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ILENIA COLÓN MENDOZA, *The Cristos yacentes of Gregorio Fernández: Polychrome Sculptures of the Supine Christ in Seventeenth-Century Spain*. Visual Culture in Early Modernity. Farnham: Ashgate. 2018. xviii + 186 pp. 16 colour + 52 black-and-white illustrations.

Scholars of Spanish sculpture have frequently bemoaned the Cinderella status of their field, compared with that of painting. However, the popularity of the exhibitions *The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600-1700* at the National Galleries in London and Washington in 2009, and of *Sacred Spain: Art and Belief in the Spanish World* at Indianapolis Museum of Art in 2010, and their related catalogues has at last begun to redress the balance by giving polychrome sculpture much greater prominence in the study of Spanish art outside Spain and Latin America. Without these more broadly-scoped and lavishly-produced precedents, it is hard to imagine that such a focused and detailed study as the present book would have been an attractive proposition for publication in the Anglophone world.

Galician-born Gregorio Fernández (1576-1636) became one of the most prominent exponents of polychrome sculpture in Early Modern Spain, establishing a flourishing workshop in Valladolid, one of the most important religious and political centres of Castile in that period. Arriving there c. 1600, his move brought him commissions from royal and court patrons, including Philip III and the Duke of Lerma, whilst the Carmelites, for whom he frequently worked, were among the many religious orders who patronized his art. The collections of the Museo Nacional de Escultura in Valladolid offer an insight into the wide range and scale of his output. Ilenia Colón's book, however, centres attention on the solitary figures of the dead, recumbent Christ, a type with which Fernández became particularly associated, which presented the viewer/believer with a mimetic devotional image that was carved and painted in a hyperrealistic style. Happily, the book belies its apparently narrow scope and its modest size and production values. Through its four chapters—first, on the iconography of this sculptural type, notably as Eucharistic symbol; second, on its precedents; third, on the artist's patrons, his style and technique, and his workshop practice and production; and finally, on religious thought, ceremony and procession in Counter-Reformation Spain—the focus turns from wide to close and back again to offer the reader both the broad context of the traditions from which Fernández's sculpture emerged and the climate in which it was produced, as well as detailed examination of specific examples and their characteristics. The result is a rich, coherent and fascinating study overall. Also included is a catalogue with information on the state of conservation of some eleven examples attributed to the artist himself, and another twenty-five to his workshop.

The iconography of sculptures of the supine Christ can be traced back to Middle Ages, and in particular to some Germanic examples, though it was not until the sixteenth century that painted and sculpted examples of the isolated figure of Christ, such as those by Juan de Juni, Gaspar Becerra and Francisco de Rincón examined in Chapter 2, emerged in Spain as direct precedents for the type popularized by Fernández. As Ilenia Colón explains, in a Post-Tridentine era, these polychrome sculptures played an increasingly significant link between the Eucharist and the physical body of Christ, as both metaphor and embodiment of the promise of resurrection. As reflections of the new emphasis on the Eucharist as the transformed body and blood of Christ and the belief in transubstantiation, so fundamental to both the Spanish church and the crown, their relevance as symbols of the bread of life was given heightened poignancy during Holy Week when they were often displayed as the dramatic centrepiece of structures representing the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Particular care was taken over the positioning and visibility of Christ's wounds, notably that of the chest, and in some cases, cork was added to the wounds for increased naturalism, as it would depress when touched, enabling the 'viewer' to relive the experience of the doubting Thomas in a Baroque atmosphere of verisimilitude and *(des)engaño*. Often, these theatrical sets were used only when the sculptures were moved outside the environment in which they were normally housed, and many have now been lost and are known only from documentary

evidence. Other important evidence that can now help us to understand the context, uses and reception of these figures are, of course, contemporary literary sources including liturgical texts and writings on visionary experience, such as those of St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Ávila, or the treatise by the Blessed Juan de Ávila *Audi, filia* (1556), which recommended the use of 'well-proportioned images of the stages of the Passion' (95) in Christian meditation. Fernández's access to such texts, suggests Ilenia Colón, may have come through his friend, neighbour and artistic collaborator, the painter Diego Valentín Díaz, who is known to have an extensive library—and who also painted the curious portrait of the sculptor, c. 1600, now in the Museo de Escultura, Valladolid.

One of the major problems of assessing Gregorio Fernández's output is that of over-attribution. As Colón explains, this is hardly surprising, given that his influence extended geographically beyond Castile and Leon to Portugal and Peru, and chronologically into the eighteenth century at least—indeed, some of the compositional elements of his *Cristos yacentes* are still used by today's *imagineros*. Workshop practice of the time and the production methods of these figures conflict with modern art historical assumptions and frustrate the search for the individual *auteur*, since many of them appear almost identical. As Colón emphasises, although Fernández himself did not invent the *Cristo yacente* type, he did 'establish a clear iconographical vocabulary for its production and dissemination'. These popular prototypes thus became synonymous with his 'brand', regardless of actual authorship. For this reviewer, one of the most fascinating and informative sections of the book is, in fact, that in Chapter 3, on his techniques, materials, and methods of production. As well as having a number of assistants and apprentices in his workshop, Fernández would collaborate closely with a number of specialists, much as Francisco Pacheco advocated in his *Arte de la pintura* (1648), from *aparejadores*, or preparers of the ground layers, to polychromers such as Valentín Díaz, and gilders. The wounds, referred to above, were created by specialist painters using resin, paint and cork. The extreme realism of Fernández's style often meant the use of *postizos* such as glass eyes, hair and ivory, with bull horn for finger- and toenails, whilst stiffened lace decorated the borders of painted fabrics. In some cases, these materials were specified in contracts.

Colour images, in many cases taken by the author herself, are provided of the examples attributed to Gregorio Fernández, though understandably the photographs are of varying quality, depending on the lighting and display conditions. Some of these are especially useful given the private or enclosed location of the works—many still only emerge during Holy Week. There are no detail colour photos, though there are black-and-white details of everything from the pattern of blood spilt from the wounds, or of the hands, feet or face, to the motifs and folds of the shroud or the pillows on which the figure is laid. Some of these, especially A.5, are especially striking and surprisingly effective. Overall, the book is well written, though the English expression is sometimes a little strained or the text repetitive (101, 104, 106). There is also some slight confusion in the references to St John of the Cross and the Blessed Juan de Ávila (97). These minor problems, however, do not detract from the very valuable contribution made by this study, which will be of considerable interest to students and scholars not only of sculpture, Spanish religious art, but to technical art historians and conservators, as well as more generally to those interested in case studies of the interrelationships between art, literature, theatre and festivals in Spain in the Baroque period.

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