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Altarpiece Dedicated To Saint Barbara, Oil On Panel, 17th-century Hispano-colonial School



1 990 EUR

Signature : École Hispano-Coloniale XVIIe

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting on wood

Description

A rare example of private devotion in the 17th-century Hispanic world, this charming depiction of Saint Barbara has retained its exceptional original tabernacle-frame, an element that has become particularly rare on the market. This particularly appealing devotional painting of Saint Barbara, executed in oil on a wooden panel in the 17th century, is preserved in its remarkable original architectural frame, forming a veritable miniature domestic altarpiece. The painted panel measures 24 x 19.5 cm, while the entire piece measures 39 x 35 cm with a depth of 10 cm, giving this work an unusual presence and an almost sculptural quality. The major interest of this piece lies in the exceptional preservation of its antique tabernacle-frame, an element often lost on this type of object intended for private

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devotion. Made of solid wood using traditional techniques, the frame features an architectural style inspired by 17th-century provincial Spanish altarpieces: a projecting cornice, deeply molded sides, carved decoration, and a lower shelf. The painting is set back in a dark niche, which accentuates the depth of the composition and reinforces its spiritual character. Saint Barbara is depicted standing, in an elegant and contemplative pose. Dressed in a red robe and a white veil tied at her waist, she gazes towards heaven with an expression imbued with gentleness and fervor. Her radiant halo is highlighted with gold. Beside her appears the famous three-arched tower, the saint's principal iconographic attribute, recalling the third window she had opened in honor of the Holy Trinity. She also holds the palm of martyrdom. At her feet is a kneeling religious figure, likely the donor or patron of the work. This presence lends the composition a particularly intimate character and suggests a conventual or private setting.

Stylistic Analysis: The work is captivating due to the quality of its composition and the balance of its palette. Of particular note are: the delicacy of the face; the fluidity of the drawing; the flesh tones achieved through superimposed glazes; the elegantly simplified draperies; the stylized landscape still marked by certain Mannerist influences; and the nuanced treatment of the sky with its bluish and pinkish tones. The palette harmoniously contrasts the reds of the dress, the greens of the landscape, and the gray-blue tones of the sky, while the golden accents of the halo bring luminosity and spirituality to the whole.

Attribution and Comparisons: This painting belongs to the tradition of 17th-century Spanish colonial religious art. It evokes certain small altarpieces from Toledo, the retablos of colonial Peru, as well as some popular works produced in Mexico and Andalusia for convents and private devotion. The work as a whole fully belongs to this artistic universe deeply marked by the spirituality of the Counter-Reformation.

Technique: Oil on softwood panel. Traditional light ground. Gilding for the halo. Executed in successive glazes. The observed cracks and wear are perfectly consistent with the age of the work. Condition: Good overall condition. Some wear and minor old lifting. Possible localized old repairs. Original frame showing natural signs of age. An authentic and particularly decorative piece. Historical Note: Saint Barbara is among the most famous martyred saints of Christianity. According to tradition, she lived in the 3rd century. Converted to Christianity against the wishes of her father Dioscorus, she was imprisoned in a tower before being martyred. After her beheading, her father was reportedly struck by lightning, making Saint Barbara the protector against sudden accidents, fires, explosions, and storms. Today, she remains the patron saint of artillerymen, firefighters, miners, pyrotechnicians, and military engineers. Appreciation: Beyond its devotional value, this work is captivating due to the rare preservation of its original altarpiece, an element that has become difficult to find on the market. An authentic ensemble, imbued with history and spirituality, uniting painting, architecture, and devotion in a single object. Panel dimensions: 24 x 19.5 cm. Overall dimensions: 39 x 35 x 10 cm. Complete ensembles combining antique paintings and original altarpieces are now uncommon. This work combines the charm of sophisticated folk art, the historical significance of an authentic devotional object, and remarkable decorative quality.