

Lot 1022



Auction	Fine Art
Date	18.11.2021, ca. 10:17
Preview	12.11.2021 - 10:00:00 bis 15.11.2021 - 18:00:00

FARINATI, PAOLO
Verona 1524 - 1606

Title: Saint John the Evangelist.
Date: Ca 1567.
Technique: Oil on wood.
Measurement: 60,5 x 47cm.
Frame/Pedestal: Framed.
Provenance:
Collection Firmian till 1782, Milan;
Probably collection Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun till 1809, Paris;
Probably collection Louis Pillivuyt, Paris;
Private ownership till 1924, Graz;
Auction Dorotheum, Vienna, 25.04.2017, Lot 13;
European private ownership.

Literature:

R. Pancheri: La pittura veneta nella collezione di Carlo Firmian. In: Le raccolte di Minerva. Le collezioni artistiche e librerie del conte Carlo Firmian, Trento 2013, p. 116-117;
R. Pancheri: Carlo Firmian "avido collettore" d'arte: il mancato acquisto della pala di Crema e il San Giovanni Evangelista di Paolo Farinati. In: Studi trentini, 96 (2017), 2018, p. 440-451.

Young, blond, beardless, dressed in green and crimson, John the Evangelist, depicted as a youth, appears in radiant light. With his face tilted to the side, he listens to the divine voice transmitted by the dove hovering in the upper right corner of the picture. The saint's typically manieristic posture is agitated and dynamic, as in most of the figures by the artist Paolo Farinatis, painted around the middle of the 16th century. The apostle holds the manuscript of his Gospel on his left knee, at the same time dipping the quill into the inkpot with his right hand: a gesture emphasising the sequence of "word-inspiration-writing". The scene takes place in the midst of the clouds, creating a mystical and at the same time realistic experience in which the eagle at the feet of the saint seems to gaze with curiosity at the shell lying in front of him, which is the symbol and signature of the artist.

The work, which is strongly reminiscent of Mannerist painting in central and northern Italy, was painted in the 1560s and was inspired by the style of artists from Emilia and Tuscany. Who commissioned the painting and where it was originally placed is as yet unknown. The first mention of St John the Evangelist is in the catalogue of the painting collection of Count Karl Gotthard von Firmian (Trento 1716 - Milan 1782), who was Minister Plenipotentiary and Governor General of Austrian Lombardy under Maria Theresa of Austria from 1758. Firmian was a dedicated patron of the sciences and arts and was instrumental in establishing Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Angelika Kauffmann. The "Gabinetto Firmiano" was undoubtedly one of the most important art collections in Milan at the time; its rapid dissemination was preceded by an inventory and the compilation of a printed catalogue, which were entrusted to the painters Giuliano Trabalesi and Martin Knoller, the sculptor Giuseppe Franchi and the abbot Carlo Bianconi. Among the works of Count Firmian from the 16th century was a painting by the Veronese artist Paolo Farinati, which is mentioned in the handwritten inventory of the collection from 1782 as "FARINATO PAOLO". It continues: "San Giovanni Evangelista, figura intera, sedente sulle nubi tiene sulle ginocchia un libro, su cui si dispone a scrivere quello che il Dator de' lumi il Santo Spirito è per dettargli. Crediamo di dire tutto, asserendo che lo stesso se n'è compiaciuto non solo per l'esattezza con cui l'ha finito, ma per averlo ancora inciso di sua mano e pubblicato". To underline the quality of the painting, Bianconi also referred to the original engraving made by the painter in 1567. Based on the description, Roberto Pancheri was able to identify the present painting with the Firmian work when it was offered on the art market in 2017.

The Firmian collection was auctioned in Milan after the death of its founder in 1782 and the small panel disappeared into the hands of collectors. It was probably bought at auction by the merchant Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun, who brought it to France at the end of the century: In November 1809, an exhibition of paintings from the "Maison de M. Lebrun" was held in a palace in the Rue du Gros-Chenet, No. 4 in Paris. The painting was attributed to Parmigianino at the time and titled "Saint Jean l'Evangeliste" and described as "Peinture sur bois, Hauteur 22 pouces 1/2, largeur 17 pouces". The dimensions and support correspond to the present painting.

The following year, in March 1810, the painting was sold, also in Paris, to Louis Pillivuyt. For about a century, traces of the work were lost, probably due to the change in attribution caused by the limited knowledge of the artist outside his area of origin. At the beginning of the 20th century it reappeared in Graz and from there it went to Italy to a private collection.

Estimate: 30.000 € - 40.000 €
