

Devotional image - Holy Family image of the Church of the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God in Vienna with the figure of St. John the Divine and Archangel Rafael

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.: 54.1215.1 

Artist/Maker: Weinmann, Marcus

Date of production: mid 18th century

Inscription: j. l.: M. Weinmann sc. Viennae

Materials: taffeta

Techniques: engraving

Dimensions: height: 15 cm
width: 9 cm

The upper portion of this copperplate, printed on silk fabric, is occupied by a miraculous picture (Gnadenbild) from the Vienna Church of the Brothers Hospitallers, held by angels, surrounded by clouds, and thus exalted. Showing Mary suckling the baby Jesus in the company of St Joseph, the picture came to be venerated as a 'Heil der Kranken,' or, healer of the ill, after the plague epidemics of 1679 and 1713, not only in Vienna but also, for example, at the Bratislava church of the Brothers Hospitallers, where in 1713 a copy of the piece was placed above the tabernacle of the high altar. (On the cult of the picture, see Gustav Gugitz: Österreichs Gnadenstätten in Kult und Brauch. Bd. I. Wien 1955, 49. Zoltán Szilárdy: 'A győri Magyar Ispita egykori kegyképe.' Arrabona, 45 [2007], 370.)

During the 18th century, several devotional copperplates were made of the miraculous picture in Vienna that was claimed to have provided protection against the plague. Many of these were printed on silk fabric, which is more durable than paper (see IM inv. no. 54.1783, and Szilárdy op. cit., Fig. 10). The reason was probably that during the plague, the faithful wore these devotional images on their chests, as talismans, and sometimes touched them to the miraculous picture. Such a devotional picture cured the painter of this miraculous picture of gout, as reported by the chronicle of the shrine (cf. Vollständiger Bericht von dem Ursprunge des liebreichen Gnadenbildes Jesu, Mariae und Josephs... Wien 1756, p. 44, 71; see here).

The foreground of the composition is occupied by a hospital, with patients lying in beds arranged in a semicircle. In the centre stands John of God, the founder of the Order of the Brothers Hospitallers, with his helper, Archangel Raphael, who holds a basketful of bread in one hand, and a burning heart in the other. The scene refers to the hagiographic tradition according to which the archangel appeared several times to John of God in the hospital he established in Granada in 1539 to help him care for the sick. The burning heart may refer to the creed of the merciful founder of the order, who, according to tradition, hung the motto 'Let the Heart Command' over the gate of the Granada hospital.

The inscription under the composition reads: 'Das wunderhätige Gnadenbild bey denen Barmherzigen zu Wien u. der Liebreiche Ord. Stifter S. Johannes de Deo und sein erster Gehilf S. Raphael' [The miraculous picture of the Viennese Brothers Hospitallers, the loving founder of the order, John of God, and his helper, St Raphael].

At the bottom right, the signature of Marcus Weinmann can be found. Born in Klagenfurt, the engraver learned the trade from Franz Leopold Schmitner in Vienna, around 1750. He worked in Graz from 1758, and then in Vienna, and in Bratislava between 1780 and 1804, making mostly devotional pictures.

Literature

- Pásztor Emese: *Nyomott mintás textíliák a Magyar Iparművészeti Múzeum gyűjteményéből. Kiállítás a sárvári Nádasdy Ferenc Múzeumban.* Szombathely, 1987. - Nr. 31.



Das wunderbare Gnadenbild der den
Barmherzigen zu Wien u. der Schreine ord.
Sister S. Iohannes de Deo und Ierius ersten Gesil.
S. Raphael.

Albrecht Dürer.