

Lot 1125



Auction Fine Art

Date 19.11.2020, ca. 15:15

Preview 13.11.2020 - 10:00:00 bis
16.11.2020 - 18:00:00

SOLIMENA, FRANCESCO

1657 Canale di Serino - 1747 Barra

ca. 1700

Title: Portrait of a Knight of Malta (presumably Antoine Manoel de Vilhena).

Technique: Oil on canvas.

Measurement: 106 x 87,5cm.

Frame/Pedestal: Framed.

Certificate:

S. Causa, Naples, after examination of the original in August 2020.

Provenance:

Private ownership, Italy.

This half-figure portrait impresses by the enormous presence of the man depicted in magnificent armour. The left half of the body, shoulder and arm are turned towards the observer, but the sitter has turned his head so that his face is almost en face. The large eyes under the white allonge wig look at the observer gently and at the same time confidently. The order hanging on a velvet ribbon on the armour identifies him as a knight of the Maltese Order. Probably the Portuguese Antoine Manuel de Vilhena (1663 - 1736), who was Grand Master of the Order of Malta from 1722 until his death.

The artist of this work is Francesco Solimena. In the first half of the 18th century he was one of the most famous and sought-after painters of his time. Solimena lived and worked almost exclusively in Naples, which initially belonged to the Spanish Crown, but after the War of the Spanish Succession was annexed to Austria. The leading dynasties and the high nobility of Europe had access to Solimena through these political turns of events. Solimena became famous mainly for his multi-figured sacred and profane paintings and frescoes. And he met his patrons at eye level: his contemporary, the artist biographer Bernardo de Dominici, described him as the "principe di tutti i pittori viventi" ("prince among all living painters").

The oval framing of the portrait contrasts only slightly with the angles of the painting. Brown tones predominate, the red of the fluttering cloak and the few shades of blue in the armour and background are the only restrained colour accents. In contrast, the light and white painted areas set high-contrast accents: The expressive face, framed by white curls and the collar, the broad lights painted with a dry brush in a sovereign manner, which reflect the armour, the

medal on the chest but above all the white-gloved left hand of the sitter at the lower edge of the image, which covers the painted oval section of the image and seems to project into the space of the viewer, as it were. Solimena thus subtly heightens the presence of the portrayed person.

Estimate: 20.000 € - 30.000 €; Hammer: 22.000 €
