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Nicolas Loir (paris, 1624 - 1679) - Saint Mary Magdalene, Penitent - Unpublished Painting



7 995 EUR

Signature : Nicolas Loir (Paris, 1624 - 1679)

Period : 17th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Oil painting

Width : 71

Height : 58

Description

Nicolas Loir (Paris, 1624 - 1679)
Saint Mary Magdalene Penitent
Oil on canvas, 58 x 71 cm
Provenance:
Private collection
This painting represents an important discovery: a previously unpublished work by Nicolas Loir, recently identified and studied, which enriches the still relatively limited corpus of this major artist of the reign of Louis XIV. Long overshadowed by some of his contemporaries, Nicolas Loir was nevertheless one of the most active history painters of his time. Trained by Simon Vouet and later by Sébastien Bourdon, he was profoundly influenced by his stay in Rome, where he had the opportunity to admire works by Nicolas Poussin.

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The composition depicts Mary Magdalene withdrawn into a grotto, absorbed in fervent meditation. Her gaze lifted toward the heavens, her slightly parted lips, and the hand pressed to her breast convey a deeply interiorized devotion. The crucifix she delicately holds reinforces the contemplative character of the scene. At her side, the skull resting upon a book recalls the vanity of earthly things, while the jar of ointment affirms her traditional iconographic identity.

The female figure, draped in a broad golden mantle with supple, luminous folds, stands out nobly against the dark background of the cave. Loir excels here in the subtle opposition of orientations: the torso, almost frontal, contrasts with the oblique extension of the legs, creating a graceful and animated movement. This elegant construction, characteristic of the artist, lends the saint a presence that is both human and idealized.

The upper part of the composition opens onto a cloud of seraphim with childlike faces, while a kneeling angel presents the jar of ointment. These winged figures testify to Nicolas Loir's predilection for putti, a theme he developed extensively in his decorative and engraved works. Their presence establishes a mystical dialogue between the penitent and the celestial realm, enhancing the spiritual dimension of the painting.

The soft, enveloping light models the flesh with delicacy and animates the draperies with warm reflections. The distant landscape, rendered in bluish tones, opens the scene toward infinity and contrasts with the intimacy of the foreground.

The ensemble reveals a painter of great mastery, capable of uniting narrative clarity, chromatic harmony, and devotional intensity.

The attribution has been confirmed through an in-depth study, and the scholarly note written by François Marandet is available upon request . We warmly thank François Marandet for his decisive expertise in recognizing this work, which constitutes a significant addition to the rediscovery of Nicolas Loir.