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17th-century Copper "holy Family" With The Young St. John By Carracci



5 900 EUR

Signature : École de Bologne, début du XVIIe siècle (d'après Carracci)

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting on copper

Diameter : 34,5 x 34,5

Description

Bolognese School, early 17th century
The Holy Family with the Young Saint John
Oil on copper, 34.5 × 34.5 cm
A refined oil painting on copper by the Bolognese school, executed in the early decades of the 17th century and based on a famous composition by Annibale Carracci (1560-1609). The composition, one of the most successful created by the Emilian master, depicts the Virgin and Child, Saint Joseph and the young Saint John in an intimate domestic scene, where the monumentality of the figures is combined with a sense of intense humanity, a hallmark of Carracci-style painting. The work is a faithful interpretation of Annibale's famous composition, retaining its pyramidal structure, the delicate balance between the figures and the interplay of glances that guides the viewer towards the

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emotional centre of the scene, represented by the Infant Jesus. The presence of the young Saint John the Baptist, recognisable by his leather tunic and his gesture of devotion towards Christ, symbolically foreshadows the future Passion. From a stylistic point of view, the painting fully embodies the Bolognese figurative tradition of the early seventeenth century: the softly drawn faces, the volumetric construction of the figures, the warm colour scheme and the diffused light all reflect the artistic language developed by the Carracci and disseminated amongst their wide circle of pupils and followers. The work represents a reworking by a workshop or by a painter trained within the Bolognese academic milieu, capable of assimilating the idealised naturalism promoted by the Accademia degli Incamminati. Annibale Carracci's devotional compositions featuring the Holy Family enjoyed extraordinary popularity between the late 16th and 17th centuries. Alongside his large altarpieces, the painter produced numerous images intended for private devotion, characterised by a rare ability to blend classical monumentality with the natural expression of emotion. This particular model was reproduced in numerous versions, both by the artist himself and by his workshop and followers, becoming one of the most sought-after subjects amongst aristocratic and ecclesiastical collectors. The success of this composition was also aided by the circulation of engravings based on Annibale's paintings, which contributed to its spread throughout Europe and enabled numerous artists to reinterpret the composition. Versions on precious media, such as copper and stone, were intended for particularly refined patrons, often for private oratories, study rooms or collectors' cabinets, where they were appreciated both for their subject matter and for the quality of their execution. Painting on copper plate was one of the most sought-after techniques in European painting between the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The metal support,

perfectly smoothed and devoid of the texture of canvas or the porosity of wood, allowed for an extremely fine application of colour, resulting in compact surfaces, minute details and a distinctive chromatic brilliance. Copper also offered considerable structural stability, reducing the risk of warping and making it ideal for small and medium-sized works intended for private collections. Precisely because of the cost of the material and the aesthetic qualities it guaranteed, it was widely used in the major Italian schools of the seventeenth century, particularly in the Bolognese, Roman and Flemish circles. The scene depicts one of the most cherished themes of post-Tridentine spirituality. The Virgin occupies the centre of the composition, holding the Child, whilst Saint Joseph, positioned to one side with the Book of the Scriptures, assumes the role of guardian and silent witness to the mystery of the Incarnation. The young Saint John, kneeling, approaches Jesus with an air of adoration and affection, establishing a dialogue that alludes to the future recognition of the Messiah on the banks of the Jordan. The architectural setting, which opens out onto the landscape, helps to expand the narrative space, in keeping with a typically Emilian style, whilst the soft play of light accentuates the intimate and familiar nature of the scene. This painting stands as a significant testament to the influence of Annibale Carracci's innovations on Bolognese figurative art in the early seventeenth century. The quality of the composition, the preciousness of the metal support and the strong connection to one of the Emilian master's most celebrated models make this a work of particular interest.

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