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**Sebastián Martínez Domedel**

Jaén, *c.* 1615 – Madrid, 1667

***Saint John***

Oil on canvas

75 x 53 cm

Attribution confirmed by José María Palencia Cerezo.

This artwork will be published in the forthcoming catalogue *Sebastianus. Pintor de Jaén*, due to the exhibition that took place in 2015–2016 in the Cathedral of Jaén, which “recovers and does justice” to Sebastián Martínez Domedel as “one of the great” seventeenth-century Spanish artists.

Except for the great artists of Baroque painting in Spain, such as Velázquez, Murillo or Zurbarán, only scarce historical references have survived that concern the figures who worked during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For this reason, many of them have been relegated in time to a secondary plane in art history. However, this situation is changing due to the contributions of new studies. Sebastián Martínez Domedel is a perfect example of this situation. Despite the fame he achieved in his lifetime and the information about him contributed by Antonio Palomino – when he included Martínez Domedel’s biography in 1724 in his *Parnaso español pintoresco laureado* of his *Museo pictórico y escala óptica* (partially translated into English in 1739 as *An account of the lives and works of the most eminent Spanish painters, sculptors and architects*) – little by little he fell into oblivion. During a long time, he has been a little-known painter, with a limited catalogue and a biography composed of few details. However, in the last decades, new documents and diverse works have been discovered, which permit us to emphasise the quality of an artistic production with notable stylistic contrasts, being considered in sum one of the most important artists of Alta Andalucía (Upper Andalusia) of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

We still do not know his exact date of birth, but it is situated around the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. His first steps in the arts were in the city of Jaen, where there was an important pictorial activity serving the needs of private patrons and the Church. With time, he came into contact with the masters of his time, such as José de Ribera, Alonso Cano or Juan de Valdés Leal, as became evident in his work. These contacts with the Court enriched his production and permitted him to work for the great patrons such as the Duke of Lerma and Philip IV himself. In the same way, private clients and ecclesiastic entities enthusiastically welcomed his painting, which would be distributed among large cities such as Madrid, Seville, Cordoba or Jaen.

His style is eclectic and is marked by a strong influence of naturalistic painting and other contemporary artists. His work is characterised by its perfection in the drawing and its dark composition, a touch of impasto in the colour and his daring in the nude figure; the great compositions and figures with legends of the Apostles and crucifixes, without too much religious emotion, a touch cold and stylised; angels or cherubs, playful; deep and vaporous landscapes, damp and dark. He fled from closed places or rooms, representing his figures in an open landscape. Although the overall composition flows within a scale of greys, the tones and lights shine with warm touches, done in thick brushstrokes of ochre and pure colours.

The representation of Saint John in Christian art appears in two different aspects; as a child or as an adult. The representation of the child Saint John was popularised during the Italian Renaissance. As concerns the iconography of the child Saint John, his personal and constant attribute is *Agnus Dei* or the Divine Lamb. Following the text *Ecce Agnus Dei* – which is usually written somewhere in the scene, generally in a phylactery – the Holy Precursor points to it with his index finger, and it is with this movement that he expresses, as does Archangel Gabriel, his mission of announcing Christ. These characteristics are united in this oil painting by Sebastián Martínez Domedel. This attribution is confirmed by two illustrious personalities of the world of art, as are the Director of the museum of fine arts of Cordoba, José María Palencia Cerezo, and by Benito Navarrete. The current work could well be related with the painting located in the high altarpiece of the Cathedral of Jaen – done by the same artist – and concretely with the angels who hold the relic of said cathedral – the *Santa Faz* (Veil of Veronica).



Sebastián Martínez Domedel, *Veil of Veronica*, detail. Jaén, Cathedral.



**Jan Van Bijlert (Bylert or Bylert)**

Utrecht, 1597/98 – 1671

***The Courtship of Venus and Adonis***

c. 1630-1640

Oil on panel

36 x 47 cm

**Bibliography:**

Paul Huys Janssen. *Jan van Bijlert 1597/98 - 1671*. Catalogue Raisonné. John Benjamins Publishing Company. Amsterdam, 1998. p. 111-112, cat. num. 38, rep. p. 294, pl. 104.

Frank Dabell in *La Pittura Eloquente*, exhibition catalogue, Maison d'Art, Monte-Carlo 2010, n. 12, pp. 69-73, illus. p. 71.

Jan van Bijlert (1597/98-1671) was a pupil of his father, Herman van Bijlert, a glass painter, and Abraham Bloemaert. He is best known as one of the Utrecht Caravaggists and is often ranked with Hendrick ter Brugghen, Gerard van Honthorst and Dirck van Baburen. However, Van Bijlert is not primarily a Caravaggist painter, he is also a Classicist and a painter of realistic Dutch genre scenes and portraits. He was readily inspired by new movements and developments. His inspiration comes from Dutch contemporaries such as Abraham Bloemaert and Gerard van Honthorst. In 1621, Jan Van Bijlert travelled to Italy where he remained until 1624, picking up the currents of Caravaggism still prevalent in Rome: he was inspired by the work of Guido Reni and Orazio Gentileschi among others. He painted Caravaggist subject types, particularly half-length figures in bucolic costumes. His earliest paintings, done between 1624 and 1626, show direct borrowings from the Caravaggisti, but his later work abandons the strong contrasts of light and shadow and adopts a lighter palette and a more polished style. A significant influence on his later painting is the work of Paulus Moreelse.

“The theme of Venus and Adonis was well known in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It had been painted earlier in Utrecht by Paulus Moreelse in 1614. Cupid is present in all the known representations; however, Van Bijlert has clearly given him an extra role here. The god of love triumphantly rides a goat, the personification of lust. It is the same child who served as a model for the Christ Child in Van Bijlert’s *Virgin and Child and a Girl Offering Fruit in Sibiu*. The figure of Venus seems to be based on the *Andromeda* in the Galleria Farnese in Rome, attributed to Domenichino.”

Paul Huys Janssen

“Adonis holds Venus as she sits beside him, her left arm outstretched. Her hair dishevelled, the Goddess of Love is naked but for a pearl necklace, her body revealed by the falling away of the blue mantle and white shift, barely covering her most intimate parts. The pair is united, yet her arm’s gesture to the left – the sinister direction – suggests that the moment may only be a fleeting one.

Indeed, the ancient mythological narrative relates that Adonis is destined to meet his end shortly hereafter in a hunting accident, gored to death by a wild boar. Beside the couple, poised on top of a goat, sits a plump Cupid, bow in hand. At the feet of the group lies a sympathetic old greyhound, raising its head to look at Venus’ mischievous son. The landscape setting enhances the lyricism of the scene, yet it is difficult to escape a feeling of suspense while beholding this amorous subject. As a wayward youth, Adonis no doubt believes he will live forever, oblivious to the fact that time and mortality will be his enemies, just as they are enemies of beauty.

It is as if Adonis were restraining Venus from leaving him, a reversal of their usual roles in such paintings, where it is Adonis who takes leave of his beloved as he departs for what will be his fatal encounter. The hunt is alluded to clearly in the lower right corner of the composition, where we see a spear, and the theme is also symbolized by the hound. Yet the idea of the chase was common in paintings about love, and the amorous elements outweigh the premonitions of disaster in a painting more about courtship than breaking up: the dog is awake but in repose, and Cupid is certainly far from asleep (as in Titian’s celebrated *Venus and Adonis*, painted for Philip II in 1554, where his condition implies the end of love as Adonis leaves Venus for the last time; his *Sacred and Profane Love* of c. 1514 has a Venus in a pose close to ours). Indeed, Cupid sits astride a goat, a common emblem of lust.

The fact that the relationship between Venus and Adonis, best known through the writings of Ovid, was not only adulterous (Venus was married to Vulcan) but also short-lived, did not stop individuals and couples from requesting it as a subject in painting, and the tradition of showing the mythological lovers was particularly well-established in Northern Europe during the Renaissance through the spread of emblem books and a lively pictorial tradition.

Shakespeare described the lovers as ill-matched, yet it is the idea of their intense love that endures. In 1620-1621 Van Dyck painted a memorable portrait of Sir George Villiers (later Duke of Buckingham) and Lady Katherine Manners as Venus and Adonis.

The clasping of right hands, or *dextrarum iunctio*, used since antiquity to represent union, and recognizable today as a familiar greeting, could also allude to leave-taking. It was widespread in Roman and Greek funerary art, migrating from pagan to Early Christian usage, while never losing its significance of ceremonial union or reunion. The picture before us may have been commissioned to celebrate either a betrothal or marital devotion in general, and it can hardly be accidental that the two right hands are placed directly above a dog, one of the ultimate symbols of fidelity. The old greyhound – like the splendid goat, gazing at the viewer with a knowing eye – seems painted from life, and the collar and medallion hanging from it, indicating private ownership, could mirror a domestic situation, real or desired.

In the world of Italian Renaissance painting, it has been demonstrated that paintings of amorous mythological figures such as Venus and Cupid were displayed in bedrooms and were not only erotically charged but considered as auspicious for marriage and fertility; one only has to look at some paintings of Dutch interiors to note that the walls tell the same story about the domestic world in Northern Europe at this time. In short, even though death may intervene, love is what matters.

Jan van Bijlert was familiar with all this, as is clear from his other mythological paintings, and he treated the subject of Venus and Adonis on at least one other occasion, in what is now a fragmentary canvas in the Centraal Museum, Utrecht (P. H. Janssen, *Jan van Bijlert 1597/98-1671. Catalogue Raisonné*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia 1998, p. 112, no. 39). His sources must have been similar to those used by contemporary painters: a local iconographic tradition combined with an awareness of Italian art, unquestionably stimulated by his Roman sojourn of the early 1620s. Other versions of the subject can be found in the work of Paulus Moreelse (1614; private collection, cited by Janssen, *op. cit.*, 1998, p. 112) and Ferdinand Bol (*c.* 1658; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum).

In *The Courtship of Venus and Adonis* presented here, the immediate influence of Caravaggio has mellowed, and a Classical elegance comes to the fore. While it should be said that the scarcity of dated canvases makes it hard to establish a precise chronology for the painter's oeuvre, it is generally recognized that much of van Bijlert's finest work falls into the period of his early maturity, between the late 1620s and about 1640. This painting is dated by Paul Huys Janssen to the 1630s."

Frank Dabell



Paulus Moreelse, *Venus and Adonis*, 1614. Private Collection.



Ferdinand Bol, *Venus and Adonis*, c. 1658. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



**Marià Fortuny**

Reus, 1838 – Rome, 1874

***Arab Guard***

c. 1871

Oil on board

9 x 13 cm



Red seal from the sale of the works and collections of Fortuny, organised in 1875, in the lower right corner.

Label on the reverse: “Corporation of London, Exhibition, Guildhall, 1901, of works by the prominent Painters of Spain”, with the name of his owner, Arthur Sanderson, and titled “An Arab”.

Label of François Buffa & Fils on the reverse, Flemish Family business of print publishers, from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Provenance:

Scotland, Arthur Sanderson collection (1846–1915; Co-founder of William Sanderson & Son Ltd in Leith – Edimburg, Wine and spirits importers, Whisky producers).

Exhibitions:

*Exhibition of the Works of Spanish Painters*. Londres, Art Gallery of the Corporation of London, London, 1901, num. cat. 159 (see label).

This work done in oil on board by Mariano Fortuny, of small format, is a preparatory study for the squatting figure in the painting *Tribunal de la Alhambra* (*Tribunal of the Alhambra*), one of the most appreciated of the painter’s works, acquired towards 1962 by Salvador Dalí in New York. The theme of this work remains enigmatic, as can be seen in the various titles that have been attributed to it: *Tribunal d’un caïd* (*Tribunal of a Caïd - Fol*), *Los moros en el cepo* (*Moors in leg restraints - Miquel y Badía*), or *Les Suppliciés. Porte de la Justice à l’Alhambra* (*The prisoners. Door of the Tribunal of the Alhambra - Yriarte*). Its current title is referred to in a letter that Mariano Fortuny sent to José Domingo Irureta Goyena in 1872, in which he cited it as “my painting of the Tribunal in the Alhambra”.<sup>1</sup>

This scene takes place in the Patio del Cuarto Dorado (Patio of the Golden Room) o the Mexuar in the Palace of Comares, location which has been represented by various artists. The realisation of this painting of the Fundación Gala-Dalí in Figueres required an arduous preparatory work, as attested to by our work and other drawings. The figure of the squatting Arab has been interpreted in some occasions as an executioner and in others as a simple guard according to the interpretation in the final painting: in the “Testament and inventory of goods of Mariano Fortuny in Rome”<sup>2</sup> there appears registered an “Arab Guard”, which surely corresponds to our sketch. He is dressed according to the old fashion of the period of Moorish dominion in Andalusia, as are all

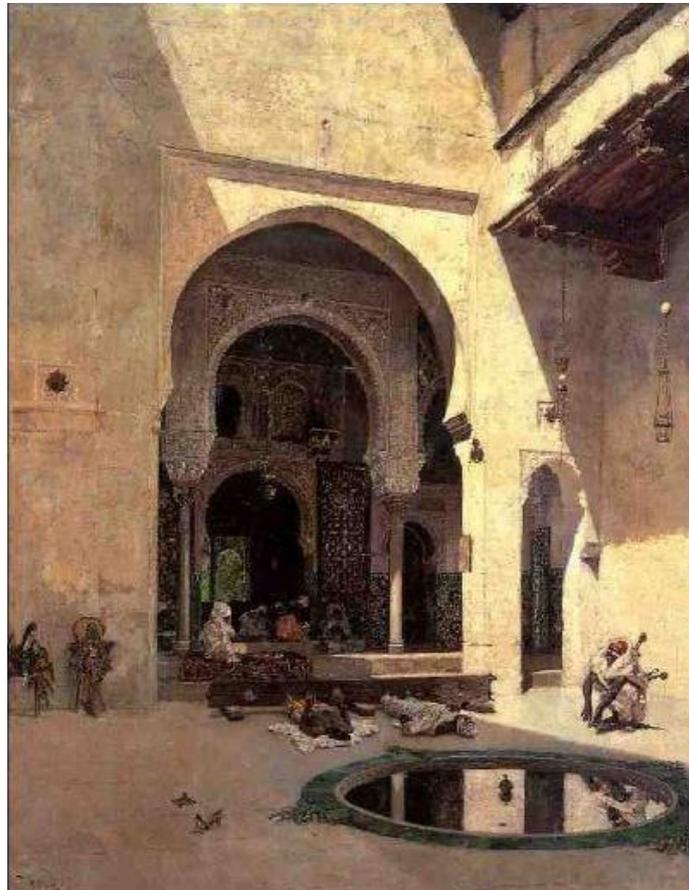
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<sup>1</sup> Study of a squatting figure for the painting *Tribunal de la Alhambra* (*Tribunal of the Alhambra*) (1871, oil on canvas, 75.2 x 59 cm).

<sup>2</sup> Navarro, Carlos G. “Testamentaria e inventario de bienes de Mariano Fortuny en Roma”. *Locus Amoenus*, num. 9, 2007-2008, p. 336, num. 50.

the figures in the final work on canvas. In four drawings done in pencil, conserved today in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (National Museum of Art of Catalonia), Fortuny studies the representation of this figure. The board which we present is no doubt the closest study to the final representation, even though he does not carry his weapons on his back, only represented in the work in Figueras.

The work was finished at the end of 1871, which allows us to date this preparatory study around that date.



Mariano Fortuny, *Tribunal de la Alhambra* (*Tribunal of the Alhambra*), 1871. Oil on canvas. Figueras, Fundación Gala-Dalí.



Letter from Fortuny to Goyena, Granada, January 2, 1872. Barcelona, MNAC, num. 008724-D.



Marià Fortuny, study for the painting *El tribunal de la Alhambra*. Graphite pencil on paper, around 1871. Barcelona, MNAC, num. 104821-D0A.



**Miquel Barceló**

Felanitx, Mallorca, 1957

***Soup***

1982

Mixed technique on canvas

60 x 73 cm

Signed and dated on back: "M. Barceló / 82 / Sopa" ("M. Barceló / 82 / Soup").

Provenance:

Zurich, Galerie Bruno Bischofberger.

Miquel Barceló inherited his interest in art from his mother, a painter. He attended drawing and modelling classes at the School of Decorative Arts of Palma de Mallorca from 1972 to 1973, continuing at the Reial Acadèmia Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi in 1974. That same year he travelled to Paris where he saw painting by Paul Klee, Jean Dubuffet and discovered Art Brut, a style that was to have a lasting impact on him. Abandoning his studies, he continued his self-taught training by exploring paintings by artists such as Lucio Fontana, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning. In the mid-70s, he entered the Taller Lluetàic Group, had his first exhibition in Barcelona and others in Mallorca. From the start, his works have been characterised by organic elements, placed on paint-covered canvases. In order to experiment with physical and chemical reactions generated by nature, the artist also worked on canvases with consistent layers of paint exposed to the weather.

The international fame of Barceló arrived in his youth when he participated in the Biennial of Sao Paulo (1981) and due to the *Documenta 7* in Kassel (1982) where he was invited by Rudi Fuchs and where he presented this painting. His work embodies numerous cultural references: the Mediterranean background of his native island and of Mali, where he lived for some years from 1988; Action Painting, the works by Jackson Pollock, Joan Miró, Antoni Tàpies, Conceptual Art and *Art Brut*. Moreover, his work as a book illustrator (among others of Dante, Paul Bowles and Enrique Juncosa, etc.) and literature influenced his production. His work includes enormous canvases and murals, terracotta and ceramic sculptures where those contributions are transfigured in a neoexpressionist personal synthesis, with creative force and a dense presence of material and artistic craft. He divides his time between Majorca, Paris, and Mali. He is the youngest artist to ever show at the Musée du Louvre, where he exhibited his illustration work for La Divina Commedia of Dante. He has had retrospectives at renowned institutions, including Centre Pompidou (Paris), Musée Picasso (Paris), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid), the Guggenheim Bilbao (Spain), and is included in many esteemed public and private collections worldwide. He is also reputed to have decorated places as the Capilla del Santísimo in the Cathedral of Majorca and the ceiling of the Human Rights Salon at the United Nations in Geneva. He received the Doctor Honoris Causa from the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona in 2012 and from Salamanca University in 2017.

This work by Miquel Barceló representing soup was exhibited in 1982 in the seventh edition of the contemporary art fair *Documenta* in Kassel, next to Francesco Clemente and Jean-Michel Basquiat. The artist was only 25 years old at the time and the reception of his work by the public and the art critics was already promising.

The theme of soup is a recurring one throughout his work. He developed it in many occasions and with different techniques. His *soup* often represents “seafood soup”, in which fish and seafood can be identified; alluding to other central theme of his work, the sea, referring to the Mediterranean Sea and to his birthplace of Majorca. Through these representations, he explores the material, the organic. This version that we present here illustrates his understanding of painting which tends to recreate reality, the soup is in raised relief from the canvas by playing with textures. It is not sure what it is composed of, but we perceive the presence of fish bones.

Soup is not the only representation of nutritive organic material in the work of Barceló, but also a metaphor of spiritual food, which satisfies the spectator through the sense of sight. A metaphor of the relationship between humans and the earth, and between humans themselves. In this way, the theme of soup is converted into a universal image, of association or of union, as can be observed in *Sopa d'Europa*, (Soup of Europe), work dating from 1985, year in which Spain signed the Act of Adhesion to the European Union. In 2007, the Onuart Foundation commissioned Barceló with the dome of the Human Rights Salon in the headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, work whose diameter measures of 45 metres. The artist himself considered this art piece as the conclusion of his work on the theme of soup, being the “definitive soup”. “I have painted soup many times, whirlpools, a sort of magma of the world being formed and this work is like the definitive soup, an enormous soup, giant, of material in transformation and in this way a sort of conclusion to my work” he affirmed.

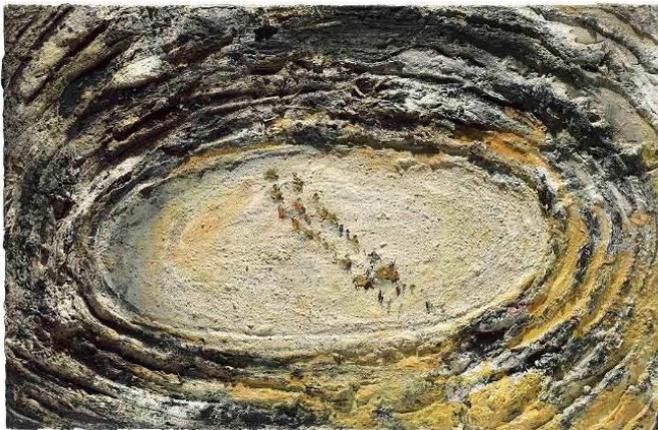


Miquel Barceló, *Sopa d'Europa*, (European Soup) 1985. Mixed technique on canvas. Dallas, Meadows Museum.



Miquel Barceló, *Dome of the Human Rights Salon in the headquarters of the United Nations*, 2007, Geneva.

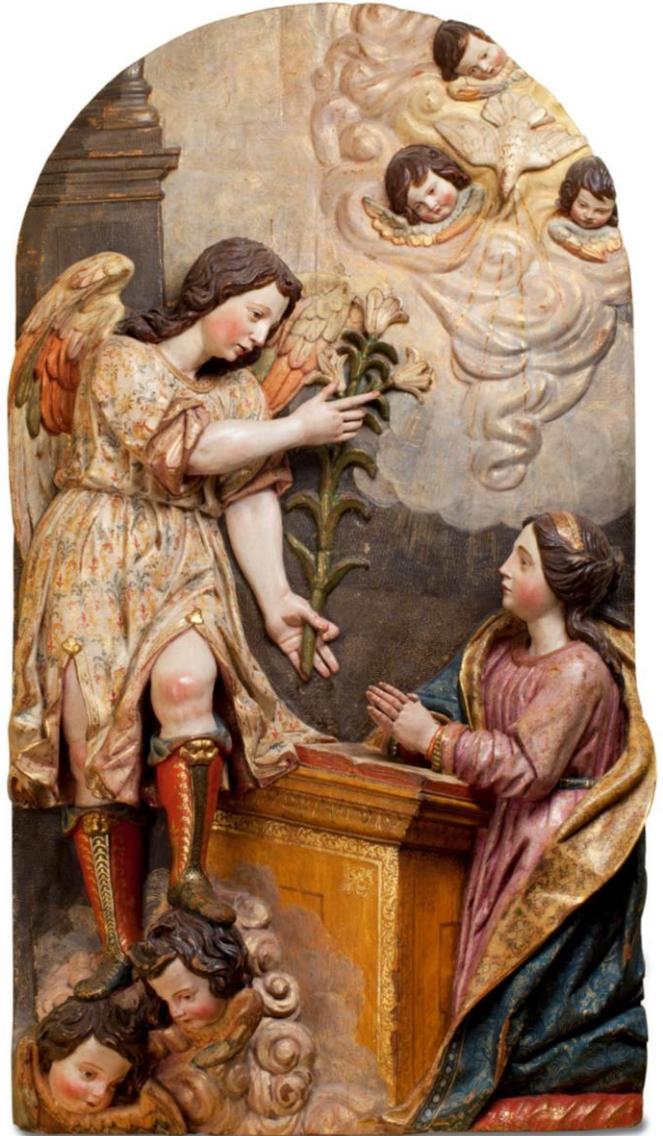
Barceló, among other artists in the history of art, such as Kandinsky, conceded a lot of importance to the circle. The artist would take up the elliptical curve of the recipient of soup and transform it, from the 1990s, in his representations of bullfighting rings.



Miquel Barceló, *El Paseillo negro*, 1990. Mixed technique on canvas. Private collection.



Miquel Barceló, *Sopa*, 1993. Bronze.



**Felipe de Ribas**

Córdoba, 1609 – Seville, 1648

*Nativity of the Virgin and Incarnation*

c. 1638

Carved wood, polychromed and gilded.

155 x 85 x 22 cm

Reliefs from the main retable of the Convent de la Concepción de San Juan de la Palma of Seville. In 1638, Felipe de Ribas (sculptor) and Francisco Terrón (painter) were commissioned to construct the retable. After the disappearance of the convent (1840, earthquake) the retable is transferred to Arcos de la Frontera. After the sale of the convent (20<sup>th</sup> Century), the works were transferred to the Franciscan Convent of Lebrija. Towards 1930, some of the works are put up for sale.

Provenance:

Main retable of the Convent de la Concepción de San Juan de la Palma, Seville.

Convent in Arcos de la Frontera.

Franciscan Convent of Lebrija.

Bibliography:

*Arte antiguo en la exposición iberoamericana de 1929*. Seville, 2014, p. 280 and ff.

Dabrio González, María Teresa. *Los Ribas, un taller andaluz de escultura del siglo XVII*. Córdoba, 1985, p. 286 and ff, fig. 38 and 41.

Navarrete Prieto, Benito. *La pintura andaluza del siglo XVII y sus fuentes grabadas*. Madrid, 1998, p.119 (rep. The Nativity of the Virgin, composition inspired in an engraving by Cornelis Cort, following composition of Zuccaro?)

Texts extracted from the bibliography on Felipe de Ribas:

DABRIO GONZÁLEZ, MARÍA TERESA. *Los Ribas, un taller andaluz de escultura del siglo XVII*. Córdoba, 1985.

GÓMEZ MORENO, MARÍA ELENA. *Escultura del siglo XVII*. Ars Hispaniae. Madrid, 1958, p. 282 and ff., fig. 257 and ff.

MARTIN GONZÁLEZ, JUAN JOSÉ. *Escultura barroca en España. 1600-1770*. Madrid, 1991, p. 165-166.

*Sevilla en el siglo XVII* (cat. exhib.) Sevilla, 1983-984, p. 195 and ff.

And from the bibliography on the retable:

DABRIO GONZÁLEZ, MARÍA TERESA. *Los Ribas, un taller andaluz de escultura del siglo XVII*. Córdoba, 1985, p. 286 and ff.

GONZÁLEZ DE LEÓN, FÉLIX. *Noticia artística de Sevilla*, Sevilla, 1844, p. 215.

LÓPEZ MARTÍNEZ, CELESTINO. *Desde Martínez Montañés hasta Pedro Roldán*. Sevilla, 1932, p. 130-131.

NAVARRETE PRIETO, BENITO. *La pintura andaluza del siglo XVII y sus fuentes grabadas*. Madrid, 1998, p. 119, fig. 149.

PONZ, ANTONIO. *Viaje por España*. Madrid, 1783, tome IX, letter IV, p. 793.

ROMERO DE TORRES, ENRIQUE. *Catálogo monumental de España. Provincia de Cádiz*. Madrid, 1934, p. 378.

Sculptor and architect of retables, Felipe de Ribas carried out his artistic activity in Seville between 1630 and 1648. He worked for seven years in Juan de Mesa's workshop. He returned to Cordoba in 1625 on the death of his father and four years later he settled definitively in Seville. There, he associated with Alonso Cano, and the Granada circle represented by Juan de Castillo, Pablo Legot and the Flemish sculptor José de Arce.

Felipe de Ribas was son of a painter and brother of the retable joiner Francisco Dionisio and the painter Gaspar; the three of them collaborated in numerous works. In the opinion of Hernández Díaz, the fundamental contribution of Felipe de Ribas consisted in the evolution he introduced in the composition of the retables which set them apart from previous ones. In his retables, the richly carved columns stand out, as do the great dynamism of the constructive and decorative elements, so much so that A. Sancho Corbacho has pondered if it is Felipe de Ribas who introduced the Solomonic column in this type of works, when he studies the main altarpiece of the Charterhouse in Jerez (1637-1639). In March of 1638, Felipe de Ribas together with the painter Francisco Terrón were contracted for two works for the Franciscan Monasterio de la Concepción, close to the church of San Juan de la Palma in Seville: the main altarpiece, to which these two reliefs belonged, and the altar of repose for Holy Week. The year before his death, 1647, he was in charge of the main altarpiece of the church of Santa María de la Granada in Moguer (Huelva), currently disappeared. In the last moments of his life, in very poor health, he had to transfer for completion to his brother Francisco Dionisio a series of works he had started and would not complete. The legacy of Montañés, the presence of Alonso Cano and the arrival of the Flemish sculptor José de Arce, who settled in Seville, compose the notable facts which shaped the sculpture of the period. The personal work of Alonso Cano in Seville is reinforced with that done by his disciple Felipe de Ribas (1609-1648).

### **Convento de la Concepción de San Juan de la Palma, Seville**

This ancient convent for which these two reliefs were carried out is now disappeared. It was a single nave church, whose walls were decorated with painted murals according to the Sevillian tradition. After the earthquake of March 1840, it was necessary to demolish the church due to its ruinous state. The community remained in the rest of the convent and built a new church. Soon after, the religious community moved to another location taking with them the most appreciated religious works of the old church.

## Move of main altarpiece

The first move of the community was to the Convento de la Encarnación which the Franciscans had in Arcos de la Frontera. There they installed the main altarpiece with some modifications (of this time remain photographs from the Mas Archive in Barcelona). When the community sold the Arcos convent (in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), they moved to the Franciscan convent in Lebrija, and once more they took with them the retablo of Ribas and Alonso Cano's stone sculpture of the Immaculate Virgin from the facade of the old Sevillian convent. In Lebrija – either due to space restrictions or for financial motives – the nuns decided to sell the works. The *Immaculate* of Alonso Cano and the figure that had presided the retablo of Felipe de Ribas were located in the parish of the Nervión neighborhood, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, a modern structure designed by the architect Antonio Arévalo Martínez. Alonso Cano's stone figure was put in the principal facade and the wood sculpture presided over the church (this figure was destroyed in 1936 and only a hand and part of the face, much deteriorated, are conserved). The rest of Ribas' retablo was taken apart and the reliefs went into a private collection.

Arana de Varflora, when referring to the church of the Convent of the Concepción, praises its retables and especially the main altar, noting that "... the main altar and the relief sculptures are worthy of appreciation..." (p. 63). Antonio Ponz in his *Viaje por España*<sup>1</sup> also agrees. González de León (1844) describes for us (although he differs in the panels of the retablo in respect to the original contract) "The main altar of two Corinthian panels, with their respective cornices, was very well formed, and had reliefs of great merit".<sup>2</sup>

## The retablo in the Convento de la Encarnación in Arcos de la Frontera, Cádiz

Romero de Torres, who had the opportunity to see the retablo in Cadiz is of the opinion that it must have suffered changes in the new location "... since the small church lacked sufficient space and height for it to be installed as it had been originally"<sup>3</sup> and attributes the work to Alonso Cano, even though the authorship of this retablo had been known since 1932, with the publication of the commission by López Martínez.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Ponz, *Viaje por España*, Madrid, 1783, volume IX, letter IV, p. 793.

<sup>2</sup> González de León, Félix. *Noticia artística de Sevilla*, Sevilla, 1844, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Romero de Torres, Enrique. *Catálogo monumental de España. Provincia de Cádiz*. Madrid, 1934, p. 378.

<sup>4</sup> López Martínez, Celestino. *Desde Martínez Montañés hasta Pedro Roldán*. Sevilla, 1932, p. 130-131.

## **The commission of the main altar of the Convento de la Concepción de San Juan de la Palma, Sevilla**

In March 1638, Felipe de Ribas together with Francisco Terrón were commissioned two works for the monastery of the Franciscan nuns of the Concepción, close to the church of San Juan de la Palma of Sevilla: the main altar and the Altar of Repose for Holy Week. The contract was signed by Felipe de Ribas as sculptor and Francisco Terrón as painter, pair frequently forming a team of artists in these years. Their respective wives also signed, Rufina de Albornoz and María Morillo, 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1638, witnessed by Rodrigo Ortiz de la Barrera. The agreed materials were hardwood for the structure and frame and cedar for the sculptures and carvings.

The composition is described in great detail: on the predella “there will be two children on each side”, the main image “pure and clean Conception” would preside the altar, be full relief and two yards (*varas*) tall, in the same frame there would be two angels, also in fully sculpted. In the side frames, according to the commission, six stories relating to the life of the Virgin “more than medium relief”, which would be distributed in the three parts of the altar as follows: in the first, “in the first niche at the lower right side will be depicted the story of the *Golden Gate*” and “in the first niche on the left, the story of the *Nativity*; in the second one the *Presentation of the Virgin* and the *Marriage of the Virgin*; and in the third one, the *Incarnation* and the *Visitation*; and in the pinnacle, the *Assumption*, with God the Father crowning the composition. Although in the commission the reverse is specified – the scenes were to be included from left to right – it may be a description facing outwards from the retable.

The price for the work was 3,800 *ducados* (2,500 for the sculptor Felipe de Ribas y and 1,300 for the painter Francisco Terrón). Both artists committed to deliver the retable to its location by the beginning of December 1639, so that it could be inaugurated for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. In the summer of 1639, the sculptor Felipe de Ribas completed his part of the work with sufficient time so that the painter could finalize the retable. On 12<sup>th</sup> August 1639, Felipe de Ribas was paid his part through the cessation from the nuns for him to obtain 1,200 *ducados* from Francisco Esquivel (debtor of the dowry of the novice Maria de Tejada in the convent). On September 15<sup>th</sup>, the sculptor gave a power of attorney to the lawyer Pedro de la Torre so that he could be paid that amount in his name.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> López Martínez, Celestino. *Desde Martínez Montañés hasta Pedro Roldán*. Sevilla, 1932, p. 130-131.

## Distribution of the main altarpiece:

Golden Gate  
Presentation  
**Incarnation**

Assumption

Immaculate Conception

**Nativity**  
Marriage of the Virgin  
Visitation

## The relief of the Nativity of the Virgin

The composition of the relief of the Nativity proceeds from an engraving by Cornelis Cort (printed in 1568) and recommended by Pacheco in *Arte de la Pintura*: “There exists an engraving from 1568 by Cornelis of this story, where we see Saint Anne in a splendid bed with the curtains raised, with a melancholy expression on her face; behind the bed there appear two servants speaking to each other and another three women who, kneeling, have in a sort of wooden tub the naked Sacred Child, washing her with half her body showing, and another servant at her side, warming a cloth; a child angel kneeling and unwrapping a sash. It is all the best that has ever



been seen in an engraving”.<sup>6</sup> This engraving was used by Spanish baroque artists from different locations (Seville, Valencia and Toledo). We can find documentation of the use of this Cort engraving in the facade of the Cathedral of Baeza, work of Juan Bautista Villapando and Jerónimo de Prado (c. 1538); Antón Pizarro used it for a work that is conserved in the church of

<sup>6</sup> Pacheco, 1649, 1990, p. 524.

Casarrubios del Monte, Toledo; Juan Ribalta for his work in Andilla; Francisco Pacheco for the predella of the retablo of the Virgin de Belén, in the church of the Adoración of Sevilla; even Murillo in his *Nacimiento de la Virgen* (Louvre) was inspired by details of this composition by Cornelis Cort;<sup>7</sup> the same composition was used in an Hispano-Philippine ivory relief of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, published by M. Estella.<sup>8</sup>

According to M. T. Dabrio González, in this relief and due to its source of inspiration, “the descriptive value is much greater, as well as the pictoric preoccupation to create optic effects which help generate the idea of depth; in this way, there are two fundamental planes, that of Saint Anne lying in bed and that of the maidens who bathe the Virgin as a child, here with figures of two sizes in order to create perspective. The clothing and the headscarves, although adapted to the technique of folds of cloth of the artist, give away another origin; however, the characters, with the faint melancholy typical of Ribas, are due to the Sevillian tradition; the angel which holds the cloth to dry Maria proceeds from other child or angel figures of the artist, while the protagonist is inspired in figures of Baby Jesus seen in Cano’s works and even more so in Martínez Montañés.”<sup>9</sup>

### **The relief of the Incarnation**

According to M. T. Dabrio González, “the scene is resolved in the traditional Western way, which is to say, with the appearance of the Angel Gabriel holding a lily, symbol of purity, in the moment that Maria is praying with a book, he is bringing the burst of the glory of represented by the dove of the Holy Spirit. Without doubt, the gaze is drawn to the strong presence of the archangel, with his strong legs in boots and greaves, and whose tunic opens in flattened zig-zag folds, very characteristic in Felipe and then in Francisco de Ribas. His powerful right arm is crossed horizontally, creating a break in the composition reminiscent of that used by Núñez Delgado in his well-known Bautista de San Clemente.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Navarrete Prieto, Benito. *La pintura andaluza del siglo XVII y sus fuentes grabadas*. Madrid, 1998, p. 118 and 135.

<sup>8</sup> Estella, Margarita. *La escultura barroca de marfil en España*. Madrid, 1984, p. 330, num. cat. 758, fig. 332 and 333.

<sup>9</sup> Dabrio González, María Teresa. *Los Ribas, un taller andaluz de escultura del siglo XVII*. Córdoba, 1985, p. 293.

<sup>10</sup> Dabrio González, María Teresa. *Los Ribas, un taller andaluz de escultura del siglo XVII*. Córdoba, 1985, p. 294.



Presentation of  
Jesus at the Temple





***Travelling writing box***

17<sup>th</sup> century

Bolivia

Cedar wood, inlaid wood (intarsia)

24.5 x 37 x 27 cm

Provenance: Barcelona, O. Junyent collection

Exhibitions: *Oleguer Junyent*. Barcelona, Palau de la Virreina, 1961, cat. No. 252.

Bibliography:

Artur Ramon i Navarro, 'El col·leccionisme a Catalunya avui: una reflexió', *Estudi del moble*. Barcelona, May 2008, No. 7, p. 22.

Small bureau with lid and front cover on iron hinges whose arms extend over the surfaces of the lid, front cover and back and end in eight-petalled flowers. Decorating the front cover is a splendid circular lock with openwork flowers around the outside and a thin string of pearls inside. The item stands on small feet in the form of flat disks. The front cover opens to reveal a series of compartments consisting of five drawers and a central 'chapel'. The two upper drawers are false. There is one large draw at the bottom and two in the middle row flanking the almost square central compartment, which differs from the rest and stands out for its chequerboard background behind an arch and two small turned columns painted black. When open, the lid allows access to a space in which there are three *estojos* or receptacles set against the sides with lids to close them.

On the exterior, each side has an eight-spoked wheel in the centre, except for the lid, which has a large design based on a smaller eight-spoked wheel that expands into a sixteen-spoked wheel, with four stars at the corners, whose centre is highlighted by two-colour petals, a motif that is repeated all over the free space in the wheels. The front cover, the top lid and the lid of the largest *estajo* are decorated with a design of interlaced eight-pointed sawtooth stars, while the fronts of the drawers are also decorated with eight-pointed stars with two-colour central flowers that are interlaced to form the well-known sawtooth designs.

Latticework decoration, in complex geometrical sets of interlaced stars, is characteristic of Spanish cabinetmaking and from early on was copied in inlaid decoration on small surfaces. Starting with star-shaped polygons, the star that gives rise to each of these motifs is surrounded by a series of elements making up a circular latticework pattern, with the eight-pointed stars always as the basic motif from which other stars are generated, such as the sixteen-pointed star, each wheel being related to the regular polygon with the same number of sides. The central star and all the lines needed to form this wheel are cut out with the corresponding set of three triangles, which for the interlaced eight-pointed stars were called *blanquillos*, without the need for plans and needing very few auxiliary lines. As in cabinetmaking, the lines are generated on the basis of a grid consisting of a series of pairs of parallel lines, called *cuerdas* in cabinetmaking and *filetes* in inlay.

This type of decoration, which is generally considered Mudéjar, was used abundantly in Spain and the Americas, copying the concepts dealt with in the manuscripts *Carpintería de lo Blanco*, by Diego López de Arenas, and, especially in the Americas, in the *Obras* of Fray Andrés de San Miguel. As in Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries, the technique and the decoration survived

for another two centuries in Spanish America. In fact, in the cathedral of Puebla de los Ángeles, in Mexico, the backs of the seating in the choir combine patterns from this Spanish decoration with the design of flowerbeds in European Renaissance gardens. This type of furniture, though, its distribution and its design are repeated almost without variation in other areas, such as in the Jesuit missions in New Granada –present-day Bolivia–, and in Colombia, where large circular locks were used. For want of further documentation on these areas, though, we must be cautious and classify it of course as colonial or at most as *novohispano*, or New Spanish.





## Wilhelm Hopfgarten and Ludwig Jollage

### *The Arch of Constantine*

Rome

1818

Chased and gilded bronze

48 x 56 x 23 cm (base 4 x 59 x 27 cm)

#### Bibliography:

A. González-Palacios, *Il Tempio del Gusto*, Milan, 1984.

*A Royal Miscellany from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle*, exhibition catalogue, London, Queen's Gallery, 1990.

*Curiosità di una reggia*, exhibition catalogue, Florence, Palazzo Pitti, 1979.

M. Praz, *La filosofia dell'arredamento*, Milan, 1964.

S. Fox in *Il Palazzo del Quirinale, il mondo artistico a Roma nel periodo napoleonico*, Rome, 1989, vol. II.

During the neoclassical period, this type of *surtout de table*, inspired in the monuments of ancient Rome, was a typical gift from the popes to the reigning European royal families. Some of these objects belonged, for instance, to Maria Luisa of Spain, Queen of Etruria and afterwards Sovereign Duchess of Lucca. It concerns two reproductions of the columns of Trajan and Antoninus Pius in Rome, worked in bronze and gilded, currently conserved in the Palazzo Pitti. Likewise, there are two reproductions of the Vatican and Lateran obelisks, executed in the same material. The Prince of Metternich possessed a *surtout de table* of this kind, as demonstrated in an illustration in his study in the Ministry of External Affairs in Vienna, reproduced by Mario Praz.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years it has been demonstrated, beyond a doubt, the attribution of these works to Wilhelm Hopfgarten (1779-1860) and Ludwig Jollage (1781-1837). Hopfgarten trained in his uncle's workshop in Berlin and perfected his art in Paris, where he settled at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We know little about this period, but he surely arrived in Rome in 1805 together with Jollage, also from Berlin. They opened a workshop in the *via dei Due Macelli* where they came to be known as smelters, chisellers, gilders and specialists in bronze patina. Among their best-known works, the famous *gueridon* stands out, donated by Pope Leo XII to Charles X, with a mosaic representing the Shield of Achilles (currently at the Grand Trianon), and a table ornament for the King of Denmark, still conserved today in Copenhagen. Both artists had a long professional career and they had contact with many Italian artists such as the smelters Righetti (especially Luigi), collaborating in the well-known equestrian monuments in Piazza di San Francesco di Paola across from the Royal Palace of Naples.

The work we study here shows evident stylistic and technical contact with the columns and obelisks of Hopfgarten and Jollage, identifiable in many works (an obelisk, for example, which turned up in Mr. Cecil Beaton's sale in Reddish House). Currently, we only know this piece of the Arch of Constantine, but the bibliography mentions that Hopfgarten and Jollage executed this theme on other occasions, exhibiting it as well in the Palazzo Caffarelli in Rome in 1818.<sup>2</sup>

The Arch of Constantine has always been considered one of the emblematic monuments of Rome: the famous transcription in statue-quality marble, antique yellow and gilded bronze by the Roman silversmiths Gioacchino and Pietro Belli between 1808 and 1815 is considered perfect

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<sup>1</sup> A. González-Palacios, *Il Tempio del Gusto*, Milan, 1984, p. 169; *Curiosità di una reggia*, exhibition catalogue, Florence, Palazzo Pitti, 1979, cat. 28, p. 167; M. Praz, *La filosofia dell'arredamento*, Milan, 1964, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> S. Fox in *Il Palazzo del Quirinale, il mondo artistico a Roma nel periodo napoleonico*, Rome, 1989, vol. II, pp. 45-47.

regarding the presentation of the proportions, but with a totally arbitrary aggregation of the chariot in the upper part. It was acquired by the Regent, future George IV, and is conserved today in Windsor Castle.<sup>3</sup>

On the underside of our bronze we find some wax seals, illegible inscriptions which indicate that the piece belonged, during some moment of its history, to a Russian collection.



Gioacchino and Pietro Belli, *Arch of Constantine*, 1808-1815, Windsor Castle.



Wax seals on the underside of our bronze

Alvar González-Palacios

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<sup>3</sup> *A Royal Miscellany from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle*, exhibition catalogue, London, Queen's Gallery, 1990, pp. 16-19.



***Jarro de pico (Ewer)***

Seville

16<sup>th</sup> century

Silver, partially gilded

23 cm high, 20 cm wide and 11 cm diameter

Provenance:

Madrid, private collection.

Bibliography:

Esteras Martín, Cristina. *La Colección Alorda-Derksen. Platería de los siglos XIV–XVIII*. Fundación Alorda Derksen. Barcelona, 2005.

Esteras Martín, Cristina. *La platería de la Colección Várez Fisa. Obras escogidas. Siglos XV–XVIII*. Tf. Editores, Madrid, 2000.

Originally it was a piece used for secular and domestic use, although sometimes it was destined for religious uses. It is an ewer (*jarro*), named for the decoration called “de pico” of the spout, which for function and type should not be confused with the jug (*jarra*) which has two handles and was used, on occasions, as a flower vase. Its function was to serve water at table, as much for drinking as for washing hands. For this reason, it is cited in historical documents as *jarro aguamanil* (aquamanile). It concerns a traditional object dating from the Golden Age of Hispanic silver. It presents a fusion of elements of renaissance style and geometrical decoration typical of the periods of Felipe I and Felipe II. It is characterised by modelled details in the spout, and grotesque masculine features, following popular models of the Italian Renaissance.

The body of the ewer, of cylindrical form, although ending in an almost semi-spherical shape, rests on a circular foot with pedestal of the same section, convex zone decorated with mirrors and other geometric decorations incised on a background of fine dots and a tapered neck crowned by a projecting trim. The vessel presents in the upper part a frieze between the moulding adorned with a valence with mixtilinear motifs. The lower part of the vessel has four pairs of ribs framed with ornamental elements. As regards the handle of this Sevillian ewer, it rises up over the top of the level of the vessel and has the shape of an inverted five with the final segment forming a curved stay.

The pouring spout appears coterminous and warped to the edge, decorated with a mascaron portraying a bearded masculine face, with an extremely fierce expression, almost diabolical due to the way he frowns, raises his eyebrows and aggressively shows his teeth. This model of mascaron was often repeated, and only small variations differentiate one from another.

In view of its formal structure and decoration, this aquamanile fully responds to the model of ewer typified in Seville, characterised by the features that we have described above, although naturally not all of them were resolved in identical manner given that they offer variants in the incised decoration as well as on the sides. It should be noted that the inside of the foot exhibits the mark of the locality of Seville, so that it is easy to identify the provenance of the piece, since the Giralda mark is present.



*Jarro (Ewer)*. Anonymous. Seville (?). Last quarter of the 16th century.



***Jarro de pico (Ewer)***

Vitoria

c. 1580-1613

Silver, partially gilded

20.2 cm high, 19.5 cm wide and 10.3 cm diameter

Bibliography:

Esteras Martín, Cristina. *La Colección Alorda-Derksen. Platería de los siglos XIV–XVIII*. Fundación Alorda Derksen. Barcelona, 2005.

Esteras Martín, Cristina. *La platería de la Colección Várez Fisa. Obras escogidas. Siglos XV–XVIII*. Tf. Editores, Madrid, 2000.

Originally it was a piece used for secular and domestic use, although sometimes it was destined for religious uses. It is an ewer (*jarro*), named for the decoration called “de pico” of the spout, which for function and type should not be confused with the jug (*jarra*) which has two handles and was used, on occasions, as a flower vase. Its function was to serve water at table, as much for drinking as for washing hands. According to the historical sources of the period of these ewers, it transpires that their use was not baptismal, but rather that the baptismal water was administered in the 16th and 17th centuries with natural shells, silver vessels or goblets. It concerns a traditional object dating from the Golden Age of Hispanic silver. It presents a fusion of elements of renaissance style and geometrical decoration typical of the periods of Felipe I and Felipe II. It is characterised by modelled details in the spout, and grotesque masculine features, following popular models of the Italian Renaissance.

This piece is a “jarra de pico” from Vitoria, fabricated primarily in silver and partially gilded. The body is a truncated cone, almost cylindrical with a frieze at mid height with struts decorated with vegetal motifs. In the lower part of the body pairs of ribs are disposed as buttresses, these in turn surrounded by incised geometric motifs. The handle, differs from the usual models of Hispanic ewers: it has the shape of a seven with the end terminating in “c”, and presents certain curvature in the upper part which rises above the height of the ewer. As regards the spout of this ewer from Vitoria, it is decorated following the traditional models, with a mascarón of a winged and bearded old man, with an extremely fierce expression on his face, provoked by the way he frowns, raises his eyebrows and aggressively shows his teeth, with this being the model of mascarón often repeated throughout the production of these “jarros de pico”.

In the lower area of the base of the ewer, we observe the mark “CAS/TANEDA”, which corresponds with all probability to the silversmith from Vitoria, Sebastián de Castañeda. It is documented that in 1592, together with another silversmith from Vitoria, Martín de Betoño, he realised a silver cross. In 1613, there is a reference that he made some maces for the Bilbao City Council. According to Rosa Martín Vaquero, it is possible that Sebastián de Castañeda first worked in Vitoria and then later settled in Bilbao.



Detail. *CAS/TANEDA*. Mark in the base of the ewer.



*Jarro (Ewer)*. Lázaro de Encalada (?). Valladolid. 1596-1597.



***Decorative pyramid. Table centrepiece***

Alcora ceramic

Bérain series

c. 1730

65 x 29 x 22 cm

**Bibliography:**

*Escultura de la Real Fàbrica del comte d'Aranda*. Exhibition catalogue, Museu de Ceràmica de l'Alcora, 2004, p.78.

Manuel Escrivá de Romaní. *Historia de la ceràmica de Alcora*. Madrid, 1945, sheet XXV.

*Un siglo de ceràmica de Alcora en el Museo Arqueológico Nacional (1727-1827)*. Madrid, 2006, pp. 32-33.

Table centerpiece from the Real Fábrica de Loza de Alcora (Royal Porcelain Manufactory of Alcora) with motifs of the series known as the Bérain series (1727-1750), characterized by the element of simulated lace or lacework in blue, combined, in this piece, with figureheads, busts, festoons, pitchers with fruit in camaïeu blue, touches of manganese, yellow and ochre. The chronology of this piece situates it in the first years of the Real Fábrica, produced by the hands of the artist Sebastián Carbonell from Marseilles. His production would be the first example of sculpture (although not the only one) of the manufactory.

The Bérain series owes its name to the creator of this decorative style, Jean-Baptiste Bérain (1640-1711). Decorator to the French monarch Louis XIV, he would mark the tastes of French society of the last third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and whose influence would extend to the rest of Europe from 1710 with the publication of his work. This style was cultivated by the French center of ceramic production in Moustiers around 1700 and reached Alcora due to the hiring of French master ceramists by the Count of Aranda at the start of the manufacturing activity. Most of these masters had been trained in the Clerissy manufactory in Moustiers. Initially, a group of French masters, Joseph Olérys, Eduard Roux and Sebastián Carbonell, were hired as draughtsman, painter and modeler, respectively, to obtain an imitation of the porcelain executed in Moustiers which, together with Marseilles and Nevers, were the principal ceramic centers in southern France. In the first years of manufacturing activity, the Real Fábrica of the Count of Aranda elaborated pieces following the models from the south of France (Moustiers and Marseilles primarily), which is where the first artistic directors came from. Forms and decorations conformed in this way to the tastes of the European aristocracy and bourgeoisie, principal market for the Alcora production. These pyramids were used by the wealthy classes of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to decorate the tables during the grand banquets celebrated at the time, destined to adorn and distinguish the tables of their proprietors.

The piece we present here is singular due to its splendid state of conservation. Of pyramidal form, this *surtout de table* has four supporting feet on which we observe the figureheads, in this case, in this architectonic decoration, a female face appears. On top, a first plinth with its respective decoration presenting the typical motifs of the Bérain series. From there, the base of the pyramid rises to be crowned with a polychromed sphere on which we observe an angel, wearing only a cloth, seated and with a basket of fruit on his head.

In essence, the Bérain style, so characteristic of the period of Louis XIV, was composed of elegant lines of delicate floral decorations, mixed with busts, caryatids, canopies, and cartouches. They had, in general, other pieces beneath which served as a base, and which were complemented with polychromed spheres, on which a little angel, seated, supports a basket full of fruit. In this way, they were made in various sizes during their period of production, such as the one belonging to the Boix collection, located today in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional (National Archaeology Museum) in Madrid (Fig. 1). A pair of obelisks are conserved, classified as candelabras, which remind us without a doubt of the current piece. However, in the first ones the figure of the upper angel is missing, as are the figureheads of the base. Further, the same museum conserves a large candelabra with the same disposition as our pyramid, 99 cm in height, on a base of 55 x 39 cm (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Pair of (*incomplete*) pyramids, classified as candelabras. Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional.



Fig. 2. *Large pyramid*. The child figure is posterior. Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional.



**Antoni Tàpies**

Barcelona, 1923 – 2012

***Arqueología III***

1986

“Chamotte” earth

38 x 59 x 16 cm

Signed “Tàpies”

Work realised with the collaboration of the ceramicist Hans Spinner in the workshop in Grasse.

Provenance:

Paris, Galerie Maeght-Lelong.

Winthertur, private collection

Paris, Galerie Lelong (ref. 20243).

Bibliography:

Agustí, Anna. *Tàpies. Obra completa*. Vol. VI: 1986-1990. Fundación Tàpies. Ediciones Polígrafa. Barcelona, 2001, rep. p. 100, num. 5338.

Moure, Gloria. *Tàpies. Objetos del tiempo*. Ediciones Polígrafa. Barcelona, 1994, sheet 100, rep. p. 151 and 240.

Exhibition:

*Tàpies. Sculptures et reliefs muraux*. Abbaye de Montmajour. Arles, 1986, cat. num. 27.

*Tàpies. Escultures i relleus murals*. Galería Carles Taché. Barcelona, 1986-1987, rep.

*Tàpies. Sculptures*. Galerie Lelong. Paris, 1991-1992, cat. num. 39, rep. p. 40.

Antoni Tàpies was born in 1923 in Barcelona, to a wealthy Catalan family involved in the publishing world. He took his initial steps in art during his convalescence sickness affecting his lungs. His growing interest in artistic circles would lead him to abandon his university studies in Law to dedicate himself completely to his passion.

He was co-founder of a Spanish avant-garde artistic group in 1948, *Dau al Set*, which created an art magazine of the same name. He was influenced in his initial phases by Miró and Klee, increasing at that time the iconographic factors and magical themes. With time, he would incorporate geometric elements and colour studies which would lead to his interest in matter, in which we find the translation into canvases with intense textures and great expressive and communicative possibilities. Participating in a sensibility extensive among artists on either side of the Atlantic due to the disaster and consequences of WWII, the Catalan artist would soon express in his work an interest in matter, earth and dust, using elements which were far from the academic practice of art. The “matter” paintings would form substantial part of his artistic corpus. During this same period, in the decade of the 50s, Tàpies would elaborate a series of figures extracted from his immediate surroundings and which appear in distinct stages of his evolution. Many times, the same image, besides appearing represented in different forms, would have multiple meanings. He would receive international recognition with these works. The work of Tàpies achieved, already in the 50s, great international projection via the art galleries Martha Jackson in New York and Maeght in Paris. He participated in 1952 in the XXVI Biennale di Venezia and in 1957 in the IV Bienal of São Paulo. From the 60s, his political compromise against the dictatorship would intensify. He incorporated iconographic elements (signs that allude to the reality of Catalonia, signs of writing etc.) and, coinciding with the appearance of *Arte Povera* in Europa and the *Posminimalismo* in the United States, he also incorporated new technical procedures (new surfaces, use of daily objects etc.). The pictorial language of Tàpies has evolved since then and has given as result a diversified and productive plastic creation admired around the world.

His work has been exhibited in prestigious museums and art centres such as the Museum of Modern Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin; the Kunsthaus in Zurich; the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; the Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Serpentine Gallery, in London; the Musée d'Art Moderne of the City of Paris, the Jeu de Paume and the Centre Pompidou in Paris; the

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, in Madrid; the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, in Valencia and the Museu d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona, among many others.

Antoni Tàpies first approached ceramics at the beginning of the decade of the 1980s primarily influenced by Eduardo Chillida, together with the art dealer and gallery owner Aimé Maeght and the ceramicist Joan Gardy Artigas, son of Josep Llorens Artigas. He made his first works in Artigas' workshop in Gallifa (Catalonia), and afterwards in the South of France, with the collaboration of Hans Spinner close to Grasse, or in Maeght's workshop in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. Among all the possibilities offered by ceramic techniques, he chose, following the advice of Eduardo Chillida, that of "chamotte" earth, a mix of normal earth with fragments of fired clay broken into pieces. The use of this technique permitted him to execute large-scale pieces, very resistant to changes of temperature, which could be placed in exterior settings.

From the start of his work as an artist, Antoni Tàpies has wanted to transform the classic conception of art as work-window and transform it into work-object. The undertaking of these sculptures allowed him to distance himself from bi-dimensional art and get closer to the object, without abandoning his own language based on a singular attention to the effects of texture and matter and conserving his symbology (marks of crosses, letters, numbers, names, etc). This part of his work is lesser known than his matter paintings, although it was presented to the public in various exhibitions, in the Abbaye de Montmajour (France), the Galerie Lelong in Paris or the Galería Carlos Taché in Barcelona. In 2004, the Museo Reina Sofia of Madrid dedicated an exhibition to the ceramics of Antoni Tàpies (*Tàpies. Tierras*, 26 October 2014 – 17 January 2015), the year after he was awarded the Premio Velázquez de las Artes Plásticas (Velazquez Prize of the Plastic Arts).

Excerpt from Anna Agustí. *Tàpies. Obra completa*. Vol. VI: 1986-1990. Fundació Tàpies. Ediciones Polígrafa. Barcelona, 2001, rep. pp. 23-24.

“The decade had started for Tàpies with yet another new departure: in 1981 he created his first clay sculptures, thus making the acquaintance of an intensely sensuous material that is easily shaped in a bold manner with hands and tools. Shaped sculpture had been suggested to him as a medium by Chillida, and Tàpies now benefited from the unstinting assistance of the potter Hans Spinner. Modelling in clay changed his painting, which now became something of an opposite pole to his sculpture. It was now fire-clay, earth fashioned and salvaged from the fire of a kiln, that symbolized strength and permanence in his art; in this medium, objects seemingly excerpted from the paintings acquired a hermetic form. Accordingly, painting received the task of opposing the immutability of such matter with the fluid and fleeting, with the traces of transitoriness. Tàpies eliminated the hard, raw material presence from his paintings, depriving them of their object-like character. They lost their tactile qualities, their sensuous surfaces. For a while even the *objet trouvé*, the begetter of the assemblages of the 1970s, disappeared completely from his work. It returned in 1986 with *1-2*, in the form of an ironing board and of the plates in *Pila de plats* and subsequently acquired a new lease of life as tools and cutlery in combination with modelled clay. Tàpies’ interest in clay, which in the years 1986-88 led to the creation of some twenty-five works per year in the studio of Hans Spinner at Opio near Grasse in southern France, declined thereafter and did not revive to a comparable extent until 1991. In 1987, alongside clay and ceramic sculptures, the artist produced his first thirteen bronzes. The pieces in all three media look much alike, investing both everyday objects – a cupboard or a bathtub, a chair or a bed, doors or shoes and, of course, books – and fragments of the human body – feet, hands, arms, skulls – with new life. The body fragments now acquired a strange aspect by being enlarged to over lifesize.”