

Rijksmuseum given unique painting to remember virus victims

May 27 2020

Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum will display a famous 16th-century painting donated to commemorate victims of the coronavirus when it re-opens next week, almost three months after closing its doors, the museum said Wednesday.

The 1587 [painting](#) by Flemish master Bartholomeus Spranger called "The Body of Christ Supported by Angels" was given to the museum by Dutch art collector and dealer Bob Haboldt.

"In the first place, it is a gift to everyone to commemorate the victims of COVID-19," Haboldt said in a statement, released by the Rijksmuseum.

"It also serves as an example, encouraging everyone to do good for museums."

Haboldt said the donation was to make a contribution "and on how we could best memorialise this period."

"Coronavirus has affected me, in the first place emotionally," said the art dealer, who has offices in Amsterdam, Paris and New York.

Made around 1587, the oil-on-copper painting depicts angels supporting the body of Christ, illuminated by heavenly light as they remove the body from a tomb.

Also called an "imago pietatis" or image of compassion, the painting was

originally made for private devotion.

It became famous after another Dutch painter, the German-born Hendrick Goltzius copied it as a print that was reproduced and distributed in large numbers, the Rijksmuseum said.

Haboldt originally sold the painting at the European Fine Art Fair, commonly known as TEFAF, in the beginning of March, Dutch media reported.

However, organisers cut short TEFAF, one of the world's premier fine arts fairs after one of the exhibitors tested positive for the new coronavirus.

The painting's sale was annulled shortly afterwards and Haboldt decided not to put it up for sale again, the authoritative daily NRC newspaper said on its website.

Neither Haboldt nor the Rijksmuseum put a price on the painting but a larger work by Spranger carried a tag of 5.5 million euros (\$6 million) at TEFAF, the NRC said.

Rijksmuseum director Taco Dibbits said the famous institution was "deeply grateful to Bob Haboldt for his generous gesture."

"In these difficult times we have seen how art can offer solace and be a source of hope and reflection," said Dibbits.

Amsterdam's famous Rijks and Van Gogh museums as well as restaurants around the country are reopening Monday under strict conditions, following almost three months of lockdown because of the coronavirus pandemic which has claimed 5,781 lives so far.

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Citation: Rijksmuseum given unique painting to remember virus victims (2020, May 27)
retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-05-rijksmuseum-unique-virus-victims.html>

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