



Naples, 18th Century, Nativity Scene Figures



1 800 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Terracotta

Height : 19-35

Description

Naples, 18th century Nativity scene figures Painted terracotta and fabric, height approx. approx. 19-35 cm. The two figures depicted here belong to the great tradition of late 18th-century Neapolitan nativity scene art, one of the highest achievements of this art form in Europe. The first figure, larger and set on a wooden base, depicts an elegant woman--likely a noblewoman or an allegorical figure--dressed in a red silk gown and wrapped in a wide white cloak trimmed with precious golden lace. Her face, sculpted with great refinement in painted terracotta, conveys a pensive and contemplative expression, while her articulated hands seem to be making a gesture of offering or wonder. The second figure, smaller in size, depicts a commoner--a shepherd or a street vendor--dressed in rustic attire consisting of a fur

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jacket, dark trousers, and rough sandals. He carries a woven leather bag slung over his shoulder, and his downward-bending, almost reverent posture conveys immediacy and narrative vitality. These works are part of the flourishing tradition of Neapolitan nativity scene craftsmanship, which, under the reign of Charles III of Bourbon and later his son Ferdinand IV, reached heights of extraordinary artistic quality. During the 18th century, the Neapolitan nativity scene evolved from a simple devotional representation into a fully-fledged, independent artistic genre, engaging the workshops of the city's finest sculptors, painters, tailors, and goldsmiths. The figures were constructed with an internal wire frame covered in burlap, with heads, hands, and feet made of finely painted terracotta, and garments made of fine fabrics--silks, velvets, and lace--often tailored by specialized seamstresses. The result was an extraordinary fusion of sculpture, painting, and the decorative arts that made each figure a unique and one-of-a-kind work of art, a faithful reflection of Neapolitan society of the time in all its social stratification.