



The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture 1600-1700 (National Gallery London)

Xavier Bray, Alfonso Rodriguez G. De Ceballos, Daphne S. Barbour, Judy Ozone

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In 16th- and 17th-century Spain, sculptors and painters combined their skills to depict, with astonishing realism, the great religious themes. Wooden sculptures of the saints, the Immaculate Conception, or the Passion of Christ were painstakingly carved, gessoed, and intricately painted, even embellished with glass eyes and tears and ivory teeth. Some were shockingly graphic in their depiction of Christ's sufferings; others, beautifully clothed, appeared to bring saints to glorious life. These were objects of divine inspiration to the faithful, whether displayed on altars or processed through the streets on holy days.

Featuring new photography, this book reappraises the unique form of Spanish painted wooden sculpture. In addition to examining the sculptures' religious roles, it also explores the unique creative relationship of sculptor and painter: Velazquez's teacher and father-in-law Francisco Pacheco, for example, often painted the flesh and drapery of wood carvings by the celebrated sculptor Juan Martinez Montañès, and taught a generation of students. The skill of painting these hyper-realistic sculptures was an integral part of an artist's training, enhancing his sensitivity to visual impact and physical presence—evident in paintings of the period.

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