

KLAAS MULLER

F R A N S F R A N C K E N T H E Y O U N G E R

The taking of Christ

Frans Francken II (the Younger) was the most important and best-known member of the famous Antwerp painting dynasty. Together with his brother Hiëronimus II, he was apprenticed to his father Frans I. He probably worked in the family studio before becoming an independent master in 1605 and in 1616 he became dean of the guild of Saint Luke.

Before 1616, he signed his works as “Frans Francken the younger”, later (as in this case) as “the old Frans Francken” or “Douwe Frans Francken (‘DO’)” to distinguish himself from his son Frans III.

Our painting brings together several scenes: in the foreground, we see Peter denying that he knows the imprisoned Christ. On the right, soldiers are gambling and playing cards for Christ's clothes. In the background, Christ appears before Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest who hatched the plot against him.

Francken shows himself to be a great psychologist in this painting: Christ's gaze is not fixed on Caiaphas but on his disciple Peter, who is betraying him.

Soldiers and people are everywhere, and the light and dark accents (torches, lanterns, the moon breaking through) make the composition both threatening and very lively. The painting style and brushwork are very lively and fluid, typical of Francken's later period.

signed left below *D^o F. Francken*

Oil on copper, 52 x 72cm

