

Lot 1014



Auction Fine Art

Date 18.11.2021, ca. 10:11

Preview 12.11.2021 - 10:00:00 bis
15.11.2021 - 18:00:00

DA SETTIGNANO, DESIDERIO
ca. 1430 Settignano - 1464 Florence

follower

Title: Virgin and Child.

Date: 15./16. J.h.

Technique: Plaster cast relief.

Height: 61,5 x 37cm.

Frame/Pedestal: Frame.

Provenance:

Private ownership, Germany.

The three reliefs depicting the Madonna and Child are copies of Florentine models from the second half of the 15th century. This particular type of object, intended for private devotion, enjoyed extraordinary popularity in Italy during the Renaissance and was also produced in later periods. Tuscany was the hub for the creation and distribution of these typical sacred images. In the second quarter of the 15th century, due to the growing demand for terracotta and plaster casts for devotional purposes, both from private patrons and monastic institutions, Florentine sculptors began to devote themselves to the mass production of reliefs depicting the Madonna in half or three-quarter view with the Child on her lap.

Starting from an original model made of marble or, more often, terracotta, a mould made of plaster was created from which the casts were made. The use of inferior materials such as plaster, stucco, terracotta and cartapesta not only shortened execution times, but also made the finished product much cheaper than traditional sculptures or painted panels. Through dozens of faithful replicas, the prestigious works of the greatest sculptors of the time, such as Donatello, Desiderio da Settignano or Antonio Rossellino, were made accessible to a wide public. The painting of the reliefs was entrusted to specialised workshops. The painter could partially modify the original subject in order to respond to the particular iconographic wishes of the client, for example by adding figures, angels, decorative elements or wedding coats of arms. The frame usually took the form of an old-fashioned tabernacle, with a triangular or ribbed pediment, a frieze, columns on the sides and a plinth. Less frequently, simple plaster or wooden box frames were used. Once the reliefs were framed, they became objects of devotion and worship before which the faithful gathered for

prayer. The importance attached to them went far beyond their purely pictorial value, so that the owners, in order not to have to part with them, commissioned minor restoration work if necessary. The reliefs were generally placed in the bedroom, and metal hooks could be attached to the base of the tabernacle in which they were located, from which candles could be placed or buckets of holy water hung. It was also considered a sign of reverence to attach jewellery and fabrics imitating vestments to the images of the saints or to cover them with richly decorated fabrics.

Particularly suitable for casting were the thin bas-reliefs created by Desiderio da Settignano, Benedetto da Maiano and Antonio Rossellino. The Madonna di Torino (Turin, Royal Palace, Galleria Sabauda; 61 x 36 cm) by Desiderio da Settignano, which stylistically can be dated to the early 1550s, was particularly popular in the 15th century, as the numerous replicas show. The first of our reliefs (lot 1014) belongs to this group, a delicate stucco work on which traces of the original elaboration can still be seen and which faithfully reproduces the dimensions and theme of the work in Turin. The well-preserved modelling is reminiscent of the copy exhibited in the Louvre in Paris (RF 897), with which our copy shares the dimensions, the loss of colour and probably also the date of execution, which is given as between 1450 and 1600 for the Paris relief.

The second relief (lot 1015) is taken from Antonio Rossellino's Madonna with Candelabra, a lost work known to us only thanks to copies made from the 1560s onwards. The subject was extraordinarily successful and was particularly appreciated in the regions along the Dalmatian coast. Unlike many mediocre reproductions, our relief has not completely lost its colourfulness. The rosy tones of the skin colours can still be seen on the perfectly sculpted faces, which were modelled in the 16th century, while flashes of gold decorate the halos and candelabra, which stand out against the background traditionally painted in a deep blue.

Of particular interest is the third relief (lot 1016), which is of great technical quality and very well preserved, and is notable for being one of the very rare stucco reproductions of Benedetto da Maiano's marble Madonna and Child on display at the National Gallery of Art in Washington (c. 1475). The work is slightly larger than the original and has some minor stylistic differences that can also be seen in the few known copies, such as the head of a putto peeking out from the lower left corner. The intense, vivid polychromy and the firm, compact modelling of the figures make it one of the best examples currently in circulation.

Estimate: 20.000 € - 25.000 €
