

	Object:	Room Corner with Curiosities
	Museum:	Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest
	Collection:	Régi Képtár
	Inventory number:	REK_201

Description

The Bible in the foreground is open at the famous line from Ecclesiastes: Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. As if a stern lecturer were explaining with a cane in his hand, the book seems to force the message upon us: all earthly knowledge and beauty are futile, for in the end comes death, and all that man has accumulated vanishes. Such 'vanitas still-lifes' have a long tradition, though initially they condemned only revelry. Here however the objects represent the entire worldly culture, not just the opulent but also the noble. We set out from Willem Blaeu's atlas, the origin of every Dutch expedition, which lies open where the country was 'born': the first victory of the war of independence was won at Bergen. Then we are taken on a journey over all the routes of the glorious Dutch merchant fleets, with a Turkish carpet, Chinese silk and porcelain, Japanese weapons and a stuffed armadillo from South America. Nor is classical culture, the cradle of European civilization, absent: above the fireplace is the tragedy of Dido, and the German cabinet is decorated with an image of Minerva. Finally, terrestrial and celestial globes raise the ensemble to the universal dimension. Van der Heyden painted this summative masterpiece at the age of seventy-five, the year he died, and the concept is obviously linked to the sense of the end drawing near. Though he may have felt it vanity, he did after all make a final display of the virtuoso skill which has protected his name from oblivion ever since. Axel Vécsey

Basic data

Material/Technique:	canvas / oil
Measurements:	75 x 63.5 cm

Events

Painted	When	1712
	Who	Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712)
	Where	

Keywords

- Painting