

Koller Auktionen - Lot 3015*

A198 Old Master Paintings - Friday 01 October 2021, 02.00 PM



PIETER BRUEGHEL the Younger

(Brussels 1564–1638 Antwerp)

The Sermon of Saint John the Baptist.

Oil on canvas.

95 × 162.5 cm.

Certificate: Dr Klaus Ertz, 7.3.2020. Provenance: European private collection. The sermons of John the Baptist were gatherings of Christian believers that were forbidden by the Roman and Jewish authorities and had to take place in secret. Pieter Bruegel the Younger reflects this theme in his "peepbox composition", which is flanked on both sides by mighty oaks and, thanks to the repoussoir motifs, guides the viewer's gaze into the distance, where they can see a river, which serves as an allegory of John's baptisms,

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and a fortified town with a church. John stands entirely in the background, wearing a simple garment as a sign of his frugality. Amongst those present are Flemish contemporaries of the painter and people dressed in foreign fashions and from all walks of life. Here the viewer can enjoy as many visual impressions as were previously only known from the works of the painter's father, Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525 -1569). Within the Brueghel dynasty, Pieter Brueghel the Younger was the one who most faithfully continued the artistic tradition established by Pieter the Elder, and, by acting as mediator, played a central role in the popularity of his father's oeuvre, which continues to this day. A "Sermon of Saint John the Baptist" by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, which is now in the Szepmüvészeti Múzeum in Budapest (inv. no. 51.2829, see Klaus Ertz: Pieter Brueghel der Jüngere- Die Gemälde, Lingen 2000, vol. I, ill. 256, p. 361) was probably in the possession of the Archduchess and Governor of the Spanish Netherlands in Brussels Isabella Clara Eugenia of Spain, which enabled Pieter the Younger to study this painting intensively. As a result, the colours in our painting essentially correspond to those in his father's painting. Together with the "Adorations", the Sermon of St John is the most successful depiction of Christian themes by the painter Pieter Brueghel the Younger. Such depictions had a long tradition from the Middle Ages onwards and enjoyed great popularity, especially in the period of upheaval around 1600. Accordingly, Pieter Brueghel the Younger painted these compositions several times in the period from 1601 to 1636. Dr Klaus Ertz dates our version to after 1616 and points in particular to the painterly perfection and the slightly mask-like faces of the figures, typical of the artist, which are highly evocative.

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