

SISMANN



ANONYMOUS FRENCH ARTIST

**DONATION TO THE MUSÉE NATIONAL DE LA RENAISSANCE - ECOUEN - FRANCE - Esau
selling his birthright to Jacob or "The Lentil Stew"**

ESAU SELLING HIS BIRTHRIGHT TO JACOB OR THE "LENTIL STEW"

Silk embroidery

France, Paris ?

First third of the 17th century

H. 18.5 cm ; W. 23 cm

Despite the richness of the textile fund of the National Museum of the Renaissance, rare are the embroidered pieces of preserved historical scenes. In addition to the corporal adorned with a *Lamentation on the Dead Christ* close to the art of Jean Cousin the father (E.C. 13224), the oval medallion depicting *Adoration of the Golden Calf* (E.CI. 1488) and the green embroidered taffeta piece of *Parnassus* (E.C. 13046), the National Museum of the Renaissance preserves few fabrics entirely covered with embroidery.

The scene represents a passage from Genesis (XXV, 29-34) concerning the twins of Isaac and Rebekah during which Esau, exhausted from the fields, agreed to sell his birthright to his brother Jacob for a dish. of lentils. This excerpt from the Old Testament was frequently produced by painters in the 16th and 17th centuries. Two other scenes from the story of Jacob and Esau adorn the chimneys of the Connétable apartment at the Château d'Ecouen. Its moral significance has also made it a favorite scene in the decorative arts, particularly in the textile field.

The technical implementation is remarkable: applied on a cream taffeta, the stitch of embroidery (flat past and encroaching past) commonly referred to as the "needle painting" is here perfectly mastered.

On the reverse, the remains of paper also testify to the technique, because the embroiderers often reinforced the fabric with stiff paper to make it more resistant to the passage of needles.

Visibly too big to come from a liturgical garment, this embroidered fragment could be part of an altar

decoration (antependium), a religious ceremony (canopy, wall hanging), a piece of furniture or a secular whole. Although different in its composition, the engraving on the same subject in the illustrated Latin Bible of Théodore de Bry (1627) shows characters wearing the same type of clothing, the same hats and wearing very similar flexible attitudes. The model of the embroiderer is probably to look in the entourage of this engraver.

This donation enriches the typology of embroidery of the fonds, as well as the knowledge of the technique of "needle painting" carried to its highest degree of excellence at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century.