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Head And Shoulders Of The Virgin In An Assumption - Guercino (1591-1666)



55 000 EUR

Signature : Il Guercino (1591 - 1666)

Period : 17th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 40

Height : 50

Description

The painting constitutes a particularly important testimony to the production of Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino, not only for its high pictorial quality, but above all for the role it plays in reconstructing the artist's creative process.Nicholas Turner, in the critical profile dedicated to the work, fully recognized the master's hand, underlining his extraordinary freedom of execution and initially identifying stylistic characteristics close to the years of Guercino's stay in Rome, between 1621 and 1623. The scholar noted in particular the breadth and confidence of the brushstroke, the vigorous chiaroscuro and a chromatic range of Titian influence, constructed through golden yellows, blues and deep vinous hues.The figure is captured in a movement of intense immediacy: the slightly

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tilted head, the parted lips and the moist gaze turned upwards give the Virgin an emotional participation that transcends the simple function of study. The execution alternates passages of considerable definition, especially in the face and neck, with other conduits with an extremely thin and liquid paint. Particularly remarkable is the rendering of the hair, constructed through rapid, flowing brushstrokes that Turner compared, for immediacy, to a true brush drawing.Numerous regrets are also clearly legible, especially along the profile of the head, neck and shoulders. These rethinks are of particular importance because they testify to a still open phase of the inventive process and confirm the experimental nature of the work.A decisive moment in the painting's critical success is represented by its publication in 2011 by Angelo Mazza and Nicholas Turner in Guercino in Reggio Emilia.The genesis of the invention, where the work is illustrated in fig. 12 and addressed within a chapter significantly entitled An Oil Study for the Head of the Madonna in an Assumption of the Virgin.There Mazza and Turner related the painting to the large altarpiece depicting the Madonna Assunta with angels and Saints Peter and Jerome, created by Guercino for the cathedral of Reggio Emilia in 1626. The painting is not interpreted as a compositional sketch of the entire altarpiece, but rather as an independent study intended to verify a different solution for the position and illumination of the Virgin's head.It is precisely this characteristic that makes the work exceptional. As scholars observe, Guercino used to develop his inventions through numerous graphic studies, while it is much rarer to encounter oil painting studies of individual details in his production. Mazza and Turner go so far as to underline how this painting constitutes a case of exceptional importance for understanding the relationship, in the master's practice, between preparatory drawing and pictorial experimentation.The canvas allows you to follow the artist's thoughts almost directly. The profile of

the neck, the different level initially imagined for the shoulders, the shape of the dress and above all the lighting construction of the face document a series of modifications made during the execution. It is therefore a work in which painting not only records a finished image, but materially preserves the different phases of the invention.Finally, of particular interest is the possible documentary evidence identified by Turner in Guercino's Book of Accounts. In fact, on the date of December 21, 1631, the payment of appears:"a Head of a Fatal Madona, Schudi 20" by Francesco Miletto, Governor of Cento between 1630 and 1632.Turner proposed that such a recording may refer to the present painting. The painting would have remained in Guercino's studio or at least in his possession for some years before being sold to Miletto in 1631.Due to its quality of execution, critical and bibliographical documentation, and the rare possibility of directly observing Guercino's inventive process through an independent pictorial study, the Head and Shoulders of the Virgin in an Assumption represents a significant document of the artist's maturation of language in the 1620s and the genesis of the large Reggio Emilia altarpiece of 1626.The work is also accompanied by a critical profile by Prof. Andrea Emiliani.Bibliography:N. Turner, A. Mazza, Guercino in Reggio Emilia. The genesis of the invention, Milan, Skira, 2011, pp. 52, 54-55, fig. 12;A. Emilians, Cain and Abel. Study of an early work by Giovan Francesco Barbieri known as Guercino, Rimini, NFC Edizioni, 2016, pp. 25-27;N. Turner, The Paintings of Guercino. A Revised and Expanded Catalogue Raisonné, Rome, Ugo Bozzi Editore, 2017, p. 422, fig. 147.I;Guercino's Account Book 1629-1666, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cento, p. 59, no. 25.Origin:Possibly Francesco Miletto, Governor of Cento, purchased directly by Guercino on 21 December 1631 for 20 scudi;Luigi Tardini, Modena, former Mayor of Modena, 1840-1860;Private collection, Modena