

	Object: Tavern Scene with Two Men and a Girl
	Museum: Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest
	Collection: Régi Képtár
	Inventory number: REK_3820

Description

There are many who are considered one of the greatest, but far fewer who are thought to be the greatest. In the history of western painting, besides Raphael, Titian and Rembrandt only Velázquez belongs in this club. Manet called him the "painters' painter", and Picasso painted a host of paraphrases to uncover his secret. The essence of his magic was perhaps put most aptly by a contemporary writer, Francisco de Quevedo: Velázquez did not mimic reality, he created it. In this Tavern Scene and similar youthful bodegons (kitchen or tavern scenes named after the bodega, or inn) naturally the Spanish genius does not unfold in full maturity. Common folk populate the canvasses, in apparently banal situations, as if pages from the picaresque novels of Quevedo and his peers had come to life, where the larks of crafty servants and other villainous ruffians tickled the readers' fancy. This startling naturalism often invited claims of Caravaggio's influence, but at the time Velázquez had not even seen the pictures of the Italian vagabond. Even more importantly, in Velazquez there is no trace of Caravaggio's violent coarseness, however vulgar the subject may be, and a kind of calm, puritanical solemnity vibrates in the air. We can only guess at the exact story behind the image, but whether we see them as scheming gaol-birds or characters from an 'exemplary story', the figures' presence has weight and significance - no less so than the kings who populated the works of his mature period. Axel Vécsey

Basic data

Material/Technique:	canvas / oil
Measurements:	96 x 112 cm

Events

Painted	When	1618-1619
	Who	Diego Velázquez (1599-1660)

Where

Keywords

- Painting