

	Object:	Death of the Virgin
	Museum:	Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest
	Collection:	Régi Képtár
	Inventory number:	REK_4086

Description

The Bible tells us little about the life of the Virgin Mary. People of the Middle Ages, however, wanted to know more about the woman who had become a focus of religion, and the supreme heavenly intercessor for the created world. Thus many apocryphal legends were born, and these episodes eventually appeared in church pictures. One of the most important stories was Mary's death. It is said that Jesus protected the body of his mother from earthly decay, and took her body and soul into heaven, where she was crowned Queen of Heaven. Medieval preachers often compared Mary's body, the vessel for the Redeemer, to the Ark of the Covenant, which 'was of acacia, for that is incorruptible and the worms do not chew it away. Thus the body of the Virgin is worthy of being saved from corruption.' Although today he is chiefly remembered as the father of the brilliant Hans the Younger, in his lifetime Holbein the Elder was also greatly esteemed. The Death of the Virgin, replete with small details taken from everyday life, is one of his most splendid works. The Virgin, with her unperishing young body prepares mildly for the end. The actions of the apostles gathered around the bed are consistent with the actual rite for the dead: Saint Peter sprinkles her with holy water, Andrew swings incense, and John puts a candle in her hand, the symbol of a peaceful death. Three read the scriptures, one of whom is, anachronistically, wearing spectacles. Meanwhile above the gate of heaven opens, and Jesus beckons his mother come hither. Axel Vécsey

Basic data

Material/Technique:	oak oil
Measurements:	150 x 228.5 cm

Events

Painted	When	1491
	Who	Hans Holbein the Elder (1465-1524)

Where

Keywords

- Painting