

	Object: Frozen River with Skaters
	Museum: Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest
	Collection: Régi Képtár
	Inventory number: REK_1698

Description

A decisive moment in the history of European painting was when during the sixteenth century artists first dared to paint pictures with no 'history'. No saints, no Greek gods: just a forest clearing, a shepherd driving his flock, or a table laid with food. Such a picture was a self-contained world, free of all literary references. And as new genres were born, so they soon had their specialists. Avercamp was the first Dutch master to specialize in winter landscapes, populated with many small figures, merrily sliding and skating. The popularity of this deaf and dumb painter peaked in the 1610s, in the decade where several exceptionally harsh winters visited the small town of Kampen, where he spent most of his life. The inquisitive eye can delight in many charming little episodes within the refined structure of the Budapest picture too. A peasant pushes his wife and child on a sledge; figures in noble attire play ijskolf, the ancestor of ice-hockey; further back two gentlemen make towards a horse-driven sleigh. Many folk are skating, but not everyone is practised in the sport: one lad has fallen flat on his tummy on the ice, and lost his hat. Those who like ribald jokes can chuckle over the woman squatted down by the prow of the ship to relieve herself, while a dog bustles about her bare behind. The noble, the fisherman and the peasant take pleasure together, and perhaps this is the picture's underlying message: the unity of the newly independent Dutch nation. Axel Vécsey

Basic data

Material/Technique:	oak / oil
Measurements:	30.5 cm

Events

Painted	When	1620s
	Who	Hendrick Avercamp (1585-1634)
	Where	

Keywords

- Painting