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Alessandro Salucci And Michelangelo Cerquozzi - Book Of Numbers, 21:4-9, The Story Of The Serpents



23 000 EUR

Signature : Alessandro Salucci et Michelangelo Cerquozzi

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 127.5

Height : 106.5

Description

Alessandro Salucci and Michelangelo Cerquozzi - Book of Numbers, 21:4-9, the story of the serpents, circa 1650 1660. The painting depicts one of the most dramatic episodes of the Israelites' exodus through the desert--the story of the fiery serpents, described in the Book of Numbers (21:4-9)--when God sent venomous serpents among the Israelites to punish them for their complaints. Here, Alessandro Salucci constructs the vast architectural setting, organized according to the principle of the architectural "capriccio," while Michelangelo Cerquozzi brings this space to life with a multitude of figures caught up in fear, flight, and suffering. In the foreground, panic centers on the Israelites: a mother clutches her child to her chest, while another child tries to flee, pursued by the snakes. Beside them, a couple

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seeks to escape the danger, while a wounded man leans against the surrounding wall. These groups, characterized by lively gestures and highly expressive interactions, give the scene its narrative intensity. In the center of the composition, Moses, standing near the fountain, contemplates the snakes in a pose of reflection and intercession. He serves as the focal point of the biblical episode. Finally, at the top of the composition, the viewer's gaze is drawn toward the harbor, toward which a woman is fleeing to escape the danger. Thus, Salucci provides the biblical episode with a monumental and theatrical setting, while Cerquozzi imbues it with a human and dramatic dimension. The architecture and figures work together to draw the viewer's gaze from the terror in the foreground toward Moses, and then toward the opening of the port, transforming the biblical narrative into a true theatrical scene. The attribution to Alessandro Salucci is based primarily on the architectural construction of the composition. The painter creates a veritable theatrical setting composed of porticoes, temples, arches, a fountain, an obelisk, and monumental buildings, arranged in a deep perspective that draws the eye toward the harbor. This conception of an imaginary ancient city--both monumental and fanciful--is consistent with the language of Salucci's architectural capricci. The figures, which are very lively and expressive, were added to this space by Michelangelo Cerquozzi, a move that is particularly fitting in the context of a work traditionally created by two artists. The attribution of these figures to Michelangelo Cerquozzi is based on their lively, folksy, and highly narrative character. Far from being mere props intended to provide a sense of scale for the architecture, the figures respond to the action through their gestures, postures, and movements. The style of the figures--characterized by lively gestures, compact silhouettes, children with exaggerated proportions, hands and feet rendered in a sketchy yet expressive manner, and a narrative

arrangement of small groups--is fully consistent with Michelangelo Cerquozzi's "bamboccianti" style. These characteristics are particularly consistent with the

Salucci-Cerquozzi collaboration documented in several architectural capricci from the mid-17th century. Furthermore, the fact that the figures in this painting are not merely decorative but constitute a genuine collective reaction to the biblical episode could explain why Salucci chose a painter like Cerquozzi specifically to execute them. Here are some of the most telling examples, which are actually documented as joint works or as direct evidence of their collaboration:

"Marina con porto, rotonda, edifici e figure," c. 1650-1660, former Galleria Pallavicini, Rome:

this is probably the closest parallel to this painting. It features an imaginary seascape, a rotunda, monumental architecture, and small figures; the work is cataloged jointly as Michelangelo Cerquozzi / Alessandro Salucci by the Zeri Foundation.

"Imaginary View with the Colosseum and the Arch of Constantine," circa the mid-17th century: another directly

documented collaboration between the two artists, combining reconstructed Roman architecture and figures. The work is held in a private collection and listed by Zeri based on Busiri Vici's bibliography.

"Landscape with a Triumphal Arch and the Colosseum" and "Landscape with the Rotonda," circa 1650: these two works from the Galleria Pallavicini are cited by the Banca d'Italia as evidence of Salucci's collaboration with Michelangelo Cerquozzi.

And finally; "Architectural Capriccio with Classical Buildings Near a Harbor and the Judgment of Solomon," c. 1650, which is particularly interesting because, like *The Burning Snakes*, this painting combines imaginary classical architecture, a harbor, and a scene from the Old Testament. In summary: the most convincing comparison with our painting is that of the "Marina con porto, rotonda, edificie figure," as it brings together precisely the same elements:

Salucci's imaginary architecture combined with Cerquozzi's harbor scene and figurative activity. Here are some of the most telling examples, which are actually documented as joint works or as direct evidence of their collaboration:

- o "Marina con porto, rotonda, edifici e figure," c. 1650-1660, former Galleria Pallavicini, Rome: this is likely the closest parallel to this painting. It features the imaginary seascape, the rotunda, monumental architecture, and small figures; the work is cataloged jointly as Michelangelo Cerquozzi / Alessandro Salucci by the Zeri Foundation.
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- o And finally, "Capriccio architettonico con edifici classici presso un porto e col Giudizio di Salomone" (Architectural Capriccio with Classical Buildings Near a Harbor and the Judgment of Solomon), circa 1650, which is particularly interesting because, like *The Burning Snakes*, this painting combines imaginary classical architecture, a harbor, and a scene from the Old Testament.

In summary: the most compelling parallel with our painting is that of the "Marina con porto, rotonda, edifici e figure," as it brings together precisely the same elements: Salucci's imaginary architecture combined with Cerquozzi's harbor setting and figurative activity. The architectural capriccio, highly prized in 17th-century Rome, involves freely recomposing real or imaginary architectural elements to create an ideal, theatrical space. In the

work of Alessandro Salucci, this technique becomes the preferred setting for narrative scenes: here, ancient architecture and imaginary monuments transform the biblical episode of the Israelites' punishment into a monumental scene, set in an idealized Rome rather than in a real location. Dimensions: Frame 127.5 cm by 106.5 cm. Stretcher 110 cm by 90 cm.