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Mattia Traverso (genoa, 1885-1956), St. Francis Preaching To The Birds

2 800 EUR



Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 153

Height : 117

Description

Mattia Traverso (Genoa, 1885 - 1956) St. Francis Preaching to the Birds Oil on canvas, 117 x 153 cm Signed and dated lower left: Mattia Traverso 1933 Mattia Traverso's artistic journey, which began in Genoa in 1885, finds in the painting *St. Francis Preaching to the Birds* a synthesis of his solid academic training and a profound devotional sensibility, cultivated during his extended stays in Rome. The son of a goldsmith, Traverso trained at the Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti, distinguishing himself early on with a talent that enabled him to win, in 1911, the prestigious Brignole Sale De Ferrari scholarship. The essay that earned him this recognition was *Salome*, a work in which the anatomical rendering and sensuality of the subject already foreshadowed the mastery of the human figure

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that would later become the cornerstone of his subsequent body of work, spanning both secular and sacred themes. Thanks to the scholarship funds, the painter was able to settle in Rome, immersing himself in an artistic milieu that led him to specialize in large-scale religious painting and to experiment with the fresco technique, while never abandoning portraiture and genre scenes. In the painting examined here, Traverso tackles one of the most famous themes in Franciscan iconography, drawn directly from St. Bonaventure's **Legenda Maior**, which recounts how the "Poverello" of Assisi, near Bevagna, addressed the birds, urging them to praise the Creator. A comparison with Giotto's famous precedent in the Upper Basilica of Assisi seems inevitable and essential to understanding the evolution of the figurative language: while Giotto created a monumental and didactic synthesis, capturing the event within a spatial framework defined by a few symbolic elements, Traverso immerses the scene in a lush, light-filled natural setting. Saint Francis is placed at the center of the composition, wrapped in his humble brown habit, his face marked by an expression of serene ecstasy and his hands extended in a gesture of welcome. Around him, a multitude of birds of various species crowd the ground and the branches of the trees, rendered with an almost ornithological precision that attests to the painter's attention to natural detail. In the background, on the right, two of the saint's companions can be seen observing the miracle with a mixture of wonder and devotion, set against a hilly landscape that fades toward the horizon beneath a clear sky. Traverso's ability to move freely between different genres is confirmed by a comparison with his other major works: while spiritual lyricism prevails here, in the **Allegory of Work (May Day)**, housed at the Gallery of Modern Art in Genoa, the artist demonstrates a sculptural power and a social tension of a different nature, while maintaining the solid draftsmanship he acquired during his

years in Genoa. His body of work for ecclesiastical commissions is vast and places him at the forefront in numerous locations, as demonstrated by the *Madonna at the Liberation of the Elect* at the Diocese of Ferrara, where compositional complexity is combined with a striking exploration of light. However, it is in the Liguria region that Traverso left the most extensive body of his religious art, filling the churches of Genoa and the region with paintings of remarkable emotional impact. Consider *St. Jerome: Emiliani Presents the Orphans to the Madonna*, where the theme of charity is rendered in an accessible yet formally rigorous style, or *The Samaritan Woman at the Well*, a work in which the sacred dialogue is infused with a sense of everyday life rich in symbolic meaning. Furthermore, *St. Bernard Celebrates Mass and Saves Souls* reaffirms his skill in orchestrating complex group scenes, where the supernatural bursts into reality with a naturalness that is a hallmark of his entire body of work. *St. Francis Preaching to the Birds* fits perfectly into this catalog, representing a balance between traditional hagiographic narrative and a modern painterly rendering, capable of conveying the Franciscan message of universal harmony through a skillful use of color and atmospheric rendering, confirming Mattia Traverso as one of the most significant and prolific figures in Ligurian painting of the first half of the 20th century.