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Caltagirone, Late 18th Century, Bongiovanni Vaccaro Workshop, Nativity Scene Figures



2 800 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Terracotta

Height : 30

Description

Caltagirone, late 18th century, Bongiovanni Vaccaro workshop Nativity scene figures depicting a woodcutter and a chicken seller. Painted terracotta, height approx. 30 cm. The two polychrome terracotta figures presented here belong to the famous Bongiovanni Vaccaro workshop in Caltagirone and depict two figures from Sicilian folk life intended for the Nativity scene: a woman carrying firewood and a poultry seller. The woman carries a bundle of branches--a gesture of daily toil--hoisted with one arm above her head, which is covered by a handkerchief, while her other hand clutches additional firewood. Her costume, carefully painted in shades of red, green, and white, reveals the workshop's technical mastery in rendering drapery through thin layers of clay superimposed

Dealer

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on the modeled body. The male figure on the right, meanwhile, carries a basket of farmyard animals and holds a bird in his free hand, in a natural and spontaneous pose that conveys the dynamism of the bustling market. Giacomo Bongiovanni is considered the first great master of the Caltagirone nativity scene tradition, dedicated to the production of clay and terracotta figurines between the 18th and 19th centuries. He opened his workshop in 1794 and introduced a significant innovation to the traditional technique, consisting of rendering the drapery with thin sheets of clay cut and arranged over the modeled bodies to resemble actual clothing. With remarkable psychological insight, he captured in his terracotta groups--realistically colored with tempera and oil paints--the characters of village life: peasants, beggars, street musicians, and nativity scene shepherds. Over time, he brought his nephew Giuseppe Vaccaro into the business, so the workshop took the name Bongiovanni Vaccaro, and the works often bear the joint signature "Gia-Giu." Giuseppe expanded the repertoire to include cheerful themes he had learned during a stay in Naples, and the workshop gained recognition throughout Europe.