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|  | <b>Object:</b> Saint Stephen Protomartyr                                    |
|  | <b>Museum:</b> Szépművészeti Múzeum<br>Dózsa György út 41.<br>1146 Budapest |
|  | <b>Collection:</b> Régi Képtár  |
|  | <b>Inventory number:</b> REK_4914   |

## Description

Domenico Ghirlandaio's shop, which employed many assistants (including the young Michelangelo), was the largest art company in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century, and practised not only painting, but jewellery, mosaics, and who knows what else. With Ghirlandaio's activity being so multifaceted, he was open to absorbing all the influences around him. No other of his Florentine contemporaries was as touched by Netherlandish painting, and nobody adopted its achievements with greater understanding than he. The painstaking details of the drawing, with a pin-sharp brushtip, the deep glow of the colours, betray the Northern influence in this image too. The first Martyr of Christianity, stoned to death a few years after Jesus's crucifixion, Saint Stephen appears with such transfixing power in three-dimensional realism, which for the contemporary viewer must have been shocking. Perhaps it was to dampen the effect, or in turn to reinforce it, that Ghirlandaio placed the figure in a feigned niche, and with this transposition, a painting imitating a statue imitating a live human being, he blurs the line between fiction and reality even further. The panel was originally part of the high altarpiece of the church of Santa Maria Novella, which was painted on both sides and could be viewed from all round. There it stood in the centre of the choir, surrounded by one of the greatest achievements of the Florentine Renaissance, Ghirlandaio's celebrated fresco cycle of the lives of Mary and Saint John the Baptist. Axel Vécsey

## Basic data

Material/Technique: wood / tempera  
Measurements: 191 x 56 cm

## Events

|         |      |                                  |
|---------|------|----------------------------------|
| Painted | When | 1492-1494                        |
|         | Who  | Domenico Ghirlandaio (1448-1494) |

Where

## Keywords

- Painting