

MADONNA AND CHILD

with Sts. Anne, Elizabeth and John the Baptist

Artist: Unknown
 Date: 16th Century
 Dimensions: 210 x 167 cm
 Material: Oil on canvas
 Inventory Number: 42347

Total Cost: € 31.135,00

STATE OF PRESERVATION:

The painting is in generally good condition, but the surface of both the canvas and the precious frame need urgent restoration. Previous restorations will need to be undone. The alteration of the colors is due to both oxidation and the aging of the varnishes. Some of the pictorial surface of the painting is flaking off and the canvas might need a new support to permit proper flexing of the fabric.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Repair and strengthen the canvas
- Cleaning and touching up of the lacunae
- Removal of previous restorations
- Reintegration of the pictorial surface
- Reapplication and balancing of the varnish
- Photographic documentation
- Cleaning and restoration of the gilded frame

This canvas depicts the Holy Family surrounded by various saints. The Virgin Mary lifts a delicate white veil to reveal the infant Christ asleep in a wooden cradle. To the left of the Virgin is St. Anne, Mary's mother, gesturing for silence so as not to disturb the baby Jesus. Next to her is another Saint, possibly Elizabeth, a cousin of the Virgin and mother of John the Baptist. St. Joseph, and perhaps St. Joachim, the father of the Virgin, or maybe St. Zacharias, the husband of Elizabeth, are depicted on the other side. Mary tenderly embraces St. John who is dressed in the usual camel skin which alludes to his penance in the desert. St. John is depicted with his hands joined in the act of adoring the Infant Jesus, at his foot a cross wrapped in a scroll reads "ecce agnus dei." These are the traditional words that identify St. John as the precursor of Jesus. The white veil that Mary is showing refers to the shroud in which Christ is wrapped after his death. A subtle sadness lingers in the quiet of the scene composition, which is dominated by feelings of the maternal tenderness of Mary and the sympathy of the Saints who look tenderly at the child.

This painting was inspired by the Madonna della Tiara on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris which has been attributed to Raphael (1483 -1520). It was executed in oils on a wooden panel in 1511, perhaps in collaboration with his pupil Giovan Francesco Penni (1488 -1528). In this work, Mary, crowned with a tiara, is depicted seated on the ground in a vast landscape of ancient ruins. She is lifting the veil to show the baby Christ child asleep while little St. John is praying.

In another famous version of Raphael's Madonna with the veil, the Our Lady of Loreto in the Musée Condé in Chantilly, Mary is represented in the act of unveiling baby Jesus who is shown awake with his arms stretched out towards her, symbolizing his resurrection and triumph over death.

This painting from the Vatican collection was completed by an unknown Italian artist active in the middle of the 16th century and focuses on the theme of Our Lady of the Veil with the enriched inclusion of various saints. St. Elizabeth, whose face is shown in the foreground with very well-defined facial features. It is possible that the patron was portrayed in the painting. The large size of the canvas suggests the painting was originally meant to decorate an altar in a church or chapel.

