

## **Luisa Roldán, *La Roldana*, (Seville, 1652- Madrid, 1706)**

The daughter of Pedro Roldán, Luisa was an apprentice in her father's studio, where she stood out as his most talented pupil. As often occurred in the Andalusian art world, family members took charge of a series of tasks in order to ensure a steady flow of commissions. It was against such a background that her vocation as a sculpture was forged, at a time when women's access to the arts was conditioned by the prevailing social conditions. At the age of nineteen, and against her father's wishes, she married sculptor Luis Antonio de los Arcos, a fellow worker in the studio. Following their marriage, the couple decided to go into business on their own.

Due to the difficulties women experienced in accepting formal commissions, Luisa Roldán's work is inextricably bound to that of her husband, Luis Antonio, although it was far inferior to hers. They worked in collaboration with Luis Antonio's brother, Tomás de los Arcos, who was responsible for the gilding and polychrome.

The works included in this Seville period reflect her paternal influence, although the artist was already beginning to forge her own personal style. These included a delicate sensitivity for expressing sentiments and natural poses, the flowing lines and curves of her carving skill, the sense of balance between volumes and the exquisite facial features of the characters.

In 1687, the couple moved from Seville to Cadiz, where their work evolved towards more complex forms and a heightened expressiveness of the figures. Around 1689, they were installed in Madrid, where in 1692 Luisa Roldán became the first woman to be appointed Sculptor of the King's Chamber by Charles II, a position that she would again hold under Philip V until her death in 1706. Known as 'La Roldana', she was one of the most outstanding figures of Spanish Baroque sculpture, and was held in great esteem by her contemporaries.