

	<p>Object: Holy Family at Rest with the Infant Saint John the Baptist and Putti</p> <p>Museum: Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest</p> <p>Collection: Régi Képtár</p> <p>Inventory number: REK_57.18</p>
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Description

Poussin is a painter at whom everyone marvels, but perhaps nobody likes. Nor was it his wish to be loved by the public: he declared that painting should address the mind, not the eye or the heart. Alongside Descartes he is the best known exponent of rationalism, the stony seventeenth-century French movement that stubbornly believed that perfection is attainable if we bend the world to the rules of reason. Poussin held the task of art to be that of staging the noble deeds of man in a logical system, as would happen in an ideal world. However, this dogmatic rigour is barely discernible in the Budapest Holy Family. Of all Poussin's pictures it is perhaps the freshest, where we can even detect traces of tender emotions. But in this case the exception indeed proves the rule: this liberated mood is carefully calculated. Poussin consciously applied the theory of modes from the ancient aesthetics of music, in which the theme determines the particular emotional tone and the order of dramaturgy. But a refined, elevated melancholy is mixed into this serene idyll, as the child Saint John the Baptist proffers a palm cross to Jesus. This toy, prefiguring the child's horrific earthly fate, links the picture to one of the main themes of classical drama, the conflict between feelings and duty. The disciplined resignation of child and mother sets a model for the noble, wise handling of such conflicts. Axel Vécsey

Basic data

Material/Technique:	canvas / oil
Measurements:	57 x 74 cm

Events

Painted	When	1627
	Who	Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665)
	Where	

Keywords

- Painting