



Nativity

Artist	Giovanni di Paolo Siena c. 1400 - Siena 1482
Origin date	around 1470
Origin place	Siena
Material	wood
Technique	tempera, gold
Sizes	magasság: 174 cm szélesség: 73 cm
Inventory No.	55.183



Description

Many altarpieces have survived from Giovanni di Paolo's long and prolific career, most of them in fragmentary condition. This panel, too, was once the central image of a triptych altarpiece; the side panels depicted two patron saints of the city of Siena, Saint Ansanus and Saint Victor (?) — now in the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon.

The central panel shows a representation of the Nativity that was especially popular in the late Middle Ages and spread through the visions of the fourteenth-century Swedish mystic Saint Bridget: Mary kneels in adoration before her Child, who lies on the edge of her cloak. The sleeping, elderly Joseph, relegated to the background, alludes to the divine conception of the Saviour, in which he, Mary's lawful husband, played no part. The painting is one of the most outstanding works from the master's final creative period. The angular, heavy figures and schematic modelling indicate his late style; yet the elderly master, then around seventy years old, depicts the details of the Christmas story with undiminished narrative delight. In the steeply rising, fairy-tale-like landscape, a flock of sheep is watched over by simple, ragged shepherds rendered with touching directness. At the sound of the angel bringing the good news, even one of the lambs raises its head, hesitantly searching for the source of the voice.

The scene is crowned above by the blessing figure of God the Father, whom the painter — avoiding foreshortening — depicted with his head tilted to one side and with a symmetrically fluttering cloak precisely adapted to the space defined by the frame.

Dóra Sallay, 2002 — website

Provenance

Acquisition of János Simor, before 1878

Restoration

2009 Varga Dezső

Exhibitions

- 1971 Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum "Középkor alkonya"

Bibliography

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- Carl B. Strehlke, in Bellosi ed. 2009, 306–9 (late work); Dominique Vingtain, in Guiducci and Vingtain ed. 2009, 94 (c. 1470).
- reconstruction);
- Laclotte and Moench 2005, 112–13 (c. 1470); Sallay 2007, 59 (c. 1470 or early 1470s); Sallay 2008, 5, 7, 12 repr., 16 (c. 1470,
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- Boskovits 1968, 18, 19. képleírás;
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