

Lot 532



Auction	Fine Art
Date	19.05.2022, ca. 10:25
Preview	13.05.2022 - 10:00:00 bis 16.05.2022 - 18:00:00

CERESA, CARLO
1609 San Giovanni Bianco - 1679 Bergamo

Title: Esther before Ahasuerus.
Date: ca. 1640-1645.
Technique: Oil on canvas.
Mounting: Relined.
Measurement: 96 x 115cm.

Provenance:
Presumably Hubert de la Fontaine and d'Harnoncourt-Unverzagt collection;
Private ownership, Italy.

A painter from Bergamo, Carlo Ceresa was one of the most important 17th-century painters in Lombardy. Gaining fame for his lifelike portraits, his oeuvre also includes numerous paintings with religious themes, many of which are still preserved in his homeland and were highly regarded by his 18th-century biographers.

The present painting belongs to this series: depicted is the episode from the Old Testament in which Queen Esther meets her husband Ahasuerus - identifiable with the famous Persian King Xerxes I - to convince him to change the edict against the Jews and save his people.

No other variants with this theme are known in the artist's production: perhaps the work was commissioned by a particularly demanding client.

The composition is atmospheric, with the main figures in the foreground standing out against the almost monochrome background in shades of gray and blue. The influence of master Daniele Crespi and early 17th century Bolognese painting, which shaped Ceresa's style, can still be felt in the work, with the interesting quotation of physiognomic models from Milanese Carlo Francesco Nuvolone. This fact testifies to the mutual study and emulation of the Lombard artists of the seventeenth century.

The painting can be dated to one of the happiest and most fruitful periods of the artist, when the elegant and refined colour values are combined with the accentuated expressiveness of the figures, namely at the beginning of the fifth decade of the seventeenth century.

Literature:
Piacenza, terra di frontiera: pittori lombardi e liguri del Seicento. Dipinti e disegni inediti, Piacenza 2010, p. 65.

We thank Simone Facchinetti, Bergamo, for confirming the attribution of the present painting on the basis of a high-resolution digital photograph.

Estimate: 12.000 € - 15.000 €; Hammer: 9.500 €
