



PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Follower Of Gabriel Metsu, The Apothecary, Also Known As The Chemist



4 000 EUR

Signature : Suiveur de Gbariel Metsu

Period : 18th century

Condition : Restauré

Material : Oil painting on wood

Width : 24 cm

Height : 29,5 cm

Description

Oil on oak panel, not parqueted

Canvas: H. 29.5 ; l. 24 cm

With: frame H. 39 ; l. 33.8 cm

Our painting is a magnificent and very faithful replica of one of the masterpieces of the painter Gabriel Metsu (1629 - 1667), The Apothecary or the Chemist, now in the Musée du Louvre.

A painter of the 'fine manner' of the Dutch Golden Age, Gabriel Metsu excelled in the production of genre scenes, for which he abandoned religious subjects from the 1650s onwards. His paintings, often in small format, were highly prized for decorating bourgeois interiors.

Little is known about the young painter's

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apprenticeship. He was probably introduced to painting by one of the city's most eminent painters, Gérard Dou (1613-1675). His style was also influenced by other painters such as Anthonie Claesz de Grebber, Nicolaus Knupfer of the Utrecht School and the great Johannes Vermeer, to whom some of his paintings are attributed.

Dou's influence is evident in the early genre scenes that Metsu began to paint after his arrival in Amsterdam, particularly in the recurring motif of the arched stone window, which is also found in our painting.

An apothecary, the forerunner of our pharmacist, sits peacefully in the window with a newspaper in his lap. His eyes are dreamy and he seems lost in thought.

On the windowsill in front of him are an inkwell, a sheet of paper, an earthenware ointment jar and a mortar. A flask of brown liquid hangs from the window frame on the right. On the opposite side hangs a framed poster showing a portrait of a man holding a pitcher. The niche is framed by cascading ivy leaves.

Behind the man there is a bookshelf with a few books and on it a globe and an inkwell.

The painting exudes a quiet, poetic atmosphere that transports us to the ambience of everyday life in the Netherlands in the mid-17th century.

While every detail has been faithfully reproduced from the original, there is a difference in the colouring of the ivy leaves framing the window.

Ours still have a green, very slightly bluish tinge, whereas those in the Louvre painting are completely bluish. This can be explained by the use, in the original version, of a mixture of blue pigments and schietgeel, a yellow pigment that fades with time and exposure to light. It is therefore highly likely that the painting was made in the early 18th century, based on the original work, at a time when the colours were still relatively well preserved.

The painting was almost certainly copied before

the original was first recorded at a sale in Amsterdam on 14 May 1749 (Lugt 705).

At the beginning of the 18th century, there was a great demand for the works (especially genre scenes) of the great seventeenth-century masters, such as Gabriel Metsu, who were now inactive or deceased. On their own initiative or at the request of the collectors on whom they depended, many artists copied the work of their predecessors.

These reproductions, of the highest quality, are sometimes sold at a premium and confused with the originals. Among these brilliant copyists were Willem van Mieris (1662-1747) and Louis de Moni (1698-1771). The sale catalogue of the latter's collection (Leyden, 13 April 1772) mentions several copies of Metsu's works by de Moni.

We are grateful to Adriaan Waiboer for his help in assessing and dating this painting.

Inscriptions on the back:

- Label 'JPL' (?)
- Label '13' (Sale of 24 November 1975, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, No. 13, attributed to Frans van Mieris, illustrated)
- 9', in pencil
- Trace of wax stamp

Provenance :

- Probably Chevalier Baget sale, 14-15 February 1816, Paris, n°59, after Metzu, 'An old man leafing through a book that he is holding open on his lap. Near him, on a window sill, is a cornet, an iron mortar and other accessories. A very good copy. 85 F
- Probably Bonneuil sale, Paris, 8 April 1816, n°19, after Metzu, withdrawn.
- Sale 24 November 1975, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, n°13, attributed to Frans van Mieris, illustrated (label kept on the back of the painting).