

Devotional image - with a depiction of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.: 20142.b 

Date of production: late 18th century

Place of production: Austria

Materials: parchment; silk

Techniques: watercolour

Dimensions: length: 21,5 cm
width: 15,8 cm

Such “nun’s work” were sacred small artworks made primarily by nuns, paraphernalia for personal devotion, objects much less often meant for church use. Following the Council of Trent (1545–1563), initiating the Catholic Counter-Reformation, they were created in the spirit of Baroque iconography.

At the centre of the artwork preserved at the Museum of Applied Arts, we see a painted depiction of Madonna and Child, which is a copy of the early medieval Blessed Virgin Mary ikon in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. The modern worship of this devotional image can perhaps be best explained by the fact that the Council of Trent took place in this Basilica, and so this ikon became the symbol of Catholic Reform. We are familiar with various types of depictions of the Mother of God, and this is a *Hodegetria*, or a “Guiding” Mother of God. Mary holds the Child in her left arm. The Infant raises His right arm in a Benediction, while both figures gaze at the beholder.

At the bottom of the frame decorated in colourful floral applique, we discover the form of a pelican feeding its offspring, which in Christian iconography is the popular motif for Resurrection and Redemption.

