

Massacre of the Holy Innocents

Artist: unknown (Neapolitan school, Liegi school)
Date: XVII century
Dimensions: 119 x 170 cm
Material: oil on canvas
Inventory no: 40422

STATE OF PRESERVATION

The painting is in generally good condition, but the surface is extremely dark making it difficult to read the composition. Previous restorations will need to be redone. The alteration of the colors is due to the oxidation and the aging of the varnishes. Some of the pictorial surface of the painting is flaking off and the canvas needs a new support to permit the breathing and flexing of the canvas.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES

- Consolidation of the canvas
- Cleaning and consolidation of the pictorial surface
- Touching-up of the pictorial surface
- Photographic documentation
- Application of varnishes

Total Cost € 10.000,00



► The Massacre of the Holy Innocents refers to the mass infanticide by the King of Judea, Herod the Great, recounted in the Gospel of Matthew 2:16-18. The Gospel reports that King Herod ordered the execution of all the male children, two years and younger in the village of Bethlehem, so as to be sure to kill the newborn King of the Jews, whose birth had been announced to him by the Magi. The infants, known throughout the Church as the Holy Innocents, have been deemed the first Christian martyrs. In Christian tradition the Gospel of Matthew became the subject of several artistic representations.

On the loggia balcony of an imposing building, Herod the Great is watching the massacre scene along with other priests and Scribes. The tragedy is completely concentrated in the dynamism and position of the characters in the foreground, and yet, this composition encaptures the drama of the event softened by the fluidity of movements, fluttering clothes, and

embroidered vestments typical of the Baroque period. The landscape on the right-hand side is characteristic of the seventeenth century and is influenced by northern painting and the ideal Italian landscape.

This painting is similar to the style of Poussin, and possibly painted by a Neapolitan artist influenced by Bernardo Cavallino. One theory is that Andrea del Leone, the brother-in-law of Aniello Falcone who brought the classical characteristics and style of Poussin to the Neapolitan school, is the artist. Another fascinating hypothesis, to be verified during the upcoming restoration, is that the author of this painting is Bertholet Flémal (1614-1675), the epitome of the French-roman style in Liegi. Flémal was born in Liegi, but lived and worked in Rome and Florence and was greatly influenced by Poussin and other contemporary Italian painters.



Unknown Artist, Massacre of the Holy Innocents, XVII century, detail before restoration