

Room 5

Tales of woe

Room 5 shows, in particular, depictions of the Passion of Christ.

On your way here you have already passed one of the most important paintings of the museum, the "Man of Sorrows" by Lucas Cranach the Elder. Christ shows himself here in all his human vulnerability. He presents his wounds and the instruments of torture they inflicted on him. The picture invites the viewer to devotion by enabling him to immerse himself in the suffering of Christ through direct eye contact. At the same time, the hope of salvation is also present, for Jesus is not only the tortured one here, he is also already the Risen One.

In this room 5 - behind the "Man of Sorrows" - you can see several times the scourge of Christ and the bearing of the Cross. On the one hand on two late medieval altarpieces, on the other hand on a baroque oil painting. Pay attention to the differences in the representation. The late medieval Christ on the altarpieces with the gold background is a very suffering man. He has an emaciated, maltreated body and lowers his gaze. The faces of his tormentors are drawn to grotesque, hate-filled grimaces. But in the midst of this brutality there is also beauty and compassion, as for example in the mourning gaze of Mary on the right panel.

The Baroque painting by Hendrick Goltzius looks quite different. Here, Christ's dull shimmering body seems to be untouched by all abuse. Jesus has raised his gaze to heaven. He is no longer quite of this world. The faces of the soldiers are more rigid. Hate also prevails here, but the painter expresses it much more reservedly. The "carrying of the cross" of 1700 is even more different from this representation. Here the drops of blood seem to serve only a decorative purpose. The suffering of Jesus must be known to the observer, it cannot be deduced from the picture any more.

The largest painting in the room shows a different story of suffering. St. Sebastian was condemned to death in the Roman Empire because of his confession to Christianity and executed by numidic archers on behalf of the emperor. But he survived badly wounded and could be nursed back to health. Unfortunately he did not survive a second execution. The depiction of his execution inspired many artists, including this unknown painter, who created a two-part altarpiece with this motif in the 16th century.

The Luther Bibles exhibited here also have a history of suffering behind them. The Bible from the 17th century has a large burn hole which, according to the family legend, can be traced back to a gunshot wound in the 30-year war. It lies next to the so-called "Fußbankbibel", which in the former GDR was used as a footstool for so long that its lid broke.