

LaGalleria

Girolamo Sellari, detto Girolamo da Carpi

Ferrara, 1501 – 1556

The Crucifixion

Olio su tela

Modena, Corporate Collection La Galleria BPER Banca

This dramatic canvas evokes the Gospel passage of the Crucifixion: the dark and stormy sky is torn open by a violent light that illuminates the bodies of Christ and the thieves, while in the distance, trees bend under the lash of the wind and mounted soldiers scatter in fear (Matthew 27:45). In the fury of the unleashed elements, one can even seem to discern, amidst the rain-swollen clouds, the solar eclipse mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (23:44). The composition, steeped in subtle anti-classical elements, reveals the anguished sentiment of the artist who, in the years leading up to the Council of Trent, did not even hide veiled sympathies for reformed religiosity. The almost grotesque deformation of certain details finds references in the strongly pathetic imagination of Giulio Romano and Nordic culture: in particular, the figures of the soldiers in the foreground are directly derived from the famous engraving of Calvary by Lucas van Leyden (Bartsch, VII, no. 74). In this expressive violence, which distorts the refined Raphaellesque elegance of his youthful works, the representation of human drama finds a striking echo in the dark sky, illuminated by sudden flashes, revealing glimpses of wooded landscape in the gloomy background atmosphere.

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