

Art Day 4 - looking at pictures for Holy Week

Christ Crowned with Thorns by Hieronymus Bosch



but an immediate, still picture that draws in the viewer and invites meditation. Here, Christ is surrounded not by the four evangelists but by four grotesque tormentors, each with their own unpleasant attributes that create a sense of evil and despair. In the top left, the thin faced, mean expression of the armoured man shows a sense of deadly purpose as he prepares to force the crown on Jesus' head, but its position in the picture makes it more like a halo. In top right the man has his hand on Jesus' shoulder and holds a stick but his especial menace is the spiked collar round his neck,

This painting was made in about 1490, using oil paint on oak. The brush technique is clever, using many layers in places so that, for instance, the oak leaves on the headdress of the man on top right appear to stand out from the picture as if they have been pinned on.

Bosch was a Dutch painter, who was best known for his extraordinary paintings of fantastic and demonic scenes on a fairly large scale. This small painting, by contrast, is more in the style of a medieval devotional painting, of the type that would be carried on travels, being not a narrative

suggesting that Christ's torturers were like savage dogs. At bottom right, the ugly, comfortable face of the man has a greedy look as he reaches up to clutch at Jesus' robe, perhaps ready to tear it off and share it out. The man at the bottom left is the most cruel picture of all, an ugly man, with a stick and, on his headdress, both a star and a crescent moon – obvious references to unbelievers. Each of these is totally focussed on the figure of Jesus who alone looks out of the picture, calm, suffering, serene and silent.