



## Reviews of Books

**Cacilda M. Rêgo, Mariano Paz, Sheldon Penn, Ann Davies, Rachel Beaney, Geoffrey Maguire, Carolina Rocha, Fiona Noble, David William Foster<sup>†</sup>, Pamela A. Patton, Ilenia Colón Mendoza, Hilary Macartney, Erica Segre & Enrique del Rey Cabero**

To cite this article: Cacilda M. Rêgo, Mariano Paz, Sheldon Penn, Ann Davies, Rachel Beaney, Geoffrey Maguire, Carolina Rocha, Fiona Noble, David William Foster<sup>†</sup>, Pamela A. Patton, Ilenia Colón Mendoza, Hilary Macartney, Erica Segre & Enrique del Rey Cabero (2021): Reviews of Books, Bulletin of Spanish Visual Studies, DOI: [10.1080/24741604.2021.1893545](https://doi.org/10.1080/24741604.2021.1893545)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/24741604.2021.1893545>



Published online: 23 Mar 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

***Hijo del Laocoonte: Alonso Berruguete y la antigüedad pagana.*** Edición de Manuel Arias Martínez. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Subdirección General de Documentación y Publicaciones. 2017. 260 pp.; 170 ilustraciones en color.

This exhibition catalogue gathers works by Alonso Berruguete and presents them alongside his ancient precedents. The sixty-seven works include sculptures, paintings, prints and drawings. The book is divided into two parts: Part 1 has five essays and Part 2 is a catalogue sectioned into five themes. It also has a seven-page bibliography and a list of works along with 170 colour illustrations. The focus of the exhibition is Berruguete's twelve-year sojourn in Italy and the influence of the Laocoön discovery on his work. It proposes that Berruguete draws from this vital experience with its foundation in the study of antiquity to become the first true modern sculptor of Spain.

The first essay by Maria Bolaños, director of the Museo Nacional de Escultura, presents the importance of the Laocoön as a symbol of 'universal significance' (17). Berruguete was a primary witness to its rediscovery in the Renaissance along with other important monuments like the Domus Aurea which provided him with an 'antiquities museum' from which to draw inspiration. The Laocoön is then key to his own vision of art and provides a basis from which he departs from Spanish sculpture as craft and instead uses his ingenuity to create a new iconography. Essay 2, by Vincenzo Farinelli, focuses on the *paragone* between not only painting and sculpture but between literature and art while tracing the importance of the Laocoön in the work of Michelangelo and Berruguete. Tommaso Mozatti, in essay 3, notes Francisco de Holanda's drawing of the Laocoön as a useful record of the sculpture in terms of the interventions realized by Angelo Montorsoli and recreating the timeline of events of the discovery. Mozatti also traces the chronology of Berruguete in Italy, quoting Giorgio Vasari who mentions the creation of models of the Laocoön by Berruguete and his contemporaries in Italy. The fourth essay is Miguel Morán Turina's study of ancient sculpture collections in Spain. He uses primary sources to paint a picture of the cultural understanding of ancient sculpture in Spain and its under-appreciation. He discusses the collections of Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Don Luis de Ávila and the Duke of Alcalá. The fifth essay, by Carlos Morán Sánchez, discusses antiquity as it was understood by Berruguete's contemporaries. The author mentions the rise of humanism and the interest of the monarchy of Philip II in the legitimization of the Spanish nation. With this end the king patronizes a series of maps and illustrations known as the *Relaciones topográficas de los pueblos de España* that capture ancient Spanish ruins.

In the catalogue, Manuel Arias Martínez discusses the play between classical rules and the freedom of form. His essay concludes that Berruguete's trip to Italy, his relationship with the monarchy and his reinterpretation of Antiquity are the key to his success. Berruguete's work is a synthesis of the disciplines of painting and sculpture, and in a sense he produced sculptural paintings (86). The topics of the exhibition include I, 'La luz de la Antigüedad en Roma', which discusses Berruguete's use of Vitruvian proportions, his study

of Antiquity through drawings and models, and his access to private collections and archaeological gardens. The essay discusses works by his contemporaries Diego de Siloé and Bartolomé Ordoñez. Section II, 'Sarcófagos y lecciones', traces the use of ancient models and compositions in paintings and sculptures by Berruguete such as for the relief of the *Llanto sobre Cristo muerto*. Section III, 'Bajo el influje del Laocoonte', establishes evidence of its influence in *retablos* such as San Benito and figures such as the *Patriarca* and the *Sacrifice of Isaac* where bodily positions are almost exact. Section IV, 'Reinterpretando modelos', discusses works such as the *retablo* of the monastery of La Mejorada in Olmedo, Valladolid where *putti* and griffins serve as examples of reinvention. In the last Section, V, 'A la sombra de la gran venera', referring to the scalloped niche of the *retablo* of San Benito the author presents evidence of the influence of Domus Aurea on the work of Berruguete.

The essays in this catalogue shed new light on the importance of linking antiquity to the work of Spanish artists such as Berruguete and the significance of the Laocoön discovery. This event gave impetus for creating models and drawings, for collecting ancient works and for creating inventories of the Roman ruins in Spain all of which created a wealthy environment for the exchange of ideas. Antiquity was studied and reinterpreted in a new language by Berruguete who was able to synthesize lessons in classicism and in certain instances break them. The catalogue written by Manuel Arias Martínez systematically presents models for the works of Berruguete and provides solid evidence for his creative and unique use of sources. This section of the book is especially crucial for any Spanish scholar as it provides important visual evidence that is often ignored in the career of Berruguete.

ILENIA COLÓN MENDOZA

*University of Central Florida.*