

FIREWORKS AT CASTEL SANT'ANGELO

Artist: Unknown
Date: 18th Century
Dimensions: 24.5 x 31 cm
Material: Oil on canvas
Inventory Number: 41558

Total Cost: € 8.015,00

STATE OF PRESERVATION:

This painting is in a rather precarious state of conservation. The pictorial surface requires cleaning and consolidation.

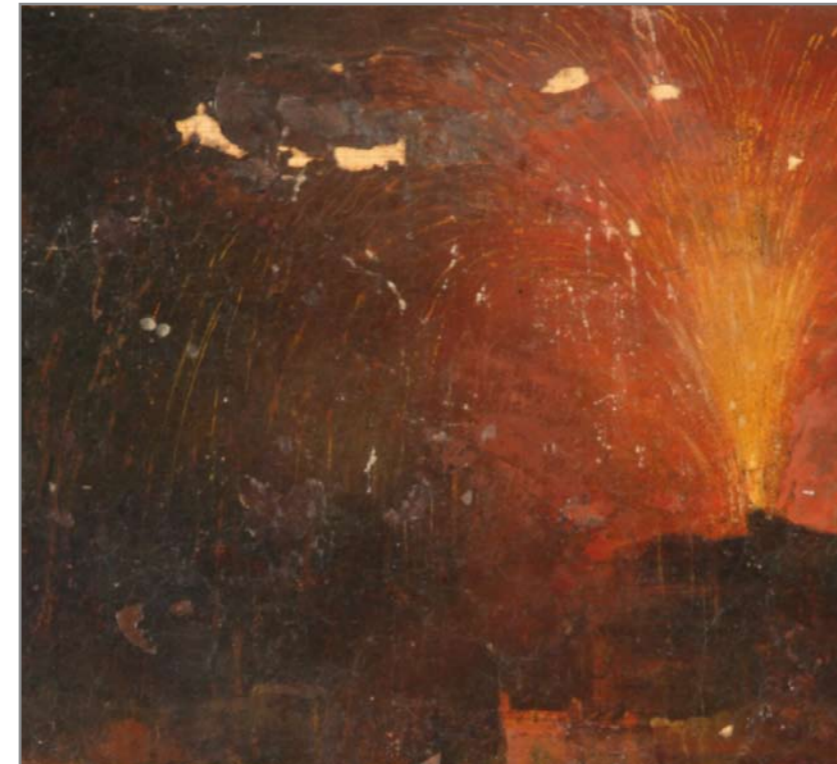
RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

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

The fireworks at Castel Sant'Angelo are an extremely popular Roman tradition which takes place on the 29th of June, the anniversary of its patron saints, Peter and Paul. The Italian name for this celebration is the "Girandola".

A number of fireworks, as many as 4500, are fired together to create an umbrella of fire above Castel Sant'Angelo. The show would originally start after the signal was given by the Pope from the Vatican Palace. This "sign of joy" was repeated on the day of the election of a new pope.

In the past, Castel Sant'Angelo was the perfect place for such a show of fireworks as it was isolated from the city and located near the banks of the Tiber, whose waters reflected the beautiful images of the fireworks.



On these occasions, Castel Sant'Angelo was transformed into a magnificent stage where lights and fireworks were accompanied by much fanfare and gun shots, more or less numerous according to the importance of the event celebrated. On the occasion of the nomination of a new pope, a procession took place at the bottom of the castle, and the new pope would be honored with 101 cannon shots.

The invention of this tradition may be attributed to Michelangelo himself. Bernini too was often involved in organizing these kinds of events. Loved and requested by various Popes, the "Girandola" was apparently a real passion for Pope Julius III (1550-1555) to the point that the Pope wanted to be portrayed in a frieze of his apartment in the Vatican Palace while attending the show.

The Castle, with its cascade of flames glowing, became a very popular pictorial subject thanks to the engravings by Francesco Piranesi and Louis-Jean Desprez.

This small painting depicts the "Girandola" of the castle illuminated by a fountain of light. The bridge and houses on the left are in half-darkness, lit only by the reflection of the fireworks on the water of the Tiber.