



Workshop Of Francesco Cairo (santo Stefano In Brivio, 1607 - Milan, 1665), The Penitent Magdalene



6 000 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 48

Height : 60

Description

Workshop of Francesco Cairo (Santo Stefano in Brivio, 1607 - Milan, 1665) Penitent Mary Magdalene Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 cm With frame, 75 x 65 cm The work in question, depicting the Penitent Magdalene, can be attributed to the workshop of Francesco Cairo, born in 1607 in Santo Stefano in Brivio, a figure who perfectly embodied the Baroque artist suspended between existential angst and great technical mastery. Raised under the tutelage of Pier Francesco Morazzone (1573-1626) in Milan, he absorbed from his master a taste for dramatic gesture and vivid colors that characterized his early works, which were already fully mature by 1635. To this legacy were added the teachings of Cerano (1573-1632), who pushed him toward a style of painting charged with an almost feverish

Dealer

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suffering, a pathos that shines through vividly in his paintings, such as in the various versions of Herodias or, indeed, of Mary Magdalene. These works, steeped in greenish tones and atmospheres with a somber backdrop, seem to be the pictorial reflection of the collective trauma of the 1630 plague, an event that profoundly marked his life and drove him to flee to Turin. It was precisely in the Savoy capital that Cairo managed to transform his inner torment into a highly successful career, becoming a court painter as early as 1633. Although his early years in Turin were still dominated by symbolic subjects such as Christ in the Garden, his contact with the nobility and his exposure to Caravaggio's naturalism and the dynamism of Tenzio da Varallo led his art toward a new evolution. He thus began to explore a softer style of painting, influenced by Genoese and Flemish masters such as Van Dyck, which led him to lighten his palette toward more melancholic and sensual solutions, similar to those of his contemporary Carlo Francesco Nuvolone. After a brief period in Rome, he spent his mature years between Turin and Milan, where he died in 1665, further refining his style through the study of the great Venetian and Emilian traditions: in the works of his final phase, the youthful intensity gave way to an opulent and sunny color palette, blending the grace of Correggio with the tonal richness of Titian. This Penitent Magdalene stands as an emblematic testament to that Lombard Baroque sensibility that constantly oscillates between the deepest mysticism and a disturbing sensuality. The work belongs to an iconographic vein that Cairo explored with an almost obsessive, serial-like intensity, interpreting the theme of the saint in ecstasy through a stylistic language rich in chiaroscuro drama and physical languor. In this version, Mary Magdalene's face is captured at the culminating moment of spiritual abandonment: her eyes turned toward heaven, her parted lips, and her pale complexion reflect that subtle boundary between the pain of repentance and the

pleasure of divine vision--an emotional tension that closely resembles the autograph versions preserved in prestigious private and public collections, such as that of the Pinacoteca Malaspina in Pavia. Unlike the more composed interpretations of 17th-century Rome, here Cairo's workshop draws on that "pittura di tocco" and the leaden atmospheres typical of the master, where the figure emerges from a dark background that enhances its almost marble-like plasticity. The detail of the chest partially veiled by a transparent gauze and the reclining posture of the clasped hands are not merely aesthetic flourishes, but communicative codes aimed at humanizing the sacred figure, making her accessible and vibrant with a tormented vitality.