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*The Sacred Made Real:  
Spanish Painting and  
Sculpture, 1600–1700*

Press Event

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**BAROQUE SPAIN'S REMARKABLE PAINTED  
SCULPTURES JOINED FOR THE FIRST TIME BY  
GREAT 17TH-CENTURY SPANISH RELIGIOUS  
PAINTINGS, ON VIEW AT THE NATIONAL  
GALLERY OF ART  
FEBRUARY 28–MAY 31, 2010**

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**Attributed to Juan Martínez Montañés**  
***Immaculate Conception (la Purísima)*, about 1628**  
polychromed wood  
University of Seville

(Updated February 18, 2010)

Washington, DC—Masterpieces created to shock the senses and stir the soul are spotlighted in ***The Sacred Made Real: Spanish***

***Painting and Sculpture, 1600–1700***, on view at the exhibition's only U.S. venue—the National Gallery of Art—from February 28 through May 31, 2010. This landmark reappraisal of religious art from the Spanish Golden Age includes 11 paintings by Diego Velázquez, Francisco de Zurbarán, and others, displayed for the very first time alongside 11 of Spain's remarkable polychromed (painted)

sculptures, many of which have never before left Spain and are still passionately venerated across the Iberian Peninsula in monasteries, churches, and processions.

During the Spanish Counter-Reformation, religious patrons, particularly the Dominican, Carthusian and Franciscan orders, challenged painters and sculptors to bring the sacred to life, to inspire both devotion and emulation of the saints. The exhibition brings together some of the finest depictions of key Christian themes including the Passion of Christ, the Immaculate Conception and the portrayal of saints, notably Pedro de Mena's austere *Saint Francis Standing in Ecstasy* (1663), which has never before left the sacristy of Toledo cathedral.

By installing polychromed sculptures and paintings side by side, the exhibition shows how the hyperrealistic approach of painters such as Velázquez and Zurbarán was clearly informed by the artists' familiarity—and in some cases direct involvement—with sculpture. During this period, sculptors worked very closely with painters, who were taught the art of polychroming sculpture as a part of their training.

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

"We hope that this exhibition will convey the artistic excellence and spiritual profundity of Spanish baroque 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, which together provide an illuminating and powerful experience."

#### **Exhibition Support**

The exhibition in Washington is made possible by the generous support of Robert H. Smith, The Charles Engelhard Foundation, and an anonymous donor.

The exhibition is presented on the occasion of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union, with the support of the Ministry of Culture of Spain, the Spain-USA Foundation and the Embassy of Spain in Washington, DC. This exhibition is included in the *Preview Spain: Arts & Culture '10* program.

Additional support for the Washington presentation is provided by

Buffy and William Cafritz.

The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

### **Exhibition Background**

A crucial loan to the exhibition, Zurbarán's masterpiece *The Crucifixion* (1627) from the Art Institute of Chicago achieves an astonishing sculptural illusion on canvas. When seen in close proximity to Juan Martínez Montañés' polychromed sculpture of 1617 from the Church of the Convent of Santo Ángel, Seville, these two art forms begin an intense natural dialogue.

In Seville, Francisco Pacheco taught a generation of artists, including Velázquez (later his son-in-law), the skill of painting sculpture as an integral element of their training. Pacheco himself painted the flesh tones of superb wooden sculptures carved by fellow Andalusian artist Montañés, known by his contemporaries as "the god of wood." Among the most important examples of their collaboration is their life-size *Saint Francis Borgia* (1624) from the Church of the Anunciación, Seville University, commissioned by the Jesuits to celebrate Borgia's beatification that year. Another highlight of the exhibition is the fascinating juxtaposition of Velázquez's *The Immaculate Conception* (1618–1619) from the National Gallery, London, with Montañés' exquisite polychrome sculpture of the same subject (c. 1628) from the Church of the Anunciación, Seville University.

To obtain even greater realism, some sculptors such as Pedro de Mena and Gregorio Fernández introduced glass eyes and tears, as well as ivory teeth, into their sculptures. In one of Mena's most proficient works, *Mary Magdalene Meditating on the Crucifixion* (late 1660s), the artist used several strands of twisted wicker for his subject's long flowing hair and animal horn for her toenails.

Throughout Semana Santa (Holy Week) in Spain, some 17th-century polychrome sculptures are still carried through the streets by religious confraternities, particularly in Seville, Granada, and Valladolid—the most important centers of this art. One such processional sculpture included in the exhibition is the *Pietà* (c. 1680–1700) from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

During the evening of Palm Sunday, Seville's Archicofradía del Santísimo Cristo del Amor (Confraternity of the Christ of Love) process a life-size sculpture *Christ on the Cross* by Juan de Mesa.

The exhibition features a smaller version of this work (c. 1621), which although non-processional, plays a vital role in the pastoral life of the confraternity.

Zurbarán's heightened illusionism shows an acute understanding and appreciation of sculpture, as seen in the brilliant handling of drapery in his painting, *Saint Serapion* (1628) from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, CT, which is among the artist's greatest achievements. The saint's luminous white habit cascades with astonishingly rendered folds of deep shadow. Here, Zurbarán demonstrates that painting can indeed achieve the same disconcerting realism as sculpture.

The religious art of 17th-century Spain pursued a quest for realism with uncompromising zeal and genius. Painting and sculpture are distinct arts, but *The Sacred Made Real* shows how, in 17th-century Spain, they were drawn together in the service of ardent devotion and the quest to appeal to religious sensibilities.

### **Curators 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 curatorial coordinators in Washington are Mary L. Levkoff, curator of sculpture and decorative arts, and David Alan Brown, curator of Italian and Spanish paintings, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Published by the National Gallery, London, in association with Yale University Press, the exhibition catalogue features scholarly essays on the technical aspects of polychroming sculptures, 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 is included. The 224-page catalogue with 185 color illustrations is available from the Gallery Shops. To order, call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

### **Exhibition Films**

Produced by the National Gallery, London, *The Sacred Made Real* documentary explores the traditions and rituals surrounding 17th-century Spanish polychrome sculpture. The film reveals how the close collaboration of sculptors and painters played a key role in the development of Spanish art. It includes exclusive footage of the

sculptures in situ and as part of Holy Week processions in Seville.

*Making a Spanish Polychrome Sculpture*, produced by the J. Paul Getty Museum, is a 12-minute film that explains the process of creating a polychromed sculpture. Digital animations and footage of a sculptor and a painter demonstrate the techniques current in 17th-century Spain.

With minor exceptions, these films will be shown in the East Building Small Auditorium Monday through Friday from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. and on weekends continuously during public hours; they will be shown in the East Building Auditorium on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays at 11:30 a.m.

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#### **Press Release**

#### ***The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600–1700***

National Gallery, London—October 21, 2009 through January 24, 2010

National Gallery of Art, Washington—February 28 through May 31, 2010



#### **Pedro de Mena, *Christ as the Man of Sorrows (Ecce Homo)*, 1673**

polychromed wood, human hair, ivory, and glass

Real Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales, Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid © 2009

Photo Gonzalo de la Serna

Arrestingly realistic sculptures and paintings of the saints, the Immaculate Conception, and the Passion of Christ are among some 21 Spanish masterpieces of the 17th century in this landmark exhibition. 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, are showcased. The exhibition also explores the relationship between paintings and the painted sculptures that has been noted by scholars but is 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.

**The exhibition has been organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the National Gallery, London.**

**The exhibition in Washington is made possible by the generous support of Robert H. Smith, The Charles Engelhard Foundation, and an anonymous donor.**

**The exhibition is presented on the occasion of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union, with the support of the Ministry of Culture of Spain, the Spain–USA Foundation and the Embassy of Spain in Washington, DC. This exhibition is included in the *Preview Spain: Arts & Culture '10* program.**

**Additional support for the Washington presentation is provided by Buffy and William Cafritz.**

**Curators:** Xavier Bray, assistant curator of 17th- and 18th-century Spanish and Italian paintings, National Gallery, London; David Brown, curator, department of Italian and Spanish paintings, National Gallery of Art; and Mary Levkoff, curator, department of sculpture and decorative arts, National Gallery of Art

**Catalogue:** The 224-page hardcover catalogue with 185 color illustrations includes scholarly essays on the technical aspects of polychrome sculptures; their patronage; individual artists' training, careers, and 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 is included, as well as entries for each of the objects. Authors are exhibition curator Bray; independent scholar Alfonso Rodriguez G. De Ceballos; and, from the National Gallery of Art, Washington, senior object conservators Daphne Barbour and Judy Ozone. Published by the National Gallery, London, in association with Yale University Press. Hardcover (\$65) currently available. Softcover (\$45) available in January 2010: Gallery Shops, <http://shop.nga.gov/> or 1-800-697-9350.

**Exhibition Guide:** Explanatory texts will be provided in a palm-size booklet available at the entrance to the exhibition.

**Films:** A 50-minute documentary film about the exhibition, produced by the National Gallery, London, and a 12-minute film on the making of polychrome sculpture, produced by the Getty Foundation, will be

shown continuously in both East Building auditoriums.

**Opening Day Lecture: *The Sacred Made Real: The Making of an Exhibition***

Bray will present the opening day lecture on Sunday, February 28, at 2 pm. Book signing of catalogue follows. First come, first seated. East Building Auditorium.

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**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](http://www.nga.gov). The Gallery is now on Facebook—become a fan at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://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.

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*The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600–1700*

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## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

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### Alonso Cano (1601–1667)

Alonso Cano was a painter, sculptor, designer and architect, hence his nickname—the "Michelangelo of Spain." He was born in Granada and is said to have been trained by Juan Martínez Montañés. He entered Francisco Pacheco's workshop in Seville in 1616 and obtained his diploma as a *pintor de ymaginería* (painter of religious images) in 1626. He worked as court painter in Madrid between 1638 and 1651, and returned to Granada as a clergyman at the cathedral in 1652. It was probably during this last period that he produced sculptures carved as well as painted by his own hand.

### Gregorio Fernández (1576–1636)

Fernández was one of the most sought-after sculptors in Castille, working chiefly in Valladolid, where he is first recorded in 1605. He probably trained there with the sculptor Francisco de Rincón (about 1567–1608). He was also influenced by the work of an earlier Valladolid sculptor, Juan de Juni (about 1507–1577). Fernández worked mainly in wood, carving figures and reliefs for altarpieces as well as images for processional groups (*pasos*). Some of his iconographic types were widely imitated in the 17th century. Most of his works were made for churches in Castille and Valladolid and his *Christ at the Column* (c. 1619) is still carried through the streets of Valladolid every year on Good Friday.

### Pedro de Mena (1628–1688)

Pedro de Mena y Medrano was born in Granada, the son of the sculptor Alonso de Mena. Trained by his father, he later worked with Alonso Cano. In 1658, he left Granada for Málaga where he was commissioned to make the choir stalls for the cathedral. This work brought him considerable fame and in 1663 he was made sculptor to Toledo Cathedral. However, he failed in his attempt to become court sculptor (*escultor de cámara*) in Madrid and continued to work mainly in Málaga. Pedro de Mena excelled in the portrayal of contemplative figures, and scenes and versions of his *Christ as the*

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*Man of Sorrows* sculpture were much in demand.

#### **Juan de Mesa (1583–1627)**

Originally from Cordoba, Juan de Mesa moved to Seville in 1606 and joined the workshop of Montañés, whose style greatly influenced him, although he soon developed his own natural and more expressive manner. He executed his figures with particular attention to anatomical accuracy, and it has been suggested that he visited hospitals to study cadavers. He specialized in processional sculpture and was probably more in tune with popular taste than Montañés. Before his early death in 1627 from tuberculosis he produced some of the most expressive sculptures of the period.

#### **Juan Martínez Montañés (1568–1649)**

Montañés was called "the god of wood" by his contemporaries, so great was his skill in carving. He trained in Seville and Granada, and by 1588 was established in Seville. In 1635 he was called to Madrid to model a portrait of Philip IV for a bronze equestrian statue of the king. While in Madrid, the artist Velázquez painted Montañés' portrait. Montañés was a deeply religious man and his images conformed to the demands of the Counter-Reformation in their popular realism and didactic character. A number of versions exist of his most famous images, such as *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*.

#### **Francisco Pacheco (1564–1644)**

Scholar, painter, and theorist Pacheco was one of the leading figures in the Seville art world in the first part of the 17th century. Director of an artistic and literary academy, he was the teacher of Velázquez, who married his daughter in 1618. His *Arte de la Pintura*, written in 1638 and published posthumously in 1649, is one of the most important sources of information about the production of sculpture and painting in Seville. Pacheco painted many of the sculptures of Juan Martínez Montañés and collaborated with him on a number of life-size statues of religious figures. He was particularly interested in religious iconography, notably in that of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception and of the Crucifixion. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was propagated with great fervor in Seville and Pacheco's painting of the subject was widely influential.

#### **Francisco Ribalta (1565–1628)**

Ribalta was born in Solsona, Catalonia, and is said to have trained in Italy but this remains unproven. He painted mainly religious pictures and was influenced by the Italians, whose work he saw at El Escorial,

important for his development as an artist—and again in 1649.

#### **Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664)**

Born in Extremadura, Zurbarán trained in Seville and established himself in that city in 1626, becoming the preferred artist of the city's religious and civic institutions. Early in his career, before he moved to Seville, he had worked as a polychromer and in 1624 had been commissioned to carve and polychrome a life-size sculpture of the Crucifixion (now lost). One of the reasons for his success was his naturalistic style. Indeed, his painting of Christ on the Cross was so realistic that it could be mistaken for a three-dimensional work. Zurbarán was the perfect interpreter of the devout Seville of the Counter-Reformation and the painter par excellence of saints and the monastic life.

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