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Zurbarán

Distinguished Painter

JAVIER PORTÚS

ABOUT THE BOOK

When asked about El Greco in 1924, Picasso replied: ‘I used to like [him] very much, but now I prefer Zurbarán, that very great painter who is so intensely Spanish and so little known in France’. This book stems from a desire to offer readers a comprehensive view of Zurbarán’s life and work and what it has meant over the last four centuries. After summarising the main events of his life and his greatest artistic achievements, it focuses on cross-cutting themes which run through the painter’s entire career and help us understand the forces that drove his creativity and his place on the Spanish and European art scene of his day.

Francisco de Zurbarán, Distinguished Painter pays special attention to aspects such as his creative awareness, his professional pride, his relationship with his colleagues, the importance of religious institutions and private clients in his career development, and his remarkable ability to create new iconographic types. Besides, the artistic dialogues established here show how nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians and artists shaped the image of the Extremadura-born painter according to the aesthetic, political and moral aspirations of their own time, often giving a distorted impression not just of his professional and intellectual profile but also of the nature of his work. They are the pieces of a puzzle which, when joined together, offer us a picture of one of the most complex artistic personalities of the Spanish Golden Age.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Javier Portús is head of Collection of Spanish Baroque Painting at the Museo del Prado. He holds a doctorate in Art History and specializes in art historiography and the visual culture of the Golden Age in Spain. Among other studies, he is the author of *La sala reservada del Museo del Prado y el coleccionismo de pintura de desnudo en la corte española* (1998), *Pintura y pensamiento en la España de Lope de Vega* (1999) or *El concepto de pintura española* (2012). Portús has curated several exhibitions, such as *The Spanish Portrait: From El Greco to Picasso* (2004), *Velázquez's Fables. Mythology and Sacred History in the Golden Age* (2008), *Velázquez and the Family of Philip IV* (2013-2014) and *Meta-painting. A Journey to the Idea of Art* (2016), all at the Museo del Prado.

“Completed in the same year that retrospective exhibitions of the painter’s work are being staged in London, Paris and Chicago, it offers an innovative and timely reflection on this artist’s career, oeuvre, critical fortune and visual reception. By publishing in English this valuable contribution, which challenges the long-held view of Zurbarán, we hope to reach a wider readership”, José Luis Colomer, director of the CEEH

“Los méritos de Javier Portús y sus responsabilidades en el Museo del Prado son bien conocidos. [...] Su visión conjuga un claro interés por la cultura visual del Siglo de Oro español con particular atención a las interacciones entre pintura y literatura, enriquecida por una atención minuciosa hacia la fortuna de los grandes maestros del pasado y su impacto en la historiografía artística. Tales intereses permiten combinar un excelente conocimiento del arte español y de sus conexiones internacionales para una mejor comprensión de contextos históricos y culturales, así como su relevancia en la historia del pensamiento y la crítica de arte, hasta, por fin, conectar con el lector y el espectador actuales”, *Archivo Español de Arte*