

## Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Spain



Sant Climent de Taüll is a Romanesque-style church situated on the edge of the remote mountain village of Taüll, situated at an altitude of 1,520 meters in the province of Lleida, Catalonia.

Although the main income now of its 272 inhabitants is tourism in the twelfth century the lords of Erill (a very important barony in the Pyrenees, who had the villages of Taüll and Boí under their jurisdiction) amassed great wealth allowing all the rustic churches in the valley to be renewed, building the churches of Sant Climent, Sant Martí (destroyed by an avalanche in the 1970s) and Santa Maria, featuring a richly decorated Romanesque architecture with outstanding liturgical furniture.

Its architecture is greatly influenced by the Lombard (North Italian) style, evidenced by its exterior decoration. The tall, vertical bell tower is an example of Byzantine influence.

The main work of art is the mural painting of the *Pantocrator* or *Christ in Majesty*, located on the central apse of the church.

Its genius lies in the way it combines elements from different Biblical visions (*Revelation, Isaiah and Ezekiel*) to present Christ on the Day of Judgement. Christ appears from the background causing a movement outwards from the centre of the composition, which is presided by the ornamental sense of the outlines and the skilful use of colour to create volume. The exceptional nature of this work and its pictorial strength have reached out to modernity and fascinated twentieth-century avant-garde artists like Picasso and Francis Picabia.

The round surface beneath Christ's feet represents the earth and the halo on his head represents divinity. Christ's right hand symbolizes blessing, and in his left hand he holds a book with the words EGO SUM LUX MUNDI, which translates in English to "I am the light of the world". The symbols of Alpha and Omega hanging like lamps on either side of Christ, symbolize the beginning and end. The fourfold images represent four evangelists. To the right, an angel is seen beside the lion holding one of its hind legs, which is a symbol of St. Mark. To the left, an angel holding the tail of the bull is a symbol of St. Luke. The other two evangelists fit into the triangular space on either side of the mandorla. An angel holding the Gospel Book represents St. Matthew, and the other angel is St. John holding an eagle in his arms. Below the mural painting of Christ in the mandorla is St Thomas, St Bartholomew, Mother of God, St. John the Evangelist, St. James and San Felipe. The Mother of God holds a bowl where red rays emerge from it, which symbolize the blood of Christ.



The identity of the painter, referred to as the Master of Taüll, is unknown and was probably Italian.

Between 1919 and 1923 the mural was removed and placed in a specially constructed apse in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona. It has been replaced in the church by a copy.

**Luis de Morales** (1509/10-1586) was active during the Spanish Renaissance in the 16th century. Most of his work was of religious subjects, including many representations of the Madonna and Child and the Passion.

Influenced by Raphael and the Lombard School of Leonardo da Vinci especially in his early work, he was called by his contemporaries "The Divine Morales" because of his skill and the shocking realism of his paintings, and because of the spirituality transmitted by all his work. His work has been divided by critics into two periods, an early stage marked by the influence of Florentine artists such as Michaelangelo, intense, more anatomically correct later stage with similarities to the works of German and Flemish Renaissance painters.



De Morales painted the subject of the *Pietà* a number of times. The enormous expressive force of this version of 1560 shows the half-length figures on a striking background of rigorous black. Incorporeal and almost fragile in appearance, the silent, latent expressiveness of the figures is enhanced by the restricted colour range: from the transparent pallor of the flesh to the luminous blue and white of the Virgin's mantle and coif.

The severe upright of the cross, the abrupt contrasts of the strong lighting, combined with the facial expressions, makes palpable the pain of the Virgin as she kneels at the base of the cross, the heavy body slipping down from her grasp. The body of Christ is modelled with a subtle Leonardesque sfumato; while the contorted and lengthened torso, plus the precision of detail derived from the Flemish models which were imported into Spain, conveys the spiritual message about the Passion with a devastating impact.

*Pentimenti* revealed by technical studies of the numerous versions of the Pietà, indicate changes in the figures, in their anatomical details and in the cloth of the Virgin's mantle or headgear, shows Morales's obsessive interest in this composition, with subtle variations also introduced in the physiognomy of the mother and child, or in the expression of grief and death. Morales achieved what may be one of the most perfect images of the Pietà in a sixteenth-century European painting.

In the *Ecce Homo* of 1560-70 Jesus is shown half-length, crowned with thorns and with a haggard face, parted lips, prominent cheekbones, and moist eyes raised in an attitude of submission to the divine will. His hair, beard, moustache and eyelashes are minutely rendered in a light brown colour. Similarly detailed is the treatment of the tears and drops of blood. The latter, caused by the thorns piercing his forehead and the whiplashes inflicted during the flagellation, run down from the forehead and cheek, passing down the neck to the breast. The pale tone of his body contrasts with the blood-red colouring of the robe, which is thrown over his shoulders and fastened with a button. His hands are crossed and tied together with a rope, while the left hand holds the reed which serves as his sceptre, the diagonal line of which emphasising the vertical line of the body.



Iconographically, this is the pitiful image of a carnivalesque king, a burlesque version of his true nature, with crown and sceptre included. depicting the episode in which Jesus is condemned to death before the multitude at the Praetorium.

**Doménikos Theotokópoulos** (1541 – 1614), most widely known as **El Greco**, was a painter, sculptor and architect of the Spanish Renaissance.

He was born in Crete, which was at that time part of the Republic of Venice, and the centre of Post-Byzantine art. He trained and became a master within that tradition before traveling at age 26 to Venice, as other Greek artists had done. In 1570 he moved to Rome, where he opened a workshop and executed a series of works. During his stay in Italy, El Greco enriched his style with elements of Mannerism and of the Venetian Renaissance. In 1577, he moved to Toledo, Spain, where he lived and worked until his death. In Toledo, El Greco received several major commissions and produced his best-known paintings.

El Greco's dramatic and expressionistic style was met with puzzlement by his contemporaries but found appreciation in the 20th century. El Greco is regarded as a precursor of both Expressionism and Cubism, while his personality and works were a source of inspiration for poets and writers such as Rainer Maria Rilke and Nikos Kazantzakis. El Greco has been characterized by modern scholars as an artist so individual that he belongs to no conventional school. He is best known for tortuously elongated figures and often fantastic or phantasmagorical pigmentation, marrying Byzantine traditions with those of Western painting.



**Portrait of an Old Man** is usually identified as a **Self-portrait**. It is an oil on canvas painting showing the influence on El Greco of Titian and Tintoretto, which he picked up in Venice.

Specialists consider that this canvas would be made around 1595, so that Doménikos would be about 55 years old, slightly advanced in age for his time, and at a time of his maximum creativity and fame after having painted the *Burial of the Lord of Orgaz*. The portrait highlights an intelligent face with alert eyes and a direct, penetrating gaze. He wears a coat with a fur collar and a small ruff, common in the fashion of the day. The quick brushstroke used throughout, for details of the ruff, the fur collar as well as the head, result in a masterful example of Greek portraiture, creating an atmosphere of intimacy and the personality and conscious soul lying behind the eyes, that is characteristic of his portraits.

**The Dormition of the Virgin** (before 1567) is a tempera and gold on panel, probably created near the end of the artist's Cretan period. The painting combines post-Byzantine and Italian mannerist stylistic and iconographic elements. The discovery of a signature in 1982 constituted a significant advance in the understanding of El Greco's formation and early career.

The icon, which retains its function as an object of veneration in the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Syros, was probably brought to the island during the Greek War of Independence. The icon conforms closely to the established pattern for this subject, nevertheless, it has lost some elements of the traditional Byzantine austerity, adopting traits of the Renaissance engravings.



**The Modena Triptych** (1568) is a small portable altarpiece (37 cm. in height) with hinged wings, painted on both sides, of a type similar in form to others produced in Crete in the sixteenth century, but with an Italian Renaissance frame. The subjects on the front, from left to right, are the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, the *Allegory of a Christian Knight*, and the *Baptism*; and on the back, the *Annunciation*, *Mount Sinai*, and *Adam and Eve*.

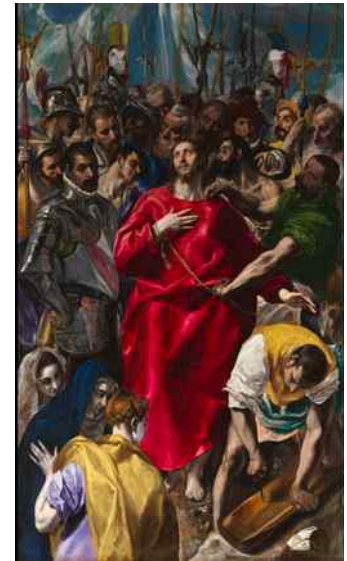
The theme of Mount Sinai, on the back of the central panel, was of Cretan origin, and faithfully repeats a traditional Byzantine model. The picture shows pilgrims on the way to the Monastery, and the Mountain as the Road to Heaven. The reference to Saint Catherine in both the central panels has been suggested as a possible indication of the artist's connection' in Crete with the monastery of Saint Catherine, a dependency of that of Mount Sinai, and the most important school of painting in the island. The other compositions are similarly not original, but here the artist has used engravings after Italian (mainly Venetian) compositions as his models. The repetition of traditional images was usual in Byzantine art.

In 1577, El Greco migrated to Madrid, then to Toledo, where he produced his mature works. At the time, Toledo was the religious capital of Spain and a populous city with "an illustrious past, a prosperous present and an uncertain future". In Rome, El Greco had earned the respect of some intellectuals, but was also facing the hostility of certain art critics. During the 1570s the huge monastery-palace of El Escorial was still under construction and Philip II of Spain was experiencing difficulties in finding good artists for the many large paintings required to decorate it. Titian was dead, and

Tintoretto, Veronese and Anthonis Mor all refused to come to Spain. The moment was ideal for El Greco to move to Toledo.

***The Disrobing of Christ (El Espolio)*** 1577–1579, is one of the most famous altarpieces of El Greco, which are renowned for their dynamic compositions and sense of movement.

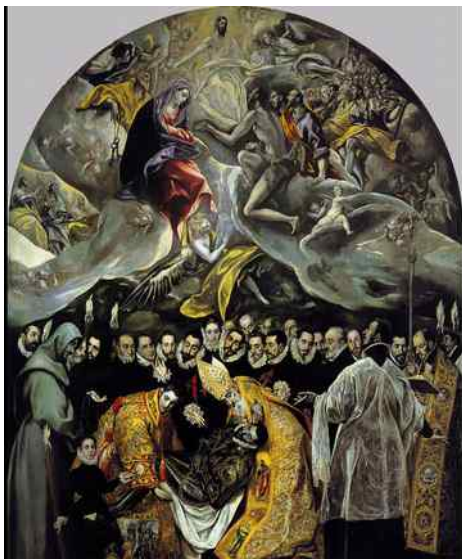
The painting shows Christ looking up to Heaven with an expression of serenity; His idealized figure seems segregated from the other people and the violence surrounding him. A figure dressed in black in the background points at Christ accusingly, while two others argue over who will have His garments. A man in green to Christ's left holds Him firmly with a rope and is about to rip off His robe in preparation for his crucifixion. At the lower right, a man in yellow bends over the cross and drills a hole to facilitate the insertion of a nail to be driven through Christ's feet. The radiant face of the Saviour is violently juxtaposed to the coarse figures of the executioners, who are amassed around Him creating an impression of disturbance with their movements, their gestures and lances.



Christ is clad in a bright red robe; it is on this red tunic that El Greco concentrated the full expressive force of his art. Only the chromatic coupling of yellow and blue in the foreground raises a separate note contrasting with the glorifying hymn of the red.

In the left foreground, the three Marys contemplate the scene with distress. Their presence was objected to by the Cathedral authorities, since they are not mentioned as present at this point in the Gospels. Greco probably took this detail, with some others like the rope around Christ's wrists, from the account in the *Meditations on the Passion of Jesus Christ* by Saint Bonaventure. The placement of the tormentors higher than the head of Christ was cited, among other critical details, by the commissioners of the Cathedral in the arbitration process over the price.

In designing the composition vertically and compactly in the foreground El Greco seems to have been motivated by the desire to show the oppression of Christ by his tormentors. The figure of Christ, robust, tall and tranquil, dominates the centre of the composition which is built vertically like a wall. El Greco chose a method of space elimination that is common to middle and late 16th-century Mannerists. According to American Art Historian Harold Wethey, El Greco "probably recalled late Byzantine paintings in which the superposition of heads row upon row is employed to suggest a crowd".



***The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*** 1586–1588, illustrates a popular local legend. An exceptionally large painting, it is clearly divided into two zones: the heavenly above and the terrestrial below, brought together compositionally.

The Count of Orgaz was a pious man who, among other charitable acts, left a sum of money for the enlargement and adornment of the church of Santo Tomé (El Greco's parish church). He was also a philanthropist and a right-thinking Knight. According to the legend (he was buried at the precise time that he was murdered) Saint Stephen and Saint Augustine descended in person from the heavens and buried him by their own hands in front of the dazzled eyes of those present.

In the upper part, the clouds have parted to receive the "righteous man" into Paradise. Heaven is evoked by swirling icy clouds, semiabstract in their shape, and the saints are tall and phantom-like. Christ, clad in white and in glory, is a radiance of light, and the crowning point of the triangle formed by the

figures of the Madonna and Saint John the Baptist. These three central figures of heavenly glory are surrounded by apostles, martyrs and Biblical figures.

The scene of the miracle is depicted in the lower part of the composition, the terrestrial section, where the Saints in golden and red vestments respectively, bend reverently over the body of the count, who is clad in magnificent armour that reflects the yellow and reds of the other figures. The noblemen contemplate the event in a detached and restrained manner. The young boy at the left is El Greco's

son, Jorge Manuel; on a handkerchief in his pocket is inscribed the artist's signature and the date 1578, the year of the boy's birth.

The painting has a chromatic harmony that is very rich, expressive and radiant. On the black mourning garments of the nobles are projected the gold-embroidered vestments, thus creating an intense ceremonial character. In the heavenly space there is a predominance of transparent harmonies of iridescence and ivoried greys, which harmonize with the gilded ochres, while in the Madonna's mantle deep blue is closely combined with bright red.

The composition of the *Burial of Count Orgaz* has been closely related to the Byzantine iconography of the *Dormition of the Theotokos*, bearing a close relationship with the icon of the *Dormition* by El Greco. Travel writer, historian and art critic Robert Byron asserts that El Greco, as a genuine Byzantine painter, worked throughout his life with a repertoire of components and motifs at will, depending on the narrative and expressive requirements of the art.

**View of Toledo** c.1596–1600, is one of the two surviving landscapes of Toledo painted by El Greco, and is among the best known depictions of the sky in Western art, along with the landscapes of J.M.W. Turner and Claude Monet, and Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night*. Landscape paintings were rare among Spanish paintings of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

El Greco creates a palette full of dramatic colours, vibrant with blues, black, white, and vivid greens, contrasting from light to dark. It is made up of all earth tones. Most notable is the distinct colour contrast between the darkness of the skies above and the vibrant greens in the hills below. *View of Toledo* shows viewers an image of darkness, or moodiness that is present in Toledo.



**The Opening of the Fifth Seal** (or *The Fifth Seal of the Apocalypse* or *The Vision of Saint John*) of 1608-14, was painted in the last years of El Greco's life for a side-altar of the church of Saint John the Baptist outside the walls of Toledo.

The painting is a fragment from a large altarpiece. It depicts a passage in the Bible, Revelation (6:9-11), describing the opening of the Fifth Seal at the end of time, and the distribution of white robes to "those who had been slain for the work of God and for the witness they had borne." as they cry out to God for justice upon their Earthly persecutors. The ecstatic figure of St. John dominates the canvas, while behind him naked souls writhe in a chaotic storm of emotion as they receive white robes of salvation.

The missing upper part may have shown the *Sacrificial Lamb Opening the Fifth Seal* (destroyed in 1880), and may have resembled that of another altarpiece, the *Concert of*

*Angels*, painted by El Greco for the same church, and also cut down. Many believed that the bottom section, which has been preserved, depicted profane love, while the missing upper part depicted divine love.

The robes are painted in brilliant colour: red, yellow and blue primaries on the left, and green, the complimentary of red, on the right, set against a contrasting brown and grey background; a juxtaposition which was to influence the development of twentieth century art; likewise the expressionist distortions of El Greco have also been an inspiration for many twentieth century artists; most notably Picasso,'s *Les Femmes d'Alger* mirrors the expressionistic angularity of *Opening of the Fifth Seal*.

**Portrait of Jorge Theotocopoulos** (1600-05) was long thought to be a self-portrait by El Greco, but is now universally agreed to represent the painter's son, Jorge Manuel Theotokopoulos (1578-1631).

In one of his most splendid portraits El Greco depicts his son as an artist and at the same time as a member of the upper class. Jorge Manuel appears about twenty-five to twenty-seven years old. The young gentleman, of a certain aristocratic mien, displays elegantly the tools of his craft; however, Jorge Manuel was not a remarkable painter like his father.



Picasso also used this remarkable painting as a bases for an invention of his own

**Juan Sánchez Cotán** (1560 – 1627) was a Spanish Baroque painter, and a pioneer of realism in Spain. His still-lives were painted in an austere style, especially when compared to similar works in the Netherlands and Italy.

In 1603, Sanchez Cotán, then in his forties, closed up his workshop at Toledo to renounce the world and enter the Carthusian monastery Santa Maria de El Paular as a lay brother. He continued his career painting religious works with singular mysticism. In 1612 he was sent to the Granada Charterhouse; he decided to become a monk, and in the following year he entered the Carthusian monastery at Granada. The reasons for this are not clear, though such action was not unusual in Cotán's day.



Cotán was a prolific religious painter whose work, carried out exclusively for his monastery, reached its peak about 1617 in the cycle of eight great narrative paintings that he painted for the cloister of the Granada Monastery.

Although the painter's religious works have an archaic air, they also reveal a keen interest in the treatment of light and volume, and in some respects are comparable with certain works by the Italian Luca Cambiaso, whom Cotán knew at the Escorial. Cambiaso was leader of the Genoese School and noted for painting a number of poetic night scenes, which may have influenced Sanchez Cotan who was an early pioneer of Tenebrism at the beginning of the golden age of Spanish painting.

The **Virgin Awakening the Child**, painted between 1603 and 1627 portrays a tender maternal scene, illuminated by the single light source of the candle.

Sánchez Cotán stylistically falls within the school of El Escorial, with Venetian influence, and his works can be placed in the transition from Mannerism to Baroque.

Although his religious paintings have a primitive sensitivity and a peaceful rhythm, Cotán's high stature in art history rests exclusively on his still-lives, of which only a few are extant. Their severe naturalism has little in common with the artistic style then prevalent.

These mysterious, puzzling, visually compelling still-lives prompt a number of interpretations: are they deliberations on an ascetic way of life, or early meditations on vegetarianism? (The Carthusians are vegetarian, although many of his works contain game birds.) What of the selection of fruit and vegetable in **Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber** (1602)?





The quince and cabbage are suspended, as was typically done in country kitchens, to keep them from spoiling. What is the significance of the melon, sectioned with its seeds exposed and the sliver lying alongside, quivering in the harsh sunlight? The cucumber, intact, edges over the sill, pointing towards the viewer as it emerges from the dark interior. It has been suggested that the gradual curvilinear plane of the cut fruit is suggestive of Archimedes' hyperbola. Such paintings may have been made for an educated, secular clientele, who would have understood them as geometric meditations.

In mathematics, a **hyperbola** is a type of smooth curve lying in a plane. A hyperbola has two pieces, called connected components or branches, that are mirror images of each other and resemble two infinite bows. It is one of the three kinds of conic section, formed by the intersection of a plane and a double cone

A hyperbolae is an open curve with two branches, the intersection of a plane with both halves of a double cone. The plane does not have to be parallel to the axis of the cone; the hyperbola will be symmetrical in any case.



Cotán utilized the hyperbolic curve in many of his still-lives, sometimes leaving the space blank and at other times filling it with game, fruit or vegetables.

**Still-life with Vegetables and Fruits** (1602). Cotán established the prototype of the Spanish still life, called a bodegón, composed mainly of vegetables. Characteristically, he depicts a few simple fruits or vegetables, some of which hang from a fine string at different levels while others sit on a ledge or window. The forms stand out with an almost geometric clarity against a dark background. This orchestration of still life in direct sunlight against impenetrable darkness is the hallmark of early Spanish still life painting. Each form is scrutinized with such intensity that the pictures take on a mystical quality, and the reality of things is intensified to a degree that no other seventeenth-century painter would surpass.



**Still Life with Game Fowl, Vegetables and Fruits** (1602) shows the inside of a cupboard. On the shelf are a group of birds consisting of two serins, two goldfinches and two sparrows on a cane, as well as three carrots, two radishes, and a large white thistle (cardo) that closes the composition. Hanging from the upper sill are three lemons, seven apples, a goldfinch, a sparrow and two red partridges. The composition is outstanding for its sobriety, intimacy and intensity. Those characteristics are emphasized by the lateral light that produces large shadows, creating a perfect and fully realistic illusion typical of still-lives painted by Cotán, which became the prototypes of Spanish still-lives.

The comestibles in *Still-life, Cardo and Carrots* take up scarcely a third of the sparely occupied space, which takes on a mysterious, impenetrable presence of its own. In the previous painting the cardo looks fresh and edible; by contrast here it is dried out and flaking. The carrots are going green and beginning to rot. This food has been hanging around too long, hinting at the passing of time and thereby disrupting the sempiternal expressiveness of the technical precision.

Art historian Norman Bryson describes Sánchez Cotán's spare representations as abstemious images and links his work to his later monastic life. They are said to express a monastic denial of worldly pleasure and richness: "Absent from Cotán's work is any conception of nourishment as involving the conviviality of the meal .... What replaces their interest as sustenance is their interest as mathematical form." His fruits and vegetables are arranged in beautiful ballet like compositions.

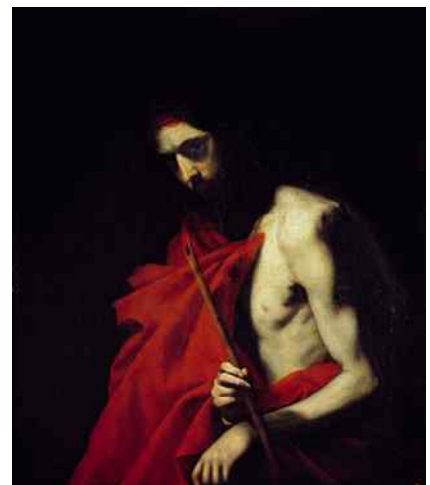


He depicted few artefacts other than the strings from which vegetables and fruits dangle, this being the common means in the seventeenth century of preventing food and vegetables from rotting. Even if the objects are arranged so that they seem close enough to touch, they are nevertheless distanced. For all the realism with which they are depicted, the isolation of each object, heightened further by the black background, lends them a monumental, almost sculptural gravity.

**Jusepe de Ribera** (1591 – 1652), born in Xativa, was a Spanish Tenebrist painter and printmaker. Ribera was a leading painter of the Spanish school, although his mature work was all done in Italy, firstly in Rome, from which he had to flee, then from 1616 in Naples where he remained for the rest of his life. The Kingdom of Naples was at the time part of the Spanish Empire.

Caravaggio was a major influence on his style, and the mood of drama and anger presented in his most expressive works. Although Ribera never returned to Spain, many of his paintings were taken back by returning members of the Spanish governing class. His influence can be seen in the works of Velázquez, Murillo, and most other Spanish painters of the period.

This dark, brooding *Ecce Homo* (1620) owes much to the tenebrism of Caravaggio. The subject, usually translated as '*Behold the Man*', is derived from the Biblical words of Pontius Pilot on handing over Christ to the Jews for their decision on his fate. It was a popular subject amongst Baroque painters. Ribera painted several versions using a similar composition of a half length semi nude figure with a thick, red mantle, symbolic of the blood he is to shed and the protection it is to give to mankind. In contrast to his other versions, in this depiction Christ is withdrawn, contemplative, and perhaps fearful, looking inward, with shadowed, haunted eyes. The diagonal line of His lightly held staff introduces a note of instability and echoes His upper arm and forward leaning of his stance as He moves towards His destiny.



Tenebrism, from the Italian, *tenebroso* (murky), is a style of painting using very pronounced *chiaroscuro*, where there are dramatic contrasts of light and dark, and where darkness becomes a dominating feature of the image. The technique was developed to add drama to an image through a spotlight effect, and was popular during the Baroque period of painting.





Traditionally the character portrayed in this portrait of c.1630 has always been recognized as Archimedes, due to the compass in his hand and the papers with geometric signs that surround him. However, the portrait is now identified as **Democritus**, known as "the philosopher who laughs".

The philosopher is portrayed half-length, dressed as a beggar and holding a compass with his right hand, while with his left he holds some papers where some geometric symbols are represented. The figure's rough clothing, the activity in which he is engaged and his books indicate an intellectual from the classical world. On the spine of the book, lower right, the signature and the date are written, The painting is cropped on the right side.

His smiling face with deep wrinkles and his bony long-fingered hands are the focus of the composition and are rendered with great fidelity and great naturalism. A light enters from the left, bathing the philosopher's body, which together with a halo of lighter paint around the head and the neutral background highlights him, giving the composition a greater perspective and realism. It is believed that Ribera had a

model pose for the picture, possibly someone anonymous found on the street, whom he portrayed as if he were a nobleman or a king. It has been defined as "A true portrait of any peasant found in the alleys of viceregal Naples"

**Magdalena Ventura with Her Husband and Son** or **The Bearded Lady** (1631) shows Magdalena Ventura, a woman from Abruzzi, standing while nursing her baby. Behind her, in the shadows, is her husband, and on the right are two steles. The top one lists the details of their family story in Latin, proclaiming it as *A Wonder of Nature*. As the second stele with inscription explains, the wonder lies not only in this unusual woman and her beard story, but also in her fertility and the work of the painter and the proud owner who commissioned it.



Not only has Ribera emphasized her manliness by having her stand while nursing, he shows Magdalena's strength in her hands in the way she grips her child, and her height almost equal to that of her husband, as if hirsutism may also cause a growth spurt. The stele claims she was aged 52 and had only begun to show facial hair growth at age 37. She had at least two other children.

Ribera, is reputed to have been the chief in the so-called Cabal of Naples, from the late 1610s to the early 1640s, along with the Geek painter Belisario Corenzio and the Neapolitan Giambattista Caracciolo; when they attempted to secure all important commissions for themselves by a process of intrigue, sabotage of work in progress, bribes, poison and intimidation with threats of violence. They effectively deterred Annibale Carracci, Guido Reni, Domenichino and a number of other none-native artists from pursuing or completing commissions.



According to the 13<sup>th</sup> century *Golden Legend*, following the resurrection of Jesus, Philip preached in Greece, Phrygia and Syria, along with Bartholomew and his sister Mariamne. In **The Martyrdom of Saint Philip** (1639) Ribera captures the moment in Hierapolis when the crucifixion is still in progress. A low perspective, gives the main characters a sense of monumentality and the contrast of light and shadow enhances the dramatic effect.

On the right is a group of curious onlookers who appear to comment on the event. The people who appear on the left, on the other hand, are oblivious to what happens. Some critics see an allegory of Charity in the figure of a woman holding a little child in her arms, looking out toward the viewer, and making a tender and delicate counterpoint to the cruelty dominating the rest of the scene.

Painted on an epic scale, with possibly larger-than-life figures, the canvas presents the martyrdom as an impressive religious and human tragedy. Saint Philip's long limbs are extended as he turns his face to the heavens in an anguished petition for divine succour. The heavens do not open, however, nor is there a chorus of angels; for Ribera, martyrdom is an essentially earthly spectacle. Saint Philip is not depicted as eighty-seven years old, as his hagiographers described him, but instead as a powerfully built, middle-aged man. His ordinary features: sunlit face with its expression of pain and resignation, short hair and moustache reveal that, like the model used by Ribera, he was of humble origin.

Ribera theatrically contrasts the saint's resignation with the vigorous physical efforts of the two henchmen who make a great effort pulling on the rope to raise the cross's horizontal bar. A third man grasps him by the leg in an attempt to pull it from supporting the heavy, sinking weight of the martyr which forms a counterbalance to the upward thrust of the crossbar.

The body of St. Philip, forms a series of concavities, of shadows, that are already deforming and distorting the body, as he is being raised up. Although there is strength in the body, in the muscles of the legs and the cruelly distended arms, there is also a hollowness, especially in the torso, that makes him feel so vulnerable.

As the executioner on the left hauls down on the rope his body sinks down in a counter-thrusting movement to the rising body of the saint. The composition catches these movements at a counterpoint where an arc is subtly suggested running from the head of and along the body of the executioner, through the white thigh of the saint, thereby conjoining them together like twin actors in one enduring image of torture exalted to divine suffering. Above, the arc closes, scissor-like into a curved V formed by Philip's arms: as if raised in an appeal to heaven, which is blocked off by the heavy cross bar.

Characteristic of Baroque art is the foreshortening of figures who move out into the viewer's space;, making the figure of St. Philip himself seem very close.

This work epitomizes Ribera's depictions of martyrdom: unyielding in its representation of suffering and implacable in its imitation of worn and aged flesh. At the same time, the low viewpoint reveals a vast and beautiful blue sky, and Ribera offers a fascinating demonstration of painterly skill in his use of rich, saturated tones and his masterful handling of the paint, from the thick impastos on the saint's flesh to the vibrant transparencies of the background figures.

Along with his massive and predominating shadows, he retained from first to last a great strength in local colouring. His forms, although ordinary and sometimes coarse, are correct; the impression of his works gloomy and startling. He delighted in subjects of horror.



Ribera was a noted printmaker. Few paintings survive from 1620 to 1626; but this was the period in which most of his best prints were produced. These were at least partly an attempt to attract attention from a wider audience than Naples. In this woodcut, **Portrait**, of a man inflicted with sores and a terrible goitre we see not only Ribera's consummate skill in representation, but his unflinching attitude to (or perhaps morbid interest in) depicting the horrors of infirmity that mortal flesh is prone to.

This expressive drawing of studies of the mouth and nose is a testament to his acute observation and drawing skills.





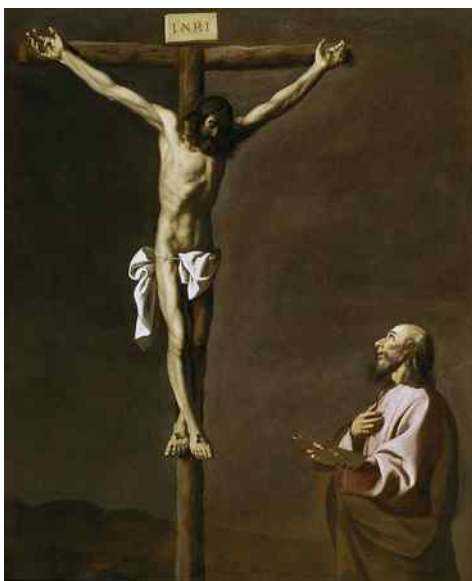
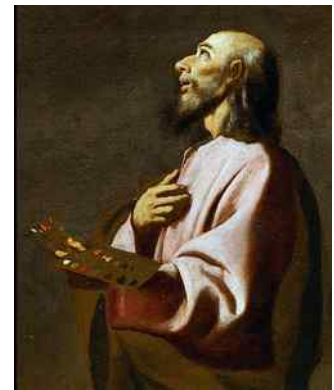
In the early 1630s his style changed away from strong contrasts of dark and light to a more diffused and golden lighting, as may be seen in ***The Clubfoot*** (or ***The Club-Footed Boy***) of 1642. The motif of the painting, featuring a Neapolitan beggar boy with a deformed foot, is a derivation of taste for scenes of low life in art, as instituted by Caravaggio. Behind him is a vast and luminous landscape, against which the boy stands with a gap-toothed grin, wearing earth-toned clothes and holding his crutch slung over his left shoulder. Written in Latin on the paper in the boy's hand is the sentence "Give me alms, for the love of God".

This is one of the painter's last works, and one of the most bitter, with a strong contrast of light and shade. Although familiar with the compositions of Italian and Flemish painters he, nevertheless, clung to the profoundly Spanish tradition of realism, even though spending most of his life in Italy.

Moved by a Christian awareness of human weakness, Spanish artists often painted pictures of the poor and disabled. Here the young Neapolitan vagabond seems to be making game of his own infirmity; he is also careful to inform us, by means of the scrap of writing he holds, that he is dumb as well as crippled, because he appeals to the charity of the passer-by with his card written in Latin.

**Francisco de Zurbarán** (1598 – 1664) is known primarily for his religious paintings depicting monks, nuns, and martyrs, and for his still-lives. Zurbarán gained the nickname Spanish Caravaggio, owing to the forceful, realistic use of chiaroscuro in which he excelled.

It is unknown whether Zurbarán had the opportunity to see the paintings of Caravaggio, only that his work features a similar use of chiaroscuro and tenebrism. The painter thought by some art historians to have had the greatest influence on his characteristically severe compositions was Juan Sánchez Cotán. Polychrome sculpture—which by the time of Zurbarán's apprenticeship had reached a level of sophistication in Seville that surpassed that of the local painters—provided another important stylistic model for the young artist;



***Saint Luke as a Painter before Christ on the Cross*** (1635-40) is recognised as a probable self-portrait. The Catholic Church and other major denominations venerate the saint as **Saint Luke the Evangelist** and as a patron saint of artists, physicians, bachelors, surgeons, students and butchers; his feast day is 18 October. Saint Luke was a doctor in Syria, but he is also considered the patron saint of artists because of a legend that says he painted the Virgin's portrait. Therefore, Zurbarán chose his own face to represent his patron saint, depicting him holding his palette and gazing up at Jesus on the cross. Zurbarán, unusually, depicts Christ with his legs crossed and although he includes the four nails, he eliminates the ledge, giving the figure greater movement and making the foreshortening more dramatic. Although there is a certain element of idealisation in the figure of Christ, the artist follows the dictates of naturalistic tenebrism, emphasising the stretched and taught ribs and thorax, creating a realistic image, as if the crucified figure materialises directly in front of the saint. In this he would have been influenced by the dramatic realism of

polychromed crucifixes. A powerful light from the left creates distinct contrasts of light and shade: dark tones and the delicacy of the folds being specific characteristics of Zurbarán's art.

Zurbarán made various works on the subject of the *Immaculate Conception*, all different, but alike in representing the virgin as a young girl standing in the sky.

This one, dating 1628 to 1630, is one of his earliest compositions. It depicts his characteristic girlish and ecstatic image of the Virgin. She appears with her hands joined in prayer, raised on a transparent orb, surrounded by symbols of the litanies that recall the virtues accompanying the image of the Virgin. The abundance of those complex signs, which must be understood theologically, offers the faithful two possible ways of approaching this work: that of the extremely complex doctrinal manifesto understood by a limited number of specialists, and the votive image of a handsome and childlike Mary whose appearance can awaken the fervour of even the least sophisticated believers.



The fourth-century saint *Saint Margaret of Antioch* was cast out by her father, a pagan priest, when she converted to Christianity. She was left to fend for herself tending sheep.

In Zurbarán's 1631 painting she is dressed as a wealthy shepherdess, with a lambskin jacket over her picturesque costume and a straw hat fashionably cocked on her head. Zurbarán shows her holding a crook and a prayer book, with a colourful saddlebag – of a type made by peasant weavers – over one arm.

The saint seems oblivious to the snarling dragon – Satan in disguise – at her feet; she gazes directly towards us with a sober, determined expression. According to the *Golden Legend*, a medieval compilation of saints' biographies, the beast devoured her. She burst from its belly unharmed and later assumed the role of patron saint of childbirth.



The strong lighting emphasises her flawless skin and the rich colours and textures of her clothing, but also the dragon's scales, piercing eyes and pointed fangs.

Zurbarán painted his figures directly from nature, and made great use of the lay-figure in the study of draperies, in which he was particularly proficient. He had a special gift for white draperies - the most difficult of all colours to paint; as a consequence, the houses of the white-robed Carthusians are abundant in his portraits.



On August 29, 1628, Zurbarán signed a contract with the friars of the Merced Calzada in Seville with the commission to make twenty-two paintings on the life of San Pedro Nolasco, founder of the order.

*Francisco Zumel* (painted in 1633), one of the most famous theologians of his time, was born in Palencia in 1540 and died in 1607, so Zurbarán could not have met him. To paint the portrait he would have based his painting on descriptions of him by the monk's companions', and the pose of a friar from the Sevillian convent who also lent his features to Fray Pedro Machado.

The figure, captured from a low point of view to give him greater monumentality, emerges from a gloomy background, with great majesty and timeless character. The fitting of the scholar into a slender triangle conveys a sense of stillness and solemnity to the composition. A small table covered with a red tablecloth forms a counterpoint to the figure.

The apparent uniformity between the portraits is nuanced by the different orientation of the figures: by the variety in the arrangement of the hands and by the range of tones that make these paintings an authentic symphony of whites. Even more than the books and caps depicted in these unassailable effigies of divinity the solemn whiteness of the habits, the hands full of character, the gravity and calm of the heads, reflect the intellectual and spiritual stature of the guardians of the city of books.

Zurbaran made a number of versions of **St. Francis in Meditation**. The one in the National Gallery, London (c.1631-40) is a fine example of his work. This is one of Zurbarán's most austere and intensely spiritual works. Saint Francis is shown kneeling in fervent prayer, his clasped hands cradling a skull. Shadow obscures his face, giving us only a glimpse of his features. He wears the robe of the Franciscans, the religious order he founded in the thirteenth century; its patched and tattered appearance draws to mind the vow of poverty taken by all the order's members.



Zurbarán shows the saint in a moment of profound contemplation, his head tilted upwards and mouth slightly open. The skull is a symbol of death and refers to Christ's crucifixion. Meditation on death was particularly favoured by the Jesuits, and saints contemplating skulls are frequently found in seventeenth-century Italian and Spanish painting. In the version of 1632 in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Buenos Aires) the kneeling saint bows his head in contemplation of the skull (memento mori) cradled in his hands. A rocky outcrop, with a heavy book balanced precariously on top, is sufficient to suggest the wilderness.



Zurbarán is said to have adhered to rigid methods throughout his career, which was prosperous, wholly confined to Spain, and varied by few incidents beyond those of his daily labour. His subjects were mostly severe and ascetic religious vigils, the spirit chastising the flesh into subjection, the compositions often reduced to a single figure. The style is more reserved and chastened than Caravaggio's, the tone of colour often quite bluish. Exceptional effects are attained by the precisely finished foregrounds, massed out largely in light and shade. Backgrounds are often featureless and dark. Zurbarán had difficulty painting deep space; when interior or exterior settings are represented, the effect is suggestive of theatrical backdrops on a shallow stage.

Zurbarán's late works, such as the *Saint Francis* (c. 1632; in the Alte Pinakothek) show the influence of Murillo and Titian in their looser brushwork and softer contrasts.

**Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez** (1599 – 1660) was the leading artist in the court of King Philip IV, and one of the most important painters of the Spanish Golden Age. He was an individualistic artist of the contemporary Baroque period, important as a portrait artist. In addition to numerous renditions of scenes of historical and cultural significance, he painted scores of portraits of the Spanish royal family, other notable European figures, and commoners.

Velázquez's art became a model for 19th-century realist and Impressionist painters. In the 20th century, artists such as Picasso, Dali, and Francis Bacon paid tribute to Velázquez by re-interpreting some of his most iconic images.



The **Self Portrait** (c.1640), painted in Rome at the height of his career and now in the Musée de Bellas Artes, Valencia is, apart from the one included in *Las Meninas*, the only self-portrait of Velázquez universally accepted as true by critics.



**Christ in the House of Martha and Mary** (1618) dates to his Seville period. At this time, Velázquez was experimenting with the potential of the bodegones, a form of genre painting set in taverns or kitchens which was frequently used to relate scenes of contemporary Spain to themes and stories from the Bible, often depicting people working with food and drink.

The painting shows the interior of a kitchen with two half-length women to the left. On the table are a number of foods being prepared by the maid. In the background is a biblical scene, generally

accepted to be the story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38–42). In it Christ goes to the house of Martha. Her sister, Mary, sat at his feet and listened to him speak. Martha, on the other hand, went to "make all the preparations that had to be made". Upset that Mary did not help her, she complained to Christ to which he responded: "Martha, Martha, ... you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." In the painting, Christ is shown as a bearded man in a blue tunic. He gesticulates at Martha, the woman standing behind Mary, rebuking her for her frustration.

The maid in the foreground (Martha) is preparing a large amount of food and, from the redness of her creased puffy cheeks, we can see that she is also upset. To comfort her (or perhaps even to rebuke her), the elderly woman indicates the scene in the background reminding her that she cannot expect to gain fulfilment from work alone. The maid, who can't bring herself to look directly at the biblical scene, instead looks directly out towards us. The painting meditates on the implications of the story, which for a theologically alert contemporary audience included the traditional superiority of the *vita contemplativa* (spiritual life) over the *vita activa* (temporal life), not that the latter was inessential. Saint Augustine had drawn this moral from the story in the 5th century, followed by countless other divines. In the Counter-Reformation the usefulness of the "active life" was somewhat upgraded by many writers to counter Lutheran assertions of the spiritual adequacy of "faith alone".

**Old Woman Frying Eggs** (c.1618) is a genre painting produced during his Seville period, before his definitive move to Madrid in 1623. Velázquez frequently used working-class characters in early works like this one, in many cases using his family as models. The old woman appears in his *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*.

Like other early works by the artist, it shows the influence of chiaroscuro, with a strong light source coming in from the left illuminating the woman, her utensils and the poaching eggs, while throwing the background and the boy standing to her right into deep shadow.



**The Venerable Mother Jerónima de la Fuente** portrays the Franciscan nun born to a noble family in Toledo, at the convent of Santa Isabel in her native city. In 1620, at the age of sixty-six, she sailed from Seville to the Philippines, where she founded and became the first abbess of the convent of *Santa Clara de la Concepción* in Manila. There, she died in 1630. The portrait was undoubtedly made in Seville in June 1620, while she was waiting to embark on her long voyage. In it, she stands, energetically holding a crucifix in her right hand and a missal - or perhaps the rules of the order - in the left. This imposing image bears witness to Velázquez's activity before moving to Madrid, when, influenced by Caravaggio, he used chiaroscuro with powerful characterizations and a crude light that unforgivingly emphasizes the irregularities of her face and hands. Her energy is marvellously expressed in her intense and scrutinizing gaze and her manner of wielding the crucifix, almost as if it were a weapon.

***Apollo in the Forge of Vulcan*** (1630) has been cited as one of the most important works from Velázquez's first trip to Italy and "one of his most successful compositions with regard to the unified, natural interaction of the figures." It was created in Rome without commission at the request of the painter Rubens who had visited Spain in 1629.

The painting depicts the god Apollo (identifiable by the crown of laurel on his head) telling Vulcan, who is found making weapons for war, that his wife, Venus, is having an affair with Mars, the god of war. For this reason, the other figures in the room are looking in surprise at the god who has just appeared before them, some of them even opening their mouths to indicate surprise.



The subject is taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Velázquez interpreted the scene into a strictly human version, with contemporary figures. Apollo is seen wearing a toga which leaves his torso exposed to view. Vulcan, in this picture, is just a blacksmith, as are his helpers, who are men from the village who know the trade. Vulcan is staring at him in astonishment after having heard the news of his wife's adultery with the god Mars, for whom he is forging armour at this very moment. The cave in which the blacksmith god forges weapons for the other deities in this painting is shown as a smithy, similar to those Velázquez could have seen in Spain or in Rome. With characteristic mastery Velázquez also painted a variety of objects which would be commonly found in a forge.

During his Italian journey he was influenced by Venetian painting, which can be seen in his use of colour, for example in Apollo's striking orange toga. In Rome he was influenced by Michaelangelo to create extremely large and strong, muscular figures.

On the other hand, Velázquez was always obsessed with achieving depth in his works. In this case he uses "space sandwiching", that is, putting some figures in front of others so that the sensation of depth exists in the viewers' minds. In this way he portrays depth, rather than just using the view through the window seen at the back of the room. As in many of his works, objects that appear in the painting show realism taken to the extreme. At the back, in the upper right, various objects can be seen on a shelf which form an individual still-life, characteristic of Velázquez' early works.

As a Spanish painter his characters are ordinary people, not idealised as in Italian works. Vulcan could even be said to be quite ugly, and Apollo's face, despite being surrounded by an aura which differentiates him from the rest, is also un-idealised.



Velázquez had established his reputation in Seville by the early 1620s. In December 1622 Rodrigo de Villandrando, the king's favourite court painter, died. Velázquez received a command to come to the court of Philip IV, King of Spain, who sat for his portrait in 1623. The portrait pleased the king, and Velázquez was commanded to move to Madrid, promising that no other painter would ever paint Philip's portrait and all other portraits of the king would be withdrawn from circulation.

***Philip IV in Brown and Silver*** (between 1631 and 1635) was the first portrait the artist produced after his first trip to Italy in that it adopts the softer and more colourful palette of the Venetian school.

Philip IV was normally shown in fairly sombre clothing, so the unusual splendour of his costume here suggests that this work was made to celebrate something particular. In 1632, he wore a similar outfit for an important ceremony in which the Cortes of Castile pledged an oath of allegiance to his son and heir, Baltasar Carlos. His sleeveless jacket and breeches, white silk sleeves and cloak are all richly embellished with silver thread, and his hat is decorated with delicate feathers. He wears the badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece (a prestigious chivalric order)

and rests one hand on his sword. Philip appears as a young man, his impassive and assertive expression conveying his power.

We can see Velázquez's signature on the petition Philip holds, identifying his position as court painter. The artist rarely signed his works, only those he considered important.

**Portrait of Pope Innocent X**, executed during a trip to Italy around 1650, is considered by many artists and art critics as the finest portrait ever created. The painting is noted for its realism, in that it is an unflinching portrait of a highly intelligent, shrewd but ageing man. He is dressed in linen vestments, and the quality of the work is evident in the rich reds of his upper clothing, head-dress, and the hanging curtains.



The pope, born Giovanni Battista Pamphilj, was initially wary of sitting for Velázquez, but relented after he was shown reproductions of portraits by the artist. A contributing factor for this large advancement in the painter's career was that he had already depicted a number of members of Pamphilj's inner court. The pope, however, remained cautious, and the painting was initially displayed only to his immediate family, and was largely lost from public view through the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Irish-born painter Francis Bacon painted a series of distorted variants, often known as the "Screaming Popes", which total more than forty-five known variants executed during the 1950s and early 1960s



**Las Meninas** (1656) is a complex and enigmatic composition, raising questions about reality and illusion, and creating an uncertain relationship between the viewer and the figures depicted. It is one of the most widely analysed works in Western painting.

The painting shows a large room in the Royal Alcázar of Madrid during the reign of King Philip IV of Spain, and presents several figures, most identifiable from the Spanish court, captured, according to some commentators, in a particular moment as if in a snapshot. Some look out of the canvas towards the viewer, while others interact among themselves. The young Infanta Margaret Theresa is surrounded by her entourage of maids of honour, chaperone, bodyguard, two dwarfs and a dog. Just behind them, Velázquez portrays himself working at a large canvas. Velázquez looks outwards, beyond the pictorial space to where a viewer of the painting would stand. In the background there is a mirror that reflects the upper bodies of the

king and queen. They appear to be placed outside the picture space in a position similar to that of the viewer, although some scholars have speculated that their image is a reflection from the painting Velázquez is shown working on.

The back wall of the room, which is in shadow, is hung with rows of paintings, including one of a series of scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by Peter Paul Rubens, and copies, by Velázquez's son-in-law and principal assistant Juan del Mazo, of works by Jacob Jordaens. The paintings are shown in the exact positions recorded in an inventory taken around this time. The wall to the right is hung with a grid of eight smaller paintings, visible mainly as frames owing to their angle from the viewer. They can be identified from the inventory as more Mazo copies of paintings from the Rubens Ovid series, though only two of the subjects can be seen.

The paintings on the back wall are recognized as representing *Minerva Punishing Arachne* and *Apollo's Victory Over Marsyas*. Both stories involve Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom and patron of the arts. These two legends are both stories of mortals challenging gods and the dreadful consequences. One scholar points out that the legend dealing with two women, Minerva and Arachne, is on the same side of the mirror as the queen's reflection while the male legend is on the side of the king.

The red cross of the Order of Santiago, painted on Velázquez's breast, is presumably a detail that was added at a later date, as the painter was admitted to the order by the king's decree on 28 November, 1659. It has been suggested that the King, a keen amateur painter, added the cross himself after the death of the artist.





According to the interpretation of Dawson Carr (*Painting and reality: the art and life of Velázquez*), the elusiveness of *Las Meninas*, "suggests that art, and life, are an illusion". The relationship between illusion and reality were central concerns in Spanish culture during the 17th century, figuring largely in Don Quixote: the best-known work of Spanish Baroque literature. In this respect, Calderón de la Barca's play *Life is a Dream* is commonly seen as the literary equivalent of Velázquez's painting: What is a life? A frenzy. What is life? A shadow, an illusion, and a sham. The greatest good is small; all life, it seems is just a dream, and even dreams are dreams.



**The Surrender of Breda** 1634-5, was inspired by Velázquez's first visit to Italy, in which he accompanied Ambrogio Spinola, who conquered the Dutch city of Breda a few years prior. This master-work depicts a transfer of the key to the city from the Dutch to the Spanish army during the Siege of Breda. It is considered one of the best of Velázquez's paintings.

One of twelve life-size battle scenes intended to perpetuate victories won by Philip IV's armies, it illustrates the exchange of keys that occurred three days after the capitulation between Spain and the Netherlands was signed on June 5, 1625. Hence, the focus of the painting is not on the battle itself, but rather the reconciliation. At the centre of the painting, literally and figuratively, is the key given to Spinola by Justin of Nassau. The key is "the precise centre of his

design, [enclosing] it in an emphatic parallelogram so that it becomes the focus of the entire large canvas—literally the key to the composition, locking all other components into place."

The extraordinary respect and dignity Spinola demonstrated towards the Dutch army is praised in *The Surrender of Breda*. Spinola "had forbidden his troops to jeer at, or otherwise abuse, the vanquished Dutch, and, according to a contemporary report, he himself saluted Justin."

Velázquez's relationship with Spinola ensures the historical accuracy of the painting, and his knowledge of the intimate history of the siege makes it an especially important historical commentary. The portrayal of Spinola is undoubtedly accurate, and Spinola's memory of the battle contributed to the perspective with which Velázquez composed the painting. Velázquez "desired in his modest way to raise a monument to one of the most humane captains of the day, by giving permanence to his true figure in a manner of which he alone had the secret." The painting salutes a moment of convergence between Spanish power, restraint, and generosity following the battle.

**Alonso Cano** (1601 – 67) was a painter, architect and sculptor born in Granada. He was made first royal architect, painter to Philip IV.

He was notorious for his ungovernable temper; and it is said that once he risked his life by committing the then capital offence of dashing to pieces the statue of a saint, when in a rage with the purchaser who begrudged the price he demanded. According to another story, he found his house robbed after coming home one evening, his wife murdered, and his Italian servant fled. Notwithstanding the presumption against the fugitive, the magistrates condemned Cano, because he was of a jealous temper. Upon this he fled to Valencia, but afterwards returned to Madrid, where he was put to the torture, which he endured without incriminating himself, and the king received him into favour. After the death of his wife he took Holy Orders as a protection from further prosecution. It is said that on his deathbed, when the priest held a crucifix to him, he told him to take it away because it was badly carved.



The **Ideal Portrait of a Spanish King** (c.1643) is designed to be viewed from below, and was part of a series on the dynasty of Castile and Leon that various artists painted for the king's bedroom or *Furies Room*.



The devotional subject of ***Christ Gathering His Robes*** (1646) appears in Italy in the 16th century and although it is not as frequent as that of the flagellation of Christ at the column, it does appear in 17th century Spanish art. The painter imagines the moment that follows the flagellation in the Praetorium of Pilate, narrated in the Gospels. Christ is alone, with his body punished and bleeding; Cano's sober style and his perfect mastery of drawing instils a sense of serenity without losing expressive power. In the whole of the artist's production, this canvas, shows echoes of Caravaggio's tenebrism.

Both in the perfection of drawing and modelling the painting of the ***Crucified Christ*** (1646) is an indisputable master-piece,

The harshly lit, pale body of Christ appears isolated in time and space against the dark and unrevealing gloom of a night sky. The stark reality of the flesh, the stretched muscles and the taught rib cage express

the human frailty of the Man of Sorrows. The crowds and the mourners have left and Jesus suffers the sober and intense evocation of loneliness and death.

Cano, when representing Christ on the Cross, has preferred the model of the four nails, with the straight body and the feet resting on the wooden subsurface; the iconography defended by Francisco Pacheco in the *Art of Painting* and adopted by Velázquez. The skull at the base of the cross is a symbol of Adam, through which the entire humanity is redeemed by the sacrifice of the Messiah.



**Bartolomé Esteban Murillo** (1617-1682) was a Spanish Baroque painter. Although he is best known for his religious works, Murillo also produced a considerable number of paintings of contemporary women and children. These lively, realist portraits of flower girls, street urchins, and beggars constitute an extensive and appealing record of the everyday life of his times.

His first works were influenced by Zurbarán, Ribera and Cano, and he shared their strongly realist approach. The great commercial importance of Seville at the time ensured that he was subject to artistic influences from other regions. He became familiar with Flemish painting.

He also painted two self-portraits, the earliest portraying him in his 30s, and this one of c. 1670-73 in London's National Gallery portraying him about 20 years later.

His first works were influenced by Zurbarán, Ribera and Cano, and he shared their strongly realist approach.

***The Young Beggar*** c 1645 was the first of Murillo's many paintings of children, and the first known depiction of a street urchin by Murillo, in which the influence of Velázquez is apparent. Also known as *The Lice-Ridden Boy* due to the figure of a young boy delousing himself. This work of art was undoubtedly inspired by the rampant misery in the streets of Seville during the Golden Age. In the 17th century, Spain had a dilemma with abandoned children who had to fend for themselves.

Religious conflict and plagues that affected the children were the hardships that became the subjects of Murillo's paintings. He could have been influenced to create such works due to his upbringing and he drew inspiration from what surrounded him. As a child, he was orphaned and raised by relatives.





Murillo's paintings of low life were also influenced by the popularity of Spanish picaresque literature of the seventeenth century. An enormous inspiration for him were the works by novelist Miguel de Cervantes, who was known for depicting stories of roguish heroes and foolish knights,

**Boys Eating Grapes and Melon** (c1645-46) is one of his best-known works, and one of the few that moves away from the religious themes that dominated most of his work. Two ragged children in a street of Seville eagerly devour a yellow melon and a bunch of grapes.

The figures are arranged along a series of diagonals, a very common compositional device at the time, running from the lower left, to the patch of gloomy evening light on the upper right. The focal point is the head of the boy lowering grapes into his mouth, to which the other boy turns, his cheeks stuffed with the juicy melon. A counter line runs from there along the line of the boy's arms to the right foot of the other boy. This subtle grid holds together what appears on first viewing as an informal and spontaneous grouping.

Saint Jerome was a fourth century priest and scholar. He has been depicted by a number of artists, sometimes in his study but more popularly as a hermit living in the desert, working on his translations of the Gospels.

In his painting of c.1650-52 Murillo shows **Saint Jerome** at the entrance to his cave home, loosely wrapped in his red cloak, a reference to his position as a cardinal of the church. The painting is pared down to its essential elements, imparting a strong effect of his presence. It is as if the onlooker is sharing his cell, seated at a lower level awaiting a lesson. Although sitting quietly, absorbed in his reading, the diagonal of his leaning posture, and the sharp angle of his arm lend a dynamic force to the composition.

A strong light enters the cave, illuminating the saint's torso and face, and the page of the book. The softening of the edges of his forms (sfumato) and diffuse luminosity ensured the popularity of his works.



Murillo was Seville's most popular painter in the later 17th century.



While he is well known for works with religious themes, he also produced a number of genre paintings of figures from contemporary life engaged in ordinary pursuits. These pictures often possess a wistful charm; **Two Women at a Window** (c.1655-60) is a striking example. A standing woman attempts to hide a smile with her shawl as she peeks from behind a partially opened shutter, while a younger woman leans on the windowsill, gazing out at the viewer with amusement. The difference in their ages might indicate a chaperone and her charge, a familiar duo in upper-class Spanish households. Covering one's smile or laugh was considered good etiquette among the aristocracy.

The convincingly modelled, life-size figures, framed within an illusion of a painted window, derive from Dutch paintings that were meant to fool the eye.

Murillo spent two periods working in Madrid, the second one from 1658 to 1660; after which he returned to Seville. Here he was one of the founders of the Academia de Bellas Artes. This was his period of greatest activity, and he received numerous important commissions, among them the altarpieces for the Augustinian monastery, the paintings for Santa María la Blanca (completed in 1665), and others. He died in Seville in 1682, a few months after he fell from a scaffold while working on a fresco at the church of the Capuchines in Cádiz.



***Christ Healing the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda*** (1670) shows one of the seven acts of charity described in the Gospel of Matthew and was part of a series that Murillo painted for the church of the Hospital de la Caridad in Seville. The Caridad was a charitable brotherhood dedicated to helping the poor and sick of the city; Murillo himself was a member.

The pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem was periodically visited by an angel, and whoever first touched its water after this would be cured of illness. Christ went to the pool and heard a sick man complain that someone always stepped into the water before him.

Here, Christ invites the man to stand, curing him; their mirrored hand gestures capture the powerful connection between them. The man's raised arms create an upward

motion, as if he is being lifted from the ground by an invisible force – a visual evocation of the miracle taking place.

Murillo had many pupils and followers. The prolific imitation of his paintings ensured his reputation in Spain and fame throughout Europe, and prior to the 19th century his work was more widely known than that of any other Spanish artist. Artists influenced by his style included Gainsborough and Greuze.