



## Giuseppe Picano (sant'elia Fiumerapido, 1732 - Ca. 1810), Raffaele Arcangelo



12 000 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Painted wood

Width : 40

Height : 139

Depth : 60

### Description

Giuseppe Picano (Sant'Elia Fiumerapido, 1732 - c. 1810)Raffaele ArcangeloPolychrome wood and glass paste, 139 x 40 x 60 cm (H x W x D)Critical essay by Prof. Giuseppe SavaConsidered one of the most fascinating figures of 18th-century Naples, Giuseppe Picano distinguished himself as a masterful practitioner of wood sculpture, capable of infusing wood with the same softness and emotional intensity as stone. Following in his father's footsteps--his father, Francesco Antonio, was also a sculptor--he was born in Sant'Elia Fiumerapido, in what is now the province of Frosinone, in 1732 and was subsequently active in Naples until the early 19th century (he died around 1810), Picano trained in the heart of the mature Neapolitan Baroque. He honed his talent under the guidance of--and on behalf of--the

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Neapolitans Luigi Vanvitelli and his son Carlo, later becoming the principal collaborator and close follower of Giuseppe Sanmartino, creator of the famous Veiled Christ (now housed in the Sansevero Chapel in Naples), and of Giacomo Colombo. The result of this fruitful collaboration was the extraordinary Nativity scene from 1740 housed in the Church of Santa Maria in Portico in Naples: a unique monumental ensemble consisting of 24 life-size figures that can still be admired in their original setting. Although he worked primarily in Naples and Campania and preferred wood for his sacred subjects, Picano demonstrated extraordinary versatility, successfully experimenting with marble, terracotta, stucco, and papier-mâché as well. His stylistic signature is defined by a vibrant realism, evident in the expressive faces and the complex chiaroscuro drapery that lend dynamism to the figures, as seen in the statues of saints and sacred figures inside the Church of the Santissima Annunciata in Naples. His fame led him to spread his works throughout the Kingdom, leaving works of great value even in Calabria, in addition to the numerous saints and Nativity scene elements that still adorn the altars of many Neapolitan churches today, confirming him as a vital bridge between the theatricality of the mature Baroque and the restraint of the emerging Neoclassical style. From a technical standpoint, after carving the wood--usually soft woods such as linden or poplar--Picano applied a thin layer of linen or hemp cloth soaked in glue to cover the grain and joints of the material. On this base, he applied numerous layers of plaster and animal glue, which were then smoothed with meticulous care until a surface as smooth and silky as porcelain was achieved. This preparation was essential for rendering the flesh tones: the artist did not simply paint the surface, but created an artificial "skin" capable of reacting to light in a natural way. The color was applied through successive layers of oil glazes, using a palette that ranged from pearlescent tones for the Madonnas

to browner, more weathered tones for the hermit saints or prophets. To accentuate the realism, Picano used the "rossori" technique: he applied pink or vermilion hues to the knuckles, elbows, cheeks, and around the eyelids, simulating the blood flow typical of a living body. A distinctive technical detail, inherited from the great tradition of the Neapolitan nativity scene, was the inclusion of crystal or glass paste eyes that were back-painted, as in the case of the Archangel Raphael under consideration: they were inserted from inside the skull or fitted with extreme precision into the eye sockets, giving the statue a supernatural depth of gaze. Finally, the application of a final varnish--often made from mastic or amber--provided that subtle sheen that mimicked the natural moisture of the skin and eyes, making his sculptures almost unsettling in their lifelike quality.