

	Object:	The Martyrdom of Saint Andrew
	Museum:	Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest
	Collection:	Régi Képtár
	Inventory number:	REK_523

Description

Seventeenth-century Naples was, according to many, hell upon earth. Impoverished by Spanish rule, the life of the people was embittered by continuous starvation, epidemics, earthquakes, and even the Vesuvius. The hovels of the poor were increasingly crowded, since the scant harvests had forced village folk into the city. Crime flourished in the stale air of the back streets. It was perhaps inevitable that Caravaggio's violent art, which grappled with the fear of death, came into its own in Naples, and for decades it set the way for the city's painters. But the school of ruthless naturalism did not reach its peak until a generation later, with Ribera. This Spanish-born master was most in his element when portraying the tortuous deaths of Christian martyrs, with shocking verisimilitude, as in this masterpiece of his darkest period. The apostle Andrew preached the gospel in the East, until Roman governor of Achaëa condemned him to follow the founder of his "superstitious sect" in death by crucifixion. If anybody, it is Ribera who manages to convince us that for Andrew martyrdom was redemption. His humiliated body is shrivelled by time, his withered skin hangs drily from his frame; and yet there emanates from him a metaphysical power of the soul. Over him tower shadows of a priest and the governor, presaging Goya's oppressive demons. They are not satisfied with destroying his body: to the very last moment they try to win over his soul, and persuade him to worship the idol of Jupiter. Axel Vécsey

Basic data

Material/Technique:	canvas / oil
Measurements:	206.1 x 177.7 cm

Events

Painted	When	1628
	Who	Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652)
	Where	

Keywords

- Painting