

Death and the Miser Deconstructed



1. A Crucifix with Jesus hangs in the window at the top of the room. A beam of light streams through the window towards the miser dying in bed.
2. The image of Death has an arrow in his hand pointed at the miser.
3. Four demons are pictured in this work: the first is above the dying miser's bed, a second offers the miser a bag of gold, the third is in the strongbox holding a bag of gold open for the healthy miser, and the fourth is coming out from underneath the strongbox and is holding a piece of paper in his hand.
4. The image of the healthy miser dropping a coin into the strongbox is wearing the key to the strongbox and a rosary around his waist.
5. The piece of paper held by one of the four demons refers to the indulgences granted by the Middle Age church to wealthy contributors.
6. A rat tail sticking out underneath strongbox may be a reference to the Black Death.
7. Most art historians argue that the small winged demon at the bottom of the painting is a self-portrait of Bosch.
8. A helmet, spear, sword, and armor lay strewn at the bottom of the painting refers to chivalry and the crusades of the Middle Ages.

WHERE TO FIND AN IMAGE OF THIS WORK

Digital Image: National Gallery of Art

<http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg39/gg39-41372.0.html>