Diptych - depicting scenes from Christ's Passion

Metalwork Collection

Accession Nr.:	18846
Date of production:	first half of the 14th century
Place of production:	Paris (presumably)
Inscription:	nincs
Materials:	ivory
Techniques:	carved
Dimensions:	height: 12,5 cm width: 18 cm thickness: 0,8 cm

This small ivory diptych, showing eight scenes of the passion of Christ, is of a distinctive French 14th century type whose primary aim was to assist private prayer and contemplation, and stimulate pious devotion. In this case, the series of pictures served contemplation of the dramatic events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday. The passion scenes composed in niches under three-lobed arches and separated by columns start on the lower left with the betrayal of Judas and the capture of Christ, and continue with His ridiculing, scourging and crucifixion. On the top row, the three-figure Calvary picture is followed by the Laying in the Tomb, the Noli me tangere of the resurrected Christ, and then, inconsistently in terms of the narrative, the set of images closes with the liberation from limbo of Adam and Eve. The carving properties of ivory permitted spectacular artistic flourishes, of which the freestanding column in the Scourging scene is one. The compositions and iconographic types are familiar from cathedral sculpture and stained glass and are rooted in the “classical” traditions of Gothic art in the second half of the 13th century. Ivory carvers, however, made use of the potential for rich illustrative detail and schematic design offered by these monumental artistic inventions, rather than the expressive power produced in the architectural context. These monumental artistic inventions, which have such expressive power in the architectural context, and the pleasant shine of ivory, convey softness and optimism rather than drama. Made in something like mass production, such ivory reliefs presented a much-simplified, almost plebeian version of the Bible stories.

Literature

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