

	Object:	Portrait of Queen Caterina Cornaro
	Museum:	Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest
	Collection:	Régi Képtár
	Inventory number:	REK_101

Description

The heroine of Donizetti's opera, Caterina Cornaro was not born to the crown. The Venetian patrician girl was swept to the throne of Cyprus by her legendary young beauty and the caprices of politics. Rather than ruling, her role was to become a moral example - so decided Venice, which wanted the important trading post for itself. Thus she abdicated from the throne, but in exchange became the most feted celebrity in the city, a strange and exciting curiosity: a queen in the republic. When the leading Venetian master of the time, Gentile Bellini created this celebrated portrait, the bloom of her youthful beauty had waned. The painter makes no bones about this, and approaches his model with cartographical objectivity. The sumptuous gala dress is given as much attention as the face. The intricate rhythms of necklaces, veils, fabrics and jewels seem to combine to form a kind of eastern ornamental pattern: like those that Bellini studied so enthusiastically during his years at the Istanbul court. The braiding seems to symbolize the restraint of duty: it seems to fetter the woman, biting into her flaccid flesh, while she stands firm, without so much as a tremor. This makes the image an epitome of the ruler's virtues: the dual triumph over external challenges and selfish inner desires. And this makes it the very masterpiece claimed by the confident words put into the mouth of the queen in the inscription: 'You see how great I am; but even greater is the hand of Gentile Bellini which portrays me on such a small panel.'Axel Vécsey

Basic data

Material/Technique:	wooden / oil
Measurements:	63 x 49 cm

Events

Painted	When	1500
	Who	Gentile Bellini (1429-1507)

	Where	
Was depicted	When	
(Actor)		
	Who	Catherine Cornaro (1454-1510)
	Where	

Keywords

- Painting