



PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Saint Sebastian. Oil On Canvas. Italian School. Probably Francesco Cairo, 17th Century



12 000 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Oil painting

Width : 116

Height : 156

Description

Dimensions: 156 cm high x 116 cm wide
According to tradition, Saint Sebastian was born in Narbonne in 256 to a noble family, although he was raised in Milan. In 269, he enlisted in the Roman army and, thanks to his skills as a soldier, was appointed commander of the first cohort of the Praetorian Guard by Emperor Diocletian, who was unaware that he was a Christian. Despite his position, Sebastian refused to participate in pagan rituals and devoted part of his time to helping and supporting persecuted and imprisoned Christians. When his faith was discovered, Diocletian ordered his execution by arrows. Believed to be dead, he was rescued and nursed back to health by Irene, a Christian noblewoman, until he recovered. Far from fleeing Rome, Sebastian decided to confront the emperor

Dealer

Ares Anticuarios

Antiquités

Mobile : 699538192

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once more and publicly defend his faith. As a result, he was executed a second time, by beating with sticks and garrotte. His body was then recovered by his disciples and buried on the Via Appia, in the catacombs that bear his name today. Tradition places his death in the year 288. Certain aspects of Francesco Cairo's life and training remain poorly documented. It is believed that he may have trained in the circle of Morazzone, whose influence is evident in his early works. In 1633, he was summoned to Turin as court painter to Duke Victor Amadeus I of Savoy, a city where he achieved considerable renown. His works from the 1630s are characterized by a distinctive emotional intensity, blending sensuality, drama, and religious fervor. After a stay in Rome in 1638, he returned to his hometown in 1648, where he remained until his death. The sensual and dramatic nature of his pictorial language is evident in this Saint Sebastian. The saint's naked body, rendered with marked stylization and sensuality, forms the central axis of the composition. Also noteworthy is the perspective of the face, depicted from a low vantage point, which intensifies its expressiveness and accentuates the theatrical nature of the scene. The work depicts the moment following the first martyrdom, when Sebastian, still alive, is found and rescued. Two figures appear alongside the saint, attempting to come to his aid, in reference to the episode in which Irene and her companions rescued and tended to him after he had been presumed dead. Cairo thus transforms the account of the martyrdom into a scene of great emotional intensity, in which the saint's suffering blends with the sensuality and idealized beauty of his figure.