



16th Century Ebony Vanity



Description

The work belongs to the late Renaissance tradition of vanitas and memento mori, probably from the late 16th century, circa 1580-1600. The highly expressive treatment of the face, the cut symmetry between flesh and bone, and the almost meditative sobriety of the sculpture evoke those cabinet-of-curiosities objects intended to remind us of the brevity of human life. This carved head in ebony, approximately eleven centimeters high, has a striking presence despite its intimate format. Mounted on a discreet pedestal, it appears like an ancient relic, traversed by time and the memory of men. The dark patina of the material further accentuates its archaic, almost funerary character. The work represents a true vanitas: a silent meditation on the human condition. The left half reveals the face of an emaciated old man,

5 000 EUR

Period : 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Ebony

Width : 7cm

Height : 11cm

Depth : 9cm

Dealer

Mémoires d'un âne

Antiquités-décorations

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marked by deep wrinkles and the exhaustion of years. The eye, still alive, seems to carry the weight of knowledge and experience. The flesh already seems to be withdrawing from the world, revealing under the skin the bony reliefs and fragility of existence, as well as the beginnings of worm-eaten decomposition. Every furrow in the face tells of the slow work of time on man's body. The other half tilts towards the inevitable: the naked skull, devoid of flesh, imposes the ultimate truth of all life. The empty eye socket responds to the still inhabited gaze of the old man, like a dialogue between breath and silence. The transition between the two faces is of great symbolic force: it shows not only death, but the gradual passage of being towards its disappearance. With its austere aesthetic and powerful symbolism, this sculpture is fully in line with the humanist tradition of 16th-century memento mori, where art sought not only to seduce the eye, but to remind everyone of the transience of life and the vanity of earthly things. It is a work of meditation, at once sombre and deeply poetic, where old age and death come together in the same timeless truth. Height with base 21cm