

BARTOLOMÉ ESTEBAN MURILLO

Spanish school, 1617 - 1682.

This artist was baptized in Seville on New Year's Day 1618. He was apprenticed there to the painter Juan del Castillo, who died in 1640. He married in 1645 and subsequently had nine children. According to Palomino (who emphasizes the point very strongly), he went to Madrid and studied the paintings in the Royal collections there. This visit is put by Palomino before the execution of a series of paintings for the cloister of San Francisco in Seville, one of which is dated 1646; but Murillo himself in a declaration made at the time of his marriage said that he had never left Seville. This contradiction, and the fact that substantial changes are found in the artist's work by the mid-1650s, as compared to the San Francisco series -- changes implying a move away from the native pictorial tradition of Seville, and an accompanying knowledge of the work of Rubens, van Dyck, Velasquez and perhaps the Venetians -- suggest that the visit should be put later, most probably between 1648 and 1650, when the artist is not recorded as being in Seville. Thereafter he seems to have spent the rest of his life in his hometown. In 1655 paintings by him of Saints Leandro and Isidoro were placed in the Cathedral there, and he was described as the city's best painter. In 1656 he completed the Vision of Saint Anthony for the Cathedral, and in 1660 became one of the founders of the Seville Academy and its first president. In 1670-74 he is recorded as working on paintings for the Hospital de la Caridad, and from 1678 on he did paintings for the Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes. He was engaged in producing pictures for the Capuchin church at Cadiz at the time of his death in April 1682, caused by a fall from the scaffolding. He was an extremely productive artist, with many assistants and followers, and created a tradition of painting which continued in Seville, probably throughout the eighteenth century.

Madonna in Prayer

oil on canvas, 20 × 14 $\frac{3}{4}$  ins.

Colln. Edith Clowes.

Condition

A photograph in the Witt Library shows the condition of the painting before cleaning. Much of the detail was previously obscure, particularly in the landscape and drapery.

Provenance

Marquis of Lansdowne, Bowood House (from about 1840) ; Christie's sale, Mar. 7, 1930, no. 55<sup>①</sup>; Elizabeth Holmes Fisher, Los Angeles, California ; private colln., U.S.A. ; Newhouse Galleries, New York. Acquired by Mrs Clowes in 1966.

Literature

A.M. Jameson, Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London, London, 1884, p.306, no.31 ; W. Stirling, Annals of the Artists of Spain, 3 vols., London, 1848, III, p.1420 (1891 ed., IV, p.1609) ; E.E. Minor, Murillo, London, 1881, p.75 ; C.B. Curtis, Velasquez and Murillo, London, 1883, no.75 ; M. Bryan, Dictionary of Painters and Engravers, 2 vols., London, 1889, II, p.190 ; 1904 ed., III, p.388 ; A.F. Calvert, Murillo, A Biography and Appreciation, London-New York, 1907, p.157.<sup>②</sup>

~~Dated~~ <sup>Placed</sup> at the time of its acquisition around 1650 ; but there is no clear basis for dating the work.<sup>③</sup>

The Madonna is shown with the instruments of the passion -- nails and a crown of thorns.

Notes

1. As 18 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 14 ins. Bought in, by Mason.

Notes, cont.

2. All of these publications refer only to the location of the work. It does not appear in A.L.Mayer, Murillo, ~~Berlin-Stuttgart~~, Berlin, 1913..

3. Very few of Murillo's works are dated ~~and~~<sup>and</sup> have definite dates attached to them . See Mayer, op.cit.