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**LANDMARK EXHIBITION TO EXPLORE IMPACT OF
LIFELIKE RELIGIOUS SCULPTURES ON
PAINTINGS FROM BAROQUE SPAIN, ON VIEW AT
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
FEBRUARY 28-MAY 31, 2010**



Attributed to Juan Martinez Montañés
Immaculate Conception (la Purisma), about 1628
polychromed wood
University of Seville

(Updated October 13, 2009) Washington, DC— Arrestingly real sculptures and paintings of the saints, the Immaculate Conception, and the Passion of Christ are among some 20 Spanish masterpieces of the 17th century on view in a landmark exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from February 28 through May 31, 2010. ***The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600-***

1700 will showcase major paintings by Diego Velázquez, Francisco de Zurbarán, and Francisco Pacheco, with painted and gilded sculptures carved by Gregorio Fernández, Juan Martínez Montañés, and Pedro de Mena, among others.

The exhibition will also reveal the dynamic and intricate relationship between two-dimensional pictures on canvas and painted sculptures that has long been noted by scholars but little known by the general public. Many of the sculptures have never been exhibited away from the Spanish churches, convents, and monasteries where they continue to be venerated and to inspire the faithful.

"We hope that this exhibition will convey the artistic excellence and spiritual profundity of Spanish art to our visitors," said Earl A. Powell III. "We are grateful to the museums and Spanish ecclesiastical institutions that have agreed to lend these exceptional works of art, which together provide an illuminating and powerful experience."

The Sacred Made Real is organized by the National Gallery, London, where it will be on view from October 21, 2009, through January 24, 2010, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Exhibition Support

The exhibition has been made possible by the generous support of Robert H. Smith.

Polychrome Sculpture

The spectacularly painted and gilded sculptures that are the glory of Spain's patrimony form an integral part of the Spanish artistic panorama. Although Spanish painting is well known and documented, Spanish polychromed sculptures—partly because of their fragility—have rarely been the subject of special exhibitions, and their influence on painting has not been fully explored. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when neoclassical taste for monochrome marble or bronze sculpture prevailed, critics and historians rejected the flamboyantly lifelike polychromed sculptures of the baroque era.

Some of the polychromed (literally "many colored") sculptures in the exhibition will be seen in the United States for the first time. They

were painted and gilded not only by specialist artists who worked uniquely on polychroming sculptures that were carved from wood (or occasionally formed from rigidified fabric and papier-mâché), but also by the masters—including Velázquez—who are now instead recognized primarily for their dramatic two-dimensional pictures rendered on canvas. It is likely that Velázquez's supreme illusionism in depicting events from Christ's life emerged from his training in the polychromy of sculptures and his familiarity with them. Carefully juxtaposed in the exhibition, two-dimensional pictures on canvas and three-dimensional polychromed sculptures will be presented for fresh interpretation about the roles and status of the respective artists who participated in their creation.

The Exhibition

The majority of sculptures created in 17th-century Spain were dedicated to Christian subjects. *The Sacred Made Real* will explore how painters and sculptors combined their skills to create intensely real representations of the saints, the Immaculate Conception, and the Passion of Christ. The exhibition will also provide a reappraisal of the crucial role of these hyper-realist sculptures in the development of Spanish painting.

Significant sculptures will be installed with great Spanish paintings of the period, such as *The Immaculate Conception* (1618/1619) by Velázquez and the celebrated *Crucifixion* (1627) by Zurbarán, whose styles were influenced by their familiarity and direct involvement with sculpture.

The process of creating a polychromed sculpture will also be explored—from the carving and preparation of the wood to the final touches of paint and gold leaf that seem to bring the figure to life. In the creation of a polychromed figure, painter and sculptor worked together in a unique relationship. Velázquez's teacher and father-in-law, Francisco Pacheco, often painted the wood sculptures carved by the celebrated sculptor Montañés and taught a generation of students the skills they needed to paint sculpture. Mastering the technique of polychroming these hyper-realistic sculptures was an integral part of an artist's training, enhancing his sensitivity to visual impact and physical presence—all of which are evident in paintings of the period.

Curator and Exhibition Catalogue

The curator of the exhibition is Xavier Bray, assistant curator of 17th- and 18th-century Spanish and Italian paintings, National Gallery, London. The coordinators in Washington are Mary L. Levkoff, curator of sculpture and decorative arts, and David Alan Brown, curator of Italian and Spanish Renaissance painting, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Published by National Gallery, London, in association with Yale University Press, the exhibition catalogue will feature scholarly essays on the technical aspects of polychroming sculptures, their patronage, individual artists' training and careers, public reception of their works, and an assessment of how these sculptures are still used today in a Spanish religious context. A biographical section on each sculptor and painter in the exhibition will be included. The 224-page catalogue with 185 color illustrations will be available in November from the Gallery Shops. To order, call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or email mailorder@nga.gov.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. The Gallery is now on Facebook—become a fan at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the East and West Buildings. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's

back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 x 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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