

Finch & C^o



AN UNUSUAL OIL PAINTING OF A DWARF ATTRIBUTED TO FRANCISCUS SMUGLEVITCH
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POLISH SCHOOL 1745-1807

OIL ON PAPER, LAID ON CANVAS

SIZE: 24CMX17.5CM

LITERATURE

FRANCISCUS SMUGLEVITCH (SOMETIMES SPELT SMUGLEWICZ) STUDIED IN ROME

GAINING A FIRST PRIZE AT THE ACADEMY OF SAN LUCA AND IN 1785 RETURNED TO POLAND TO WORK FOR KING STANILAS AUGUSTUS. IN 1800 HE WENT TO ST PETERSBURG TO WORK FOR THE EMPEROR PAUL.

HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE PAINTED THE PORTRAIT OF THE DWARF BAIOTTO WHICH IS LABELLED ON THE REVERSE 'SMUGLEWICZ-56 A WHOLE LENGTH OF BAIOTTO, THE DWARF AT ROME'.

DWARVES WERE A FEATURE OF SEVERAL 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY COURTS AND WERE OFTEN REGARDED IN THE MANNER OF HUMAN PETS. THE DUKE OF MANTUA HAD A SPECIAL SUITE OF SMALL ROOMS TO HOUSE HIS GROUP. PHILIP V OF SPAIN HAD HIS COURT PAINTER VALAZQUEZ PAINT A MAGNIFICENT SERIES OF PORTRAITS OF HIS FAVOURITE DWARVES.

MANY COLLECTORS OF CABINETS OF CURIOSITIES HAD A FONDNESS FOR DWARVES. THEY CREATED A STRIKING VISUAL ABRUPT CHANGE OF SCALE AND PROVIDED AN ADDED ATTRACTION TO THE GALLERY. IN MANFREDO SETTALA'S 'MUSEUM THEY ACTED AS GUIDES AS WELL AS BEING EXHIBITS AND WERE COUNTED AMONG THE MARVELS OF THE COLLECTION. A WONDROUS LINK BETWEEN THE INANIMATE OBJECTS AND LIFE ITSELF.