Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

17th-Century Italian Terracotta Figure of Pope Innocent X

£645

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REF: 4782

Height: 73 cm (28.7")

Width: 20 cm (7.9")

Depth: 16 cm (6.3")

Description

A rare and compelling 17th-century Italian terracotta figure of Pope Innocent X, born Giovanni Battista Pamphilj and Supreme Pontiff from 1644 until 1655. Hand-modelled in terracotta, the figure has an immediacy and expressive quality that speaks to the skill of the maker and the devotional as well as political significance of papal portraiture in Baroque Italy.

Pope Innocent X was one of the defining figures of mid-17th-century Rome, presiding over the Papal States during a period of intense artistic patronage, diplomacy, and religious power. A member of the influential Pamphilj family, he is remembered for his forceful character and for the grand Roman projects associated with his pontificate. His image would have carried considerable resonance at the time, representing both spiritual authority and temporal rule.

The terracotta medium gives the sculpture a particularly tactile character. Its hand-worked modelling preserves the marks and vitality of the artist's process, while the warm earthen surface lends the figure a sense of age and presence. Unlike a formal marble or bronze portrait, a terracotta work retains an intimate, almost immediate connection to its creation, making it an especially engaging representation of its subject.

Whether conceived as a devotional object, a study for a larger work, or a commemorative portrait, this figure offers a tangible connection to 17th-century Italian art and the powerful visual culture of papal Rome. Its combination of historical subject, handmade construction, and expressive material makes it a notable addition to a collection of early Italian sculpture, religious art, or Baroque decorative objects.

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