aesthetic ends, art was reduced to its social and religious function. It was once again becoming a "committed" art, a means at the service of a cause. The Roman Catholic Church after the Council of Trent (1545-63) adopted a propagandistic stance in which art was to serve as a means of extending and stimulating the public's faith in the church. To this end the church adopted a conscious artistic program which was paradoxically both sensuous and spiritual; while a naturalistic treatment rendered the religious image more accessible to the average churchgoer. The arts present an unusual diversity in the Baroque period, chiefly because currents of naturalism and classicism coexisted and intermingled with the typical Baroque style. The Church intended to restore her unity and the collective sense of the faithful through a tightening of discipline, which required a severe and sober style. The classicized tendency that evolved from this program was characterized by simple and balanced compositions imbued by classical sobriety, more delicate in form and restrained in expression. This high relief is a rare example of the idealistic classicizing style which during the XVII century formed a counterpart for the more emotional and theatrical Baroque sculptures.