

SA1016031

Johan Frederik Clemens After Nicolai Abraham Abildgaard, Socrates - Antique Engraving

Price

Sold**Item Reference: SA1016031****Date of manufacture: 18th Century**

Dimensions

Height = 51 cm (20.1")

Width = 60 cm (23.6")

Depth = 3 cm (1.2")

Description

This exquisite late 18th-century copperplate engraving by Johan Frederik Clemens (1749-1831) depicts the Greek philosopher Socrates. It's after an oil painting by Danish painter, Nicolai Abraham Abildgaard (1743-1809). Here we see the eminent sage deep in introspective contemplation. His burly head resting upon a muscular left hand. Beyond him, grappling for superiority, two shadowy spirits with contrasting agendas. Socrates described having a sixth sense, which he dubbed the daimonion. It arrived in the form of an inner voice or through environmental events and often warned him against taking certain actions. Today, we might refer to this as our conscience. In this instance, there's conflict and struggle. The animated figure on the right is on the cusp of offering detrimental advice before being silenced by the firm hand of the other. As such, in these moments of calm reflection, the philosopher arrives at a positive decision. Johan Frederik Clemens' rendering of Abildgaard's work is scintillating and extraordinary. He's produced an image with rich chiaroscuro and remarkable finesse - with little more than fine lines and cross hatching. To achieve this level of profi...

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