The Seventeenth Century

2. Spain and the Catholic North

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Spain

Influences from Italy: naturalism and Caravaggio

There was gloom in Spain. The defeat of the Armada in 1588 was the first of surprising reverses; two further Armadas smashed in storms; silver lost on the high seas and in the Americas to Protestant "pirates"; defeat in Ireland (Kinsale 1601) and by Henry IV in France. Moreover, Spain faced the near-certain loss of the Dutch Republic. The collapse of finances forced Philip III's councillors to sign a truce in 1609 at Antwerp, where they were obliged to recognise the United Provinces as if they were a sovereign power. Leaders of the nation feared they had been deserted by God, a view reinforced by outbreaks of plague from 1598 to 1602 and a series of poor harvests. Thus, the Council of Trent's demand for truthful and pious works of art still struck a chord in Spain. A departure from El Greco's style towards naturalism was evident even in Toledo, as Italian influences began to be felt.

Juan Bautista Maino, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1612-3 (Prado, Madrid)

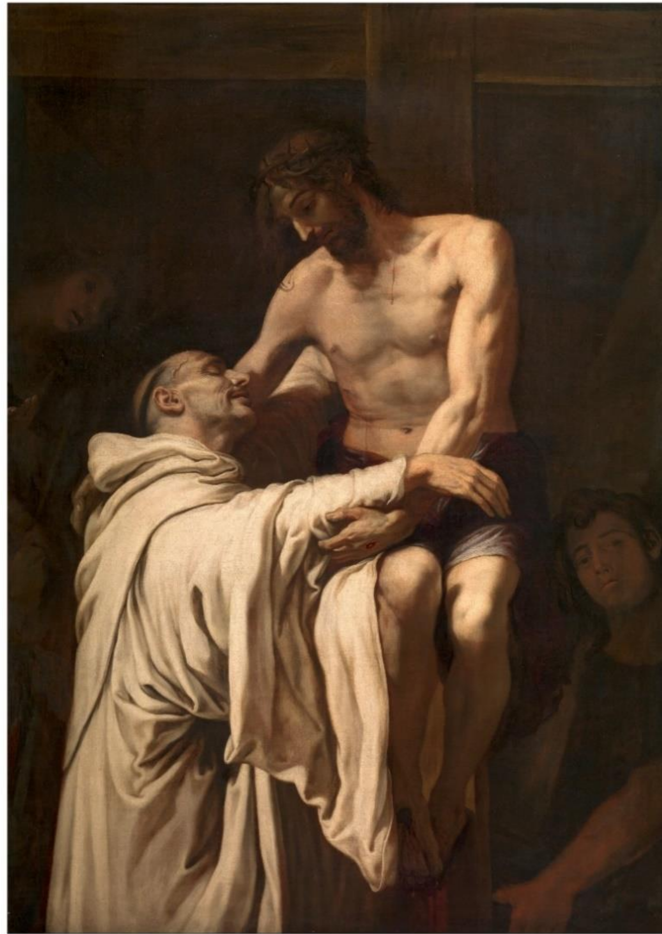
Juan Bautista Maino, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1612-3 (Prado, Madrid)

Juan Bautista Maino (1578-1641) studied in Italy from 1600 to 1608, where he met Caravaggio and Annibale Carracci. Moving to Toledo in 1611 Juan Bautista painted the *Altarpiece of Four Holy Feasts* for the convent church of St Peter Martyr. The altarpiece broke with El Greco: the *Adorations* introduce a new realism evident in the figures (painted from models) and the still life. Maino did not go so far as the daring naturalism and strong chiaroscuro of Caravaggio, perhaps too much for Toledo just then. The contrast in colouring and artefacts of rich men and peasants shows Juan Bautista's grasp of naturalism and the lessons he had learned in Italy. Maino joined the Dominican order in 1613 and painted rarely. He was appointed by Philip III as drawing master to the future Philip IV, a fine choice given the evidence.

Francisco Pacheco explained the role of painting in the service of Catholicism: *"it would be hard to overstate the good that holy images do: … They heighten our spirits and show to our eyes and hearts the heroic and magnanimous acts of patience, or justice, chastity, meekness, charity and contempt for worldly things … the principal goal of Christian images will always be to persuade men to be pious and lead them to God."*

Simple and pious images became popular, and Francisco Ribalta's painting of *St Bernard* is in this vein. Christ lowers himself from the cross to embrace the founder of the Carthusian order. Ribalta captures Bernard Clairvaux's joy and sense of safety in the arms of his Lord. Recent cleaning has revealed two figures in the background, possibly angels.

Caravaggio's straightforward realism and simplicity, especially of *St Paul* and *St Peter*, resonated in Spain. Two great Spanish masters followed his style; one who never lived in mainland Spain, the other never saw Italy.

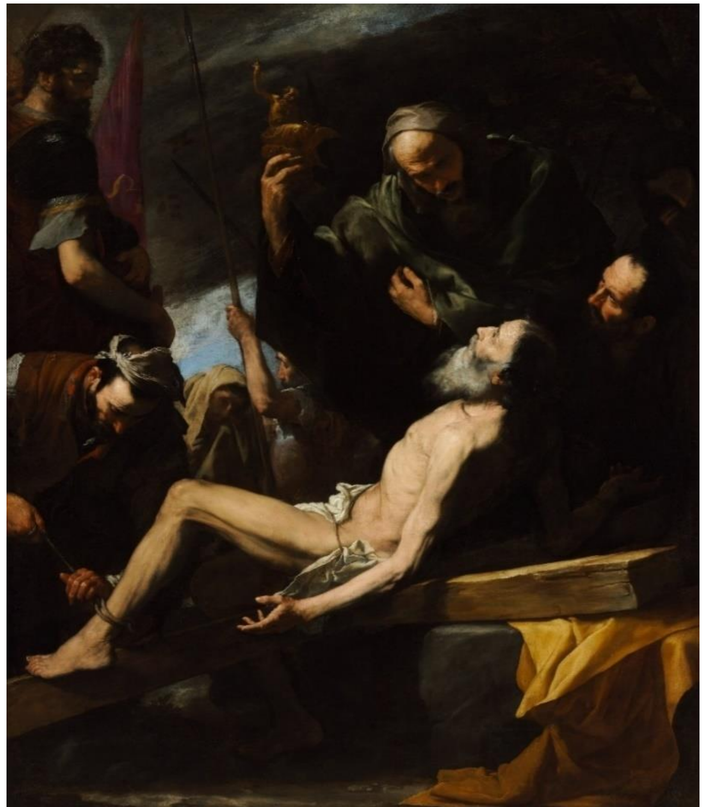


Francisco Ribalta, *Christ embracing Saint Bernard*, 1625-7

Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652)

Jusepe de Ribera is one of the masters of the Spanish Golden Age. He travelled to Italy and was in Rome in 1612 where he saw Caravaggio's works. Jusepe moved to Naples in 1616 and remained there until his death. The Kingdom of Naples was part of the Spanish empire, ruled by a Spanish Viceroy, and many of Ribera's works were sent to Spain. His art developed, but he follows the style of Caravaggio's *Crucifixion of St Peter* in his own *St Andrew*.

Ribera has gained the reputation for delighting in subjects of horror. Perhaps this is a mis-reading of the Counter-Reformation principles of much of his work. Depictions of martyrdoms were immensely popular among strict Catholic Spanish patrons, who also thought such images were beneficial to the public. But Jusepe's art is much more than that. Indeed, he has links to the gentle art of El Greco.

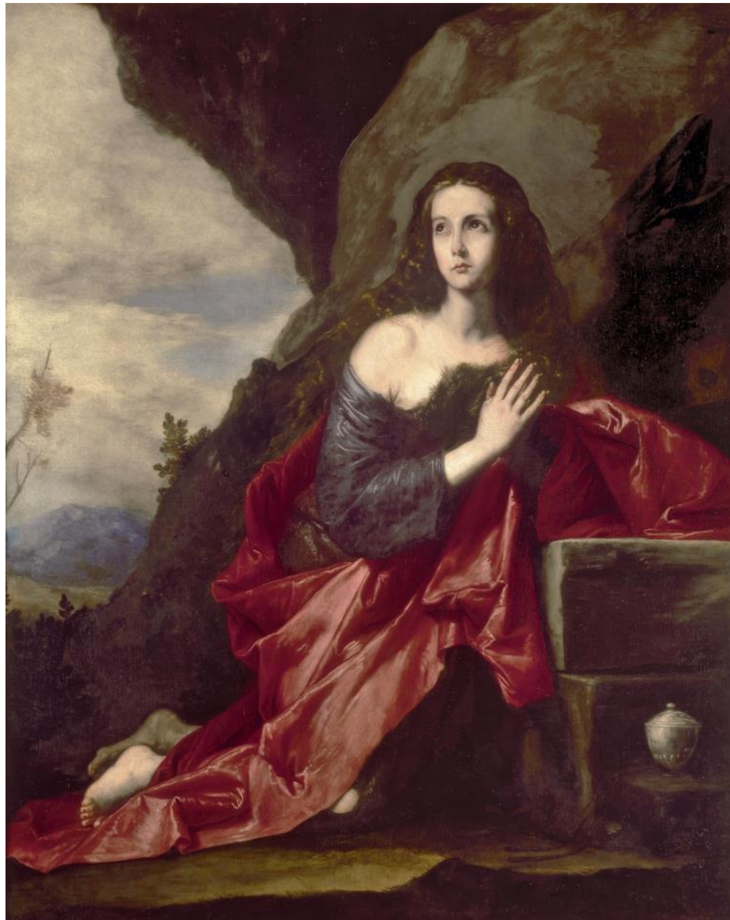


Jusepe de Ribera, *Martyrdom of St Andrew*, 1628

Jusepe de Ribera, *The Trinity*, 1635

The Trinity is based on the same 1511 Durer print that El Greco used for his *Trinity (1577)* but Ribera shows God as impassive, knowing that his Son's sacrifice has always been necessary. The warm colours suggest timelessness. The lower half is lit with dramatic light, revealing Christ's ashen face in counterpoint to His Father's rosy hues. Trickles of blood stain the loincloth and shroud.

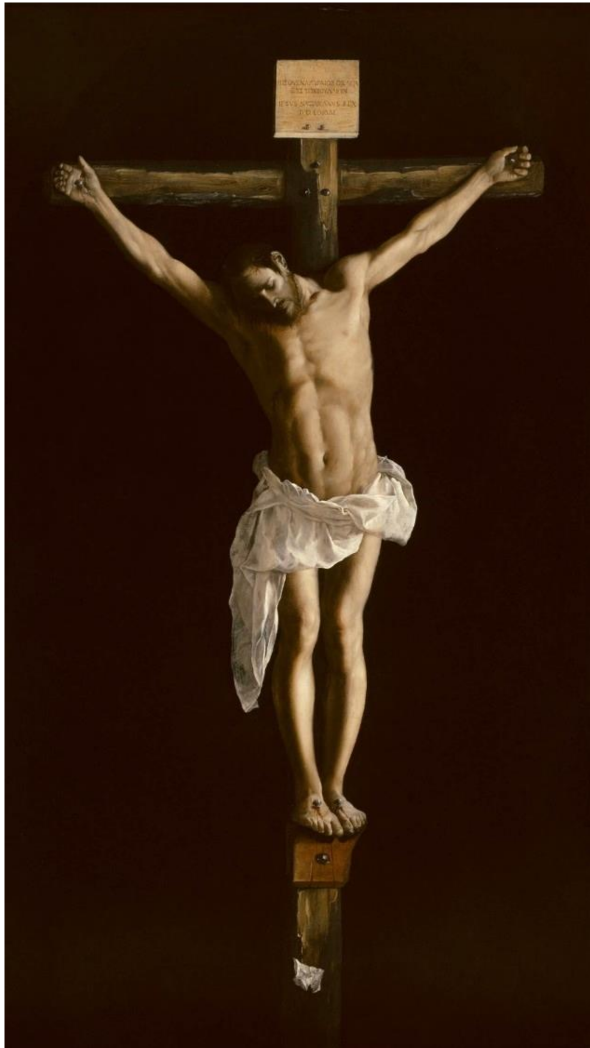
Jusepe's *Penitent Magdalen* recalls El Greco's work in pose, composition, and stunningly beautiful saint. Mary's hair, delicate features, rich cloak and silver jar of ointment contrast against the setting, which portends the simple life ahead of her. Ribera painted four penitent saints in landscape; child (John the Baptist), old man (Bartholomew), old woman (Mary of Egypt) and this one – each a diagonal composition against a landscape with an open sky.



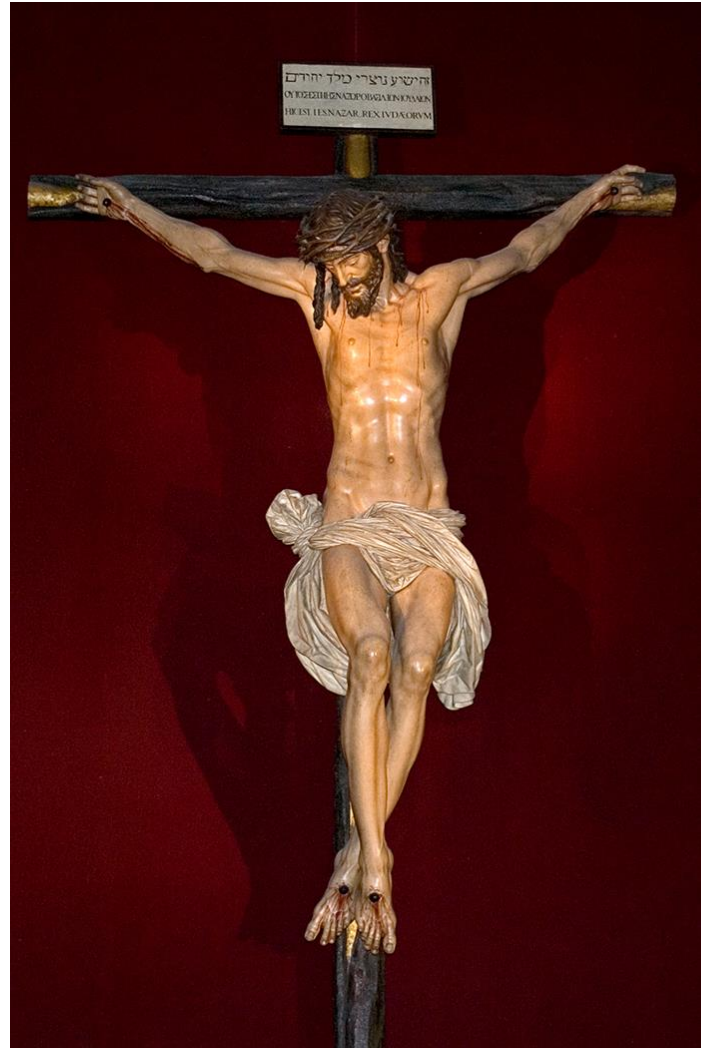
Jusepe de Ribera, *Penitent Magdalen*, 1641

Francisco de Zurbaran (1598-1664)

Francisco de Zurbaran gained the nickname “Spanish Caravaggio”, for his light and shade, somewhat ironically as he never went to Italy and may not have seen any of Caravaggio’s works. Zurbaran is considered to be, after Velazquez, the greatest painter of the age in Spain. Unlike Velazquez, he did not work at court. Instead Zurbaran stayed in Seville. Francisco was born in a town 60 miles from Seville, but served an apprenticeship there for three years as a teenager. A decade later, his *Christ on the Cross* secured his future.



Francisco de Zurbaran, *Christ on the Cross*, 1627



Juan Martinez Montanes, *Christ of Clemency*, 1606

Zurbaran produced the work as part of his first big commission in which he provided 21 paintings in eight months for the Dominican monastery of San Pablo el Real in Seville. The main subject was Saint Dominic, but this was the painting which caught attention. The severe chiaroscuro gives form to Christ’s emaciated body. The work is intended to induce meditation on Christ’s humanity and sacrifice, so there is no background and none of the figures associated with the Crucifixion scene. Zurbaran signed his name on the scrap of paper, a detail which seems to add to the realism. Four nails are shown, often only one is depicted for the feet.

The depiction of Christ crucified was pervasive in Spain and not limited to paintings. Juan Martinez Montanes sculpted *Christ of Clemency* (painted wood) for the private chapel of an archdeacon who, in 1614, donated the work to the Carthusian monastery of Santa Maria de la Cuevas in Seville. Zurbaran was serving his apprenticeship at the time and must have seen the sculpture. Christ’s figure in Montanes’ work seems to “*hold the promise of coming alive (Tomlinson).”* Zurbaran’s Christ was so admired that the Elders of Seville invited him in 1629 to settle permanently in Seville, believing his works would add to the reputation of the city.

Francisco had no concerns about accepting. Seville was booming, more populous than any other city in the country and surpassed in size only by Paris and Naples. The Guadalquivir River connected Seville to the Mediterranean, and the city was the major port for Spain's trade with the New World. By 1600 the city had 37 monasteries/convents (in addition to churches) and by 1625 another 15 were established. The 1630s was a decade of great success in Zurbaran's career. St Francis was one of his specialities in male saints. The man of charity as a fervent penitent, the skull a reminder of the vanity of earthly life. Francisco Zurbaran's pictures of praying monks *"combine a down to earth actuality with a rapt intensity of Counter-Reformation mysticism (Baticle)."*

Francisco de Zurbaran, *St Francis in Meditation*, 1635-9

Francisco de Zurbaran, *St Francis in Prayer*, 1639

Zurbaran was talented in painting fabrics, but esteemed for white robes - a facility which extended to fleece.

Francisco Zurbaran, *Agnes Dei*, 1635-40

By the time Francisco finished this Seville was in decline. The river to the sea gradually silted up and trade at Seville migrated to Cadiz, along with the wealth. After 1640 Zurbaran painted pictures for sale in the New World. Many canvases would be loaded onto a ship, with the captain promising to sell as many as he could in Mexico.

Still Life (*Bodegon*)

Juan Sanchez Cotan (1560-1627) defined Spanish still lifes – *bodegones* – in the early 17th century. He chose a few humble fruit and vegetables, placing them in an almost abstract way in dramatic lighting. Cotan's compositions are thought to have influenced Zurbaran's art. The cardoon, on the far right, is a characteristic feature of many of his works, its white curves break the rigid right angles and the rich colours of the other items.

Juan Sanchez Cotan, *Still life with Game, Vegetables and Fruit,* 1602

The frame also allowed Juan a measure of illusion. Some items appearing to stretch out of the frame into our space. *Still life with Game, Vegetables and Fruit* is an early work and one of Juan's most complex. Fewer objects appear in other works and they are placed with geometrical precision.

Juan van der Hamen (1596-1631), Spanish and baptised in Madrid, added surfaces stepped in depth and height. These works have less humble objects than Cotan's. This work is perfect. The dark jug in the right foreground a striking balance to the much larger and more colourful group of flowers and artichokes in the left further back.

Juan Sanchez Cotan, *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*, 1602

Juan van der Hamen, *Still Life with Artichokes, Flowers and Glass Vessels*, 1627 (Prado, Madrid)

Spanish kings, whose taste was for the ornate, evidently preferred still life works from the Netherlands, except for these paintings by Juan van der Hamen. Just as in the Dutch Republic, the emergence of a middle-class urban clientele demanding new subjects and delighting in illusionism formed an enthusiastic market for *bodegones*.

Francisco de Zurbaran, *Still Life with Vessels*, c 1650

Zurbaran painted a few of them. His most famous shows vessels looming out of the darkness. Possibly the ceramics refer to Saint Justa and Saint Rufina the patron saints of Seville, who were the daughters of a potter. Murillo painted the sisters as an altarpiece for a Capuchin chapel in Seville. They are depicted nursing the Giralda (an important symbol of the city) as they did in 1504 to protect it from an earthquake.

Bartolome Estaban Murillo, *St Justa and St Rufina*, 1665/6

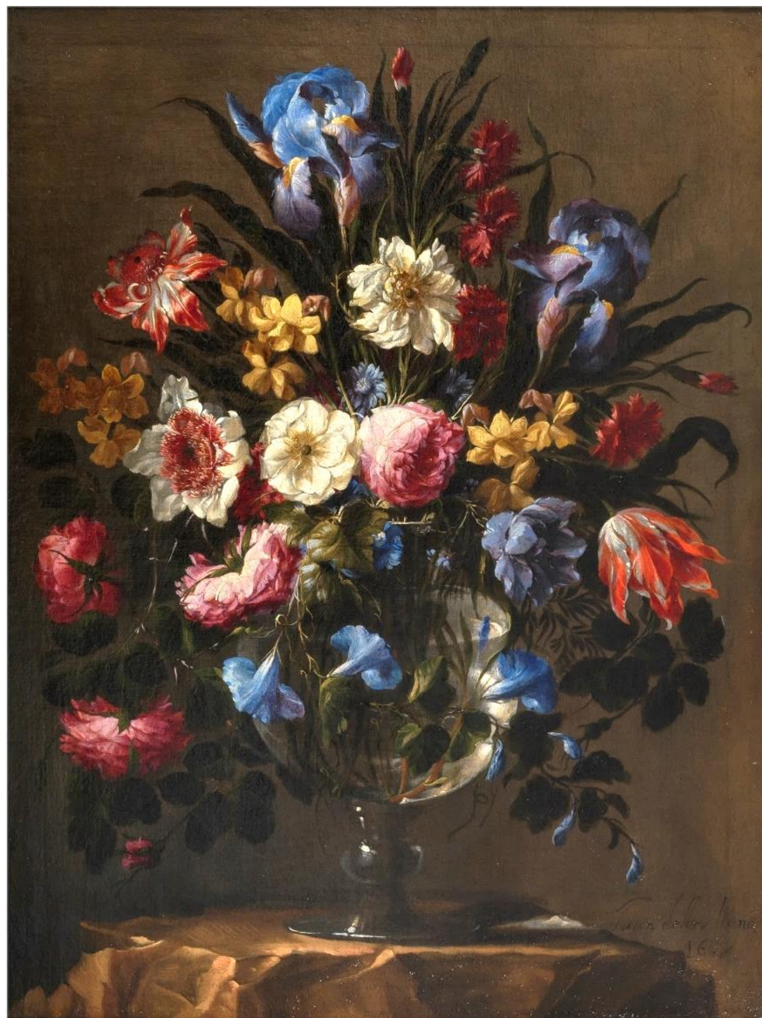
Juan Fernandez "El Labrador" specialised in the painting of fruit, grapes particularly, for which he was called "*a modern Zeuxis*." He moved on from his pictures of small pairs of bunches with no leaves to the hanging of the fruit from a vine - equilibrium without boring symmetry.

Juan Fernandez, *Four Bunches of hanging Grapes*, c 1636

Juan de Espinosa also excelled in fruit, but with more variety than Juan Fernandez and departing from the traditional *chiaroscuro* of *bodegones*. His fruit have the gleam and transparency of precious stones, the deep red jar and the metal dish add to the effect.

Outside influences and the taste of Spanish kings eventually were felt on Spanish still life. **Juan de Arellano (1614-76)** was the greatest Spanish flower painter of the 17th century. In his best works he produces a careful balance of colour and volume even though the arrangement looks disorganised. The bare table-cloth with simple creases forms a suitably plain base.

Juan de Espinosa, *Still life with Grapes, Apples and Plums*, c 1630



Juan de Arellano, *Flowers in a Glass Vase*, 1668

Madrid

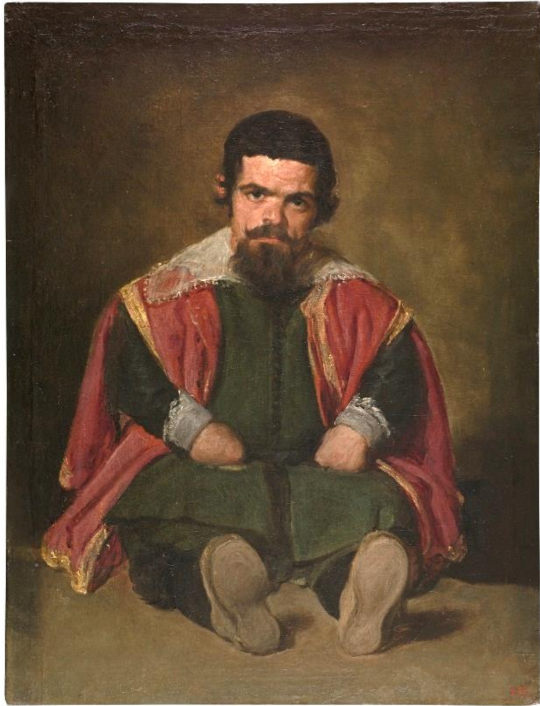
<u>Diego Velazquez (1599-1660)</u>

Diego Velazquez was born in Seville, received initial training under Francisco Pacheco and in 1617 passed his guild examination. Some of his first notable works were *bodegones*. Pacheco later condemned such pictures as lowly art, unless they had been executed by Velazquez. In the *Old Woman*; metal, crockery, glass, vegetables, basket, egg whites - everything is painted superbly.

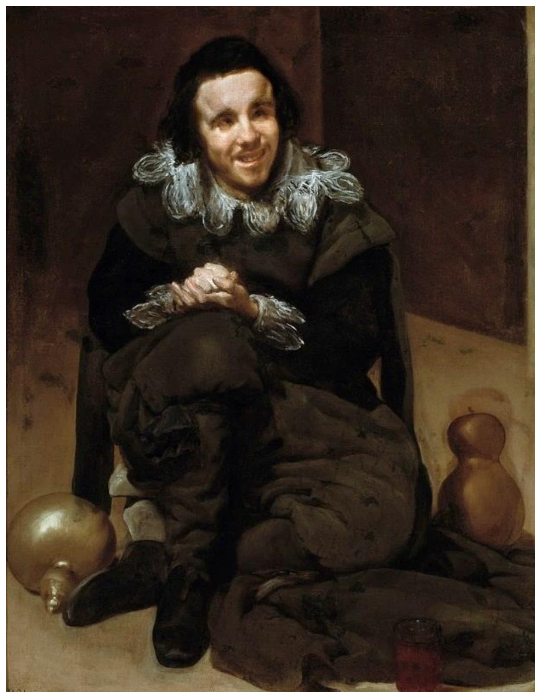
Diego Velazquez, *Old Woman Cooking Eggs*, c 1617

The *Old Woman* re-appears in the *House of Martha and Mary*, which repeats a compositional form long-popular in the Netherlands: a still life with a religious scene in the background. This "scene-within-a-scene" painting features often in Diego's art.

Velazquez went to Madrid for the first time in 1622. Olivares, Philip IV's chief minister and fellow Andalusian, summoned him back a year later to settle permanently as court painter. From 1623 Diego was the only artist allowed to paint portraits of the king. At the royal court, the high esteem in which dwarves were held in the 16th century continued through the 17th. Velazquez painted many portraits of them and other court entertainers in his 'People of Pleasure' portraits. The Spanish court found jesters amusing either because of a physical (dwarfism) or mental disability or for their wit: *El Primo* is an example of the first; *Calabacillas*, the second; and, *Pablo* the third.



Diego Velazquez, *The Buffoon El Primo (Sebastien de Morra)*, 1644



Diego Velazquez, *The Buffoon (Juan) Calabacillas*, 1635-9

Sebastien stares intensely, with an air of defiance, his hands curled into fists. *Calabaza*, Spanish for gourds or pumpkins, was also associated with madness or rashness, and so appears often in titles of buffoons. Diego paints Juan's face indistinctly which adds to the sense of alienation.

Edouard Manet called *Pablo*, *"perhaps the most astonishing piece of painting that has ever been made … the background disappears. It is air that surrounds the man, entirely dressed in black and full of life*." Edouard based his *Fifer/Young Piper (1866)* on it.

Diego Velazquez, *Pablo de Valladolid*, 1635

Having skipped ahead a little to cover this series, we'll return to Velazquez preparing for his first trip to Italy in 1629. Diego gained permission to spend two years in Italy during which he was still paid his court salary. He visited Genoa, Venice, Rome and finally Naples (meeting Jusepe de Ribera) on his way home. His last painting before embarking on this exciting trip was *Bacchus*. Mythological subjects were rare in Spanish painting - monarchs usually engaged Titian for this sort of thing. Diego's *Bacchus* is nothing like that of his Italian counterpart. The work looks like a scene in Madrid; drinkers with leathery faces and popular costumes, convincing as peasants. Bacchus is distinguished from them only by the pallor of his skin. The model for him could easily have been pulled off a Madrid street.

Diego Velazquez, *The Feast of Bacchus*, 1628-9

In Italy, Velazquez was greatly influenced by Venetian colour. His compositions show a greater interest in the nude and the theory of gestures. *Joseph's Bloody Coat brought to Jacob (1630)* is influenced by Titian (a dog is included as a homage), but it is *Vulcan's Forge* that makes the effect of the Italian trip clear.

Diego Velazquez, *Apollo in the Forge of Vulcan*, 1630 (Prado, Madrid)

Velazquez paints large, classical semi-nude figures instead of the lumpy peasants in *Bacchus*. Vulcan and his assistants are given a variety of poses, accompanied by dramatic gestures and expressions as they react to Apollo's news that Mars is shagging Vulcan's wife. Diego again treats us to some stunning still life; armour, tools, red-hot metal and (perhaps, most strikingly) the small jug.

Velazquez' newly-developed skill for nudes produced *The Crucified Christ*, painted for the Benedictine convent of San Placido in Madrid. The perfectly proportioned body (Italian classical influence) is moulded by light and silhouetted, like Vulcan's assistants. The warmth of the wood against the cold flesh contributes to an image of great intensity: "*one of the most successful of all Spanish devotional images (Prado Guide).*"

Diego Velazquez, *The Crucified Christ*, 1632

Diego returned to Madrid to embark on a frenzy of activity as Philip built the Buen Retiro Palace and the Torre de la Parada hunting pavilion and refurbished the Alcazar. The Parada demanded appropriate paintings. Velazquez painted pictures of Philip IV and his heir Prince Baltasar Carlos outside in hunting gear with guns, accompanied by dogs, but it was equestrian portraits that mattered more; control of the horse a symbol of the monarch's power. The standard had been set in 1548 by Titian with his *Charles V (1548).* Diego followed Titian's composition in his painting of Charles' great-grandson: side-on view, horse heading to the right, tree to the left and dark-skied landscape in the background. Charles V actually led his forces into battle at Muhlberg, so Titian painted him in armour wielding a lance. Philip IV, nary near a battlefield, has the conceit to wear armour but bears the staff of command instead of a weapon.

Diego Velazquez, *Equestrian Portrait of Philip IV*, 1635-6

Peter Paul Rubens, *Equestrian Portrait of the Duke of Lerma*, 1603

The armour and staff appear in an earlier equestrian portrait by Rubens, when he was sent to Spain on a diplomatic mission by the Duke of Mantua, Vincenzo Gonzaga, for whom he was court artist. The ineffectual Philip III reigned then, largely through advisory councils. His favourite was the Duke of Lerma, who had the reputation across Europe of being the real power. In fact, as Parker notes, Lerma rarely attended council meetings and "*his energies, such as they were, centred on securing advancement for his relatives and friends and riches for himself: his annual income rose from 8027 ducats in 1598 to 973,073 ducats in 1625*." Nevertheless, Gonzaga thought it prudent to flatter Lerma and asked Rubens to paint a portrait. The *Equestrian Portrait* was the result. Rubens had seen Titian's *Charles V* in the Royal Collection in Spain, but instead he copied the composition of El Greco's *St Martin and the Beggar*, including the Spanish master's colours and style. Lerma is shown in armour and with the staff of command.

This work by Rubens was the model that Anthony Van Dyck used for his equestrian portraits off Charles I of England: horse coming towards us. Velazquez also used Rubens' work when he painted *Prince Baltasar Carlos on Horseback*. Carlos is shown in an identical pose to Lerma, but we see him from the other side and the horse is livelier. Carlos is too young to be shown in armour, but not apparently to be depicted controlling such a large horse coolly with one hand.

Diego Velazquez, *Prince Baltasar Carlos on Horseback*, 1635

Around the time he painted Philip IV and Carlos, Velazquez portrayed Olivares on a horse too. Olivares was a very different man to Lerma. Olivares had a brutal schedule, waking at five and then working until eleven at night, often later. When he accompanied the king hunting, Olivares had state papers stuffed in his pockets, even his hat, and dictated orders to a coachful of secretaries who trailed in his wake. Four of them were killed by Olivares' work-rate, which he sustained through 22 years of service. It was Olivares who brought Velazquez to Madrid, and Diego rewarded him with a powerful portrait.

To our modern eyes, he looks more a leader than Philip IV, but that is a mistake. Philip is shown calm and assured. He was stiff with etiquette (and said to have smiled only twice in public in his life), but is tranquil in the certainty of his divine right to rule. Nevertheless, perhaps Philip found some fault, for at the end of 1636 Velazquez's equestrian portrait had been replaced by one which Rubens had painted during stints of diplomatic work in Madrid from 1627-1630 (Rubens shared a studio with Velazquez in 1628 and contributed other paintings to the Torre de la Parada). Rubens' version is known only through a copy in the Uffizi, but is much more dynamic; Philip facing the viewer with a commanding expression rather than sitting passively in profile.

Diego Velazquez, *Gaspar de Guzman, Count-Duke Olivares*, 1636

At the Buen Retiro Palace, Philip created the Hall of Realms for ceremonies and festivities. Twelve paintings celebrating the military triumphs of Spain during Philip IV's reign were commissioned for the hall. Velazquez' *The Surrender of Breda* is the most famous.

The truce signed with the Dutch Republic in 1609 was due for renewal in 1621. Instead, Spain decided to go to war. The decision surprised Europe, but the Dutch had used the truce to attack Spanish holdings in Mexico, Brazil and the Caribbean and had moved into Africa and the Far East. The feeling in Madrid was that waging war on the Dutch Republic would save Spain's overseas territories. So once again Ambrogio Spinola, commander-in-chief of the Army of Flanders since 1604 was called to action. Spinola *"combined great military skill with the ability to finance the army during the frequent periods when the king of Spain's coffers were empty (Parker)"*. He captured the strategic fortress of Julich in February 1622, after a seven-month siege, and then laid siege to the Dutch fortress of Breda, which surrendered on the 5 June 1625.

Velazquez shows Spinola accepting the surrender from Justin of Nassau, whom he treated warmly, praising the bravery and steadfastness of his long defence. Spinola's graciousness suggests that both knew the outcome was inevitable. The power and discipline of the Spanish forces is depicted on the right with their mass of largely vertical pikes – the painting is also known as *Las Lanzas* for that reason. Diego includes a self-portrait, to the right of the horse. Ironically, only two years after Velazquez' painting, the Dutch re-took Breda.

Diego Velazquez, *The Surrender of Breda*, 1635

The sieges of the 1620s were hellishly expensive. A year after Breda had surrendered, Olivares was gloomy; *"Spain's sickness is serious and has become chronic. We have lost our prestige; the treasury (which is the basis of authority) is totally exhausted."*

In 1628 Spinola urged peace, not for want of money, but because the Spanish Netherlands was being devastated and trade had stopped. Rubens, serving as diplomat, wrote from Antwerp, *"This city languishes like a consumptive body which is gradually wasting away. Every day we see the number of inhabitants decreasing, for these wretched people have no means of supporting themselves either by manufacture or by trade."* In autumn 1629 more Spanish losses in the Netherlands prompted Philip to offer an unconditional truce. A ministerial colleague wrote of Olivares, who was still working tirelessly, in 1629; *"it is true that the ship is going down, but under other captains we should have perished sooner."*

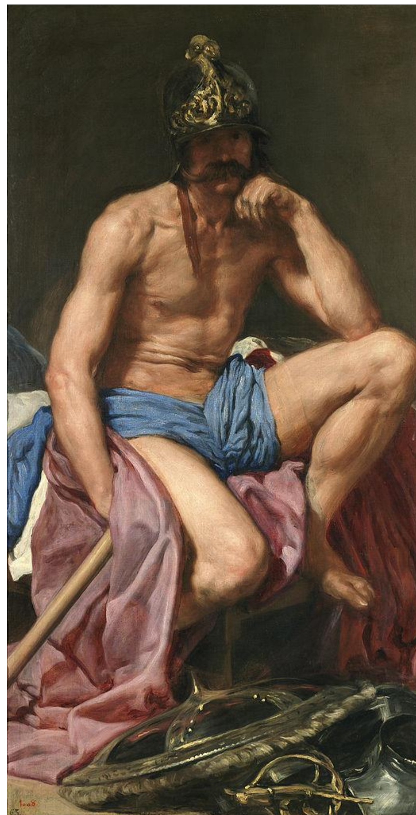
Rubens, who rarely painted portraits, captures the war-weariness of Spinola at this time. "*The careworn expression seems at odds with the splendour of military accoutrements … but it appears to have been an accurate reflection of the man himself, whose death a few years later was, according to Rubens, 'brought on by work and worry' largely occasioned by Spanish hostility towards him. It seems he was tired of living (White)".*

Peter Paul Rubens, *Ambrogio Spinola*, 1627-8

In 1638, Velazquez painted *Mars*, and like his *Bacchus*, the god looks nothing like the Italian prototype or the seducer of Venus. Again, an ordinary Spanish soldier could have served as a model. *Mars* has the same expression as Rubens' *Spinola*, exhausted and melancholy - the personification of Spain. Diego clearly learned a lot in Italy about painting nudes.

The earthiness of *Mars* and *Bacchus* re-appears in *Aesop* (who was a former slave) who Velazquez depicts as a ragged figure. Diego may have been influenced by meeting Jusepe de Ribera during his trip to Italy, who used beggars as his models in his series of 'ragged philosophers'.

Aesop's features are not sharply drawn. A loose and painterly style is evident Diego's works in the 1630s.



Diego Velazquez, *Mars*, 1638

Diego Velazquez, *Aesop*, 1638

Diego Velazquez, *Toilet of Venus (Rokeby Venus)*, 1645-1648

Diego uses this style in the *Rokeby Venus*, an unusually lascivious painting in Spanish art, probably done for Philip IV between the death of his wife in 1644 and before Velazquez' second trip to Italy in 1648. Diego painted few works in the 1640s. The court was depressed by catastrophic losses. Spanish armadas were destroyed by the Dutch in the English Channel (1639) and off the Brazilian coast (1640). Catalonia revolted, placing herself under the protection of King of France. Portugal revolted too and gained her independence. Despondency deepened when two years after the death of his mother, Baltasar Carlos died too. Without an heir Philip IV was forced to re-marry, and he chose the fiancé of his son, Mariana of Vienna. A delegation left in 1648 to bring her to Madrid. Velazquez travelled with it as far as Italy, where he stayed until 1651.

Diego took his slave to Italy, Juan de Pareja, a Moor who served as an assistant in the artist's workshop. In Rome, Innocent X reluctantly gave Velazquez permission to paint his portrait, but made it clear that he would not be sitting for long.

Diego Velazquez, *Portrait of Juan de Pareja*, 1650

Diego Velazquez, *Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1650

According to some sources, Velazquez used the portrait of Juan to prepare. In both, Diego worked quickly, brilliantly capturing the character of his sitters. Innocent was renowned for his taciturnity: *"his portrait by Velazquez … stern and deeply suspicious, glowers at the spectator (Langdon)."* The work inspired artists in the following centuries, for subject, searing intensity and for the impressionistic style. Back in Madrid, Velazquez spent more time on royal duties but had time to paint two of his masterpieces.

Diego Velazquez, *The Spinners (Las Hilanderas) or The Fable of Arachne*, 1655

Las Hilanderas is a scene-within-scene. To the rear, in front of a tapestry of Titian's *Rape of Europa* (then in Philip's collection) Minerva in armour confronts Arachne. Arachne claimed she could weave just as well as the goddess and proved it. Minerva, inflamed by jealously, beat Arachne and tore the tapestry. Mortified, Arachne hanged herself. Minerva intervened to prevent death, turning Arachne into a spider dangling on its thread. The women in the foreground seem oblivious to their patron. The two scenes are weaved together by strokes of paint for the yarn continuing into highlights on the blue dress.

Diego Velazquez, *Las Meninas (The Maids of Honour)*, 1656

Las Meninas is Velazquez' most famous work. And one of the most important works in art, partly because of the complex relationship between the artist (just what is he painting?), and between the work and the viewer, who seems to share the same space occupied by Philip and Marianne, reflected in the mirror (and possibly subjects for the artist, as is the viewer). The riddle extends - for Diego to be painting *Las Meninas*, he would have to be in the viewer's space or have a mirror there. Cue extensive analyses over three centuries.

The work shows two *meninas*: Maria Agustina Sarmiento, who offers water in a jug, and Isabel de Velasco, who will retrieve it (such was the stiff decorum of Philip's court). They attend the 5-year old Infanta Margaret Theresa, a delightful girl who was loved by all. The dwarf Maria Barbola stands nearby, while Nicolas de Pertusato teases the dog. The painting is airy and beautifully balanced in breadth and depth. Velazquez wears the red Cross of the Order of Santiago, added later as he was not inducted 1659.

In the last years of his life Velazquez scarcely painted, so consumed was he with court duties. In June 1660 Maria Teresa (Philip's daughter from his first marriage) was handed over to Louis XIV's mother and his Chief Minister Mazarin on the small swampy Isle of Pheasants in the River Bidassoa on Spain's northern border whence she was taken to France to be married to Louis. This exchange mirrored that which took place on the same island in 1615 when Elisabeth of Bourbon was handed over to become Philip IV's wife. Maria Teresa's marriage cemented peace between France and Spain.

Maria Teresa was accompanied by her father and the entire Spanish court. Diego was responsible for the decoration of the Spanish pavilion and for the overall display. After returning home in late June Diego wrote, *"I have returned to Madrid, worn out by journeying all night and working all day."* On the 31st of July he contracted a fever and a week later was dead. Velazquez was buried in the Church of San Juan Bautista in Madrid (his wife too). The church was destroyed by the French in 1809. Diego's artistic legacy will long survive his final resting place.

Alonso Cano (1601-67)

Alonso Cano, equally renowned as a sculptor and architect, served an apprenticeship in Seville with Francesco Pacheco alongside the slightly older Velazquez. Few paintings remain from Alonso's time in Seville although they established his reputation, but the most important developments in his art came after he was summoned to Madrid in 1638 by Olivares, at Velazquez's instigation. There he was able to study the Royal Collection.

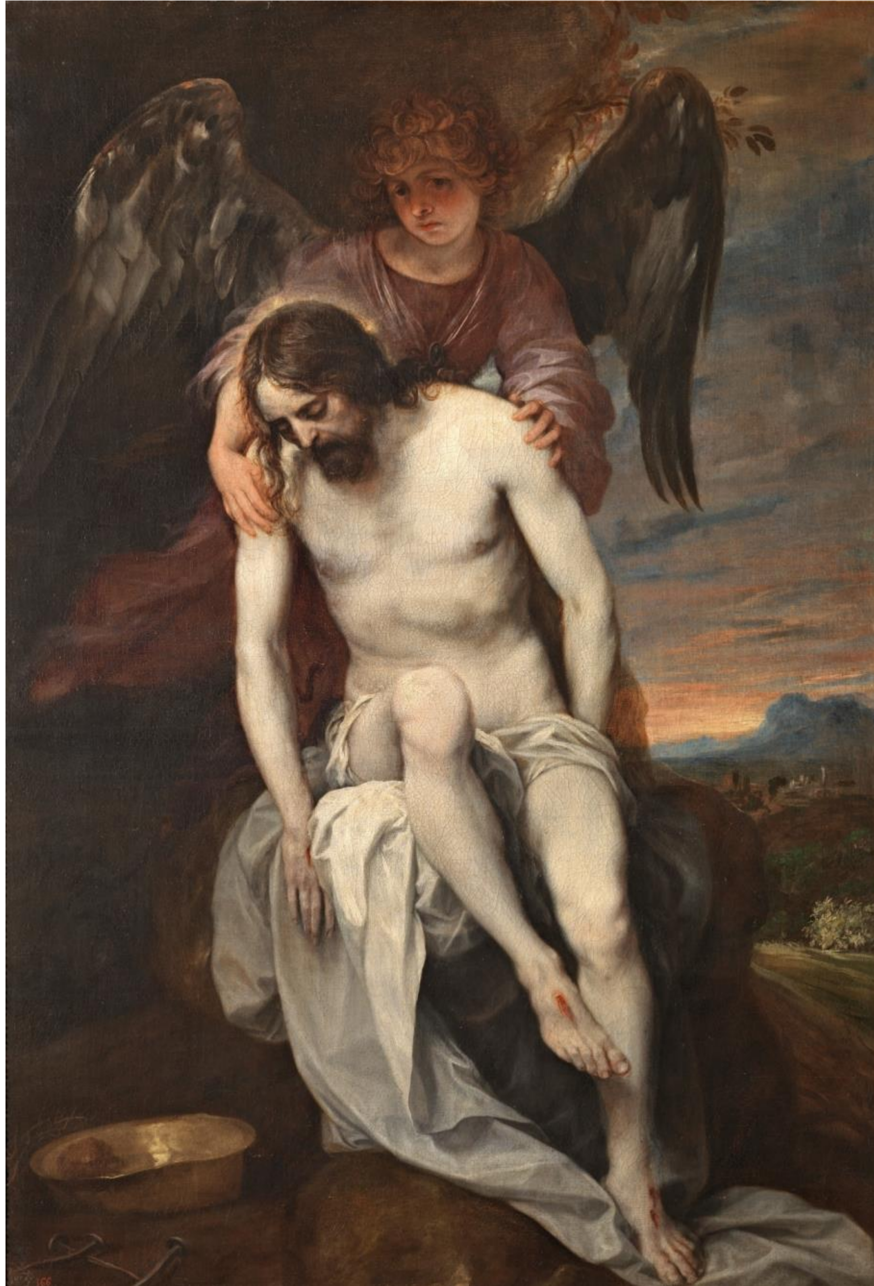
In his religious works, *"what sets him apart is his exquisite and balanced sensitivity, his taste for serene beauty (Prado Guide)."* *The Virgin and Child* is based on a well-known engraving by Durer, which Cano interpreted with great delicacy. The faces are serene and sweet, intimate in their mutual gaze which isolates them from us. They are highlighted by the austere landscape. Many influences can be discerned; a Raphael-like Madonna, minutely-rendered plants and stones in the bottom foreground just as Leonardo included in his religious works, Venetian blue and pink tones

Alonso Cano, *The Virgin and Child*, 1645-52

Alonso Cano, The Miracle of the Well, 1638-40

The work is painterly, following the trend in Madrid in the 1640s. *The Miracle of the Well* shows that Cano quickly learned a free and loose technique in Madrid. The son of a 12th century farm labourer Isidore (canonised in 1622, patron saint of Madrid) fell into a well. Father and mother, Maria Torribia, a farm peasant, prayed and as they did so the water level in the well rose until the child was carried to the top.

Noteworthy too was Alonso's skill in painting the nude with great precision and sensitivity, much along the lines of Michelangelo, but with greater sympathy. Velazquez and Cano are exceptional in Spanish art for their nudes. Alonso painted two works of the dead Christ supported by an angel; one of them puts him ahead of Velazquez in this genre.



Alonso Cano, *The Dead Christ supported by an Angel*, 1646-52 (Prado, Madrid)

The iconography is drawn not from scriptures but from Pope Saint Gregory's vision of Christ supported by two angels. The image grew in popularity during the Renaissance as an alternative to the Pieta, in which Christ is supported by his mother (perhaps because everyone knew there was no surpassing the magnificent depiction in Michelangelo's sculpture). In this, the much more powerful of his two works, Alonso uses only one angel who looks inconsolably sorrowful. Christ is perfectly proportioned. The whole composition and colouring – the angel's pink robe and dark landscape silhouetting the dead flesh - brings Christ's body into focus. This is further emphasised by the wonderful foreshortening of the right thigh as the knee and big toe press against the picture frame.

Seville

The loss of trade was not the Seville's only misfortune. In spring 1648 the bubonic plague began to spread through southern Spain, reaching Seville by the end of the year and killing half the inhabitants of the city in 1649. Famine struck in 1651 and a food shortage the next year prompted an uprising.

<u>Bartolome Esteban Murillo (1618-82)</u>

As Seville recovered, Bartolome Esteban Murillo, *"became the painter of the moment, displacing the austerity of Zurbaran with an idealising style that perhaps offered his audience what they most desired: the promise of a better world beyond (Tomlinson)."* Murillo was born in Seville and his early training exposed him to naturalism and simplicity of Zurbaran and Ribera.

Bartolome's art struck a chord with ordinary folk who were suffering in the city. *The Holy Family with a Little Bird* could be a scene of everyday life in Seville and underlines the importance of family life and the need to work (Mary's sewing basket and Joseph's carpentry tools). Such paintings were very popular.

Murillo's draughtsmanship, strong modelling and good use of light which picks out Christ and the dog, and *St Jerome*, are evident in these works. Joseph's arms, left knee and right foot enfold and protect the Child in much the same way as Raphael painted Mary in his Holy Families. Here Joseph is given much greater prominence; from the late 16th century he had been held up as an example of generosity, selflessness and discretion.

Murillo, *The Penitent St Jerome*, c 1650

Murillo, *The Holy Family with a Little Bird*, c 1650

Despite the reverence felt for Joseph, Murillo's paintings of Mary were enormously popular, either as simple devotional images or in grander compositions with saints. Murillo was a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary, a society dedicated to worship of the Virgin Mary. Bartolome's Virgin is not the powerful protector of Raphael, but a sweet, precious young woman, full of love.

Murillo, *The Virgin of the Rosary*, 1650-55 (Dulwich Picture Gallery)

Murillo, *Apparition of the Virgin to St Bernard*, 1655 (Prado, Madrid)

Murillo's more complex composition of St Bernard being rewarded with the Virgin's milk for his devotion to her displays the artist's beloved cherubs on clouds set in golden light. Most striking is how Murillo uses looser brushwork for the celestial realm to form a strong contrast to the realism and precision of St Bernard's cell, and the wonderful still life of its contents.

Murillo, *The Foundation of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome: The Patrician's Dream*, 1665

This same division, but with a more painterly approach to the worldly scene occurs again in *The Foundation of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome: The Patrician's Dream* one of pair painted for the church of Santa Maria la Blanca in Seville, a former medieval synagogue which was being rebuilt. The Virgin appears to John in a dream telling him to build a church on the Esquiline Hill, to which She points, where they will find a plan of the building drawn in snow. While there is still detail in worldly objects the Virgin is painted in light and transparent strokes. This painting and its pair were removed during French occupation to *Musee Napoleon* in Paris where the gilded decorative corners were added showing plans and elevation of church.

Murillo, *The Young Beggar*, 1645-50 (Louvre)

Murillo, *Urchins eating fruit*, 1645-48

Murillo, *Four Figures on a Step*, 1655

Religious works helped make Murillo the most highly esteemed Spanish artist in Europe and almost the only one known beyond Spain's borders in the 17th century, with the exception of Ribera in Naples. His paintings of children were in great demand in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Some of these works reflected life in Seville for the poor – not at all the sweet images Murillo is often associated with. The *Young Beggar* is also known as the *Lice-Ridden Boy*, a common problem during the city's troubles, when urchins lived in dreadful circumstances. Bartolome avoids excessive gloom by showing the three lads with food - how they acquired it is neither here nor there. *Four Figures on a Step* is more difficult to interpret. Critics have suggested prostitution as a theme because of the well-dressed pair. But older women wearing glasses appear in Flemish and Dutch genre paintings as kindly people, some inspecting children's hair for lice.

Murillo, *The Flower Girl,* 1665-70 (Dulwich Picture Gallery)

The Flower Girl shows just why Bartolome was in great demand: a ravishing work of enormous appeal, produced in his mature painterly style which serves to soften both the scene and the viewer's heart. The details of the pattern on the shawl and in the flowers (and the ear-rings) provide counter-points. This is probably the epitome of Murillo's genre paintings of children, more effective than the more well-known *Two Girls at a Window*. Bartolome may have painted many such pictures for private patrons. Naturally, these works, often smaller and subject to vicissitudes of family fortunes, sales and decay of houses, are much less likely to survive than altarpieces which remained in respected places of worship.

From around 1660 Murillo was the most admired painter in Seville, receiving many major commissions from ecclesiastical institutions who appreciated his *"soft, assured and monumental style and his tender religious scenes".* He managed to transfer his skill with children into religious paintings, the ruins in the background of the *Good Shepherd* depicting the defeat of paganism.

Of particular significance are Bartolome's depictions of the Immaculate Conception. The belief that Mary was free from original sin was immensely popular in Seville, particularly after long and passionate arguments between defenders and detractors were held in the city in 1616. The dogma inspired every notable artist there. Velazquez painted a version early in his career. As was usual Mary is shown standing on the moon, a symbol of purity. She was often also depicted surrounded by her attributes: Zurbaran painted one example.

A lighter style marks Murillo's twenty versions of the theme. The most famous was commissioned by the canon of Seville Cathedral, who donated it to the Hospital de Venerables Sacerdotes of which he was ecclesiastical president.

Murillo, *The Good Shepherd*, 1660

Diego Velazquez, *The Immaculate Conception*, 1619

Francisco de Zurbaran, *The Immaculate Conception*, 1628-30

Bartolome's work radiates beauty and splendour, adopting a more celebratory tone than the piety invoked by his Sevillian predecessors. That also gives him an opportunity to depict lots of tumbling cherubs. The one in the lower foreground helping to support Mary looks like one of Murillo's street children and perhaps intentionally; poverty can mask all manner of virtues.

Marshal Soult, who plundered Murillo's *Foundation of Santa Maria Maggiore* works, had the good taste not just to steal this painting but to keep it rather giving it to Napoleon. After his death it was auctioned in 1852 and the Louvre bought it for the highest price ever paid until then for a painting.

The crises in late 17th century Seville saw the founding and decoration of the Hospital of the Brotherhood of Charity. Its well-to-do members offered extensive aid to the sick and indigent during the plague of 1649. Murillo painted 8 scenes of mercy. Once again Marshal Soult struck, making off with four of them in 1810, including the *Prodigal Son*.

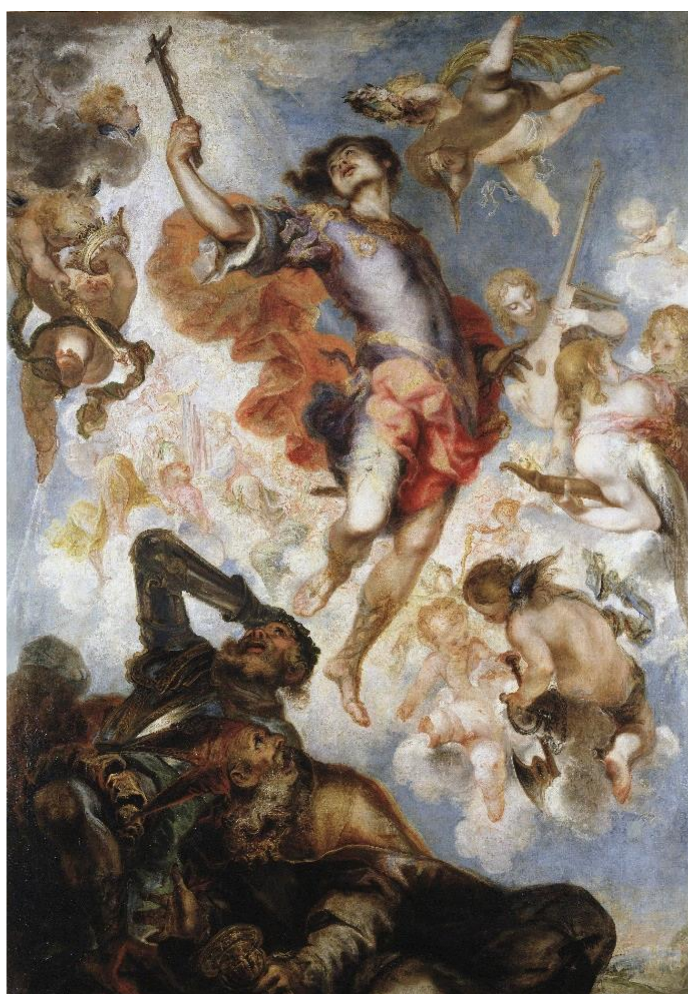
Murillo, *The Immaculate Conception of Los Venerables*, 1660-65

Murillo, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 1671-4

The Return of the Prodigal Son portrays the embrace of the father, focussing on the joy of forgiveness and reconciliation. A servant brings new clothes, which shine more brightly than anything else in the painting, stark against the rags which Murillo highlights. Bartolome's late painterly style is evident in this stunning work.   His international stature grew in the 18th century when he was seen as the precursor of Rococo. This reputation held firm into the end of the 19th century, when Murillo fell into discredit because the tender and devout nature of his painting was judged excessive. Despite his success no works by Bartolome were collected by the Spanish Hapsburgs; none were found in the Madrid Alcazar in 1700. He was recovered for Madrid by Elisabeth (Isabella) Farnese, wife of Philip V of Bourbon, who acquired many of Murillo's works now housed in the Prado.

High Baroque

The influence of Rubens' works at court and Velazquez' awareness during his second trip to Italy that Baroque works had replaced Caravaggio naturalism brought a change to Spanish painting*, "severity and taste for concrete reality and direct light sources were replaced by dynamic compositions and bright and luminous colours. Skies of intense blue became the norm and restraint gave way to gesticulation, images of penitence to images of glory and simple domestic settings to opulent theatrical scenarios (Tomlinson)."*



Francisco de Herrera the Younger, *The Triumph of Saint Hermenegild*, 1654

Herrera's altarpiece *Saint Hermenegild* shows the shift from penitence to celebration. Hermenegild was converted to Catholicism by his wife and the Bishop of Seville. After he refused to take Arian communion, his father had him beheaded.

Hermenegild ascends to heaven, his earthly attributes of a Visigoth prince, crown and sceptre, are on the left. The axe and chains of his martyrdom are to the right beneath angels who provide music.   Herrera adopts a loose style, economically sketching in crowds of cherubs and the foreground figures of Hermenegild's father and the Arian bishop (rendered in dark tones as befitted pagans).

Noticing the change in Italian art, Velazquez attempted to convince ace Baroque painter Pietro de Cortona to come to Madrid to paint ceiling frescoes. Pietro was over-loaded with rich commissions in Rome. Diego managed to lure Angelo Colonna and Agostino Mitelli, collaborators on Baroque frescoes in Rome, but Spain had to wait decades for a noted Italian fresco painter.

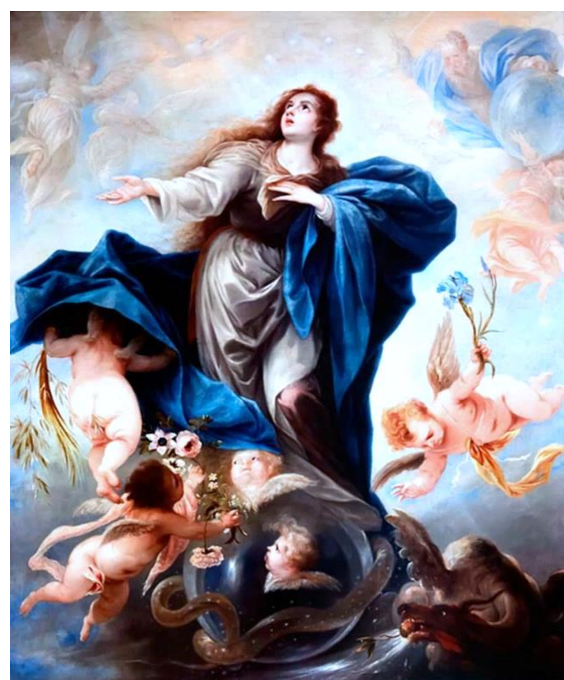
Claudio Coello (1642-93) is the leading artist of the Madrid Baroque School, and was appointed court painter in 1686. Many of Coello's works have been lost. His *Triumph of St Augustine* was done for convent of the Augustinian Recollets in Alcala de Henares. Rubenesque angels bear St Augustine's crozier. The saint looks at his vanquished enemies, the infernal dragon and paganism (again represented by a classical sculpture), on which an archangel is bearing down with his sword of fire.

Claudio Coello, *Triumph of St Augustine*, 1664 (Prado, Madrid)

Juan Antonio de Frias y Escalante (1633 – 69) studied Madrid. His *Immaculate Conception* with swirling movement of the cherubs around Mary, carried on by the angels and God, is a foretaste of the Rococo. Unusual is the inclusion of the infernal serpent, carrying in its mouth the apple of Garden of Eden, defeated by Mary's purity.

Forty years after Velazquez' attempts, a famous Italian fresco painter finally came to work in Spain. **Luca Giordano** [who we met in notes on Italy] was welcomed by King Carlos II in 1692 with much excitement and a huge salary. Giordano decorated palace and churches with frescoes and paintings new to Spain, *"colourful, exuberant … composed with marvellous ability, making use of devices learned from all the Baroque masters, yet with a personal note of airiness and fantasy (Haskell)."*

Giordano painted a series of murals and canvases to decorate the Royal Palace at Aranjuez, including scenes from Solomon's life, which were later produced on canvas.



Juan Antonio de Frias y Escalante, *The Immaculate Conception*, 1667

Luca Giordano, *The Judgement of Solomon*, 1694-6

Sacristy, Toledo Cathedral

The vault of the Sacristy at Toledo Cathedral is lavishly decorated with Luca's frescoes. The theme is the Chasuble of Saint Ildephonsus, the Visigoth who was presented with the robe *'whose embroidery and fabric no human hand could ever hope to fashion'* by the Virgin Mary. The theme runs throughout Toledo Cathedral. The colours of the golden ceiling fresco contrast beautifully with the striking red of El Greco's altarpiece, *El Espolio (The Disrobing of Christ)*.

Many of Giordano's frescoes were lost in the Napoleonic Wars and the Spanish Civil War, but his brilliance dazzled the Spanish court and aristocracy, paving the way for the wonders of Tiepolo.

The crowned heads of Europe could hardly wait for the death of Carlos II, who was widely known to be suffering mentally and physically yet clung to life tenaciously. Carlos was not going to produce an heir, and the disposal of the Spanish Empire was a prominent subject in royal courts. The unanimous choice to succeed Carlos, Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria, had the bad taste to die: cue much disquiet and disagreement.

Carlos attempted to settle the issue in his will by nominating the Bourbon Philip, Duke of Anjou (grandson of Philip IV's daughter Maria Teresa and Louis XIV) to inherit Spanish possessions in their entirety. France leading so large a realm was obnoxious to everyone else in Europe, so the War of the Spanish Succession ran from 1700 to 1713. Carlos himself knew that his reign would end poorly, and took solace in the illusions of glory depicted in the frescoes of Luca Giordano.

Luca Giordano, *The Adoration of the Trinity*, c 1695

The Adoration of the Trinity on the ceiling above the Imperial Staircase in the Escorial shows the Trinity with Charles V (offering the crown of the Holy Roman Empire and Spain) and Philip II (offering the globe). Carlos II, his second wife Mariana of Neuberg and his mother are on the balustrade, looking longingly at these august and powerful predecessors who must themselves have been wondering from their places in heaven quite how mighty Spain had been brought to her knees by heathens.

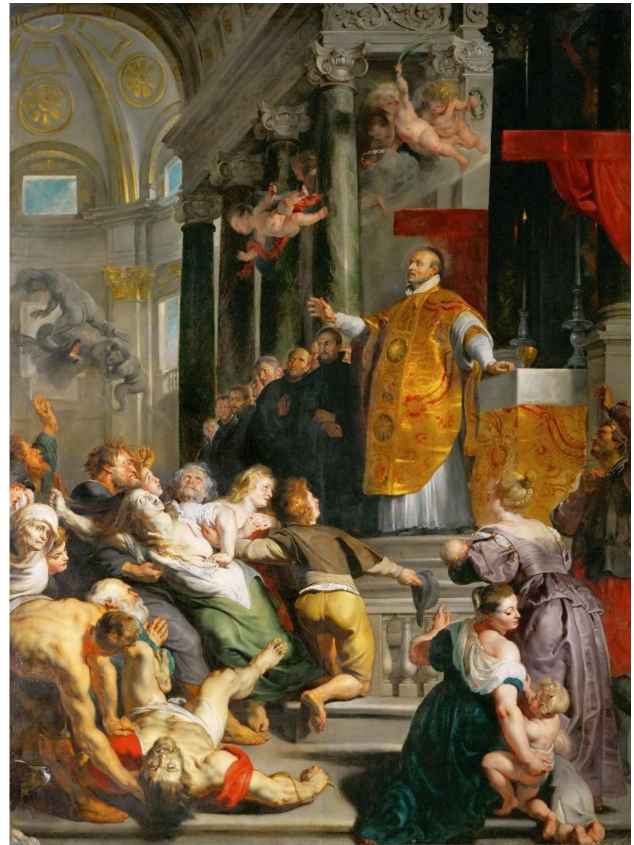
Spanish Netherlands

Antwerp had been the capital of the Dutch revolt of 1566 but was savagely sacked in the Spanish Fury of 1576 and, after a siege, returned to Spanish rule in 1585. Protestants in the city were given four years to settle their affairs and leave: 60% of Antwerp's population did. From this time Protestantism started to lose ground in Europe. The Jesuits were keen to attract ordinary folk back to the Church.

Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

The Jesuits regarded Antwerp as being on the contested frontier of Catholicism and *"they spared no pains to uplift the minds of beholders by dazzling their eyes."* The Jesuits, with whom Rubens had a close association, were established in Antwerp by 1585 but only built their own church 30 years later. The church was consecrated amid much splendour in 1621. Rubens received commissions for two large altarpieces of St Xavier and St Ignatius which were to alternate at the high altar.

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Miracles of St Francis Xavier*, 1617-18



Peter Paul Rubens, *The Miracles of St Ignatius of Loyola*, 1617-18

Rubens' colour produces two pieces celebrating the success of the Jesuit fathers. *St Francis* has a sweeping spiral from the blind men groping forward through the man raised from the dead up to the sick Hindu and along the beams of light. A more complicated snake-like movement from the bottom right appears in *St Ignatius*.

Rubens produces complicated movement in *The Rape of Daughters of Leucippus.* The diamond with intersecting diagonal and the twisting forms (which Rubens would use again in *The Last Judgement*) is typical of Baroque art. Honour & Fleming remark; *"there is a suggestion of rapture rather than rape. There is no violence. The central figure seems to float upwards, merely supported on the brawny arms of the two gods. Despite the theme, the effect is curiously unerotic – rather as Ruben's religious paintings are unmystical."*

The Rape epitomises Rubens' approach to figures. In an unpublished treatise recorded by Roger De Piles in 1608, Rubens lamented that *"we see so many paunch-bellies, weak and pitiful legs and arms, that seem to reproach themselves by their idleness … [men should be portrayed in strength and size] as appears from the backs of porters, the arms of prize fighters, the legs of dancers, and almost the whole body of watermen".*

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Rape of Daughters of Leucippus,* 1617-8

Rubens' *Daughters of Leucippus* are typical of his women, and a reason his religious works fail. Michelangelo and Raphael had depicted strong, powerful Madonnas – formidable intermediaries on our behalf with God. Rubens' versions look like washer-women or wet nurses; capable of a simple manual task but unreliable for anything else.

When Charles I chose Jacob Jordaens instead of Rubens to work on the Queen's House at Greenwich he explained that Jordaens would *"make the faces of the women as beautiful as may be, the figures gracious and svelte (Salisbury)."*

Rubens is better with *Tereus.* But, then, a more dramatic scene can hardly be imagined. The king, sated after a sumptuous meal, is told by his wife, Procne, that she has just fed him his son in revenge for Tereus raping her sister and cutting out her tongue. As so often Rubens' breasts defy gravity.

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Banquet of Tereus*, 1636-8

There was nearly no Rubens. In 1570, while in Cologne, his father committed adultery, for which the penalty was death. He was in jail for two years, but pleading letters from his wife saved him. Rubens was born after that scare. As we have seen in Spain Rubens painted the occasional portrait, but he regarded himself as a history-painter. After decorating the Jesuit church in Antwerp, Rubens wanted to work on Banqueting House and wrote to James I's agent touting his services: *"regarding the hall in the New Palace, I confess that I am, by natural instinct, better fitted to execute very large works than small curiosities. Everyone according to his gifts; my talent is such that no undertaking, however vast in size or diversified in subject, has ever surpassed my courage."*

Rubens was ignored in England but was called to Paris by Maria de' Medici, the widow of Henry IV, who had thwarted Phillip II and restored power to the French throne. Henry was stabbed and killed during a carriage ride in Paris in 1610. He had made it clear from the start that Maria should keep out of politics: *"just look after yourself, you shall have all the pleasures and delights that a queen of France could desire but I beg and command you not to meddle in affairs of state."* This advice she ignored when she was regent for her son, Louis XIII, until 1614. She relied on a trio of Italian immigrant friends and fell out with her son so seriously that he banished her for several years to the provinces. In 1620 Maria was allowed back and concentrated on decorating her Luxembourg Palace with paintings glorifying her life. Rubens got that job.

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Apotheosis of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency of Maria de' Medici on 14 May 1610*, 1623-5

The Apotheosis of Henry IV originally had Henry placed higher than Maria, but she soon changed that. Maria receives the orb of government, from the personification of France. A group of nobles is seen rejoicing, in defiance of historical truth. The cycle of 24 paintings of Maria's life was finished just in time to celebrate the marriage of her daughter Henrietta Maria to Charles I of England. But Rubens' programme of 24 paintings of Henry IV's life was abandoned. With this major commission lost, Rubens resumed his diplomacy. He went to London on behalf of Spain to negotiate a peace treaty. Rubens gave Charles I *Peace and War* to celebrate the success of the mission. In return, Charles I graciously knighted the artist. Mars, the god of war, is driven off by Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, protecting a woman and child. The rest shows the benefits of peace.

Peter Paul Rubens, *Peace and War (Minerva Protects Pax from Mars),* 1629-30

Rubens painted two subjects later in life for his own pleasure.

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Garden of Love*, c 1633

When he was 53, he took as his second bride his first wife's niece, Helene Fourment, aged 16. She can be seen in various poses in *The Garden of Love*. In March 1635 Rubens purchased the great estate at Steen and painted many landscapes of it – almost all remained in his studio at his death.

Rubens' first training was under a landscape master, but he often subcontracted the painting of landscape in the background of his pictures. Rubens rode around the countryside outside Antwerp in the evening, enjoying rural scenes. *The Prodigal Son* originated from these rides but the composition was greatly influenced by **Adam Elsheimer (1578 – 1610)** of whom Rubens was a fervent admirer. Elsheimer's works feature many sources of light. Rubens repeats this in *The Prodigal Son* with the two lights towards the back of the barn.

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Prodigal Son*, 1618 (Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp)

Adam Elsheimer was born in the Lutheran stronghold of Frankfurt-am-Main in 1578, the eldest of ten children of a master-tailor. He travelled to Venice in 1598 but by 1600 had settled in Rome, where he remained until his untimely death. He converted to Catholicism there, apparently so that he would not be excluded from commissions for religious works. Rubens got to know him in Rome and admired his small oils on copper, painted with painstaking precision with the help of a magnifying glass. When Elsheimer died, Rubens wrote:

> *Surely after such a loss our entire profession ought to clothe itself in mourning. It will not easily succeed in replacing him; in my opinion he had no equal in small figures, in landscapes, and in many other subjects … For myself, I have never felt my heart more profoundly pierced by grief than at this news*

Elsheimer, as much as anyone, explored the nature of light in his works. Perhaps his most famous piece is *Flight into Egypt,* a work Rubens was desperate to acquire after Adam's death, repeatedly pleading with the widow who was trying to sell it in Italy.

Adam Elsheimer, *Flight into Egypt*, 1609 (oil on copper) (Alte Pinakothek, Munich)

Flight was "*the first true moonlit night scene in European painting*" and Elsheimer was the first to depict the Milky Way and a rendering of the moon's surface. Rome in 1609 had many telescopes constructed by Federico Cesi who was a friend of Elsheimer. The stars in the painting are accurate, the constellation of the Great Bear with the Plough in the upper right for instance.

However, Rubens largely neglected landscapes until he painted scenes of Het Steen for his own pleasure. *A View of Het Steen* shows the house as it was, although set in rolling country instead of the actual flat terrain. The sun is rising and bathes folk off to market and a huntsman with dog. On a branch in the right foreground are two goldfinches, a kingfisher flies in front of the hedgerow and two magpies wheel in the sky. An idyllic scene. The *Rainbow Landscape*, which is of the same size, is a companion picture; high summer.

Gainsborough was a passionate admirer of Ruben's landscapes, praising *The Watering Place (1620)* which he saw in 1768 in the collection of the Duke of Montagu in a letter to David Garrick. Constable saw Het Steen in the collection of Sir George Beaumont (who later donated it to the National Gallery for its inception – one of the first donations). In his lectures on landscape given in Hampstead in 1833 Constable said:

> *"In no other branch of art was Rubens greater than in landscape – the freshness and dewy light, the joyous and animated character which he has imparted to it, impressing on the level monotonous scenery of Flanders all the richness which belongs to its noblest forms. Rubens delighted in phenomena – rainbows upon a stormy sky – bursts of sunshine – moonlight – meteors – and impetuous torrents mingling their sound with wind and wave."*

Constable concluded his praise by singling out *Het Steen* and the companion piece *Landscape with Rainbow* as being among Rubens' finest works.

Peter Paul Rubens, *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning*, c 1636

Peter Paul Rubens, *Landscape with Rainbow*, c 1636

Rubens had written a letter on 18 December 1634, after securing his release from diplomatic service to Isabella: *"Since that time I have no longer taken any part in the affairs of France, and I have never regretted this decision … I am leading a quiet life with my wife and children, and have no pretension in the world other than to live in peace."* He was at Het Steen for 5 years. Rubens died a happy and rich man from heart failure in 1640. His demise was lamented in royal courts across Europe.

Anthony van Dyck (1599 – 1641)

Bellori described Anthony van Dyck's manner of living *as "more like a prince's than a painter's"*. Anthony was born in 1599 to a prosperous family who lived in a large house just off the central square of Antwerp, his father a merchant with international trade in textiles. They were a steadfast Catholic family. His mother died bearing her 12th child in 1607. Anthony smuggled more than a hundred copies of Roman Catholic books for his co-worshippers when he visited The Hague. His clients were exclusively Catholic. Van Dyck was a precocious genius, establishing his own studio at age 16, becoming Rubens' principal assistant at 18 or 19 and, at the behest of Earl of Arundel, was working for James I at 21. Van Dyck painted many portraits of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel during this first brief stay in England but his first notable portraits came when Anthony was in Genoa.

Anthony van Dyck*, Marchesa Balbi*, 1623

His Marchesa Balbi, a young female sitter, reprises Rubens' *Veronica Spinola-Doria*. Here it is clear that van Dyck is far superior as a portraitist: the youth and liveliness of the girl is emphasised by the solemn setting in contrast to Rubens' stiff portrayal. Van Dyck's stuff is far more impressive: the brocade and the ruff.

Peter Paul Rubens, *Veronica Spinola-Doria*, 1607-8

Van Dyck had a brief stay in Sicily, but returned to Genoa where he stayed until 1627. In his 5 or 6 years there he seems to have painted the entire elite. In 1780 72 portraits by Van Dyck were found in Genoese palaces. He returned to Antwerp affluent and unexcelled as a portraitist. Anthony van Dyck's Grand Manner portraits are his greatest legacy but they tended to show the self-importance of the subjects. His smaller, more intimate, portraits have *"more of their personalities and less of their pretenses (Moir)."* This intimacy remained throughout Anthony's career, especially with sitters who were friends. Antwerp Cathedral Organist *Henricus Liberti*, a visionary dreamer, is one. The best example may be Anthony's long-time friend *François Langlois*, engraver, art dealer and an accomplished amateur musician. Van Dyck portrays him, with great affection, dressed for a performance.

Anthony van Dyck, *Henricus Liberti*, 1632

Anthony van Dyck, *François Langlois*, 1628

In Antwerp van Dyck received several commissions for altarpieces, and he produced many smaller works for private homes and chapels. In 1632 Anthony went to London. Charles I had acquired his *Rinaldo and Armida* depicting Tasso's poem: Armida, the enchantress, sent to kill the Christian crusader Rinaldo, falls in love at first sight and binds Rinaldo to her island with a chain of flowers.

Anthony van Dyck, *Rinaldo and Armida*, 1629

The King evidently wanted to acquire Van Dyck as well. Charles I installed him in a house at Blackfriars on the Thames (easy to reach by boat) and the king visited regularly. In July 1632 he was knighted and appointed principal royal painter. Charles I had a large court and encouraged peers to live in London. The number of peers had doubled since 1603, and by 1628 about 80 maintained residences in London. Van Dyke was much in demand. His studio at Blackfriars resembled a production line, according to German banker and collector Everhard Jabach who van Dyck painted in 1636-7. Each sitter had a one-hour appointment when van Dyck sketched the face on the canvas and made a drawing of the pose in black and white chalk on a separate sheet of grey paper (many of these drawings survive). His assistants would take the canvas and lay in the figure's setting and paint the costume from clothing left by the sitter. Van Dyck finished the head and touched up the rest of the portrait. The *Portrait of the Abbe Scaglia (1634)* has an aureole around his head but this is a sign not of sanctity but of the process by which the portrait was done – the head from life and the rest in the studio without the sitter by his Anthony's assistants.

Anthony van Dyck, *Charles I with M. de Saint-Antoine*, 1633

Anthony's success was great as a court painter but his primary responsibility was to Charles I and the royal family. He painted 50 portraits of the royal family during the 100 months he was in London.

Charles was not well-liked; aggressive, confrontational and uninterested in discussion – he ruled, after all, through divine right. He dismissed Parliament in 1629, intending not to summon another (the next was called in 1640 with the crisis impending).

There was a need to create an impressive royal image. Van Dyck had re-worked Rubens' equestrian portrait during his time in Italy and adapted it again, depicting the king on a white stallion under a monumental arch *"like an ancient Roman warrior-emperor returning triumphant to his capital city."* The effect is muted by the inclusion of the king's riding master, but the intention was clear. The work was hung at the end of the Long Gallery in St James' Palace overlooked by Titian's paintings of Roman emperors.

The equestrian portrait was well-suited to Charles I: sitting him on a horse disguised his small and unimposing stature. Although horses did not serve him well in reality. In 1642 he rode at the head of 300-400 armed men to arrest five Members of the House of Commons but this assault on Parliament swung public opinion decisively against him and within a week he and his wife had fled London fearing for their safety. A second equestrian portrait presented Charles as the reincarnation of Marcus Aurelius and also had echoes of Titian's portrait of Emperor Charles V. But van Dyck's most famous portrait shows the King dismounted: *Charles I at the Hunt*. The King's stance is arrogant (even the horse bows) and his lack of height is disguised by the low viewpoint (a common feature of van Dyck's Grand Manner portraits). The cavalier hat sets off Charles' face against sky, only he is fully illuminated and portrayed with more detail than his servants.

Anthony van Dyck, *Charles I at the Hunt*, 1635

It is interesting that a forest and ships are shown as both were important sources of royal income (by-passing Parliamentary control). In 1634 strict enforcement of the antiquated Forest Laws began and landowners were heavily fined for encroachments made on the Forest of Dean since the death of Richard I in 1199 (!). The same principle was applied to Waltham Forest, the New Forest and, in 1637, to the Forest of Rockingham. While this retrogressive extortion was bad enough, Rockingham was re-defined from its actual 6 miles to a notional 60 miles thus allowing fines totalling £51,000 to be imposed.

In 1635 ship money, levied occasionally on coastal counties because of their obligation to provide ships for the navy was extended inland and collected annually. In 1635 £199k was demanded and all but £5k collected; in 1636 £189k was collected and £178k in 1637. The spread inland of ship money promised to turn it into a permanent source of revenue for the crown (thus negating the need to seek money from Parliament). Judges in 1638 explicitly denied the king's right to *"impose charges upon his subjects in general, without common consent in parliament."*

Van Dyck's *Triple portrait of Charles I* is shown in the section on Bernini. By 1640 the situation in London was grim and Anthony was disappointed that his scheme for four large tapestries for the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall Palace had to be abandoned. Whether van Dyck realised Charles and his court were in danger or whether he wanted to exploit the death of Rubens in May 1640, he returned to Antwerp in autumn 1640. The Spanish court invited him to complete Rubens' unfinished paintings for Philip IV but Anthony refused and sought new commissions. When he did not receive any, he went to Paris in December 1640 hoping to be asked to decorate the Grande Galerie of the Louvre. He was unsuccessful and returned to London only to find the political situation worse. Van Dyck himself was seriously ill by then. His wife gave birth to a daughter on 1 December 1641 and van Dyck re-made his will on the 4th and 5 days later died. Charles I had him buried at St Paul's and an impressive monument was raised – both destroyed in the Great Fire.

France

Anthony Blunt points out that French painting was at a low ebb from 1575 to 1625. At that start of the 17th century, Henry IV concentrated on a programme of building great works of architecture. There was little work for French painters. After he died, Marie de Medici naturally preferred Italian artists (she invited Rubens because he was in service to the Duke of Mantua). Orazio Gentileschi came in 1623. Only one certain commission from Marie survives, the large *Public Felicity*. Understandably, given Marie's high opinion of herself and her Regency, it depicts a magnificent female figure holding the attributes of French royalty, looking calm even as storm clouds threaten. Orazio stayed for less than two years but exerted a strong influence, particularly through his strong forms, like *Felicity*, and Caravaggesque lighting.

Simon Vouet (1590 – 1649) had already experienced Orazio's world in Rome. He went to the city in 1614 and "*quickly acquired a reputation as a follower of Caravaggio by painting scenes of melodrama and genre.*" Simon's best work in Rome is not in these genres, but the religious scene of *St Jerome and the Angel*. The still life elements are fine and the work is well composed. Wings, arms, trumpet and hands are nicely balanced.

Simon was very successful in Rome, being elected the principal of the Academy of St Luke in 1624, the first foreigner to hold the post.

Returning to Paris in 1627, Vouet realised that neither the naturalism of Caravaggio or the full power of the Baroque would be favoured. He compromised with a mix of mild Baroque and classicism. *Time Defeated* has rudimentary movement and swirling drapery amid classical figures, especially that of Saturn.

Orazio Gentileschi, *Public Felicity Triumphant over Dangers*, 1624

Simon Vouet, *St Jerome and the Angel*, c1623 (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC)

Simon Vouet, *Time Defeated by Hope and Beauty*, 1627

Beauty, who threatens Saturn with a lance, is thought to be portrait of Simon's wife. If so, she fails to bring a face to the name. Compared to Italian art this compromise style is weak, but proved popular in Paris. Richelieu collected old Italian masters but patronised Vouet.

Vouet's talent was by nature decorative, and it is here that his work is strongest. *Allegory of Prudence* was painted for Anne of Austria, Queen Mother and Regent to the young Louis XIV, part of a series to decorate the Palais Royal in Paris. Anne's relationship with Mazarin, Richelieu's successor, was intimate – her love-letters to him are passion untarnished. She is shown unmoved by her beauty, time (who lies beneath her) or court intrigue.

The poor state of national art explains why Simon Vouet's *"influence on French painting was greater than his real quality as an artist might lead one to expect (Blunt)."*

Simon Vouet, *The Allegory of Prudence*, 1645

Philippe de Champaigne (1602- 1674) was another French artist patronised by Richelieu, for whom he painted many portraits. Philippe was an important artist in Paris, becoming painter to Marie de Medici in 1628. His court works are rather stiff, but Philippe was freer in his religious paintings. *Adoration* has convincing shepherds including one bearing a trussed sheep, symbol of Christ's future. How many *Adorations* feature this prototype of *Agnes Dei*, the best rendering of which is Zurbaran's?

Philippe de Champaigne, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, c 1630

Philippe de Champaigne, *Christ on the Cross*, 1655

Georges de la Tour, *The Musician's Brawl*, 1625-30

Georges de La Tour (1593-1652)

The most famous artist working in France at this time is Georges de la Tour. Curiously, very little is known about Georges; there are no letters, nothing more than an odd line on a legal certificate. No house he lived in stands because Lorraine suffered much devastation in war. Born in March 1593, Georges was the son of the baker (a well-off position) in Vic in the Bishopric of Metz in Lorraine.

La Tour stayed in Rome for a while and when he returned to Lorraine in 1616 he was *"deeply imbued with the spirit of Caravaggio."* His *St Jerome* (now in Grenoble) has the lighting, naturalism and shallow stage of Caravaggio. Every detail is shown with precision – white hairs on chest and callus on big toe. Although the body is a ruin, the saint is noble. This level of detail is repeated in the *Hurdy Gurdy Player* (Nantes), with lovely flashes of red in the hat and shoe-laces.

Georges de La Tour, *St Jerome*, 1630-33 (National Museum, Stockholm)

Georges de La Tour, *The Hurdy-Gurdy Player*, 1620-25

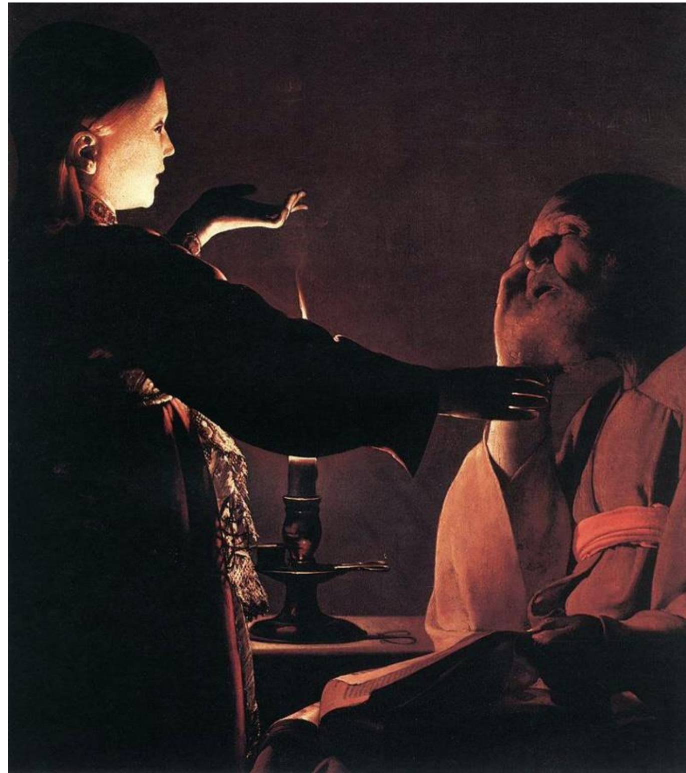
Georges' other format in his early works was horizontal half-length figures. *The Musician's Brawl* was the first. Musicians begging were common, as blind men (like the *Hurdy-Gurdy Player*) often tried to make a living this way. *The Fortune Teller* is in the same format. In the 17th century gypsies (known as Egyptians) roamed around Lorraine in scores. The fortune tellers were usually women. The gypsy would place a coin on the palm of the subject's hand and then hold the hand open toward her. This work has a strip missing on the left – perhaps an 8th of the width. Georges' eye for detail can be seen in the dresses and fabrics. The pearl ear-ring might have been the inspiration for Vermeer. The dark-haired girl with her lustrous locks, full lips and perfect profile is gorgeous. She may well have been the model for La Tour's *Magdalene*'s.

Georges de La Tour, *The Fortune Teller*, c 1630 (The Met, New York)

There is a simplification in Georges' later works which brings the stillness that aids meditation. The start of the transition came with night scenes, then popular in France. One of the finest is *Christ with St Joseph*. The cross is evoked by the auger held by Joseph and the beam he is working on. The boy Christ seems to understand the significance and sits patiently, accepting his fate. The worship of St Joseph increased around this time; *"Jesus's foster father was seen as the unpolished man who earned his living by the sweat of his brow and through his contact with Virgin and Child rose up to a truth that was beyond his understanding, which sometimes shocked him, but whose mysteries he finally fathomed (Thullier)".*

This theme is repeated in *Dream* - Joseph is studying to understand spiritual truths but exhausted by his struggle, falls asleep. At that moment an angel calls on him – a scene of peace and silence.

Georges de La Tour, *Christ with Joseph in the Carpenter's Shop*, 1642



Georges de La Tour, *Joseph's Dream*, 1640

The trend to simplicity continues in the *Wrightsman Magdalene***,** which shows Mary just about to begin her penance. She has not yet given up her prostitute's clothes (her skirt with embroidered hem and alluring blouse), but her jewellery has been discarded on the floor and the table and she has picked up the symbolic skull. The geometry of the composition (squares and trapeziums) is softened by the sweeping curve of the hair and sleeve.

The *Fabius Magdalen* is one of Georges' most lyrical works, and the most famous of this series. She was enjoying a revival in the 17th century because she was sinful in both nature and deed but was saved because of her love for God, without any need for doctrine, argument or clerics. She was considered second highest in the spiritual hierarchy to the Virgin Mary. Only Georges painted her as a nocturne.

Georges de La Tour, *The Penitent Magdalene (Wrightsman)*, 1640s/50 (The Met, New York)

Georges de La Tour, *The Penitent Magdalene (Fabius)*, 1635-40 (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC)

The nocturnes do away with glitter and dispense with colour, and return to essential form. Mary's hair is reduced to a dark glossy mass and physiological details are barely visible. A turn away from the material world towards the spiritual. The move to stricter geometry produced *The Newborn Child*.

Georges de La Tour, *The Newborn Child (Nativity),* 1645-8 (Museum of Fine Art, Rennes)

A tight and simple composition. The candle lights up the mother's dress in a blaze of red which sets the picture aglow. The faces are calm and peaceful. The idea here is of all birth; wondrous and mysterious.

The plague recurred in Europe in the 17th century. Epidemics from 1628-31 killed 280,000 in Italy and a million people in France. This prompted a revival of prayers to, and depictions of, St Sebastian. He was nursed back to health by the widow Irene after being shot with arrows. He then harangued Diocletian for the cruelty inflicted by Romans on Christians for which Sebastian was brutally beaten and thrown into a common sewer (a scene painted by Ludovico Carracci). Caravaggio's followers in Naples emphasised the drama and horror in paintings of Sebastian.

Georges produces exactly the opposite qualities. There is little anguish in *St Sebastian (Louvre)* - just a wonderful tear from Irene and a small trickle of blood. The forms are generalised and all violence, even movement is eliminated. *"The result is a monumentality which has no parallel among the other followers of Caravaggio, an impressive simplicity which converts the formula of naturalism into something classical … The picture takes on a quality of stillness and silence rarely to be found in visual arts (Blunt)."*

Georges de La Tour, *St Sebastian Attended by St Irene*, 1649 (Louvre)

It was ironic that one of Georges' most famous later works should be prompted by plague. Out of the blue, his wife, Diane, died on 15 Jan 1652 of a fever accompanied by a palpitation of the heart. She was followed a week later by a servant, who died from pleurisy, and on the 30th Georges succumbed to pleurisy as well.

The Academy and Charles Le Brun (1619 – 1690)

From 1661, when Louis XIV emerged from his regency to be crowned, he and Jean-Baptiste Colbert directed French life. Colbert knew the economy was important, a truth eluding many ministers in Europe in those days, and took control of trade from the guilds. He also dictated improvements in agriculture, internal communications and the merchant fleet. This brought prosperity (which in turn, Louis XIV tried his hardest to dissipate). Control was also exercised in intellectual fields; *"the thought as well as the actions of all Frenchmen must follow the state plan"*. The arts had to serve the glory of France under Louis' absolute rule. Colbert added the best furniture makers and craftsmen to the tapestry weavers to form a factory at Gobelins producing everything necessary to a uniform style for the furnishing of royal palaces, notably Versailles, which consequently *"offers little in either painting, sculpture or architecture which is of the first quality in itself. Louis XIV aimed first and foremost at a striking whole (Blunt)."*

Colbert also turned his attention to the academies. The Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture was formed in 1648 so that artists working for the crown were free from guild regulations. Colbert and Charles Le Brun reorganised the Academy in 1663 and imposed an official style which was a compromise of the Baroque (which appealed enormously to Louis XIV with its rich, grand scale) and the classical tradition engrained in French art. Any artist seeking a decent commission had to conform, as work came from either the Gobelins or the Academy, and the official style was accepted in all French cities. Literature was different because Paris provided a market just as important as Versailles, so Racine and Moliere (for example) were free of strait-jackets.

Simon Vouet would have excelled in the Academy style but he was long dead. Le Brun caught the attention of Louis XIV through his decorations for the palace of Nicholas Fouquet, who was appointed Minister of Finance by Mazarin in 1653 during Louis' minority. Fouquet retained this post until Louis had him arrested in 1661, a surprising event which led to the elevation of Colbert. Fouquet, with his rich financial cohorts who controlled the French budget, was then subjected to the newly-formed (and *1984*-named) Chamber of Justice. Louis took control of finances and fleeced the bankers; sacking judges who might thwart him. In 1664 Louis sent Fouquet to prison where he was kept until his death (1680) as a warning. Soon after Louis ordered Charles Le Brun to paint a scene from the life of Alexander.

Charles Le Brun, *Entry of Alexander into Babylon (Triumph of Alexander)*, 1665

This work, produced 8 years before the reform of the Academy, is not a perfect example of the future official style. The scale is reminiscent of the Baroque, but misses the point of appealing to the emotions. It smacks more of Mannerism with Alexander surrounded by a rich and distracting variety of figures set in criss-crossing action. It is filled with classical figures, and has much to catch the eye. It certainly appealed to Louis XIV. Soon after this was painted, Bernini's plans for the Louvre were rejected amid harsh criticism, signalling the end of Roman influence on French art.

The philosophy of the Academy was that painting appeals to reason and not primarily to the eye; an intellectual art for educated people. Artists must use only the most beautiful parts of nature and apply laws of proportion, perspective and composition. Form and outline were paramount. Colour, ephemeral in nature and appealing to the eye, was much less important. Lectures taught complicated rules. The painter must choose only noble subjects and have coherence in time, place and action. There must be nothing 'low' and everything should be relevant. This was the old idea of *decorum*.

Le Brun produced a famous treatise on the expression of the passions, giving exact illustrated instructions on how to represent every emotion. Suitable artists as models for students were the Ancients, Raphael and his followers, then Poussin. Students were specifically warned against the Venetians, since they had too much interest in colour, and against Flemish and Dutch artists, who imitated nature too slavishly and without discrimination. Blunt dryly observes, *"the reader will not be surprised to learn that this restrictive teaching did not produce remarkable or individual artists."*

One can imagine how Le Brun's *Alexande*r would have been slated in the Academy. Indeed, Le Brun's works for Louis departed from the Academy style. While *Risen Christ* has Raphael-like figures, the work has the touch of the Baroque so admired by Louis. Colbert, realistically painted, is bottom right, gesturing towards the riches his master will fritter away.

Charles Le Brun, *Louis XIV adoring the Risen Christ*, 1674 (Museum of Fine Arts, Lyon)

Charles was an artist of great natural talent, and he must have felt bridled by the official style. Colbert died in 1683 and was replaced by the Marquis of Louvois, who sacked Le Brun from the Academy. Despite this, Charles still received favours from the king. In his enforced retirement Lebrun freed himself from his own shackles. The *Adoration* defies Academy conventions with its lighting and emotional atmosphere.

Charles Le Brun, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1689

Pierre Mignard (1612 – 1695) was Le Brun's great rival who Louvois had supported for many years, finally appointing him as Director of the Academy. Louvois commissioned *The Tent of Darius* from Mignard in direct competition to the scene in Le Brun's earlier series for Louis XIV.

Pierre Mignard, *The Tent of Darius*, 1689

If the comparison was to demonstrate Mignard's talent over that of his predecessor, it failed roundly. Mignard's busy mass of lightweight figures who gesture and glance randomly all over the canvas, destroy the focus of the picture.

Charles Le Brun, *The Family of Darius before Alexander*, c 1660 (Versailles)

Le Brun, with convincing figures, coloured and lit coherently and directing their attention appropriately, is vastly superior. Mignard's tent is an afterthought. Le Brun's frames the masses, isolating them from the main action, while the diagonal of the tent (edged in yellow to match her robe) leads to the pleading mother of Darius.

Mignard did show originality in portraits, a genre was abandoned because of the Academy's preference for history painting. Pierre breathed new life into this ailing tradition with *Marquise de Seignelay*. She is shown as the sea-goddess Thetis, perhaps because her husband, who had died the year before, had been Head of the French Navy. Mount Etna (in the background) had been in sight during a famous naval victory in 1676. Her elder son is dressed in a way to suggest Achilles – Thetis' son. The Marquise was apparently in the market for a new husband, the younger son posed as Cupid. Mignard painted many highly acclaimed society portraits, often with the sitter as goddess or hero.

Pierre Mignard, *Marquise de Seignelay as Thetis*, 1691

Later Trends

Reaction against the official Academy style grew. The *Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns* in the late 1680s was based on Charles Perrault's theses arguing that adoration of the Ancients was irrational. Modern artists had made great advances (perspective, composition, expression) unknown to Romans and Greeks. Adding to this was increasing admiration of some French artists for Venetian art who argued that painting was meant to deceive the eye and colour achieves that more fully than the drawing advocated by the Academy. This favoured Rubens over Poussin, even though the Academy regarded Rubens as deficient in drawing. Thus, the trend for religious and historical paintings to be more Baroque.

Charles de la Fosse, *Rape of Proserpine*, 1673 (Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris)

Charles de la Fosse (1636 – 1716) reflected this shift. After he had trained under Le Brun, Charles went to Venice and returned inspired by Veronese and Correggio. *Proserpine* is set in a Venetian landscape with classical figures in a lovely spacious curving procession. Then in the 1680s he turned to Rubens as a model. *Iphigenia* also has the types and swelling draperies, largely unknown in France, taken from Rubens.

Jean Jouvenet (1644 – 1717) reflects this shift in religious art. His *St Bruno* can be compared to an earlier one by Le Sueur. The saints are similar but Jean's seems to swoon while clutching the crucifix, giving the scene a Baroque emotionalism which Le Sueur avoided. Jean uses diagonals (beloved by Rubens) which are emphasised by the vertical and horizontal grains in the wood.

Charles de la Fosse, *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, 1681

Jean Jouvenet, *St Bruno Praying*, c 1700

Eustache Le Sueur, *St Bruno at Prayer*, 1647

Jouvenet's tendency towards Rubens is more marked in four colossal pictures of events from Christ's life: *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes, The Resurrection of Lazarus, Christ driving the Traders out of the Temple* and *Christ in the House of Simon*. Jean shows naturalism in the draperies and still life which would have shocked the Academy. Jouvenet made a trip to Dieppe to study scenes of fishermen for *Miraculous Draught*.

Jean Jouvenet, *Christ in the House of Simon*, 1706

Enthusiasm for the ponderous Academy style waned at court among the younger members of the royal family, who wanted gayer decorations of myths in a frivolous vein. The young wife of the Dauphin, the Duchess of Bourgogne on whom Louis XIV doted brought "*to the Court of Versailles the only lightness and gaiety to be found there in the King's last years.*"

In the decoration of the Menagerie which Louis ordered for her, he encouraged this lighter style, although not a fan himself. The taste among court ladies for light pictures of pleasurable scenes was the basis of the Rococo in France.

Bon Boullogne, *Hippomenes and Atalanta*, 1699

The revival of portraits sparked by Pierre Mignard began also to follow the style of Rubens and Van Dyke, as the genre bowed to the party of Colour. **Nicolas de Largilliere (1656 – 1746)** spent ten years in London encouraged by Peter Lely whose influence can be seen in the pupil. The tutor's face is more natural (Rembrandt might have painted it). This northern European influence can be seen in Nicolas' diploma work in the Flemish naturalism of the objects that surround Le Brun, a version of the state portrait with attributes.

Nicolas de Largilliere, *Tutor and Pupil*, 1685

Nicolas de Largilliere, *Charles Le Brun*, 1686

This naturalism extended to religious works and, rather surprisingly, to landscape. **Alexandre Francois Desportes (1661 - 1743)** studied at the Academy, was Court painter in Poland in 1695 and 1696 and on his return to Paris was commissioned by Louis XIV for portraits of his favourite hunting dogs and rare animals for the Menagerie at Versailles. These works take still life into landscape. To prepare the backgrounds of these works Desportes made a series of studies in oil directly from views in the neighbourhood of Paris. This was startling in the 17th century. No one thought of painting outside (Claude and Poussin had sketched) as oil paint was not in tubes as it was in the 19th century. Alexandre's nephew explained his uncle's method:

Alexandre Francois Desportes, *Hunting Dog and Partridges*, 1700

"He used to take out into the country his brushes and his palette ready loaded with colours, in zinc boxes; he had a walking stick with a long steel point, which held it firm when stuck in the ground, and on the handle which opened there hinged with a screw a little easel of the same metal, to which he fixed the drawing-board and paper."

Alexandre's landscape sketches date from 1690-1706. They anticipate the Barbizon School. The tree stump with the orange-brown highlights is essential to his *River Landscape* (a larger version of Monet's magpie).

Alexandre Francois Desportes, *River Landscape*, 1690s (oil on paper on wood) (The Met, New York)

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