

A 16th / 17th century carved oak and polychrome decorated figure of Saint Roche, Franco-Spanish, circa 1600

£895



REF: 3821

Height: 49 cm (19.3")

Width: 18 cm (7.1")

Depth: 10.5 cm (4.1")

Description

Designed wearing a characteristic large hat, lifting his tunic to show the signs of plague on his thigh, losses.

St Roche's reputation for the care of 'plague' victims, and for being himself a plague survivor undoubtedly contributed to the spread of his popularity as a cult figure after the Black Death (1347-1349) in Europe. Despite the fact that he died in the early 14th century before the Black Death ravaged Europe's population, the references to 'plague' in his lifetime would have implied any one of the many illnesses the medieval world was vulnerable to.

The increased appearance in art and iconography of Saints with plague connections from the 16th century onwards surely sprang from a widespread and profound need for reassurance that there was someone who could help; someone who had themselves survived this terrifying scourge. The common representation of St Roche dressed as a pilgrim lifting his clothing to reveal a plague bubo on his thigh developed from this cult veneration of him as a protector and symbol of hope.

Provenance: Private Collection, Buckinghamshire.