

Lot 1065



Auction	Fine Art
Date	17.05.2024, ca. 14:49
Preview	10.05.2024 - 10:00:00 bis 13.05.2024 - 18:00:00

SOLIMENA, FRANCESCO
1657 Canale di Serino - 1747 Barra

Title: Preparatory Study for the Crucifixion.
Date: Ca. 1728.
Technique: Oil on canvas.
Mounting: Relined.
Measurement: 33 x 41 cm.
Frame: Framed.

Expertise:
Riccardo Lattuada, Naples, 19.02.2024, copy available.

Provenance:
Collection Erich Schleier, Berlin.

The large area of visible and well preserved brown ground suggests that it is a preliminary study for a more complex composition. The three figures can easily be traced back to the lower right part of Francesco Solimena's "Descent from the Cross", the most important version of which was painted in 1728-29 for the chapel of Prince Eugene of Savoy's hunting lodge in Engelhartstetten and has been in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna for some time. The work in Vienna is the larger one (398 x 223 cm), but there are also smaller versions in Chambéry, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, and in the Berkeley Art Museum (both approx. 128 x 75 cm). These works can be seen as reminiscences of the large composition for Eugene of Savoy, the success of which is also evidenced by the existence of numerous copies and workshop derivations.

The present painting shares typical features of the technique developed by Solimena during the preparation of the sketches, which Bernardo de' Dominici describes in detail, quoting Solimena's instructions. The brown ground, on which the figures are silhouetted, is used to describe the shaded parts of the chiaroscuro painting; the execution is very precise and the choice of colours is already essentially that adopted in the elaboration of the works. We observe this method in various works on canvas by Francesco Solimena, which are conceived as parts of complex compositions and thus intended for technical use, so to speak: "Nicholas and Anthony of Padua" as preparation around 1687 for the corresponding fresco figures in Naples, Church of San Giorgio Maggiore (offered at Sotheby's,

London, 1974-1990, resp. New York, now Naples, Lauro Collection); "Apostle Peter in Glory and Angel" in Marlow, Leighton Fine Arts, as preparation for the figure of the same name on the ceiling of the church of San Nicola alla Carità in Naples (c. 1690); and the small sketch with the Nativity in Naples, De Giovanni Collection, conceived for some figures in the Adoration of the Shepherds in Naples, Santa Maria Donnalbina, which were not used in the final design (c. 1699-1701).

Over the course of his long career, Solimena also applied this method to preparatory paintings for works such as the one discussed here, which were created towards the end of the third decade of the 18th century. It is significant that - as far as is known - no other versions of this study are known, which increases its informative value.

We are grateful to Riccardo Lattuada for confirming the attribution after examining the present painting on the basis of a high-resolution digital photograph. We are also grateful to Francesco Petrucci, Rome, who has also independently recognised the attribution.

Estimate: 5.000 € - 8.000 €; Hammer: 8.000 €

