Georges Croegaert (1848 - 1923)

A curious drawing

Signed and inscribed, lower left: *GEORGES CROEGAERT. PARIS*

Oil on panel

10¼ x 8¼ in – 26 x 21 cm

Frame size

14¼ x 12¼ in – 36.2 x 31.1 cm

£28,000

Provenance:

Private collection

Artist description:

Georges Croegaert was one of a small group of painters working in the late 19th century specialising in the particular genre of 'cardinal' painting. Largely based in Paris, Francois Brunery (1849-1926), Jean Vibert (1840-1902), José Frappa (1854-1904), and Andrea Landini (1847-1912) together with Croegaert dominated this new genre.

At the heart of its enormous popular appeal was the light-hearted mockery of the luxurious and lavish lifestyle popularly considered to be led by the Catholic Church. Paintings of hypocritical cardinals poring over licentious material carefully concealed within a worthy tome or surreptitiously imbibing strong liquor and gorging themselves on choice foods reflected the widespread anticlerical feeling in late 19th century Europe; a conservative Church at odds with a growing liberalism in society at large.

Croegaert himself was born in Antwerp, Belgium in 1848 and studied at the prestigious Academy of Fine Arts in that city. He was a painter of still lifes, genre and particularly portraits of young women dressed in the height of fashion rendered in his highly detailed technique, the emphasis on the textures and sheen of silks and satins.

In 1876 the 28 year old Croegaert moved to Paris in search of more lucrative commissions and it was here as a painter of 'cardinals' that he made his reputation and achieved huge commercial success. Croegaert's highly detailed technique lent itself perfectly to the portrayal of this genre; he depicted the excesses of the Cardinal's lifestyle their ornate furnishings, tapestries, glass and silverware. Demonstrating his virtuosity he captured the vivid reds and purples of the Cardinals robes together with the characterisation and humour in the faces of these faintly ridiculous figures.

Croegaert exhibited in Paris, Brussels and Vienna, his popularity extending throughout Europe and to the United States. He died in Paris in 1923.