

# Object Summary

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## Ex-Voto Painting of the Battle Of Lepanto

### Date

1500-1599

### Primary Maker

Antonello Ricci

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### Dimensions

208 x 133cm

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### Object Type

Painting; Ex-voto

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### Technique

Tempera and Oil on Panel; Composite wood with strips of fabric glued along the joints of these planks as well at weak points such as cracks and knots. It has a traditional gesso preparation layer mixed with animal glue. The palette is limited with the background prepared in tempera, finished in glazes, highlights and final touches in oil.

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## Museum

Malta Maritime Museum

## Registration Number

MMM 000591

## Description

On 7 October 1571, 132,000 men on 490 ships faced each other on two sides of the Gulf of Patras, near Lepanto, in modern-day Greece. It was the last major battle in history fought exclusively with rowing vessels. The Holy League carried 30,000 sailors and oarsmen, 35,000 soldiers, 206 Galleys, and 6 Galleasses, whilst the Ottoman and Maghrebi Fleet carried 37,000 sailors and oarsmen, 30,000 soldiers, 222 Galleys, and 56 Galliot and Fuste. At the Battle of Lepanto, the Holy League lost 13 Galleys, and between 7,500 and 10,000 men were killed. The Ottoman and Maghrebi Fleet had 50 Galleys and Galliot sunk or destroyed, 117 Galleys and 20 Galliot captured, and between 25,000 and 30,000 men killed. The composition of the Ex-Voto painting shows on the top part, the Virgin Mary and Child, flanked by St. John the Baptist, the patron Saint of the Order, on the left-hand side, and St. Lucia on the right-hand side. The Baptist's staff points towards the Christian fleet, whilst St. Lucia points the blade of her martyrdom towards the Ottoman fleet. These lead the viewer's eye towards the bottom panel of the painting. The Christian fleet on the left, consisted of many nationalities: Spanish, Neapolitan, Sicilian, Sardinian, Papal, Venetian, Genoese, Savoyard, Tuscan, Greek rebels and Maltese. In the centre left, one can see three galleys of Malta: the Santa Maria della Vittoria, San Giovanni, and San Pietro. At the extreme left, are the bulk of Papal and Imperial galleys, including the Capitana of Pope Pius V, and La Real, flagship of the Commander-in-Chief, Don Juan of Austria. Behind the royal squadron on the Christian side is a sword-wielding angel, symbolising that God is with the Christians. Across from them are Ottoman ships and galleys from the Maghreb. On them are ethnically Greek, Ottoman, and Arab men, but also North African corsairs and European renegades. The Ottoman fleet is depicted as spurred into action by a company of demons. At the lowest part of the composition, on the foreground kneels the donor of the painting, a

Knight of the Order of St. John, presumably one who fought in the battle and was wounded, possibly on the galley San Pietro. His coat-of-arms is found at the bottom right, but is unfortunately partly lost. The presence of Santa Lucia in this painting, may symbolise the donor's wounds in his eyes or throat during battle. The message of the painting leaves no question as to the power of the prerogative of faith in late 16th century life.

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