

Lot 905



Auction **Fine Art**

Date 02.06.2021, ca. 14:03

Preview 27.05.2021 - 10:00:00 bis
30.05.2021 - 18:00:00

RIEMENSCHNEIDER, TILMAN
1460 Heiligenstadt - 1531 Würzburg

and Workshop

Title: Man of Sorrows.

Date: ca. 1500.

Technique: Lime wood (?), colourfully painted and full-round carved.

Height: 102cm.

Exhibitions:

"Tilman Riemenschneider. Frühe Werke" exhibition Mainfränkisches Museum Würzburg and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1981, in cat. p. 255ff;

"Tilman Riemenschneider - Werke seiner Glaubenswelt" exhibition Museum am Dom, Würzburg, 24.03.-13.06.2004, in cat. no. 11, p. 202 with ill.

Literature:

F. Mader (ed.): Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Würzburg, Munich 1915, p. 223, fig. 179;

J. Bier: Tilman Riemenschneider. Die frühen Werke, Würzburg 1925, p. 40f;

A. Schädler: Die Fränkische Galerie, Zweigmuseum des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums, Veste Rosenberg Kronach, Munich 1987, 34f.

Provenance:

Kamelitinnenkloster Himmelspforten, Würzburg, first mentioned in 1915;

possibly originally from the Zisterziensinnenkloster Himmelspforten, which was dissolved in 1803 and repopulated by the Carmelite nuns in 1844.

Tilman Riemenschneider, the master sculptor from Würzburg, had a decisive influence on sculptural art north of the Alps in the late 15th century. The convincing, comprehensible physicality combined with the highest spirituality of his figures places him at the forefront of sculptural masters of his time. Yet the individual physiognomy of the sculptures he created usually takes a back seat to their spiritual expression.

Riemenschneider's work is the subject of extensive research. His large workshop is documented in detail, as is his activity as a councillor and mayor of Würzburg. Works of this nationally highly important Franconian master that have

been preserved over the centuries can be found in the most important German museums or still in the churches for which they were originally created.

In 2004, the extensive exhibition "Tilman Riemenschneider - Werke seiner Glaubenswelt" took place in the Würzburg Museum am Dom, where the Man of Sorrows shown here was also exhibited and described in detail. The appearance on the art market of a sculpture that is recognised by researchers as being by Riemenschneider and his workshop and of such high quality is an absolute rarity.

The figure comes from the present-day Carmelite convent of Himmelpforten, which used to be located outside the gates of Würzburg, but is now part of the established urban area. The older history of this sculpture - who commissioned its execution and whether it was originally intended for this convent is not yet known. This Man of Sorrows was not accessible to the public in past decades, as it served the Carmelite nuns as a devotional image in their enclosure. The impressive, fully sculpted figure shows the risen Christ, clothed in what used to be a floor-length, wrinkled cloak and a bulging loincloth. As a dead man but living God, he shows the stigmata of the crucifixion, placing his right hand emphasisingly below the sword wound on his body. The Saviour's posture appears natural, facing the viewer. Placing his left foot only with the ball of his foot, he stands in contrapposto. The upper part of the body is slightly bent to the left, the right shoulder slightly elevated. The left arm - unlike in many similar depictions - is not raised demonstratively, but hangs down relaxed, with the palm and stigma facing forward. Finely worked strands of hair running out in twisted curls and a similarly shaped beard frame the serious face with its introspective gaze. The thick crown of thorns on the head is the only instrument of torture that refers to the suffering of the crucifixion. The wrinkled cloak and the bulging loincloth give the figure physical volume; an artifice that is astonishing given the sculpture's shallow depth.

Since the High Middle Ages, the artistically designed type of the Man of Sorrows, which - unlike the Ecce Homo depiction - shows Christ exclusively with the wounds inflicted by the crucifixion after the resurrection, has had a central function in sacred art. For the believer, it symbolises the Eucharist, the climax of the Christian rite, the realisation of Christ's sacrificial death for the redemption of mankind.

This thematic aspect can also be seen in the position of two other comparable sculptures in Riemenschneider's work: Fully sculptured carvings of the Man of Sorrows crown the altar of Mary in Creglingen and the altar of the Holy Blood in Rothenburg. Whether the sculpture here originally had a similar location has not yet been clarified by art historical research. Its balanced proportions certainly suggest that it was not created for an extreme lower view. It is possible that it was conceived as an independent devotional image, like Riemenschneider's likewise comparable stone Man of Sorrows, which is now in the Bavarian National Museum. Indeed, it was in this function that the sculpture by the master sculptor from Würzburg and his workshop last served in the Himmelpforten Monastery.

Estimate: 25.000 € - 35.000 €; Hammer: 40.000 €
