Virgin Of Mercy - France, Champagne Limestone And Polychromy Circa 1500



9 000 EUR

Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Superbe état

Material : Stone

Width : 36 cm

Height : 29 cm

Description

This limestone sculpture represents a Virgin of Mercy: after the descent from the cross, Mary holds Jesus on her knees and observes the death of her child. This very moving moment is not found in the Bible but is a representation of apocryphal writings. These sensitive themes spread in Europe with the monks and the Devotio moderna movement: a current of thought which appeared in the Germanic area at the end of the 14th century before spreading to Europe. The primary desire of this movement is to reform the base of the Church, so that the faithful can reclaim their relationship to Christ and God by eliminating intermediaries. Through various texts and works, we insist on the humanity of Christ and the holy characters to make them models of life and piety but accessible models. Thus faith

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becomes more active and Man becomes a source of his own Salvation: earthly experiences are opportunities to imitate Christ during his own life on Earth, to act like him and thus to deserve Salvation. It was also during this period that devotion to the Virgin developed, notably through the theme of the Virgin of Mercy which met with great success throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, in Northern Europe and in Italy. It is the pain of the Virgin, the pain of a mother which is presented to the faithful through works of varying sizes. Addressing the spectators, Marie invites reflection and meditation: "I am speaking to you, to all of you who pass here! Look and see if there is a pain like my pain, To that with which I was struck! The Lord sharpened me in the day of his fierce anger. (Lamentations 1:12). Depending on literary sources, periods, geographical areas and requests from sponsors; the Virgins can vary in their attitude: some lament, cry, pray, bend over the body of Christ or express a certain acceptance. Our Virgin is distinguished by great dignity and a serene expression in the face of the death of her son: she accepts the sacrifice of Jesus to save humanity. Our Virgin of Mercy is from Champagne. We can see it in the lengthening of the limbs of Christ; to Marie's youthful appearance, her young woman's face despite her mature age; and the idealization of the characters' features (ovoid faces, almond-shaped eyes, fine features, small nose, rounded forehead for women), which are characteristic elements of sculpture from this region. The treatment of textiles is also a recognizable element of Champagne sculpture. Indeed, after the Time of Misfortunes which ran through the entire 15th century, Champagne found a favorable political, social and economic situation. From this rich period that was beginning, the bourgeois merchants were doing well: business prospered in the cities, especially the textile industry, which was developing strongly. Wanting to give themselves areas of nobility, these bourgeois bought land, titles,

married noble women and placed orders for religious art like true patrons. It is therefore normal for the characters in the works they commission to be richly dressed; and that the clothes are worked. On our work, in addition to Jesus wearing his traditional perizonium with a remarkable work done on the folds of the fabric; Marie wears a gold dress, a chin-strap gimp veil, and is draped in a long blue coat with gold trim and red lining. The tail of this long coat is brought to the front and covers his legs. Note the suppleness of the drape and the rendering of the folds of the heavy fabric, which reflects the interest of the inhabitants of Champagne (and the sponsors) for clothing and the textile industry. Another characteristic element of this sculpture: the material used. It is a chalky limestone, typical of southern Champagne, which by its ease of extraction allowed the development of the production of sculpture at the end of the Middle Ages. Of a certain fragility, it is a stone whose tenderness allows full exploitation of the imagination and talent of the sculptors. It was therefore very popular with craftsmen because it was easy to find and work with. We can also see on the back of the piece, the original iron hanging system. To the excellent condition of our piece is added its original polychromy still clearly visible, which accentuates the emotional and solemn aspect of this set.