



Murillo

IV CENTENARIO

Murillo
Sevilla / 400
años



ENGLISH

BARTOLOMÉ ESTEBAN MURILLO FOURTH CENTENARY

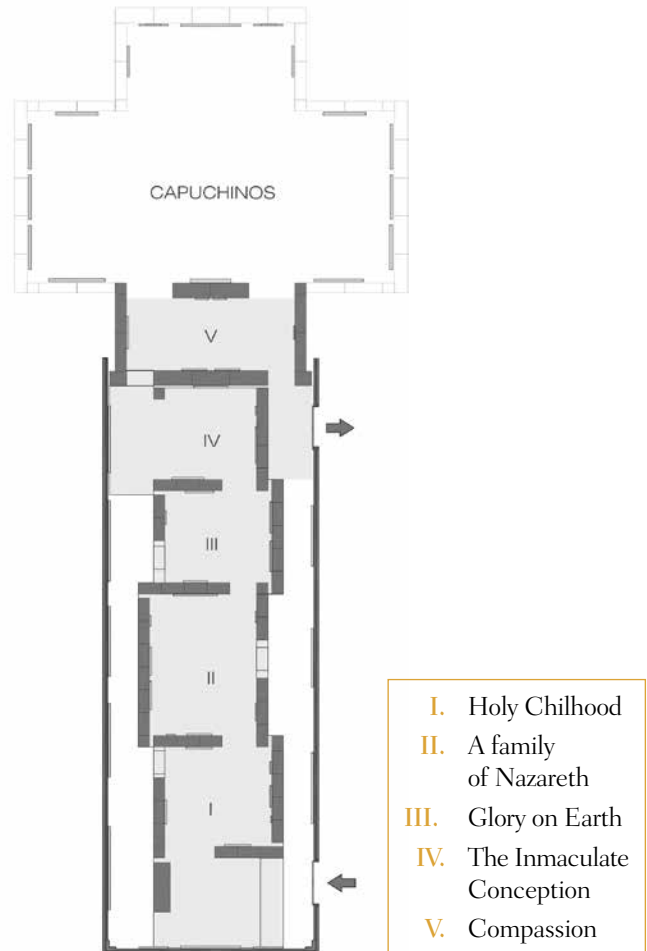
TO MARK THE FOUR HUNDREDTH anniversary of Murillo's birth, this museum has brought together fifty-five of his works. Universal artist identified with Seville, interpreting the themes of the city's devotion, decorating some of its most emblematic monuments with his paintings, and capturing its residents from all walks of life on his canvases.

The exhibition is organised around thematic criteria reflecting the painter's personal vision of the religious and civic context in which he lived. His profound, intuitive and eminently humane eye enabled him to render that context in an inspiring manner, whether he was painting beggars or nobles. His creative skill and sincere spirituality are also clearly manifested in the devotional paintings he produced, which are filled with details of daily life, while his moving conception of the transcendental is

conveyed through images that are both highly original and beautiful.

The nine sections into which the exhibition is divided provide a glimpse of the world through Murillo's eyes: from the religious paintings which introduced such memorable prototypes in the history of art—with a particular expertise in the case of the Immaculate Conception—to the social reality of 17th-century Seville, a city of paupers and saints, of rascals and wealthy noblemen and merchants who could afford to have their portraits painted by the famous master.

This exhibition provides a unique opportunity to revisit many of his works and discover new ones. Above all, it is a chance to see how Murillo combines his genius use of technical and compositional devices with the profoundly tender gaze that he casts over his subjects.





- VI. Penitence
- VII. Storyteller
- VIII. Genre painting
- IX. Portraits



1.
The Good Shepherd

About 1665

Oil on canvas,
123 × 101.7 cm

Museo Nacional del Prado,
Madrid

The scene unfolds in a bucolic country setting replete with classical allusions in the form of archaeological ruins. Murillo gave the boy an air of determination, apparent in his firm grasp on the staff. Jesus is portrayed as the Good Shepherd, a beautiful and effective evangelising metaphor of Christ. The tenderness of the scene is underscored by the sheep Jesus is caressing, a representation of the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) mentioned in the Scriptures, at the moment when John the Baptist sees the boy and cries, “Behold, the Lamb of God”. The imagery of the lamb expresses the obedient submission to the divine plan that would culminate in his death on the cross.



2.
Virgin and Child Jesus
 About 1675
 Oil on canvas, 164 × 108 cm
 Gallerie Nazionali di Arte
 Antica, Palazzo Barberini
 y Galleria Corsini, Rome

This *Virgin and Child* is from Murillo's late period and represents the pinnacle of his development of this iconographic theme. It leaves behind the Tenebrism of earlier decades and prefigures Rococo-style painting. The semi-darkness that envelops the figures of the Virgin and Child in the artist's first period is replaced here by an outdoor setting, with architectural ruins invaded by vegetation forming the backdrop to the intimate conversation between mother and child, interrupted by the spectator's gaze.

During the 19th century this work enjoyed immense fame, as testified by the numerous copies. It became the icon of the Galleria Corsini, where it was known as *The Gypsy Madonna*.



3.
Virgin and Child
 About 1670-1680
 Oil on canvas, 166 × 115 cm
 Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
 Dresden, Gemäldegalerie
 alter Meister, Dresde

The theme of the seated Virgin and Child against a dark background appears frequently and with numerous variations in Murillo's works, satisfying the high demand for paintings of this type, which expressed a sweet, intimate religious sentiment. Mary's gaze is different here from other works on this theme: her eyes are turned upwards, and she sighs heavily—perhaps a gesture of maternal bliss or a premonition of the future grief that will break her heart.

This painting is the only Spanish school work in Dresden, intentionally purchased as a Spanish picture in 1755. During the revolutionary uprisings of 1849, the canvas was perforated by several bullets. News of the mutilation spread to Spain, where the Madrid newspapers reported the occurrence.



4.
*The Mystic Marriage
of Saint Catherine*, 1655
Red and black chalk
on light beige paper,
182 × 206 mm

Hamburger Kunsthalle,
Kupferstichkabinett,
Hamburg

The three figures in the composition were drawn with vigorous red ochre lines on a soft outline in black chalk. Mary is situated on the right with the Christ Child in her lap, and in front of them is Saint Catherine of Alexandria holding the palm frond of martyrdom. The saint extends her right hand to the mother and child, reverently touching their hands.

For a long time, this drawing was thought to have been one that Murillo made for his oil painting on the same theme, currently held in Lisbon. However, recent studies suggest that it is an academic reproduction, probably by a direct disciple, and it therefore represents an important example of the work produced in the master's studio.



5.
*Mystical Wedding
of Saint Catherine*,
before 1655
Oil on canvas,
76.5 × 94.5 cm

Museu Nacional
de Arte Antiga, Lisbon

This tender scene shows the Virgin and Child accompanied by the figure of a saint. It is clear from the X-ray image of the work that Murillo had experimented with a composition in an outdoor setting, with the base of column between the two women and a curtain behind the Virgin, although in the end he opted for a completely neutral backdrop. The flat appearance of the background strikes an elegant contrast with the details in the foreground, evident in the carmine brushwork of the clothes and even more noticeably in the rapid white brushstrokes that form the transparent veils.

Isabella II of Spain gave this painting to King Louis I of Portugal for his gallery of paintings.



6.
*The Infant Saint John
 Playing with a Lamb*
 About 1670-1675
 Oil on canvas, 61 × 44 cm
 National Gallery of Ireland,
 Dublin

Murillo painted the theme of the Infant Saint John in the wilderness on several occasions. The saintly child is actually portrayed in a scene from his adult life, following a figurative tradition popularised in Europe by prints and copies of works by Van Dyck and Reni, artists who influenced Murillo's style.

The saint wears animal skins and a red cloak and carries a cane bound in the form of a cross. The phylactery hanging from it bears the inscription "Ecce ag[nus Dei]". The lamb is a figurative symbol of Christ's sacrifice, in reference to the words of John the Baptist recorded in the Gospel: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."



7.
The Holy Family
 About 1670-1675
 Oil on canvas, 96.5 × 68.5 cm
 The Devonshire Collection,
 Chatsworth

The Holy Family at home in Nazareth was a very popular devotional theme. As a pious, homely scene portrayed in an ordinary setting, viewers easily identified with it. This motif lent itself to highly naturalistic interpretations, as Murillo did with this dimly lit interior, creating a scene of great intimacy.

This is a mature work in which the artist dispensed with precisely drawn contours, composing the fabrics and figures with light, subtle dabs of the brush in a manner that is reminiscent of how colour is treated in many of his small sketches and a testament to the degree of skill he had attained by the end of his career.



8.
*Saint Joseph with
 the Christ Child*
 About 1655-1660
 Oil on canvas,
 164.2 × 108.5 cm
 Victor Fedotov Collection

In Spain, depictions of Joseph with the Christ Child multiplied as veneration of the saint spread thanks to the efforts of religious orders. Saint Joseph is consistently depicted as a man far from old age in Murillo's oeuvre; the artist insisted on portraying him in the prime of his life, brimming with strength and vigour. This iconography of Saint Joseph travelling with the Christ Child that was particularly popular in the early decades of the 17th century and was often rendered in painted wood carvings, and Murillo seems to have closely followed this precedent.

The scene, a poignant dialogue of gazes and gestures, underscores Joseph's dual role as an earthly father and an advocate who intercedes on the believer's behalf before God.



9.
*Saint Joseph with
 the Child Jesus*
 About 1660
 Oil on canvas on board,
 29.7 × 24.5 cm
 BBVA Collection, Madrid

The composition of this small-format painting is identical to that of the substantially larger *Saint Joseph with the Christ Child* exhibited alongside. This repetition offers us an opportunity to examine Murillo's creative process by identifying the two works at the same time. Despite its small size, the fact that it is only minimally sketched suggests it is not a preliminary study used to experiment with a composition but a complete work in its own right, made before or after the larger version.

In both cases, Saint Joseph is depicted as a vigorous man in his early prime, rather than the elderly figure found in most iconographic representations up to that point.



10.

***The Holy Family with
the Infant Saint John***

About 1668-1670

Oil on canvas,

156 × 126 cm

Szépművészeti Múzeum,
Budapest

This work forms a pair with *The Flight into Egypt* and can be seen as the depiction of a private moment in the lives of an Andalusian family. Here Murillo portrayed Saint Joseph with his carpentry tools, the Christ Child and little Saint John tying two sticks together to make a cross, and Mary sewing as she watches the children with a slight smile. The cross and the phylactery bearing the words “Ecce Agnus Dei” underscore the religious significance of the picture, which is practically a genre scene. The fireplace reminds us that the scene is set in a domestic environment, while the mountains and clouds visible in the distance lend depth to the composition.



11.

The Flight into Egypt

About 1668-1670

Oil on canvas,

155 × 125 cm

Szépművészeti Múzeum,
Budapest

Murillo had already depicted this iconography in his youth, around 1647-1650, in a quasi-Tenebrist style with certain naturalist features. The Budapest painting belongs to a later period, when the master's style underwent a substantial change in the use of light and colour. His pictorial technique became lighter and his colours more vaporous.

Murillo portrayed the flight of the Holy Family exactly as it is described by Saint Matthew, the only evangelist to include in his Gospel the scene where Saint Joseph is visited by an angel who tells him to flee from Israel with his family. The baby Jesus is the only one looking at the viewer. Rather than depicting an imaginary, idealised child, the artist based his rendering of Jesus on a real model.



12.
*The Holy Family
 (The Heavenly and
 Earthly Trinities)*, sketch
 About 1670-1680
 Oil on canvas, 27 × 22 cm
 Cajasol Collection, Seville

This sketch provides a valuable insight into Murillo's creative process. In it the painter primarily experimented with the compositional structure, which presents many similarities to the final version, but there are also a few small differences. Murillo had already determined the distribution of the characters, the chromatic base he would develop in the larger canvas, and the treatment of the brightest areas. The most noticeable differences are in the meaningful gazes of the figures in the two versions. These seemingly minor details are in fact quite significant, completely altering the reading of the work. The sketch conveys a more intimate connection between the members of the Holy Family.



13.
*The Holy Family
 (The Heavenly and
 Earthly Trinities)*
 About 1675-1682
 Oil on canvas,
 293 × 207 cm
 National Gallery, London

Murillo captured the theological concept of Jesus who, by virtue of his dual nature, is both God and man, and therefore belongs to both the Heavenly Trinity, along with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to the Earthly Trinity of the family from Nazareth. The Virgin Mary expresses her closeness to the Christ Child, while Saint Joseph appears as a father and husband, his direct forward gaze establishing a rapport with the viewer.

The exquisite rendering of this complex iconography and the extremely smooth and transparent brushwork, blending the forms into the background, make this work one of the greatest achievements of the artist's final period.



14.

The Nativity

About 1665-70

Oil on obsidian,

38.3 × 34.2 cm

The Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston, Colección Rienzi,
donación del Sr. y la Sra.

Harris Masterson III

This work is painted on obsidian, a very rare support in European painting. A glossy black volcanic glass, it probably reached Europe from Mexico or Central America. For use as a painting support, it was highly polished on the painted side and left rough on the reverse. The beautiful natural veining of the obsidian, appearing as delicate, milky, vertical stripes, gives an impression of divine light falling on the scene. Murillo could have obtained the obsidian panel through his patron Justino de Neve, who had family connections in the Americas. This source is highly likely because De Neve also owned two other Murillo paintings on obsidian, both now in the Musée du Louvre.



15.

The Annunciation

About 1660

Oil on canvas,

125 × 103 cm

Museo Nacional
del Prado, Madrid

Murillo represents the stage of the Annunciation to Mary known as *humiliatio* (submission), when she spoke the words recorded by Saint Luke: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord”. This is the fourth of the five moments into which the Franciscan Fra Roberto Caracciolo da Lecce divided the episode of the Annunciation: *disquiet, reflection, inquiry, submission and merit*. The artist framed this delicate conversation in a setting with conventional architectural devices and allusions to the empyrean realm: a table draped in a cloth; on the table, an open book and a vase with lilies symbolising purity. In the foreground is a sewing basket whose contents would have drawn viewers into the scene, making them participants in the Annunciation.



16.
The Immaculate Conception
 About 1670
 Oil on copper,
 70 × 54.2 cm
 Museo de Bellas Artes,
 Seville

Murillo was conversant with more sophisticated, less common pictorial media, such as small cabinet paintings on copper for private devotional use. The smooth copper surface allowed him to precisely define each element with thin coats of glaze, using less for the lighter colours. The agitated brushstrokes curve round the forms, as in his large-format paintings. On the metal surface, the pigments of his palette take on a pearly sheen, giving the work the ethereal, vaporous, hazy-edged look that characterises Murillo's mature style. Copper was undoubtedly an ideal support for developing the extraordinary command of the glazes and transparencies that are the hallmarks of his finest works.



17.
The Virgin of the Rosary
 About 1675-1680
 Oil on canvas,
 200.8 × 128.2 cm
 Dulwich Picture Gallery,
 London

This is the most highly evolved work of all the versions that Murillo painted of Our Lady of the Rosary. The earthly carnality of earlier figurations has all but vanished, and the palette is noticeably more varied, the brushwork looser and more volatile, and the ability to convey emotions and spirituality greatly enhanced. The Virgin is seated, not on a long bench as was customary in early versions, but on a throne of clouds. Rather than level with viewers, here she floats in the celestial sphere; and the clouds and angels, once absent, have now become her throne and footstool. The palette of this painting is richer and lighter, a foretaste of the luminosity and lightness to come with the Rococo style.



18.
*Saint Augustine
and the Trinity*
About 1664-1665
Oil on panel,
250 × 139 cm
Museo de Bellas
Artes, Seville



19.
*Saint Augustine
with the Virgin
and Christ Child*
About 1664-1665
Oil on panel,
250 × 139 cm
Museo de Bellas
Artes, Seville

Both compositions illustrate mystical visions of the saint, highlighting the symbol of the Augustinian order: the offering of the flaming heart of love pierced by an arrow.

Murillo resolves the spatial configuration with light, which he used to create a contrast between the shadows below and the radiance of heavenly glory above. A diagonal line structures the two scenes, where the intersecting gazes reinforce the illusion that we are truly witnessing these mystical visions of the saint. Naturalism is evident in his monumental figure, with tanned skin, and in the masterly depiction of still-life details.



20.
*The Virgin and Child
in Glory*, 1673
Oil on canvas,
236 × 169 cm
Walker Art Gallery,
National Museums
Liverpool

This painting was commissioned by the then archbishop of Seville, Ambrosio Spínola, as the altarpiece for his private chapel in the Archbishop's Palace. It appears to have been Murillo's response to the iconography of the Virgen de la Antigua—to which the prelate was particularly devoted—a Baroque modernisation of a medieval image. The composition is unique among his work: it does not depict a young Immaculate Conception nor a seated Virgin and Child, although it contains elements of both.

In the 18th century, the section of the Virgin holding the Child was removed and replaced with a copy. The altarpiece became famous for this dramatic history and came to be known as “La Vierge coupée”. In 1862-1863 the original central section was skilfully reintegrated into the rest of the canvas.



21.
***Oil study for
 "The Virgin and Child
 in Glory", 1673***

Oil on canvas,
 36.2 × 25.5 cm

Walker Art Gallery, National
 Museums Liverpool

Recent conservation treatment has confirmed that this small oil sketch was Murillo's preparatory *boceto* for the altarpiece depicting *The Virgin and Child in Glory*, which was commissioned by Seville's Archbishop Ambrosio Spínola. Murillo would have painted it to gain the archbishop's prior approval, but also to experiment with compositional ideas and the pigments he wanted to use. As a result, there are a number of changes in composition between the *boceto* and the finished altarpiece. Most significantly, he added to the altarpiece the golden arched vault of winged cherub heads which serves to focus the viewer's attention more intently on the faces of the Virgin and the Christ Child.



22.
***The Immaculate
 Conception***

About 1675
 Oil on canvas,
 190 × 145 cm

Pérez Simón Collection,
 Mexico City

This exquisite rendering of the Immaculate Conception was not widely known until quite recently, due to the fact that it has primarily remained in private collections in different countries. Murillo represents a young Virgin of radiant beauty in a celestial setting, where she is identified with the religious fervour that swept across Seville in the mid-17th century.

The figure conveys a sense of ascending motion thanks to the hands positioned high on her breast and the upturned face, gazing heavenwards. However, this verticality is broken by the diagonal movement of the mantle and the angels clustered at her feet. Some of them are bearing elements typical of this iconography, drawn from the Song of Solomon, such as flowers, the palm frond, the olive branch and the mirror.



23.
*The Immaculate
 Conception of El Escorial*
 About 1665
 Oil on canvas,
 206 × 144 cm
 Museo Nacional del Prado,
 Madrid

Although the iconographic model of the Immaculate Conception had been established since the first third of the 17th century, Murillo helped to fix it firmly in the public mind. Over the years he phased out some of the attributes associated with the Virgin—in the case, the roses and lilies, symbols of her purity—but he always maintained the crescent moon and the halo of sunlight. He also broke with the Sevillian tradition, representing her with a white tunic and blue mantle, as described by Saint Beatrice da Silva in her visions. To this we must add the triumphant, dynamic feel of ascending motion created by the angelic retinue that seems to be lifting Mary in the direction of her gaze, inspired by a fusion of the Immaculate Conception and the iconography of the Assumption.



24.
*The Immaculate
 Conception, “La Colosal”*
 About 1650
 Oil on canvas,
 436 × 297 cm
 Museo de Bellas Artes,
 Seville

The body of the Virgin, clad in a white tunic and blue cloak as per Pacheco’s instructions in *Arte de la pintura*, traces a diagonal line from the moon, deliberating shifting the composition off-centre so that all attention is focused on the triumphant Madonna. The effect is heightened by the parallel motion of the three angels below her, while the voluminous mantle billowing in the wind forms a cross-diagonal in the shadow, lending the entire scene a strong sense of dynamic movement. The radiant white of the tunic and the golden background—a reminder that Mary is also the *amicta sole*, “clothed with the sun”—banish the systematic chiaroscuro of his earlier oeuvre.

This commission from the Franciscans, unconditional advocates of this Marian doctrine, occurred at a time when the city was caught up in a fever of devotion to the Immaculate Conception.



25.
*Christ Carrying
 the Cross*
 About 1660-1670
 Oil on canvas,
 119.5 × 142 cm
 Musée Thomas
 Henry, Cherbourg

Given the widespread devotion to images of Christ stumbling under the weight of the cross, this was a common theme in Spanish Baroque art and popular among artists in Seville. At the time Murillo was painting this landscape of the Passion, in his home town at least two confraternities venerated carvings of Our Lord of the Three Falls.

The image is designed to be viewed from the front; Christ's head is turned fully to the right to look at the Virgin, the intention being to give worshippers who approached the image a frontal view of Christ's face. For the image of the Virgin, Murillo followed the same models used for his famous bust-length *Mater Dolorosas*.



26.
Ecce Homo
 About 1675
 Oil on canvas,
 63.8 × 53.3 cm
 Colomer Collection,
 Madrid

Murillo dispenses with props and backdrops in this painting, choosing to focus solely on the profound devotional nature of the scene. This is a particularly poignant work, dominated by Christ's forlorn expression and his submissively downcast gaze. The light is soft and hazy. In the foreground, the bent arm somehow frames his face. The painting shows Christ's feelings to stir those of the spectator, but pain is not dramatically depicted: there is hardly a trace of blood, and his expression is a blend of tenderness and intense mental rather than physical anguish. Thanks to its superb composition, this image was much sought-after and repeated numerous times, as evidenced by various copies and workshop versions scattered across the globe.



27.
Mater Dolorosa
 About 1670-1675
 Oil on canvas,
 64 × 53.5 cm
 Private collection

This is one of the most fortunate contributions to Murillo's oeuvre. The German art historian Mayer was familiar with this painting and, in a letter written to its owner, he clearly stated his opinion that it was a Murillo original: "The picture is in my opinion a very fine, well preserved, genuine and most characteristic work by B. Murillo, executed most probably about 1668, the period I consider the best and most powerful of the master." Yet despite this opinion, the painting has long been ignored by other art scholars.

Its origin is uncertain, but it may have been among the works that left Spain at an early date, perhaps in possession of a Flemish merchant, given its first known location.



28.
Ecce Homo
 About 1660
 Oil on canvas,
 166 × 107 cm
 Private collection

This canvas depicts the moment in the biblical narrative when Christ, after being flogged, crowned with thorns, draped in a purple robe and given a mock sceptre to hold in his right hand, is brought before the Jewish people and Pontius Pilate pronounces the famous words that have identified this scene ever since: "*Ecce Homo*" (*behold the man*). The *Ecce Homo* motif was the quintessential expression of Counter-Reformation principles. At an early date, the theme was abstracted and emancipated from the gospel story to individualise the figure of Christ. It was commonly paired with renderings of the *Mater Dolorosa*, as separate pictures of equal size, in the belief that the contemplation of both figures would increase the piety of the faithful.



29.

Mater Dolorosa

About 1660

Oil on canvas,

166 × 107 cm

Museo de Bellas Artes,
Seville

This image of Mary, alone and without any of her customary attributes, may be considered an individual composition for devotional use. It is somewhat difficult to interpret, since it more closely resembles a rendering of Our Lady of Solitude than the Mother of Sorrows or *Mater Dolorosa*, as it has long been known. Our Lady of Solitude reflects Mary after the death of Christ, while the Mother of Sorrows is the image of the Virgin suffering at the moment when Jesus, having been flogged and crowned with thorns, was brought before the jeering crowd. For this reason, the *Mater Dolorosa* often formed a pair with the *Ecce Homo*.

To date it has not been confirmed that this version in the museum's collection was originally painted as a pair.



30.

***Christ on the Cross with
the Virgin, Mary Magdalene
and Saint John***

About 1670

Oil on copper, 67 × 47.9 cm

Meadows Museum, SMU,
Dallas, Algur H. Meadows
Collection

Murillo produced several versions of Christ on the cross, but this is the only painting that represents a specific scene narrated in the Gospel of John—the poignant moment when Christ utters these moving words to the Virgin: “Woman, behold thy son.” He then says to John, “Behold thy mother.” Mary Magdalene remains kneeling at the foot of the cross, mourning Christ’s last moments on earth. Jesus—still alive, without the spear wound in his side—turns his eyes towards his mother and John. In the background of the composition, monumental for such a small frame, we see the city of Jerusalem.

The smooth surface of the copper support enabled Murillo to deploy his talent for creating delicate, painstaking works with a soft palette.



31.
The Penitent Magdalene
 About 1655
 Oil on canvas, 166 × 121 cm
 Arango Collection, Madrid

This Magdalene is depicted with her most typical attributes: the skull, a symbol of *vanitas* and meditation on the end of earthly life; the cross, representing her personal devotion to Christ and his suffering; the book of the Gospels, an instrument of reflection and prayer; and her best-known attribute, the ointment jar. Mary Magdalene was a favourite saint of the Counter-Reformation because her life of sin and repentance clearly illustrated the efficacy of the sacrament of penance, vitally important to Catholics and vociferously denied by Protestants. The saint's brightly lit figure stands out in the gloom of the cave, in a strong chiaroscuro atmosphere that denotes the artist's familiarity with the dramatic lighting of Zurbarán's works.



32.
The Penitent Saint Jerome
 About 1650-1652
 Oil on canvas,
 190.4 × 135.2 cm
 Museo Nacional del Prado,
 Madrid

The most iconography of Saint Jerome is that of the penitent, erudite hermit. Translator and scholar of the Holy Scriptures, for his valuable contributions Jerome is considered one of the fathers of the Church and honorary cardinal. For his work, he is venerated as the patron saint of translators; and for his exemplary life, he is acknowledged as a saint by the Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran and Anglican churches.

Murillo used sharply contrasted yet naturalistic effects in this painting, something that can only be understood in this young period because of his familiarity with Ribera's pictorial method. Observing the pastose brushwork and treatment of light, one can understand why it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two masters. The light falls on the most significant parts of the scene, leaving the superfluous elements in shadow.



33.

Saint Peter

About 1675-1680

Oil on canvas, 105 × 92 cm

Galleria Nazionale, Parma

This *Saint Peter* and the painting of *Saint Philip* belong to the only complete extant *apostolado* in Murillo's oeuvre, though neither its attribution to the master nor its provenance have been fully clarified. However, it is important to note the influence that this *apostolado* left on Sevillian painters, which would appear to confirm its former presence in the city and association with the painter's work.

The strong, lifelike face of Saint Peter, one of the finest pieces in the group, has its roots in Ribera's print of *The Penitence of Saint Peter*, made in 1621, and is an example of how Murillo continually resorted to stylistic and technical devices that he had used with great success in his early years.



34.

Saint Philip

About 1675-1680

Oil on canvas, 105 × 92 cm

Galleria Nazionale, Parma

Seville's Baroque painters frequently depicted biblical series, and *apostolados* were especially valued for their catechising and artistic merits. They always served the same purpose, being vivid reminders of the "pillars" of the Church, as these monumental compositions, inserted in architectural settings, became genuine symbolic "atlantes".

The powerful visage of this *Saint Philip* and his energetic, penetrating gaze, typical of a portrait painted from life, remind us of the boldest apostles of Ribera's youth, and the same naturalism is apparent in the book and the hands. Perhaps the most striking feature of this painting is the exceptional human type, which has no parallel in the rest of the series or in any other *apostolados* by Murillo's closest followers.



35.
*Christ after
 the Flagellation*
 About 1670
 Oil on canvas,
 153.7 × 175.3 cm

Krannert Art Museum,
 University of Illinois,
 Champaign

The iconography of Christ gathering his garments after the flagellation was a popular subject in 16th and 17th-century Spanish religious literature. Many mystics regarded this tragic scene as one of the most significant moments of the Passion.

Considered an eloquent reminder of Jesus's humility and acceptance of suffering, this dramatic scene was widely venerated, and some believers even formed associations dedicated to the adoration of Christ at this particular moment in the Passion story. In Seville, the Confraternity of La Columna y Azotes (the Column and Lashes) had—around the same time Murillo painted this canvas—a sculpture of this motif among its sacred images, known as the Christ of the Purple Robe.



36.
*The Prodigal
 Son Feasting*
 About 1660
 Oil on canvas,
 104.5 × 135.5 cm

National Gallery
 of Ireland, Dublin

The widespread presence of this parable can be explained by the Counter-Reformation interest in underscoring God's mercy through the forgiveness of sins. Recreating the dissipated lifestyle of the wayward son gave artists an excuse to compose showy banquet scenes, much more grandiose in the case of Murillo's European contemporaries. These scenes almost invariably include elements such as musicians, servants, an abundance of costly food and drink, and beautiful women in luxurious gowns, all easily associated with the idea of sinful living, though depicted with an obvious moralising intention.

The composition denotes a diligent study of space, in which Murillo uses light to play with the perception of depth.



37.
***The Prodigal
 Son Feasting***
 About 1660-1665
 Oil on canvas,
 27 × 34 cm

Museo Nacional
 del Prado, Madrid

The numerous extant *bocetos* by Murillo illustrate the importance of these small paintings in his workshop's production processes, whether as preparatory sketches, samples for showing to clients or *ricordi*. This sketch contains virtually all the same elements as the final work, albeit with some modifications that subtly alter the reading of the scene, such as the interaction between the prodigal son and the courtesan, who are positioned closer and gazing in slightly different directions. Murillo minimised the ostentatious show of vices and lust, incorporating subtler allusions to sin through the courtesan and the banquet.



38.
***The Marriage
 Feast at Cana***
 About 1669-1673
 Oil on canvas,
 179 × 235 cm

The Henry Barber Trust,
 The Barber Institute
 of Fine Arts, University
 of Birmingham

The painting represents the occasion of Christ's first miracle, when he turned water into wine. Murillo created an expansive composition featuring more than twenty figures wearing a rich variety of colourful clothing. They inhabit a grand and solemn architectural space whose strong verticals are balanced by the horizontals of the table. The bridal couple is placed in the centre of the scene, picked out by a beam of light. The stoneware vessels, with the bright sheen of their damp surfaces, are of a type particularly associated with Seville. Murillo emphasised Christ's miracle by placing them exactly on the central axis of the painting.



39.
The Adoration of the Magi
 About 1655-1660
 Oil on canvas,
 190 × 146.1 cm
 Toledo Museum of Art,
 Toledo, Ohio

The Virgin presents the new-born Babe to representatives of each generation and continent, represented metaphorically by the Magi as the three ages of man and the three continents known at the time of Christ's birth. Murillo dispensed with the drama and part of the lavishness and excess we find in works by painters like Rubens, concentrating instead on the attitudes, interactions and emotions that fill every corner of the scene. As a master of colouring, he knew how to combine and contrast a rich palette of complementary hues. This colourful harmony, heir to Zurbarán's finest work, and the naturalism of the human figures make this one of the most attractive compositions of his early mature phase.



40.
The Martyrdom of Saint Andrew
 About 1680
 Oil on canvas,
 123 × 162 cm
 Museo Nacional
 del Prado, Madrid

Murillo demonstrated his narrative skills in a small format in this case, quite rare in his oeuvre for works of this complexity. In this martyrdom scene, an infrequent theme in his output, Saint Andrew's rapture is very similar to the ecstatic expression of his Immaculate Conceptions, underscoring the saint's jubilant triumph at the prospect of his imminent ascent to heaven rather than his suffering on the cross. Murillo reinforced the strong sense of upward motion with the lines of the cross arms, the visible tautness of the body, the direction of the gaze and the gradually lightening palette that leads the viewer's eyes up to the dazzling light just above the martyr's hands.



41.
Saint Didacus of Alcalá
Feeding the Poor
 About 1645-1646
 Oil on canvas, 173 × 183 cm
 Museo de la Real
 Academia de Bellas Artes
 de San Fernando, Madrid

This is a work from the series for the Franciscan monastery that represented Murillo's first introduction to Seville patrons. The canvas, in which the influence of Velázquez is undeniable, represents Saint Diego or Didacus of Alcalá, a lay brother from the town of San Nicolás del Puerto in Seville province, handing out *sopa boba* (slop or gruel) to the beggars who came to the gates of the friary seeking charity. It is a scene taken from the daily reality of Seville's most impoverished residents and one that would subsequently inspire the master's genre paintings.

Charity is personified here as a woman with one breast bared, preparing to suckle the child in her arms. Murillo internalised the message of the Franciscan legend, "Mira en el pobre a Dios" (see God in the poor man), and dignified the figure of the beggar, making him the focus of his compositions.



42.
A Peasant Boy Leaning
on a Sill
 About 1670-1675
 Oil on canvas,
 52 × 38.5 cm
 National Gallery, Londres

Murillo paid special attention to these characters which had previously played only a minor role in European painting, especially in the Spanish context. He gave these anonymous figures individuality, prominence and dignity, presenting them as people with feelings and the ability to express them. In this particular case, the broad, expressive smile on the boy's face contrasts with his shabby attire.

The composition is quite simple, yet even in this small canvas Murillo managed to create an impression of great depth through the use of light, the boy's pose—very close to the viewer—and the view in perspective of the sill that delimits the space and subtly separates the bright exterior from the gloomy interior.



43.
*Four Figures
 on a Step*
 About 1655-1660
 Oil on canvas,
 109.9 × 143.5 cm

Kimbell Art Museum,
 Fort Worth, Texas

The quest for the meaning of this remarkable work has yielded contradictory hypotheses, from those who argue that it is simply a family observing something going on in the street, to those who associate it with the practice of prostitution. In any case, the piercing gazes of the two young people and the old woman with her enormous spectacles, a common device in Baroque painting, brazenly beckon the viewer to join them.

The fashionable attire of the young man and the rest of the figures—with the exception of the conspicuous tear in the sleeping child's trousers—bespeak a higher economic, if not social, station. Murillo reused the models he created, such as the smiling youth with the hat who may very well be the protagonist of *The Young Fighting Cock Trainer*.



44.
*The Young Fighting
 Cock Trainer*
 About 1660
 Oil on canvas,
 54 × 40.4 cm
 Colección Abelló

The animation with which this painting was conceived is one of its most salient features. The theme depicted is undeniably bold: a boy pointing directly at the viewer with an acute fore-shortened arm. The mischievous, mocking smile on his face prompts us to wonder—with some discomfort—what or who he is laughing at.

The luminosity and novelty of the theme is accentuated by the bright colours of the boy's clothing and the picturesque dark feathers adorning the cap on his head. That ornamental detail led Angulo to identify the subject as one of the colourful characters who populated the world of cock fights, the reason for the title by which the painting is still known today.



45.

Domestic Scene

About 1655-1660

Oil on canvas,

143.7 × 109 cm

Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,
Alte Pinakothek, Munich

It seems plausible to associate this work with the old Spanish saying: “Child with lice, healthy and handsome; child without, weak and sickly.” The theme is particularly widespread in Dutch painting, which Murillo could have seen in private collections in Seville.

Murillo adopts an innovative approach to children and childish behaviour by putting them at the centre of his compositions. In spite of the accompanying still-life elements in this painting, the focus is firmly placed on the figures and their activity, which are further accentuated by the use of light. The scene unfolds in a humble dwelling although it is not an impoverished household, as details like the bell on the dog's collar and eye-glass on the old woman's bodice clearly reveal.



46.

The Little Fruit Seller

About 1670-1680

Oil on canvas,

144.3 × 107.6 cm

Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,
Alte Pinakothek, Munich

This is one of a series of works in which Murillo depicted children from the streets of Seville who, despite their poverty, seemed to lead a happy, pleasurable life. The painter's tender rendering was intended not only for simple aesthetic pleasure but to arouse the sympathy of the viewers, from a higher social class, towards the children in the picture. Miguel Mañana, a close friend of Murillo's, popularised a positive vision of poverty.

The technique employed in this work is different from his other paintings of children: the chiaroscuro effect is less pronounced, making the shadows appear much softer. According to certain interpretations, this picture is an allegory of autumn.



47.
***Old Woman
 and Boy***
 About 1665
 Oil on canvas, 147 × 107 cm
 National Trust Collections,
 Dyrham Park, The Blathwayt
 Collection, Gloucestershire

On one level the work can be interpreted as a roguish scene because it includes some of the ingredients typical of such compositions: interaction through looks and gestures, food as the primary concern of the needy, and laughter as a catalyst. However, it can also be interpreted from a moralising or satirical perspective, as a critique of greed: the old woman is selfishly pulling the dish away to avoid sharing it with the boy, who taunts her for miserliness.

According to a third interpretation, the boy's wide grin revealing a full set of teeth mocks the cruel passage of time and the age of the woman who, toothless and with a sunken mouth, can only eat soft, mushy food like porridge or soup.



48.
Boys Playing Dice
 About 1670-1680
 Oil on canvas,
 148 × 114 cm
 Gemäldegalerie der
 Akademie der bildenden
 Künste, Vienna

One of the outstanding characteristics of this painting is the warmth of the light that bathes the scene. The believable gestures of both boys, concentrated on the game, are clearly individual portraits rather than repetitive archetypes, while the small details are worthy of the finest still-life painter. Murillo situated the children in an outdoor space, quite possibly an attempt to replicate the poorest slums and old city walls of Seville. It is a location virtually identical to the ones we find in works such as *Invitation to a Game of Argolla*, *Old Woman and Boy* and *The Little Fruit Seller*.

Murillo cleverly transforms an inconsequential street scene—reflecting the everyday poverty and underlying world of marginalisation and deprivation—into an attractive pictorial composition.



49.
*Invitation to a Game
 of Argolla*
 About 1665-70
 Oil on canvas,
 165.2 × 110.5 cm
 Dulwich Picture Gallery,
 London

The game of *argolla*, mentioned in literary works of the Spanish Golden Age, consisted in hitting a ball through a hoop driven into the ground. In this painting, a young rogue, his face superbly foreshortened, tempts another boy to join him in the game, perhaps hoping to play for the bread the second boy is tactlessly devouring, or at least share it. The society of the day took a dim view of the world of play, and the work may therefore have moralising connotations.

This type of street scene, even in Murillo's lifetime, delighted northern European patrons, eager to own or take home a unique souvenir of the essence of 17th-century Seville, a city of contrasts.



50.
Self-Portrait
 About 1655-1660
 Oil on canvas,
 107 × 77.5 cm
 The Frick Collection,
 New York, gift of Dr and
 Mrs Henry Clay Frick II

Murillo appears here as a gentleman rather than an artist. He is nearing forty, a time of his life when he was beginning to be a renowned painter. The artist portrayed himself set in stone. This was the support of painting in classical antiquity and was a prestigious material because of what was represented on it. It was also extremely durable. The choice of the oval format and the trompe-l'oeil effect in this work are directly related to northern European innovations in portraiture.

This was the most widely known portrait of the artist until the early 20th century and is considered to be one of the self-portraits inherited by his son Gaspar.



51.

*Portrait of Juan
de Saavedra, 1650*

Oil on canvas,
135 × 98 cm

Collection of the Duchess
of Cardona

This is the earliest known example of a portrait signed and dated by Murillo. At the top two putti hold tablets with the nobleman's age and the year in which the canvas was painted. The fictive stone frame is a device he often used in bust-length portraits and even self-portraits. The chosen typology and the identity of the sitter mark it as the first in a series of portraits that reflect the subjects' ties of friendship and patronage with the artist as well as their social ambitions. The lengthy Latin inscription is the most convincing proof of the connection between this nobleman and the artist, for Murillo included a frank admission of his gratitude and sincere regard for Saavedra.



52.

*Portrait of Antonio
Hurtado de Salcedo,
Marquis of Legarda*

About 1664
Oil on canvas,
238 × 185 cm

Colomer Collection,
Madrid

This portrait is unique in Spanish Baroque portraiture and in Murillo's oeuvre. The model emphatically posed as a hunter and the imposing presence of nature mark it as a singular composition. Associated with Velázquez's portraits of members of the royal family as hunters, the painting shows a nobleman who wanted to advertise his upward social mobility by adopting the iconography of the aristocratic huntsman typical of the Habsburgs.

We know from the records that have survived that for several years until 1664 Antonio Hurtado de Salcedo resided in Seville in Calle Vidrio, not far from the house where Murillo lived at the time.



53.

*Portrait of Andrés
de Andrade y la Cal*

About 1660

Oil on canvas, 200 × 119 cm

The Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York

Little is known for certain about this figure, although the setting in which Murillo painted him seems to indicate that he was a leading citizen of Seville. He has been identified as *pertiguero* or marshal of processions in the cathedral, an office which required his active participation in public rites and ceremonies.

His dashing looks and fine clothes give an impression of calculated elegance. Moreover, Murillo subtly incorporated other details in the picture to advertise the subject's elevated social status. The presence of the dog is in keeping with the tradition of court portraiture in Spain, while the coat of arms on the wall and the eloquently massive architecture reinforce the idea of a wealthy nobleman.



54.

*Portrait of Íñigo Melchor
Fernández de Velasco*
(Madrid, 1629-1696)

1659

Oil on canvas, 208 × 138 cm

Louvre Museum, Painting
section, Paris

The subject of this portrait, a member of the Spanish high nobility, was the eighth Constable of Castile and seventh Duke of Frías, and in 1661 he joined the Order of Santiago. In 1668 he served as governor of Flanders, and in 1676, twenty years before his death, he was appointed high steward to King Charles II. Murillo probably painted this portrait during his sojourn in Madrid.

He situated the subject in an outdoor setting with some of the elements he had used in other portraits, such as the column on a high pedestal, the balustrade and the lavish drapery that accentuates the Baroque spirit of this depiction. The black silk attire with grey highlights is a prominent feature of the composition, while the abundant clouds in the luminous background serve to offset the austerity of the figure.



55.

Portrait of Josua van Belle

1670

Oil on canvas, 124 × 102 cm

National Gallery of Ireland,
Dublin

Josua van Belle (1637–1710) was a Dutch shipping merchant and art collector from Rotterdam who lived for a time in Cadiz and Seville. Murillo painted his portrait shortly before his return to Holland.

Almost certainly a full-length portrayal originally, it has long been considered one of the artist's finest portraits. A connection to the tradition of Dutch portraiture has been suggested, arguing that Van Belle may have referred Murillo to formal Dutch sources present in Seville. It has also been associated with the Flemish tradition of court portraiture in Spain, based on models established by Rubens and Van Dyck and continued by Velázquez and Carreño. Murillo had a chance to study these when he visited Madrid in 1658.

Murillo is so full of subject, so dramatic, and comes so home to, and appeals so to the common sense of mankind, and is recommended by such a magical fascination of colour, that he captivates alike the learned and unlearned, the sure test of his undeniable excellence.

A Handbook for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home, Richard Ford (1840)

Murillo

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