

Fabbri Arte
Alto Antiquariato



FABBRI ARTE



Reliquiary - cross

Gilded silver, colored glass paste, pearls and coral
Greece
15th Century
Measures: 7,5 x 2 in

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Work analysis

Reliquary - cross made of twisted filigree of gilded silver, pearls, coral and colored glass paste, containing an alleged relic of the Holy Cross, in turn finely worked, with depictions of the Baptism of Christ and the Crucifixion.

The Cross is accompanied by a coat of wax belonging to the Chigi - Zondadari family of Siena.

The work was carried out by the Greek monks who lived and worked on Mount Athos as early as the 15th century.

Tradition has it that these monks had come into possession of a fragment of the Holy Cross, and that they finely worked some parts of it through very small carvings depicting episodes from the life of Jesus Christ, to then keep them enclosed in precious works such as the aforementioned cross, made with craftsmanship and medieval goldsmith techniques.

It is therefore an important and rare testimony of a tradition that still survives today.

Also worthy of mention is the attached wax coat of arms, with the coat of arms of the important Sienese family Chigi - Zondadari, to which this rare cross - reliquary probably belonged.

The relic

The term "relic" derives directly from the Latin and means "leftovers, remains".

In a religious sense, the relics represent body remains, objects of use, products or traces that belonged or attributed to characters of religious importance, kept in sacred places and venerated through collective cults for their alleged extraordinary qualities; in particular, in the Christian tradition, we can mention the mortal remains of the body (or the blood kept in ampoules) of the martyrs of the faith, the instruments of their martyrdom, or even the body of a saint.

The relic offers the faithful the possibility of spiritually coming into contact with the revered subject, making him perceive the mysterious power of the sacred.

Christian goldsmithing

Liturgical art is an expression of God's majesty, together with the devotion and ingenuity of man who, through his artistic ability, offers him his gratitude and praise.

For this reason, Christians of every age, even those who lived in poverty (by necessity or by virtue), have adorned places of worship with magnificent works.

In particular, the monks embellished their monasteries, while at the same time remaining faithful to their vows; while not using expensive materials, they nevertheless created goldsmiths of great value.

For example, they sometimes used colored glass instead of semiprecious stones, gilded silver instead of gold, and so on.

The cult of the True Cross

The cult of the True Cross was born in Jerusalem, when the Roman aristocrat Elena Augusta, aided by the soldiers and inhabitants of the then imperial province, would find the cross of Christ by divine will; immediately after the discovery, she would have divided the cross into three parts.

The cult of the True Cross in Jerusalem started the tradition of relics, which defined the most important centers of the Christian world throughout history.

Material analysis

The analyzes have led us to ascertain that the Cross - reliquary is in gilded silver; the tablets show a meticulously created drawing, stylistically dictated by the gothic-international tradition.

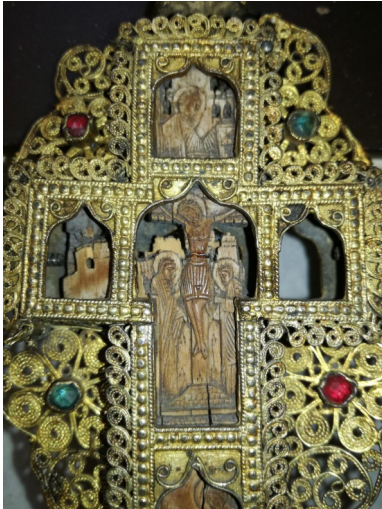
The cross is a real reliquary that can be dismantled, so that it can be opened and shown to the faithful.



1: *Chigi – Zondadari Family Coat of Arms*

The presumed relic consists of the wooden fragment contained in the upper part; the monks of Mount Athos are said to have owned a part of the True Cross, which was itself subdivided and placed in reliquaries.

The fund bears an ancient restoration dated to 1720. Accompanying the Cross was another small reliquary, containing a bone fragment placed on a small section in silk, on the back of which was the wax seal with the belonging coat of arms.



2: Central part of the cross

Detail of the central part of the reliquary in which we can see the colored glass paste and the gilded silver.

Furthermore, on the central tablet we have the fragment of the relic, on which the Crucifixion of Christ is engraved.



3: Pedestal base

Detail of the base of the Cross, showing the great executive detail; it is in fact decorated with thin curls and scrolls



4: Side view of the cross

Side view of the work: the coral present as a decoration of a lateral arm of the cross is clearly visible.

Bibliography

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Ai sensi degli Art. 1490 – 1491 del Codice Civile, con la firma di questo documento Fabbri Arte di Juri Fabbri attesta e garantisce l'autenticità e la lecita provenienza dell'opera, come da D.L. n.42 del 22 gennaio 2004.



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