

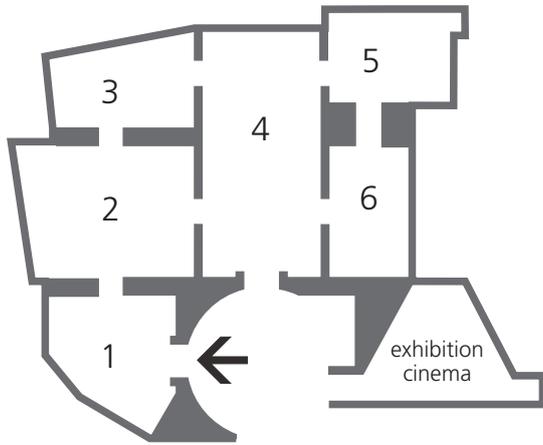
THE  
SACRED  
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SPANISH PAINTING & SCULPTURE 1600–1700

21 OCTOBER 2009–24 JANUARY 2010

THE  
NATIONAL  
GALLERY

Supported by the American Friends of the  
National Gallery as a result of a generous  
grant from Howard and Roberta Ahmanson



### Exhibition film

The extraordinarily lifelike sculptures of the suffering Christ, the saints and the mourning Virgin in this exhibition remain compelling objects of veneration in churches around Spain. A short film showing in the exhibition cinema explores the contemporary relevance of these works, including dramatic footage of their procession by candlelight through the streets of Seville and Valladolid during Holy Week. You are welcome to view the 20-minute film at any time during your exhibition visit.

Subtitled; free



### Audio guide

Curator Xavier Bray gives a personal tour of the exhibition accompanied by Brazilian painter and sculptor Ana Maria Pacheco and Jesuit priest James Harvey. The audio guide and exhibition film feature specially commissioned music by leading British pianist Stephen Hough, who has created a modern interpretation of Tomás Luis de Victoria's *Requiem* (1605). Individual movements of this beautiful string sextet can be listened to in rooms of the exhibition.

Available in English, French and Spanish;  
£3.50, £3 concessions

### The Making of a Spanish Polychrome Sculpture

To discover the incredible skill involved in making the painted sculptures in this exhibition, visit a free display upstairs in Room 1. Turn to the back of this guide for more details and notes on technique.

### Spanish Masterpieces trail

To see further great works from the Spanish Golden Age, including masterpieces by Velázquez and Zurbarán, ask at Information Desks for our special trail of the Gallery's Spanish collection.

Available in English and Spanish; free

# INTRODUCTION

In 17th-century Spain, a new kind of realism in art emerged. In order to revitalise the Catholic Church, painters and sculptors worked together in an attempt to make the sacred as realistic and accessible as possible. This realism was quite unlike any other developing in Europe. It was stark, austere and often gory, with the intention of shocking the senses and stirring the soul.

Although the painters who worked during this period, such as Velázquez and Zurbarán, are celebrated today, the sculptors – Juan Martínez



Map of modern Spain

Montañés and Pedro de Mena, for example – are virtually unknown outside Spain. The sculpture they produced, which was carved in wood and then polychromed (painted in many colours), required considerable skill and the result was some of the greatest masterpieces of Spanish art.

During this period, sculptors worked very closely alongside painters, who as part of their training were taught the art of polychroming sculpture. This exhibition will argue that this led to a new style of painting, one that was highly naturalistic and emphasised the three-dimensional. For the first time, some of the finest examples of painting and sculpture from the Spanish Golden Age are here juxtaposed, demonstrating how these two media had a profound influence on each other.

The exhibition is organised by the National Gallery, London, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Supported by the American Friends of the National Gallery as a result of a generous grant from Howard and Roberta Ahmanson.

We would like to thank the Spanish Ministry of Culture, the Spanish Tourist Board, the Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España and the Spanish Church for their generous support.

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## ROOM 1

### THE ART OF PAINTING SCULPTURE: THE QUEST FOR REALITY

The production of religious sculpture in 17th century Spain was strictly governed by the guild system – the Guild of Carpenters for the sculptors and the Guild of Painters for the polychromers or painters. The skills needed to paint sculpture were taught in painters' studios throughout Spain, the most famous being Francisco Pacheco's in Seville, where both Velázquez and Alonso Cano studied. In his influential treatise *Arte de la Pintura* (1649) Pacheco advised that a wooden sculpture 'requires the painter's hand to come to life'. Zurbarán is documented as having painted a carving of the Crucifixion early on in his career.

As an art form, the practice of painting sculpture remains little studied today. There is no doubt, however, that it was highly respected in its time and was considered a lucrative business for painters. One of the results of the direct contact painters had with religious sculpture was that they often introduced three dimensional illusionism into their compositions.



Diego Velázquez (1599–1660)

### Portrait of Juan Martínez Montañés, 1635–6

Montañés was one of the most important sculptors working in 17th-century Seville. Popularly known as the 'god of wood', he often sent his sculptures to Pacheco's studio to be painted. In 1635, Montañés was called to Madrid to make a likeness of Philip IV in clay. Velázquez portrays him as a gentleman-sculptor, dressed in his best attire. He is shown in the act of creation – an effect Velázquez marvellously captures by leaving the area of the king's head unpainted.

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 1/X6329. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

## 2

Francisco Pacheco (1564–1644)

### Christ on the Cross, 1614

Pacheco was celebrated for his skills as a painter of sculpture and often collaborated with Montañés (see portrait, 1, and 6), including work on life-sized Crucifixions. This is reflected in the strong sculptural quality of the painted Crucifixion displayed here. As censor of religious art on behalf of the Inquisition, Pacheco believed that artists should always represent the four nails by which Christ was attached to the cross, and not three as was sometimes the case.

Oil on cedar  
Cat. 2/X6151. Instituto Gómez-Moreno,  
Fundación Rodríguez-Acosta, Granada

## 3

Juan de Mesa (1583–1627)  
and unknown painter

### Christ on the Cross, about 1618–20

This carving is a reduced version, with slight differences, of one of Mesa's most celebrated life-sized Crucifixions, popularly known as the 'Christ of Love'. This large Crucifixion was commissioned in 1618 by a confraternity, or religious brotherhood, in Seville and is still processed through the streets on the evening of Palm Sunday. Mesa's precise carving style was celebrated in its day for its exaggerated realism and harsh sense of pathos. We see this here in Christ's emaciated form that reveals the outlines of his ribcage and muscles.

Painted wood  
Cat. 3/X6330. Archicofradía del Santísimo Cristo del Amor,  
Collegiate Church of El Salvador, Seville

## 4

Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664)

### Saint Luke contemplating the Crucifixion, 1630s

A painter, with palette and brush at the ready, stands before Christ on the cross. He is identifiable as Luke the Evangelist, the patron saint of painters. Zurbarán's theatrical composition – like actors on a stage, only the figures are lit – invites viewers to question whether they are looking at a painting of the Crucifixion or a painting of a polychrome sculpture. Zurbarán is known to have painted a sculpture of the Crucifixion in 1624 and no doubt knew Mesa's carvings in Seville [3, 8].

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 4/X6135. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

## 5

Alonso Cano (1601–1667)

### The Vision of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, also known as 'The Miracle of the Lactation', about 1657–60

In 1119, when kneeling in prayer before a sculpture of the Virgin breastfeeding the Christ Child, Saint Bernard pronounced the words, 'show yourself to be a mother', upon which the sculpture came alive and squirted milk into his mouth. The subject is traditionally depicted as a vision, with the Virgin mounted on clouds, but it was undoubtedly Cano's training as both sculptor and painter that led him to represent the Virgin as a sculpture seemingly coming to life.

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 10/X6133. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

# The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception

The Immaculate Conception – the belief that the Virgin Mary was born free of original sin – was a theologically complex doctrine, hotly debated in religious circles since the Middle Ages. The subject was particularly popular in Seville since the city had a special devotion to the Virgin.

Sculptors and painters such as Montañés and Pacheco worked together in establishing an orthodox image of the Virgin. Artists took as their chief source the description found in the Book of Revelation of ‘a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars...’ (Revelations 12: 1–2). And Pacheco, in his treatise, further stipulated that the Virgin should be represented as a beautiful young girl of 12 or 13 with flowing golden hair, serious eyes and a perfect nose and mouth.

6 

Attributed to Juan Martínez Montañés (1568–1649) and unknown painter

## The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, about 1628

Montañés and Pacheco produced several versions of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception together throughout their careers. This version is likely to have come from Montañés’s workshop and follows closely Pacheco’s teachings on how to paint the flesh tones and apply the elaborate *estofado* technique of decoration to the drapery. The naturalism with which the Virgin is shown – her youthful face and humble expression, her long brown hair, the folds of her mantle falling heavily around her body – was to have a profound influence on later generations of artists, notably the young Velázquez [7].

Painted wood  
Cat. 9/X6327. Church of the Anunciación, Seville University

# 7

Diego Velázquez (1599–1660)

## The Immaculate Conception, 1618–19

At the time Velázquez painted this picture he would have recently graduated from the workshop of Pacheco, where it seems likely he had received early training in the art of painting sculpture. Velázquez here introduces a strong sense of the three-dimensional to his figure. X-radiography has revealed how the Virgin's blue mantle was initially more free-flowing, as if being blown by the wind. Probably because it interfered with the statuesque quality he wanted to achieve, Velázquez eventually arranged the mantle behind her legs. The folds of the red tunic have piled up on top of the moon, a similar feature to Montañés's sculpture [6].

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 8/NG6424. The National Gallery, London.  
Bought with the aid of The Art Fund, 1974

# 8

Juan de Mesa (1583–1627)  
and unknown painter

## Head of Saint John the Baptist, about 1625

Saint John's head has been freshly decollated, the blood on his severed neck bright red. The carving was probably modelled on a human specimen, perhaps the decapitated head of a criminal. The trachea, oesophagus and paraspinal muscles have been accurately depicted. The swollen eyelids and the lifeless brown eyes beneath, as well as the half-open mouth revealing meticulously carved and painted teeth, are all realised with macabre precision.

Painted wood  
Cat. 5/X6328. Seville Cathedral

## ROOM 2

### A TRUE LIKENESS: PORTRAITS

The religious orders in 17th century Spain were important patrons of art. Commissions tended to focus either on the history of an order or on the exaltation of its founder or significant members. The Carthusians, founded in 1084 by Saint Bruno, obeyed austere monastic rules such as silence, seclusion and vegetarianism. The Jesuits, by contrast, were an order that had only recently been established in 1540 by the ex soldier and scholarly preacher Saint Ignatius Loyola. Renowned for their piety and emphasis on teaching, the Jesuits spread Catholic doctrine as far as Japan.

To mark Ignatius's beatification in 1609, by which he was proclaimed worthy of public veneration in preparation for sainthood, Montañés and Pacheco were commissioned by the Jesuits to make a life sized sculpture of him. In order to capture a true likeness, they based their representation on Ignatius's death mask, a plaster copy of which Pacheco owned. Pacheco proclaimed their portrayal of the saint the best of all representations 'because it seems really alive'. The extraordinary levels of naturalism that polychrome sculpture could achieve is perhaps nowhere better demonstrated than by Alonso Cano's *Saint John of God* [9].



Alonso Cano (1601–1667)

### Saint John of God, about 1660–5

Although Cano trained both as a sculptor and painter it was only towards the end of his career that he chose to carve and paint his own sculptures. Saint John of God, famous for his charity and founder of hospitals for the poor, was the patron saint of Granada. Originally, this carved head was part of a life-sized manikin dressed in real fabric, known as an *imagen de vestir*, in which only the visible parts, namely the head and hands, were carved. For the eyes, cups of painted glass were inserted inside the hollowed-out head. Cano subtly blends several thin layers of colour to bring warmth to the features; the painting is particularly subtle around the saint's hairline.

Painted wood and glass  
Cat. 6/X6150. Museo de Bellas Artes, Granada

10 

Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664)

## The Virgin of Mercy of Las Cuevas, about 1644–55

Originally part of a set of three paintings, this work decorated the sacristy of the Carthusian monastery of Santa María de las Cuevas, Seville. The Virgin's outspread mantle protects the monks who kneel in prayer beneath it, a traditional iconography that dates back to the Middle Ages. By contrast, Zurbarán's portrayal of the monks was probably based on contemporary portraits of the Carthusians. To assist him in his depiction of their distinctive white habits, Zurbarán may well have also been looking at a celebrated sculpture of Saint Bruno, the founder of the order, by Montañés, which was in a chapel of the Carthusian monastery [11].

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 11/X6146. Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville

11 

Juan Martínez Montañés  
(1568–1649) and unknown painter

## Saint Bruno meditating on the Crucifixion, 1634

In 1634, Montañés was commissioned to provide a life-sized sculpture of Saint Bruno for one of the chapels in the Carthusian monastery of Santa María de las Cuevas, Seville. A contemplative order, the monks took a vow of silence, each living in individual cells and dedicating their time to prayer. Montañés portrays the saint as a youthful ascetic, who focuses on the crucifix in his hand with an expression of tender compassion.

Painted wood  
Cat. 12/X6147. Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville

# 12

Alonso Cano (1601–1667)

## Saint Francis Borgia, 1624

Francis Borgia was a nobleman who spent the first part of his life in the service of the emperor Charles V and his wife Isabel. However, when the empress died, he declared upon seeing her putrefied body that he would no longer serve a mortal master and in 1546 joined the Jesuit order. He is represented here meditating on a crowned skull, a symbol of worldly vanity. This painted portrait is similar to Montañés's sculpture of the saint [13], which Cano may have witnessed Pacheco painting while he was a student in his studio.

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 13/X6145. Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville

# 13

Juan Martínez Montañés (1568–1649)  
and Francisco Pacheco (1564–1644)

## Saint Francis Borgia, about 1624

Like *Saint Ignatius Loyola* [14], this sculpted portrait is an *imagen de vestir*, a life-sized manikin covered in a simple cassock that would have been dressed in elaborate liturgical costume on solemn occasions. Commissioned by the Jesuits in Seville to mark Borgia's beatification in 1624, it is one of Montañés's and Pacheco's masterpieces. Like a make-up artist, Pacheco has applied a darker shade of brown to accentuate Borgia's cheekbones while a black line along the eyelids is used to emphasise his eyes. Pacheco's final touch was to apply an egg-white varnish to the eyes so that the face 'becomes alive and the eyes sparkle'. The saint would have originally held a real skull in his left hand.

Painted wood and cloth  
Cat. 14/X6158. Church of the Anunciación, Seville University

14

Juan Martínez Montañés (1568–1649)  
and Francisco Pacheco (1564–1644)

## Saint Ignatius Loyola, 1610

Commissioned to celebrate Saint Ignatius's beatification in 1609, this sculpture is an *imagen de vestir*, like *Saint Francis Borgia* [13], in which only the head and hands were carved and painted. The painting of the work is a fine example of Pacheco's matt technique, which he believed was more naturalistic for the flesh tones than a glossy varnish. We do not know what the saint held in his right hand, but it was likely a crucifix. The black tunic – made from cloth stiffened with glue – was probably also added later.

Painted wood and cloth  
Cat. 15/X6159. Church of the Anunciación, Seville University

15 

Diego Velázquez (1599–1660)

## The Venerable Mother Jerónima de la Fuente, 1620

Mother Jerónima posed for Velázquez as she was passing through Seville on her way to Manila in the Philippines where she was to found a sister convent. Renowned for her austere programme of penitence, biographers tell of her re-enacting the Crucifixion by attaching herself to a cross and hanging unsupported for up to three hours at a time. Velázquez's depiction of her imposing physical form may be a legacy of his early training in painting sculpture. Her leathery, taut skin, each crease carefully recorded, is executed using a very similar palette of dark browns that Pacheco applied on Montañés's *Saint Francis Borgia* [13].

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 16/X5581. Private collection

## ROOM 3

### SAINT FRANCIS IN MEDITATION: 'A CADAVER IN ECSTASY'

In 1449, Pope Nicholas V and a small retinue entered Saint Francis's tomb in Assisi in order to pay homage to his body. They were shocked to discover that, although the saint had died more than 200 years before, his body was miraculously preserved and he was standing upright with his eyes looking heavenwards, his stigmata, or marks of Christ's wounds, still bleeding. Images of this miracle, such as the ones in this room by Zurbarán [17, 18] and Pedro de Mena [19], were very popular in 17th century Spain.

The son of a wealthy merchant, Saint Francis grew up enjoying the pleasures of life, but he was soon to become dissatisfied with his worldly existence. He exchanged his clothes with a beggar and began his quest for a spiritual life. He attracted numerous followers in his own lifetime and founded a religious order, the Franciscans, which was based on the simple rules of poverty, chastity and obedience, as symbolised by the three knots in the rope worn

around their habit. The austere and hermit like life of Saint Francis was to make him an exemplary figure in post Counter Reformation Spain. Francisco Pacheco was a member of the lay order of the Franciscans and requested that he be buried wearing the habit of the reformed branch of the order, the Capuchins.

'It was a strange thing, that a human body, dead for so long before, should be in that manner in which it was: for it stood straight up upon the feet... The eyes were open, as of a living man, and moderately lifted up to heaven.'

A cardinal's description of Pope Nicholas V's visit to Saint Francis's tomb in Assisi in 1449

# 16

Attributed to Francisco de Zurbarán  
(1598–1664)

## Head of a Monk, about 1620–30

Probably made from life, this drawing seems to depict a cowled monk with his eyes lowered as if in the act of reading. The suggestion has also been made that the young monk is in fact dead, but this is unlikely given that he appears to be depicted upright and, crucially, that the pupils of his eyes are still visible. Strong lighting creates areas of deep shadow in the gaunt hollows of his cheekbones and in his eye sockets; a strip of shadow bisects his lips. Along with the close-up view, this gives the face an extraordinary three-dimensional quality.

Black chalk, with dark grey wash on yellowish paper  
Cat. 30/X6137. Trustees of the British Museum, London

# 17

Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664)

## Saint Francis in Meditation, 1635–9

Zurbarán has set the scene in a darkened room, the composition edited right down to the bare essentials. A shaft of light brings into sharp focus the sculptural form of a monk deep in prayer. If it were not for the stigmata, or marks of Christ's wounds, just visible on his right hand, we might think this was a representation of a 17th-century monk rather than Saint Francis himself. The saint's intense absorption in his meditation suggests that the painting was intended for private devotion, perhaps for a small cell or private chapel, where the monks could remind themselves of their founder's example.

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 29/NG230. The National Gallery, London

## 18

Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664)

### Saint Francis standing in Ecstasy, about 1640

Zurbarán presents Saint Francis standing upright in a state of ecstasy, just as Pope Nicholas V reputedly found him when he entered his tomb. Devoid of any narrative and illuminated as if by candlelight, Zurbarán inserts him into a shallow niche, his statuesque presence filling the composition. Casting a shadow against the wall (now only just visible), his habit hangs straight down in long parallel folds, emphasising the saint's upright posture.

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 31/X6763. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona

## 19

Pedro de Mena (1628–1688)

### Saint Francis standing in Ecstasy, 1663

Mena led an extremely successful workshop in Málaga. He both carved and painted his sculptures allowing him full control over his work. This carving may well have been inspired by Zurbarán's painted depiction of the saint [18]. In his quest for reality, Mena used materials such as glass for the eyes, ivory for the teeth, hair for the eyelashes, and rope. Despite its small size, the work has an extraordinary presence. In *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain* (1845), Richard Ford instructed his readers to specifically look out for this work. Located in the sacristy of Toledo Cathedral, where it remains today, Ford described it as 'a masterpiece of cadaverous extatic [sic] sentiment'. The sculpture has never before left Toledo Cathedral and is in an excellent state of preservation.

Painted wood, glass, cord, ivory and human hair  
Cat. 33/X6149. Cabildo de la Santa Iglesia Catedral Primada, Toledo

## ROOM 4

### MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION

Each year during Holy Week the Passion of Christ that is, his suffering in the events leading up to his death and resurrection is re enacted in cities and towns all over Spain. Floats, or *pasos*, weighing up to two tons and bearing life sized painted sculptures, are carried through the streets, each float depicting a different episode from the Passion. Supported by some 30 men, the floats sway from side to side, giving the impression that the sculptures are alive. Many onlookers are overwhelmed by the narrative being played out in front of them.

Polychromed sculptures of the Passion were also commissioned for churches and for private devotion. The uncompromisingly real nature of these sculptures, which today may appear horrifying and gory to some, were intended to arouse feelings of empathy and piety in the viewer. This engagement with a powerfully realistic reconstruction of a Passion scene is matched by painters such as Velázquez, Zurbarán and Francisco Ribalta. The three dimensional illusion of Zurbarán's *Christ on the Cross* [26] was so effective that it was often mistaken for a sculpture.

‘There is a crucifix from his [Zurbarán’s] hand which is shown behind a grille of the chapel (which has little light), and everyone who sees it and does not know believes it to be a sculpture.’

Antonio Palomino, 18th century Spanish art historian and painter, on Zurbarán's *Christ on the Cross*

## 20

Gregorio Fernández (1576–1636)  
and unknown painter

### Ecce Homo, before 1621

Fernández shows the moment when, having been bound, scourged and mocked by the soldiers, Christ was presented by Pontius Pilate to the Jews with the words '*Ecce homo*' ('Behold, the man'). To depict the flesh wounds on Christ's back, a layer of ground was removed and a pinkish-red colour was applied to the layer below. For the bruised and blemished skin, a mixture of blue and pink paint was applied with broad brushstrokes. When the fabric loincloth was removed for restoration in 1989 it revealed that the genitalia were carved and Fernández had initially conceived his figure as totally naked.

Painted wood, glass and cloth  
Cat. 18/X6154. Museo Diocesano y Catedralicio, Valladolid

## 21

Diego Velázquez (1599–1660)

### Christ after the Flagellation contemplated by the Christian Soul, probably 1628–9

Velázquez depicts a rarely represented Christian subject: following his flagellation, Christ is visited by a Christian soul in the form of a child, accompanied by his guardian angel. The Gospels tell only of Christ's scourging but there were commentaries and meditative texts that dwelt on the moments after his flagellation. While the figures of the angel and Christian soul seem to have been taken from life (the angel's wings look like a studio prop), for the classical figure of Christ, Velázquez may well have studied one of the many sculpted renditions of the subject, such as the one by Gregorio Fernández nearby [20].

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 19/NG1148. The National Gallery, London.  
Presented by John Savile Lumley (later Baron Savile), 1883

## 22

Pedro de Mena (1628–1688)

### Christ as the Man of Sorrows (Ecce Homo), 1673

Intended to be seen from close up, the skill with which this carving has been painted is exceptional. Blue paint has been applied beneath the flesh tones in order to suggest the bruising of Christ's skin. The rivulets of blood which trickle down his body are soaked up by the loincloth around his waist. Glass eyes have been inserted into the eye sockets and real hair used for the eyelashes. The sculpture was made for the illegitimate son of Philip IV, Don Juan José de Austria, for his private devotion.

Painted wood, human hair, ivory and glass  
Cat. 20/X6152. Real Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales,  
Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid

## 23

Pedro de Mena (1628–1688)

### Mary Magdalene meditating on the Crucifixion, 1664

Mary Magdalene meditates on the small crucifix that she holds in her left hand. She steps forward in a dynamic pose, her right hand clasped to her breast, overwhelmed by the empathy she feels for Christ's suffering. Technically this sculpture is one of Mena's most proficient. For Mary's long flowing hair, he used several strands of twisted wicker, painted a chestnut colour. X-radiography has revealed that the main body of the figure was created from a column of wood to which Mena attached the separately carved body parts using animal glue and long nails.

Painted cedar and glass  
Cat. 23/X6134. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. On long-term  
loan to the Museo Nacional Colegio de San Gregorio, Valladolid

## 24

Francisco Ribalta (1565–1628)

### Christ embracing Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, about 1624–7

The practice of praying in front of sculptures and paintings, especially those depicting Christ and the Virgin, led some religious figures to experience a mystical union with them. Saint Bernard reputedly received Christ into his arms after praying before a sculpture of Christ on the cross. To communicate Bernard's rapturous visionary state, Ribalta shows him with his eyes closed and a smile on his face. What is remarkable here is the way in which Christ has seemingly metamorphosed from a wooden sculpture into a living being.

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 26/X6131. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

## 25

Juan Martínez Montañés (1568–1649)  
and unknown painter

### Christ on the Cross ('Cristo de los Desamparados'), 1617

Known as 'Christ of the Helpless', Montañés here represents Christ already dead, the weight of his pale, slender form pulling at the nails that attach his hands to the cross. Blood trickles down his chest and congeals around the wound. The voluminous white loincloth gathered around Christ's waist is testimony to Montañés's nickname, 'the god of wood'. Life-sized painted sculptures would have been familiar to painters such as Zurbarán [26], who is indeed known to have painted a life-sized carving of a Crucifixion early in his career.

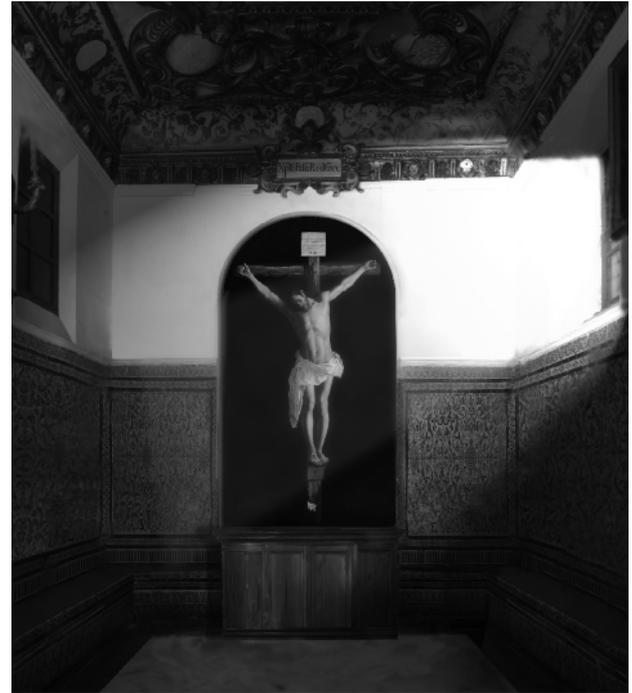
Painted wood  
Cat. 24/X6657. Church of the Convent of Santo Ángel,  
Carmelitas Descalzos, Seville

## 26

Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664)

### Christ on the Cross, 1627

This painting originally hung in an arched alcove above an altar in a chapel attached to the sacristy of the Dominican friary of San Pablo in Seville (see reconstruction, right; also featured in the exhibition film). Zurbarán designed the picture specifically for this space. Nailed to a rough-hewn cross, Christ's lifeless body emerges from impenetrable blackness, illuminated by the bright light from the window on the right. The scene is entirely devoid of narrative detail forcing the viewer to focus on the subject presented. Depicted with an incredible attention to detail – note the complex arrangement of crisp folds in his loincloth – Zurbarán's painting takes the illusion of reality to a new level: it is as though the sacrifice of Christ is taking place right in front of us.



© Robert Cripps

Oil on canvas

Cat. 25/X6141. The Art Institute of Chicago.

Robert A. Waller Memorial Fund 1954.15

## ROOM 5

### MEDITATIONS ON DEATH

The sculpture of Christ lying on a white sheet in the middle of this room was carved by Gregorio Fernández, one of the leading sculptors working in Valladolid, Northern Spain, in the first half of the 17th century. Specialising in scenes of the Passion, his work was known for its gruesome and bloody nature, often incorporating real elements. The fingernails are made from the horn of a bull, the eyes are of glass, while the bark of a cork tree was painted with red paint to simulate the effect of coagulating blood. Fernández combined these realistic techniques with a great sensibility for the male nude.

The objective of a sculpture such as this was to make believers feel truly in the presence of the dead Christ. Such images were often placed in a glass case, sometimes beneath the altar, an appropriate location given that the sacrifice of Christ was celebrated by the priest on the altar during the Mass. They were also processed during Holy Week. By omitting the lamenting figures of the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalene who are usually present with the dead Christ, we are invited to focus on the pale and lifeless corpse so that we become the mourners.

‘Gregorio [Fernández] is regarded as venerable for his many virtues; he did not undertake to make an effigy of Christ our Lord or His Holy Mother without preparing himself first by prayer, fast, penitence and communion, so that God would confer his grace upon him and make him succeed.’

Antonio Palomino, 18th century Spanish  
art historian and painter,  
*Life of Gregorio Fernández*

27 

Gregorio Fernández (1576–1636)  
and unknown painter

## Dead Christ, about 1625–30

Completely naked, apart from a loincloth, Christ's body is thin and angular. The bones push against his flesh. His eyes are expressionless and his mouth is half open, revealing a set of ivory (or bone) teeth. The painter skilfully captures the sense of life seeping out of Christ's body. The corpse has not yet been washed and prepared for burial. Blood still oozes from the wounds. Commissioned by the Jesuits in Madrid, Fernández intended this work to shock and stir the soul.

Painted wood, horn, glass, cork, ivory or bone  
Cat. 27/X6132. Museo Nacional del Prado. Madrid. On loan  
to the Museo Nacional Colegio de San Gregorio, Valladolid

28 

Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652)

## The Lamentation over the Dead Christ, early 1620s

Christ's body is here placed centre-stage on a crumpled white sheet, surrounded by the kneeling figures of Saint John the Evangelist, the Virgin and Mary Magdalene. Ribera's staging of the scene is reminiscent of the groups of religious sculptures on the floats processed in Spain during Holy Week. X-radiography reveals that the Magdalen's face was originally much closer to Christ's feet. She was probably actually kissing them, just as sacred images, such as Fernández's *Dead Christ* [27], were venerated before being carried in procession.

Oil on canvas  
Cat. 28/NG235. The National Gallery, London.  
Presented by David Barclay, 1853

## 29

Pedro de Mena (1628–1688)

### The Virgin of Sorrows (Mater Dolorosa), about 1673

Mena's highly expressive sculptures of the Virgin of Sorrows were much in demand for private devotional purposes. The bust format invited intimacy. The Virgin's parted lips give the impression she is uttering a cry of lament. The wafer-thin pieces of wood that make up her blue headdress and the inner white veil made of plastered canvas protect as well as frame her face. The painting captures variation of skin tones, such as the way the Virgin's tears colour the skin between her nose and eye socket. Glass tears, of which only one remains, would have caught the light, making them all the more naturalistic. Remnants of the pathway of her tears, probably made out of animal glue, are also visible.

Painted wood, ivory, glass and human hair  
Cat. 21b/X6784. Museo de San Joaquín y Santa Ana, Valladolid

## ROOM 6

### 'SALA DE PROFUNDIS': A ROOM FOR THE DEAD

*Sala De Profundis* was the term used by most monasteries in Spain to describe the mortuary chapel in which deceased monks were laid in state before burial. It is named after the opening words of Psalm 130: '*De profundis clamavi ad te Domine*' ('Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord'). The Mercedarian order in Seville had such a space and in 1628 commissioned Zurbarán to provide a painting for it of one of their most popular martyrs, Saint Serapion. An Englishman, Serapion had travelled to Spain in the early 13th century to fight the Moors alongside Alfonso IX of Castile. Impressed by the endeavours of the Mercedarians to act as hostages to ransom Christian captives in danger of losing their faith, he joined the order in 1222.

According to the most reliable account of his martyrdom, Serapion was captured in Scotland in 1240 by English pirates. Bound by his hands and feet to two poles, he was beaten, dismembered and disembowelled, and his neck was partially severed. Zurbarán has shown Serapion moments after the

ordeal, yet he has chosen, crucially, to eliminate any detail of gore; instead it is the white unblemished habit worn by the saint that is the focus of the painting. Serapion appears to be asleep. The subtle moment of his passing, so poignantly captured by Zurbarán, would have been entirely appropriate for a space dedicated to the transition from life to death.

30 

Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664)

## Saint Serapion, 1628

Serapion wears the white habit of the Mercedarians, with the scarlet, white and gold shield of the order pinned to the front of it. Zurbarán's rendering of the drapery and the manner in which light and shadow fall on its deep folds endow the saint with a physicality and grandeur that belie his broken body. It is so realistically painted, it is as if we could reach out and touch him. Zurbarán reminds us, however, that this is ultimately only a painted representation by fictively pinning a piece of paper with his signature onto the canvas.

Oil on canvas

Cat. 35/X6142. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT.  
The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

# THE MAKING OF A SPANISH POLYCHROME SCULPTURE

21 October 2009–24 January 2010  
Room 1 (Level 2), admission free



Francisco Antonio Gijón (1653–about 1721) and unknown painter (possibly Domingo Mejías), *Saint John of the Cross*, about 1675

Image courtesy of the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.  
Patrons' Permanent Fund (2003.124.1)

Visit this free exhibition upstairs in Room 1 to discover how the masterpieces of polychrome sculpture in *The Sacred Made Real* were made. The focus of the display is a life-sized sculpture of the 16th-century Spanish saint John of the Cross that has recently undergone technical examination at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Francisco Antonio Gijón's *Saint John* is shown alongside *Saint Francis standing in Ecstasy* (after Pedro de Mena's version of the subject on display in *The Sacred Made Real*, 19) and José de Mora's *Virgin of the Sorrows*. In both these later works, realistic touches such as glass eyes and ivory teeth were added to heighten the sense of naturalism, a development that would capture the imagination of later artists, such as Degas and Picasso.

Traditionally, a team of specialists were involved in making these sculptures. The sculptor carved the work and applied a white ground before sending it to the painter's studio. There, the head, hands and feet were painted in flesh tones. It was common for another artisan to embellish the drapery with *estofado* (gilded, painted and scribed decoration). The end result was the sensation of being in front of a living person.

Supported by the American Friends of the National Gallery as a result of a generous grant from Howard and Roberta Ahmanson

## Notes on the Making of a Spanish Polychrome Sculpture

Spanish polychrome sculpture remains an under-appreciated art form. Yet, as *The Sacred Made Real* demonstrates, these are works of extraordinary skill and artistic beauty. An *imaginero* or sculptor-painter of religious images today (such as Darío Fernández, below) will carve, paint and decorate a polychrome sculpture himself, but traditionally there was a strict division of labour. To complete the life-sized figure of *Saint John of the Cross* in the Room 1 display (see previous pages) within the seven weeks specified, a team of specialists were required.



Darío Fernández working on a bust-length copy of Gijón's *Saint John of the Cross* to show the various stages of its production. His model can be seen in the Room 1 display.

### The sculptor's role

Francisco Antonio Gijón was a sculptor from Seville renowned for his ability to carve dramatic works with intense expression. He was only 21 when he was awarded the commission for *Saint John of the Cross*.

X-radiography reveals that the figure was carved from a single column of cypress wood, which was hollowed at the back from mid-chest down to the base in order to reduce its weight and minimise cracking along the grain. The head, arms, hands, left leg and feet, as well as the cape and hood and lower scapular, were all separately carved and attached to the trunk using animal glue and nails.

The surface was then prepared to be painted. Sawdust was removed, wood knots were pierced to expel sap and rubbed with garlic to enhance adhesion, and several coats of glue size and white ground applied.

### The painter's role

The painter of *Saint John of the Cross* may have been Domingo Mejías. He probably would have started by working on Saint John's habit using the *estofado* technique (gilded, painted and scribed decoration). Linen was first adhered using *gíscola* (animal glue and garlic essence) to reinforce separate wooden sections of the sculpture. The fabric-covered wood was then layered with white ground and red bole.

Gold leaf was placed on top of the dampened bole and burnished with a polished stone. The gold leaf was painted with egg tempera, which was then scratched away using a stylus to create decorative patterns. In some areas punching was used to vary the patterning.

*Encarnación* (literally ‘incarnation’ or ‘bringing to life’) was the subtle skill of adding colour to form. There were essentially two ways of painting the flesh tones – *polimento* (glossy) and *mate* (matt). The polimento technique, which involved polishing the surface, made the sculptures look shiny and reflected light in an unnatural way. The mate technique, by contrast, was much favoured in Seville as a way of approximating the true quality of human flesh. This was the technique used by the painter for Saint John’s head, face, hands and feet.

On top of the white ground applied by the sculptor, the painter used a reddish-coloured priming as a base for the colours. Then, with the skill of a make-up artist, he worked up layers of shadow and texture using an oil-based paint to capture Saint John’s angular cheekbones and unshaven chin. The final touch was to apply an egg-white varnish to make the eyes sparkle.

For further resources and to see a live demonstration of the making of polychrome sculpture visit the Gallery’s website, [www.nationalgallery.org.uk/the-sacred-made-real](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/the-sacred-made-real).

## Information

### Catalogue and film

The fully illustrated catalogue includes essays by exhibition curator Xavier Bray; Alfonso Rodríguez G. de Ceballos; and Daphne Barbour and Judy Ozone of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. Hardback £35; paperback, £19.99. A 45-minute version of the film showing in the exhibition cinema is available (with Spanish subtitles), priced £9.99.

### Shops

Daily 10am–5.45pm, Fridays until 8.45pm. Shop online at [www.nationalgallery.co.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.co.uk) or order on 020 7747 5969.

### Eating and drinking

The National Dining Rooms  
Level 1, Sainsbury Wing Entrance  
Daily 10am–5pm, Fridays until 8.45pm

The National Café  
Level 0, Getty Entrance  
Monday–Friday 8am–11pm, Saturdays 10am–11pm,  
Sundays 10am–9pm

Espresso Bar  
Level 0, Getty Entrance  
Daily 10am–5.30pm, Fridays until 8.45pm

### Exhibition opening hours

Open daily 10am–6pm (last admission 5.15pm)  
Friday until 9pm (last admission 8.15pm)  
No readmission

[www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk)  
National Gallery Information: 020 7747 2885  
Email: [information@ng-london.org.uk](mailto:information@ng-london.org.uk)  
Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN

## Exhibition events programme

For details, pick up a copy of *Book Now* from Information Desks or visit [www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on), where you will find details of free lunchtime talks and free concerts of Spanish music during Friday Lates.

### Paradise Lost film season

Saturdays, 2.30pm, Sainsbury Wing Theatre  
£4/£3 concessions

The works in *The Sacred Made Real* present faith as a visceral experience. From classic studies by Bergman and Bresson to Luis Buñuel, the films in this season reflect on this theme. And just as the sculptures in the exhibition are processed through the streets of Spain during holy week, we find the Christian story brought to contemporary life in Montreal (*Jésus de Montréal*; 10 October) and Africa (*Son of Man*; 7 November).

A short film will be shown before each feature – discover rarely seen classics and new work in film and animation.

### 26 September: **Mother Joan of the Angels**

(Jerzy Kawalerowicz, 1961) B&W, cert PG, 110 mins  
Short: The Village (Mark Baker, 1993)

### 3 October: **Through a Glass Darkly**

(Ingmar Bergman, 1961) B&W, cert 15, 89 mins  
Short: The Madness of the Dance (Carol Morley, 2006)

### 10 October: **Jésus de Montréal**

(Denys Arcand, 1989) colour, cert 18, 118 mins  
Short: His Comedy (Paul Bush, 1994)

### 17 October: **Viridiana**

(Luis Buñuel, 1961) B&W, cert 15, 90 mins  
Short: The Black Dog (Alison de Vere, 1987)

### 24 October: **Winter Light**

(Ingmar Bergman, 1962) B&W, cert PG, 81 mins  
Short: One Day a Man Bought a House  
(Pjotr Sapegin, 1998)

### 31 October: **Simón del desierto**

(Luis Buñuel, 1965) B&W, cert 12, 45 mins  
Short: Attack on the Bakery (Naoto Yamakawa, 1982)

### 7 November: **Son of Man**

(Mark Dornford-May, 2006) colour, cert 12, 86 mins  
Short: Feet of Song (Erica Russell, 1988)

### 14 November: **Procès de Jeanne d’Arc**

(Robert Bresson, 1962) B&W, cert PG, 65 mins  
Short: The End (Maxime Leduc, Martin Ruyant, Michel Samreth, 2005)

### Special free screening

22 November, 2.30pm, Sainsbury Wing Theatre  
**Into Great Silence**  
(Philip Gröning, 2005) colour, cert U, 169 mins

### Recital

#### **The Sacred Made Real**

Wednesday 16 December, 6.30–7.30pm,  
Sainsbury Wing Theatre, £5/£3 concessions  
For *The Sacred Made Real*, celebrated British pianist Stephen Hough has composed a string sextet based on Tomás Luis de Victoria’s *Requiem* (1605). Before the performance, Hough will be in conversation with curator Xavier Bray.

## Student study day

### **The Sacred Made Real**

Thursday 5 November, 10.30am–5pm, £6 (lecturers free)  
Why was such extraordinarily explicit sculpture produced in 17th-century Spain and what is the impact of this work today? Through discussion we will explore the ways in which *The Sacred Made Real* connects the sacred to the secular and the past to the present.

To book student events visit [www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/university-and-college-students](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/university-and-college-students); ID required

## Brunch

### **Spanish Baroque Art**

Sunday 8 November, Sainsbury Wing Conference Room 1, 11.15am–1pm, £20/£16 concessions

## Lectures

6.30pm, Sainsbury Wing Theatre, £5/£3 concessions

### **23 October Shocking the Senses to Stir the Soul**

David Davies, University of London

### **30 October Merciful Image: Zurbarán's 'Saint Serapion'**

Peter Cherry, Trinity College, Dublin

**2 December Changing Taste: Colour in Greek and Roman Sculpture** Jan Stubbe Østergaard, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

### **9 December Spanish Baroque Sculpture: A Contemporary View**

Brazilian-born sculptor Ana Maria Pacheco

**22 January The Monk and the Ballerina: Pedro de Mena's 'Saint Francis in Ecstasy' and Degas's 'Little Dancer Aged Fourteen'**  
Xavier Bray, curator of *The Sacred Made Real*

## Workshops

Education Centre Rooms 2&3

Saturday 7 November, 10.30am–4.30pm

### **Depicting Passion**

£35/£30 concessions

Saturday 21 November, 10.30am–4.30pm

### **Moving Sculpture**

£35/£30 concessions

Saturday 28 November, 10.30am–4.30pm

### **Deep Velvets and White Skin**

£35/£30 concessions

## Course

### **Between Italy and Spain:**

### **Baroque Painting in the 17th Century**

Thursdays 3, 10 & 17 December, 10.30am–12pm

£45/£36 concessions

## Study day

### **The Sacred Made Real**

Saturday 16 January, 10.30am–4pm

£25/£20 concessions

Introduced by exhibition curator Xavier Bray. Speakers include: Professor Tina Beattie of Roehampton University; Dawson Carr, curator of Italian and Spanish paintings 1600–1800, The National Gallery, London; author Gijs van Henbergen; Rosemary Mulcahy, University College, Dublin.

## How to book

Online at [www.nationalgallery.org.uk/book-now](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/book-now) or at the advance ticket sales desks (Sainsbury Wing, Level 2). On the day, any remaining tickets will be on sale half an hour before the start of each event (payment by cash or cheque only).

Notes