

EL GRECO

Spanish school, 1541 - 1614.

The real name of this artist was Domenikos Theotokopoulos. In Spain his contemporaries called him Domenico Greco or "el Griego" (the Greek) ; El Greco, the form which is now generally used, apparently came into use only later. He was born in Crete, then a Venetian possession. Nothing is known of his early years, but there are a few surviving paintings which indicate that he worked initially in the Byzantine manner practiced by Cretan icon-painters.^① The date of his move to Italy is equally unknown. It seems probable that he went to Venice first, around 1560. He was almost certainly a pupil of Titian's there, and appears to have assimilated alongside this the art of Tintoretto and Jacopo Bassano. He can be identified with reasonable certainty as the pupil of Titian's, "Giovanni Candiotto", whom Giulio Clovio mentioned in 1570 as having arrived in Rome. There he reacted, in a fundamental way, to the work of Michelangelo. By 1577 he was in Toledo, where he remained for the rest of his life. In 1580 Philip II commissioned him to do a painting for the Escorial, but was displeased with the result. He worked also for numerous churches and convents, both in Toledo and in other parts of Spain. Most of his compositions exist in several versions, and there are further versions which appear to have been done by assistants working under him. He died in Toledo on April 6 or 7, 1614.

Christ Bearing the Cross (head)
oil on panel, $8\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ ins.

Provenance

Frank G. McCómbler,⁽¹⁾ Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Literature

J. Camon Aznar, Domenico Greco, 2 vols., Madrid, 1950, I, last plate (no cat. no.) ; H.E. Wethey, El Greco and his School, 2 vols., Princeton, 1962, II, p.175, no.X-45.

Exhibited

Pontormo to Greco, the Age of Mannerism, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, Feb.-Mar.1954, no.63, ill. ; Ind., 1959, no.30.

Versions

1. Colln. Oscar B. Cintas, Havana. $25\frac{1}{8} \times 21\frac{1}{8}$ ins. (Wethey, I, fig.180 and II, p.41, no.59). Half-length, with cross shown. Signed on cross (below hand).

2. Thyssen colln., Lugano, no.168. $26 \times 20\frac{3}{4}$ ins. (Wethey, II, p.174, no.X-44 ; ~~National Gallery, London~~, Paintings from the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection, National Gallery, London, Mar.-Apr. 1961, no.53, ill. in vol. of plates). Half-length also.

This image of Christ, here, which was attributed to El Greco by L. Furst (1944)⁽²⁾, corresponds to the head in the Cintas and Thyssen versions⁽³⁾. Wethey⁽¹⁹⁶²⁾ considered it to be a copy of the head in the first of those versions⁽³⁾, produced by the school of El Greco early in the seventeenth century. In the

compiler's view, it would certainly appear to be a workshop product.⁽⁴⁾

Notes.

1. As noted by Wethey, this may perhaps be the version listed by M.B.Cassio (El Greco, Madrid, 1908, no.13) as belonging to Lois Pérez, Alcoy, near Valencia.
2. Letter of Nov. 20, 1944, Clowes archives.
3. Dated by Wethey ca. 1590-95 ; he labelled the Thyssen version a "mediocre repetition".
4. This view was supported by A.Sánchez-Pérez of the Prado (orally, ~~with the compiler~~, 1966)