



Allegory Of The Four Elements, Studio Of Jan Brueghel The Younger, Oil On Copper, Antwerp 17th

11 500 EUR



Signature : Atelier de Jan Brueghel le Jeune (Anvers, 1601-1678)

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting on copper

Width : 59 cm (encadré)

Height : 47 cm (encadré)

Description

Allegory of the Four Elements Studio of Jan Brueghel the Younger (Antwerp, 1601-1678) The figures attributed to a student of Frans Francken II (Antwerp, 1581-1642) Antwerp, 17th century This work is sold with a certificate of authenticity guaranteeing its origin, date of execution and attribution to the artist. Click here to see the artwork on our website: <https://www.galerienicolaslente.com/en/allegory-of-the-four-elements-studio-of-jan-brueghel-the-younger-antwerp-17th-century.htm> Oil on copper Dimensions: h. 21 cm, w. 32 cm Mounted in an ebonised wood frame with moulded and guilloché decoration, in period style Framed dimensions: h. 47 cm, w. 59 cm This exquisite oil on copper belongs to the most refined tradition of seventeenth-century Antwerp cabinet painting,

Dealer

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Old Masters from 16th to 18th century

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where a taste for learned allegory is combined with an encyclopaedic vision of nature. The theme of the Four Elements, particularly prized by Flemish collectors, here provides the pretext for a composition of extraordinary decorative richness and naturalistic abundance. At the centre of the composition, four elegantly arranged female figures set within a wooded landscape personify the fundamental elements of the universe. The Nereid Amphitrite, seated beside an overturned vase from which a spring gushes forth, represents Water; the Muse Urania, raising an armillary sphere towards the heavens, symbolises Air and cosmic harmony; the goddess Vesta, holding a flaming torch, embodies Fire; and finally Ceres, accompanied by her traditional cornucopia overflowing with fruits and flowers, personifies Earth and its nourishing bounty. The painting fully reveals the influence of Jan Brueghel the Younger, particularly in its remarkably subtle treatment of landscape. Behind the large central oak, the wooded masses of the middle distance assume distinctly blue-turquoise tones, while the opposite bank gradually dissolves into a bluish-white haze. This delicate atmospheric perspective, inherited from the inventions of his father, Jan Brueghel the Elder, and perpetuated within his workshop, opens the composition onto misty distances and endows this small copper with remarkable depth and spatiality. The richness of the work lies above all in its treatment of a luxuriant natural world, observed with almost miniaturist precision. Vegetation, fruits, vegetables, birds, fish and aquatic creatures all participate in the same encyclopaedic vision of Creation. The delicately nuanced foliage, aquatic plants and grasses along the shore correspond to the abundant harvest of fruits and vegetables displayed in the foreground, while the birds perched upon the dead branch to the left, the waterfowl and the fish inhabiting the pond together form a veritable inventory of fauna. To this ensemble are added, rendered with equal precision, pieces of armour, firearms and a

cannon placed at the feet of Vesta, attributes of the element of Fire, here evoking human activity, metallurgy and the art of forging. Each element is individualised with the utmost care and rendered with exceptional finesse of touch and remarkable chromatic freshness. This skilfully orchestrated accumulation of animals, plants and objects, combining naturalistic observation with learned delight, is characteristic of the studio of Jan Brueghel the Younger and imbues the composition with the distinctive atmosphere of a painted cabinet of curiosities, where the abundance of the natural world becomes a source of contemplation and wonder. The figures, conceived in a more narrative and theatrical spirit, are entrusted to a follower of Frans Francken II, in keeping with the Antwerp workshop practice of paintings executed "à deux mains", whereby a figure painter collaborated with a specialist in landscape and animated still-life elements. The choice of copper as a support contributes greatly to the remarkable quality of the work. Its perfectly smooth surface permits an execution of incomparable delicacy, allowing for an exceptionally precise rendering of plumage, foliage and the innumerable miniature details that animate the scene. Our painting is preserved in an exceptional state of conservation. The palette remains remarkably fresh: the blues and turquoises of the distant landscape, the deep greens of the foliage and the brilliant reds of the draperies, flowers and fruits have retained all of their original intensity. The paint surface is beautifully preserved, allowing an unimpeded appreciation of both the meticulous execution and the chromatic richness of the composition. By virtue of its alluring allegorical subject, the precious quality of its execution on copper and the extraordinary profusion of its naturalistic details, this work constitutes an ideal collector's piece for the discerning connoisseur of seventeenth-century Antwerp painting. Intended for close contemplation, it reveals new subtleties at every glance and condenses, within its intimate

dimensions, the entire poetic, learned and wonderfully abundant universe of the studio of Jan Brueghel the Younger. Related Works
Sotheby's, London, 10 July 2014, oil on canvas, 51 × 65 cm, Jan Brueghel the Younger & Frans Francken II
Sotheby's, London, 7 December 2001, oil on panel, 52.3 × 67.6 cm, Jan Brueghel the Younger & Frans Francken II
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Jan Brueghel the Younger and Frans Francken II, oil on panel, 52.7 × 81.3 cm (inv. 71.PB.28), circa 1635
Staatliches Museum Schwerin, studio of Frans Francken II, oil on panel, 31 × 42 cm.