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Mechelen, 1744, Salt And Mustard Shakers, Solid Silver, Malines, Master's Mark: An Anchor



4 250 EUR

Signature : Maître orfèvre à l'ancre

Period : 18th century

Condition : Parfait état

Material : Sterling silver

Description

Pair of salt shaker and mustard pot in solid silver
Mechelen, 1744 - Master silversmith's hallmark: an anchor
A remarkable pair of a salt shaker and a mustard pot, crafted in Mechelen in 1744. Preserved together, the two objects feature exactly the same design and very elaborate engraved decoration. Octagonal in shape, they rest on heavily molded feet. The bodies, with a strongly architectural design, alternate between straight panels and molded projections. Their entire surface is enlivened by an abundant engraved decoration of scrollwork, stylized foliage, fleurons, interlacing, and ironwork motifs, set against finely hatched or dotted backgrounds. The lids, also paneled, are topped with a knob shaped like a small vase. The lid of the salt shaker is perforated with numerous holes

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Affligem 1790

arranged in the center of the plant motif, while the mustard pot features a hinged removable lid and a large, coiled side handle. This combination of an architectural silhouette, bold moldings, and an all-over engraved decoration is particularly characteristic of silverwork from the Southern Netherlands during the first half of the 18th century, approximately between 1715 and 1750. Variations of these tall, faceted models were found at that time in several cities of the Austrian Netherlands. Their ornamentation reflects, in particular, the influence of the French Regency style, whose scrollwork, interlacing, and symmetrical motifs were widely adopted in the decorative arts of our regions. On 18th-century tables, the shaker was used to present and dispense powdered substances, primarily sugar, but also--depending on its use and the type of openwork--spices or condiments. The mustard pot, complete with its lid, held the mustard served with meats and other dishes. These objects thus belonged to this important family of silverware pieces designed to elegantly present condiments directly on the table. Both pieces are particularly interesting due to the very clear presence of their Mechelen hallmarks. They bear the hallmark featuring the coat of arms of the city of Mechelen, the crowned capital letter "R" (the date letter corresponding to 1744), as well as the master's hallmark depicting an anchor. The identity of this master craftsman with the anchor remains unknown to this day. Georges van Doorslaer, in his reference work **La corporation et les ouvrages des orfèvres malinois** (1935), simply lists him as "Goldsmith marking an anchor." In particular, he attributes to him the remarkable reliquary of Saint Damien, dated 1718 and preserved in the church of the Mechelen Beguinage. The question of his identity is all the more intriguing given that the anchor reappeared as a goldsmith's hallmark in Mechelen within the Maes family during the second half of the 18th century: Guillaume Maes and his son, in turn, used this symbol. Furthermore, there are

approximately twenty objects from Mechelen bearing an anchor hallmark between 1694 and 1744. An activity spanning such a long period makes it plausible that the anchor was used successively by several generations of the same family of goldsmiths, possibly the Maes family. However, in the absence of a Mechelen hallmark plate from this period and archival evidence establishing the lineage, this identification must remain a hypothesis rather than a definitive attribution. Finally, the pieces retain in several places the marks left by the silver probe used to check the fineness, traces characteristic of the old system for verifying the metal, traditionally referred to in Belgium as the "striche." Given their remarkable state of preservation, the abundance and finesse of their engraving, the complete set of hallmarks, and above all the rarity of a salt shaker and a mustard pot of the same design that have remained together, these two pieces constitute a fine example of civilian goldsmithing in Mechelen under the Austrian Netherlands in the mid-18th century.