



Last Quarter Of The 16th Century, Adoration Of The Shepherds



6 000 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Copper

Width : 26

Height : 33

Description

Last quarter of the 16th century Adoration of the Shepherds Oil on copper, 33 x 26 cm - with frame, 57 x 51 cm The Adoration of the Shepherds is the subject depicted in this small and precious oil-on-copper painting, executed in the final years of the 16th century by a painter active within the circle of the great Northern Mannerist masters who had settled between Venice and Prague. The scene is crowded with sacred and angelic figures arranged in a tightly packed pyramidal composition: the Virgin, cloaked in pink and deep blue, holds the Infant who has just been laid on white swaddling clothes, while Saint Joseph looks on thoughtfully behind her; all around, a chorus of angelic musicians and shepherds bearing offerings enlivens the composition, culminating at the top with the figure of the announcing angel

Dealer

Ars Antiqua srl

Antiquaire généraliste

Tel : +39 02 29529057

Via C. Pisacane, 55 - 57

Milano 20129

unfurling a golden scroll, illuminated by a supernatural light that pierces the leaden sky. In the foreground, two figures depicted in half-length and seen from behind--a kneeling shepherd with a basket of eggs and a young woman--serve as compositional frames that invite the viewer's gaze to become part of the scene, as if he were present at the event himself. This compositional device, as effective as it is rare in late 16th-century painting, derives directly from the work of Hans van Aachen, and in particular from his *Adoration of the Magi*, now housed at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, where similar figures seen from behind in the foreground create the same effect of directly involving the viewer. It is no coincidence that van Aachen replicated this very same invention--identical in composition but in a small format on copper--in the *Adoration of the Magi* now housed at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna: it is precisely the small format and the technique on copper--shared with the painting under consideration here--that attest to a widespread practice among the painters of the Prague court, who were accustomed to creating small cabinet pieces intended for discerning collectors. While the compositional structure thus draws on van Aachen, the painterly execution--characterized by soft brushstrokes, luminous skin tones, and a warm, enamel-like color palette--refers more directly to the style of Hans Rottenhammer, whose figurative vocabulary is here assimilated with remarkable fidelity. A comparison with works such as the **Rest on the Flight into Egypt** housed at the Gemäldegalerie in Kassel, or with the two versions of the **Adoration of the Shepherds** at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich--one with a horizontal composition, the other vertical, both on copper--reveals clear affinities in the treatment of the angelic figures, the flowing drapery, and the luminous construction of the nocturnal scenes. Rottenhammer's **Holy Family**, also on copper and housed in the same Munich collection, shares with our painting that atmosphere suspended

between intimate devotion and decorative splendor typical of late international Mannerist collection painting. The painting is set in an antique carved and gilded wooden frame dating from shortly after the work was created, whose outer profile is enlivened by a dense pattern of twisted ribbon-like scrollwork that creates a vibrant play of light and shadow along its entire perimeter. In the central band, at the corners, and at the midpoints of the sides, striking geometric rosettes in relief stand out, set within fan-shaped cartouches and arranged on a ground worked with a burin that enhances the brilliance of the gilding, lending the whole a preciousness that complements the pictorial refinement of the small copper panel.