Finch & Co



SPANISH 'MEMENTO MORI' OIL ON CANVAS DEPICTING THE PENITENT SAINT MARY MAGDALENE LYING IN A GROTTO

AN UNUSUAL SPANISH 'MEMENTO MORI' OIL ON CANVAS DEPICTING THE PENITENT SAINT MARY MAGDALENE LYING IN A GROTTO A CLASSICAL LANDSCAPE BEHIND CONTEMPLATING A SKULL HER LOWER BODY DISPLAYED AS A SKELETON HER UPPER HALF WITH A RICHLY CLOTHED BEJEWELLED DÉCOLLETAGE

MOUNTED IN A CONTEMPORARY WOOD FRAME DECORATED WITH SCROLLING FOLIAGE AND WITH SKULLS TO EACH CORNER

MID 17TH CENTURY

SIZE: 56CM HIGH, 110CM WIDE - 22 INS HIGH, 43¼ INS WIDE / 61.5CM HIGH, 116CM WIDE - 24¼ INS HIGH, 45¾ INS WIDE (FRAMED)

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LITERATURE

MARY MAGDALENE WAS SOMETIMES PORTRAYED IN A GROTTO CONTEMPLATING OR MEDITATING ON THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST SO THAT THE FAITHFUL COULD PRAY TO HER IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF PENITENCE. SHE WAS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST 'OUT OF WHOM HE HAD CAST SEVEN DEVILS' WHO STOOD BY HIS CROSS, WENT TO ANOINT HIS BODY AT THE TOMB AND TO WHOM THE RISEN CHRIST APPEARED ON EASTER SUNDAY MORNING. WHEN SHE ATTEMPTED TO TOUCH HIM, HE TOLD HER 'TOUCH ME NOT' FOR THE SAVING BODY OF THE RISEN CHRIST WAS NOW BEYOND THE REACH OF HER EARTHLY LOVE. THE LOVE THAT HAD TRANSFORMED HER FROM A SINNER MUST NOW

ITSELF BE TRANSFORMED AND BECOME A SPIRITUAL LOVE FOR HIM AS A GOD RATHER THAN AS A MAN.

VEZELAY IN FRANCE CLAIMED HER RELICS FROM THE 11TH CENTURY AND A LEGEND AROSE THAT SHE, HER BROTHER LAZARUS AND HER SISTER MARTHA HAD ALL EVANGELISED PROVENCE WHERE MARY LIVED AS A HERMIT IN THE MARITIME ALPS BEFORE DYING AT SAINT MAXIMIN. THIS DEPICTION OF HER IN A CAVE OR GROTTO IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS LEGEND, BUT SHE IS MORE USUALLY SHOWN IN THE GOSPEL SCENES OF THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION REPRESENTED WITH HER EMBLEM OF AN OINTMENT JAR.

PROVENANCE

EX SPANISH PRIVATE COLLECTION