

MELBOURNE WINTER MASTERPIECES

ITALIAN MASTERPIECES

FROM SPAIN'S ROYAL COURT, MUSEO DEL PRADO

Exhibition wall texts

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The Museo del Prado and the Spanish Royal Collection

The holdings of Italian art in the Museo del Prado, Madrid, are unique and unrivalled in museums outside Italy. This exhibition presents a rich selection of paintings and drawings spanning three hundred years of Italian art, from the early sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Many of these paintings are at the heart of the Prado's collection and have never left Spain before.

The magnificent art collection of the Spanish Royal Family formed the basis of the Prado, which opened to the public in 1819 as the Royal Museum of Painting and Sculpture. The Royal Family were avid collectors of Italian art from the mid sixteenth century, when Emperor Charles V and his courtiers began a tradition of acquiring Italian paintings. This reflected the fact that Spain's dominions at this time included the Italian regions of Naples, Sicily and Milan.

The rule of Rodrigo Borgia, who reigned as Pope Alexander VI from 1492 to 1503, also consolidated Spanish influence in Rome. Over the next three centuries, hundreds of artworks destined for Spain were purchased in Italy or commissioned directly from Italian artists. Many Italian artists were also enticed to travel to Spain to work at the Royal Court. By these means the very best contemporary Italian art entered the collections of the Spanish Royal Family, and subsequently the Prado. Thanks in part to its unique origin, the Prado's collection represents all of the major artistic centres in Italy, with paintings and drawings of the highest quality by the key individuals who defined Italy's rich artistic tradition.

The genius of the sixteenth century

The High Renaissance was a time of incredible achievements in science, technology, mathematics, literature, philosophy and art that inextricably transformed Italian society. Artists such as Michelangelo and Raphael were not simply spectators or recorders of these momentous times, but were integral to the reforms that took place.

The period saw fundamental shifts in ideas about humanity and the place of the individual in society. These debates impacted directly on art as they affected how artists portrayed the human form and the world around them. As progressive thinkers re-examined ancient classical history, artists' notions of beauty became grounded on the idealised forms of Greek and Roman Antiquity. Artists also turned their eyes increasingly to the natural world for inspiration.

Drawing assumed an increasingly vital role in artistic practice at this time. Giorgio Vasari, an artist and chronicler of the lives of Renaissance artists, argued that good drawing was not only a necessary skill for an artist, but also an essential creative act.

However, as the sixteenth century progressed, idealised forms of the High Renaissance became outmoded and then were superseded by the sophisticated and elegantly artificial constructs of Mannerism, a trend spurred on by Michelangelo. Mannerist artists revelled in their capacity to push illusionism beyond the limits of logic and reason. These artists used their unfettered imagination to induce physical and emotional responses from the viewer. By the middle of the sixteenth century spectacle and sensation had left the ideals of the High Renaissance in their wake.

Andrea del Sarto

Italian 1486–1530

Study for a draped female figure

Studio di una figura femminile

drappeggiata

c. 1523

black chalk

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1545

A leading Florentine painter of the High Renaissance, Andrea del Sarto was a particularly accomplished draughtsman, especially adept in handling chalk. While his chalk studies lack the austerity and sculptural force of Michelangelo's, they instead capture transient naturalistic effects, such as light, texture and facial expression. Because of their balance between truthful observation and the ideal, these drawings were admired and proved inspirational to academic draughtsman of the nineteenth century. The shawl of the woman in this drawing is subtly modelled with highlights and shadow, while the frayed border at the lower edge suggests an actual garment.

Baccio Bandinelli

Italian 1493–1560

Seated prophet or evangelist

Profeta o evangelista seduto

c. 1536–40

red chalk

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2987

After Michelangelo, Bandinelli was the leading Florentine sculptor of the first half of the sixteenth century. Unlike Michelangelo, who had strong Republican sympathies, Bandinelli was unswervingly loyal to the ruling Medici house, for which he was rewarded throughout his career by a steady flow of prestigious, official commissions. This impressive drawing was traditionally thought to be by Michelangelo, whose influence is clearly evident in the man's muscular body, with its strongly sculptural effect, and in his rugged, bearded head.

Federico Zuccaro

Italian 1540–42 –1609,
worked in Spain 1585–88

A dignitary kneeling before a Pope, receiving a chain of office and other rewards

Dignitari inginocchiati davanti al Papa, che riceve una collana e altre premio

1570s

pen and brown ink, brush and brown ink and brown wash, over black chalk grid on yellow paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

D1567

In this drawing Minerva, goddess of learning and the arts, stands in the middle ground, to the left of centre. She presents a kneeling man to an enthroned pope, while at the same time places a gold chain around his neck. The man has been identified as the painter, architect and art historiographer Giorgio Vasari, who was made a Knight of the Order of Saint Peter by Pius V on 27 June 1571. The Pope's hooked nose and emaciated face resemble those of Pius V, the Dominican, pro-Spanish pontiff who reigned from 1566 to 1572. The delicacy of the wash and the slight angularity of the line is evidence of Federico's hand in this drawing.

Giorgio Vasari
Italian 1511–74

Frontispiece

from *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (*Lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors and architects*)

vol 3, by Giorgio Vasari, published by Appresso i Giunti, Florence

1568

wood-engraving

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Rare Books Collection, Shaw Research Library
Gift of Dr Frank Jones

RB 759.5 VASARI 1568

Giorgio Vasari
Italian 1511–74

Raphael

page no. 64 from *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (*Lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors and architects*)

vol 1, by Giorgio Vasari, published by Appresso i Giunti, Florence

1568

wood-engraving

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Rare Books Collection, Shaw Research Library,
Gift of Dr Frank Jones

RB 759.5 VASARI 1568

Giorgio Vasari
Italian 1511–74

Michelangelo

page no. 715 from *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (*Lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors and architects*)

vol 2, by Giorgio Vasari, published by Appresso i Giunti, Florence

1568

wood-engraving

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Rare Books Collection, Shaw Research Library

Gift of Dr Frank Jones

RB 759.5 VASARI 1568

Giorgio Vasari

Italian 1511–74

Saint Luke painting the Virgin *San Luca che dipinge la Vergine*

1568–72

pen and brown ink and brown wash on black chalk
grid on beige paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1563

The Florentine painter and architect Giorgio Vasari is best known as the author of *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (seen nearby), first published in Florence in 1550. Vasari strongly advocated that drawing was the fundamental basis of all art and it is telling that in this work the seated artist, Saint Luke, has outlined his composition before commencing to paint it. Saint Luke was believed to have been a painter, the first to capture the likeness of the Holy Family. Because of this tradition he became the patron saint of artists.

Raphael
Italian 1483–1520

**Holy Family with Saint John or
Madonna of the Rose**
*Sacra Famiglia con san
Giovannino o Madonna della
Rosa*

c. 1517
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P302

Raphael first trained with his father, Giovanni Santi, in Urbino before becoming a prominent pupil in the studio of Pietro Perugino. Raphael was influenced by his master's style of blending idealised figures and rich colours. Raphael left for Florence around 1504 to immerse himself in the innovative milieu of the Tuscan capital, where he quickly became one of its leading artists. There he appropriated Michelangelo's dynamic figures and Leonardo da Vinci's innovative compositional structures, which he tempered through his own genius. The intimate character of this late work, accentuated by the melancholic attitudes of Saint Joseph and Mary, suggests that it was an altar panel for a private chapel.

For Kids

Raphael, a famous Italian artist, painted this picture about 500 years ago. It was made in a time of change when people were learning about mathematics, the arts and science.

Raphael often painted people and stories from the Bible. In this picture Mary is holding her son, the baby Jesus. Raphael's paintings were so famous that the Spanish Royal Family added this one to their collection.

Explore the exhibition to find out more about the paintings the Spanish Royal Family collected.

Luca Cambiaso

Italian 1527–85,
worked in Spain 1583–85

Hercules shooting his bow

Ercole tirando il suo arco

1544–50

pen and brown ink and brown wash over black chalk
on brown paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2990

Luca Cambiaso was the leading painter of the sixteenth-century Genoese school. He trained with his father Giovanni Cambiaso (1495–1579), and together they painted scenes from the *Labours of Hercules* in the lunettes of a room in the Palazzo Antonio Doria, Genoa. For the sixth of his twelve labours, Hercules killed the predatory Stymphalian birds, which were made partly of metal, by shooting them with arrows. This rapidly executed drawing of a Bowman may be related to these paintings.

For Kids

Artists practised drawing a lot, as they had to be very good at it. Some of their drawings were used to plan and prepare paintings. Notice here how the artist Cambiaso has worked out how to draw Hercules' legs. Using flowing lines, he corrected his drawing to make it just right.

What is Hercules doing?

Michelangelo

Italian 1475–1564

Study of a man's right shoulder, breast and upper arm

Studio della spalla destra, del petto e del braccio di un uomo

c. 1536–41

black chalk on yellow paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1732

Michelangelo was one of the towering geniuses of the western European artistic tradition and his extraordinary inventiveness found equal expression in painting, sculpture and architecture. This is a study for the upper torso of one of the demons in the group at the lower right of the *Last Judgement*, which he painted between 1536 and 1541 on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. Although the drawing amounts to no more than a few hasty lines, the way the interlocking forms set up a forceful rhythm across the sheet reveals Michelangelo's authorship, as does the demon's exaggerated sinewy musculature, indicated with the greatest economy.

Giovanni Battista Castello (Il Bergamasco)

Italian c. 1509–69,
worked in Spain 1567–69

Mars and Apollo *Marte ed Apollo*

1566–69
pen and brown ink and brown wash

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1856

Here Apollo, god of the sun, confronts Mars, god of war, with his discovery that Mars has been conducting an affair with Venus, the wife of Vulcan. Mars, on the left, raises both hands in shock as Apollo tells him that he has been found out. The effeminate young Apollo gazes straight into the eyes of Mars, completely unnerved, one hand held to his heart as if confirming the truth of the report, the other gesturing forwards to illustrate that he had seen the evidence before him with his own eyes.

Bartolomeo Passarotti

Italian 1529–92

Head of a figure

Testa di una figura

1560–70

pen and brown ink on blue paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1781

Passarotti was one of the leading painters of Bologna in the second half of the sixteenth century and a pioneer of the reversion to naturalism that shaped Baroque art. In his finished pen studies, such as this one, he perfected what may be termed the ‘fish-net’ style of tight, highly finished tonal crosshatching with the pen, which had been pioneered in Raphael’s mature pen studies. Passarotti also closely observed and accurately copied figures from Michelangelo’s painted and sculpted work as well as antiquities.

Jacopo Ligozzi (attributed to)

Italian 1547–1627

A chimera

La chimera

1590–1610

pen and brown ink and brush and brown ink over
black chalk, gold paint and white bodycolour

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

D1657

Jacopo Ligozzi – painter, miniaturist, naturalist and scientific draughtsman – was one of the most talented of the many artists active at the Medici court in the years around 1600. He came from a family of painters and craftsmen active in Verona over several generations. At the invitation of Francesco I de Medici, he arrived in Florence around 1577, working there primarily as a designer of tapestries, objects and furniture, drawn in his refined and meticulous style. In Greek mythology, the chimera was a fire-breathing female monster resembling a lion in the forepart, a goat in the middle and a dragon in the hind.

Paolo Veronese

Italian 1528–88

The Evangelist Saint Luke seated in a landscape and other studies

San Luca evangelista seduto nel un paesaggio ed altri studi

c. 1580–81

pen and brown ink, brown wash and white bodycolour over pencil on buff paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D3003

As his name suggests, Veronese was from Verona, where he received his early training. In the early 1550s, after regularly receiving commissions from Venetian patrons, Veronese moved to Venice. The Evangelist's pose here recalls the painted figure of Saint Luke in the now destroyed church of San Nicolò della Lattuga dei Frari, Venice. The luminosity of the forms is remarkable, a feature that Veronese maintained in his paintings. The expressive pose of the muscular Saint Luke shows the influence of Michelangelo, whose work, disseminated through engravings, exerted a strong influence on Venetian painters of the period.

Antonio Correggio

Italian c. 1489–1534

Noli me tangere

c. 1525

oil on wood panel transferred to canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P111

Antonio Allegri, known as Correggio, was one of Italy's greatest painters. For nearly his whole life he lived in Correggio, a small town near Parma in the northern Italian region of Emilia, where much of his work remains. Correggio visited Rome between 1518 and 1519, after which his style reveals the influence of late Raphael and Michelangelo of the Sistine Chapel, who helped shape his very refined, personal and decisive contribution to the High Renaissance. The artist and writer Giorgio Vasari saw this painting in 1568 and wrote that it 'is painted with such delicacy that it defies belief'. Here the resurrected Christ tells Mary Magdalene '*Noli me tangere*' ('Touch me not'), her faith in his second coming not needing the proof of touch.

Titian and the Venetian empire

'The father of the Prado is Titian.'

Edward Hutton, *The Cities of Spain* (1906)

Titian, the great Venetian master, was the first Italian artist whose works were collected by the Habsburg rulers of Spain, who reigned from 1516 to 1700. The King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V first sat for Titian in the Italian city of Mantua in 1533, thus initiating one of the more fruitful relationships between royal patrons and a single artist in history. Charles V's son, the future King Philip II, became Titian's most important patron after the late 1540s. Following fifteen years of near-exclusive service to the Spanish sovereign, the artist wrote to Philip II in 1562 to express his desire to continue working for him until his death, which he did.

At its peak, the Spanish Royal Collection held around ninety canvases by Titian, and today the Prado has twenty-one paintings by him that once belonged to Philip II. The five paintings included here demonstrate Titian's technical versatility and mastery: from the painterly to the highly finished, and from boldly coloured narratives to the more muted tones of his portraits and late works.

Philip II also admired other Venetian masters, including Jacopo Bassano, Paolo Veronese and Jacopo Tintoretto. Much of the appeal of sixteenth-century Venetian art lies in its sensuality combined with a level of bravado in composition and technique. The famed bold spirit of the Veneto is echoed through art, which may explain its popularity with the two contemporary Spanish monarchs who acquired modern Venetian paintings en masse.

Titian

Italian 1485–90 – 1576

Nobleman with a clock

Cavaliere con un orologio

c. 1550

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P412

A most striking element of this painting is the fine gold clock. Titian included clocks in several of his portraits of aristocrats. Usually clocks symbolise the temperance that should accompany any ruler, and also allude to passing time and the fleeting nature of life. However, the presence of the clock here may respond to purely compositional needs. X-rays have revealed that the sitter originally grasped a different object below his waist. Titian must have felt that this position, with the sitter's arms practically parallel, lacked dynamism. He subsequently added the clock and placed the sitter's hand on it, bringing greater movement to the painting.

Titian

Italian 1485–90 – 1576

**The Virgin and Child between
Saint Anthony of Padua and
Saint Roch**

***La Vergine ed il Bambino tra
sant'Antonio di Padova e san
Rocco***

c. 1508

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P288

Long attributed to Giorgione, this painting was first recorded in 1641 as a work by Titian belonging to the Duke of Medina de las Torres in Naples, who later presented it to Philip IV. It is an intriguingly unfinished painting from early in Titian's career, now believed to have been painted around 1508, possibly for the Scuola di San Antonio at the church of San Rocco in Venice, at a time when his relations with Giorgione were closest. Both artists were then painting frescoes on the facades of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venice.

Titian

Italian 1485–90 – 1576

Religion succoured by Spain

*La Religione soccorsa dalla
Spagna*

c. 1572–75

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P430

Religion succoured by Spain belongs to the last group of paintings that Titian sent to Philip II only a year before the artist's death in 1576. The painting commemorates Spain's role in the victory at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, when the main fleet of the Ottoman Empire was defeated off the coast of Greece in a decisive naval encounter. Spain appears armed with a cuirass, lance and shield, defending the Catholic faith against all enemies – not just against the Turks. Here the snakes symbolise Protestant heresy, thus Titian gives the work broader meaning. The enigmatic male figure shown here is probably Philip II's half-brother, Juan of Austria, who commanded the Christian fleet at Lepanto.

Lorenzo Lotto
Italian c. 1480–1556

Penitent Saint Jerome
San Girolamo penitente
c. 1546
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P448

Lorenzo Lotto was a governor of the Ospedale dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, one of four major centres of assistance founded by the Venetian government in 1527, which Lotto named as a beneficiary in his will on 25 March 1546. A fellow governor, Vincenzo Frizieri, commissioned this painting for the hospital chapel, and its pictorial austerity and emphasis on penitence and self-mortification reflect that institution's religious ideals as one of the Catholic Reformation's most dynamic centres in Venice. The story of the penitent Saint Jerome became important in the fifteenth century, when it was used by spiritual movements that aspired through prayer to a close union with Christ. Lotto shows the fourth-century saint with arms extended, spiritually and physically 'imitating' Christ on the cross.

Paolo Veronese

Italian 1528–88

Penitent Mary Magdalene

Maria Maddalena penitente

1583

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P498

Penitent Mary Magdalene reflects the changes occurring in Venetian painting around 1580. On one hand, the new order of priorities imposed by the Council of Trent (1545–63) emphasised subjects such as the Eucharist, penitence and the martyrdom of the saints. On the other, the Inquisition began to protect decorum in the treatment of sacred subjects. At this time Veronese chose to abandon the sumptuous theatricality of his earlier compositions in favour of a more intimate spirituality. He simplified his compositions, used a darker palette and a sketchier style. His new works had a focused emotional content, as seen here, made all the more powerful by the stripping away of accessory details that would only have distracted believers.

Titian

Italian 1485–90 – 1576

Philip II

Filippo II

1551

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P411

Titian and Philip II met twice while Philip was still a prince, in Milan (December 1548 – January 1549) and Augsburg (November 1550 – 1551). Titian painted the prince's portrait on both occasions and this version was probably painted in Augsburg. Curiously, X-rays have revealed that Titian painted the portrait of Philip over one of his father, Charles V, who was also shown in armour. This work is not so much an exercise in psychological introspection as an exaltation of Philip's dignity as a prince and is a quintessential image of power. He is shown wearing elaborate flower-pattern armour created in Augsburg by Desiderius Helmschmid around 1550.

For Kids

In this painting Spanish Prince Philip II, dressed in fancy armour, poses for the Italian artist Titian. He wanted to look fashionable and impressive because this portrait was to hang in the Royal Palace. With one hand on his helmet and the other on his sword, Philip II stares at us. He looks powerful and in command. He thought Titian was the best Italian painter of the time, and his family owned ninety of Titian's paintings!

Can you find other paintings by Titian here?

Titian

Italian 1485–90 – 1576

**Salome with the head of John
the Baptist**

***Salomè con la testa di Giovanni
Battista***

c. 1550

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P428

Salome was an Edomite princess and daughter of Herodias and Herod Philip I. Here she carries the severed head of Saint John the Baptist on a platter, illustrating a New Testament story told in Matthew (14:1–11) and Mark (6:17–29). This painting has a dynamism that evokes Salome's effort to seduce Saint John with her dance. Her body forms an animated diagonal emphasised by an ethereal gauze scarf that follows the same line. The composition is balanced by the vertical lines of her head and left arm. Here, Salome's seduction is focused on the viewer, who receives her appealing gaze – a common dramatic device often seen in Titian's final works.

Jacopo Tintoretto

Italian 1519–94

The abduction of Helen

Il rapimento di Elena

c. 1578–79

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P399

The Abduction of Helen came from the Gonzaga collection and from there passed to King Charles I of England. In October 1652, upon that monarch's death, it was purchased by John Jackson, who soon sold it to the Spanish ambassador Alonso de Cárdenas for Prime Minister Luis de Haro, who gave it to King Philip IV. The work is listed in the 1666 inventory of the Alcázar Palace in Madrid. In the *Iliad*, Homer describes Helen of Troy's reticence to abandon Menelaus, suggesting she was kidnapped by Paris. Tintoretto depicts her being taken to a ship while fierce combat occurs on the shore. By characterising this scene as a battle between Turks and Christians, Tintoretto updated the Homeric tale so as to portray Helen as an allegory of Venice itself.

Jacopo Bassano

Italian c. 1510–92

The Israelites drinking the

Miraculous Water

***Gli Israeliti bevendo l'acqua
miracolosa***

c. 1566–68

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P6312

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Jacopo Bassano and his sons were renowned throughout Europe, and especially in Spain after Philip II began acquiring their works in the 1570s. Jacopo was then appreciated as an eminent naturalist painter who specialised in depictions of animals and genre scenes. This painting illustrates two separate episodes from the Old Testament Book of Exodus. In the middle ground, Moses and Aaron lead the Israelites towards the Promised Land. In the foreground, men, women and animals drink at the spring that Moses had previously caused to flow from the rock of Horeb.

Livio Mehus

Flemish c. 1630–91,
worked in Italy c. 1644–91

Genius of painting

Il genio della pittura

c. 1650
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Acquired, 2000

P7754

In this work, the youthful genius of painting slavishly copies the now sadly destroyed *Martyrdom of Saint Peter* by Titian. In effect he is learning his craft from Titian, long considered the exemplar of the Venetian school of colourists. This is one of a pair of paintings by Mehus that espouse his notions of excellence in art. In the other, now in The Palazzo Pitti, Florence, the genius of sculpture is drawing a classical statue, thus extolling the primacy of ancient sculpture and the skill of drawing. In both works Mehus includes a self-portrait that looks out at the viewer from the centre of the canvas, thus associating himself with the qualities he most admires.

For Kids

A genius is a person who is very, very clever and creative. Livio Mehus started painting when he was just fourteen. He has put himself in this picture, closely watching the child artist. The child is copying a painting by the great artist Titian, whom Mehus admired.

If you were an artist, which painting might you choose to copy?

The Carracci and their legacy

Around 1582 the brothers Annibale and Agostino Carracci, along with their older cousin Ludovico, founded an art academy in Bologna in central Italy.

Their intention was to reinvigorate painting by means of an intense study of the natural world and through bold experimentation in both drawing and painting. Their work and teaching profoundly shaped seventeenth-century Italian art.

The students of the Carracci were trained to draw directly from the studio model, and excellence in draughtsmanship was fundamental in their academy.

There is a sense that the Carracci believed the importance of this basic skill had diminished since the High Renaissance. Within a short time their academy was attracting a host of students, some of whom would forge outstanding careers. Guido Reni, for instance, was one exceptional pupil who became renowned for his delicacy of touch and refinement of colour. He quickly became the leading painter in Rome in the early seventeenth century.

Annibale Carracci and his immensely talented pupils Domenichino and Francesco Albani also developed a new form of landscape painting that set biblical and mythological narratives in an ideal but well-observed depiction of the natural world. The style of painting fostered by the Carracci rapidly gained currency among Roman patrons and collectors in particular. It also inspired a host of other artists, thus expanding and perpetuating the Carracci's reforms and legacy.

Annibale Carracci

Italian 1560–1609

The Assumption of the Virgin

L'Assunzione della Vergine

c. 1587

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P75

The Assumption of the Virgin is narrated in a legend inspired by the vision of the Prophet Elias and by the Ascension of Christ. Upon her death, the Virgin was carried to heaven by angels in the presence of the Apostles. In this bold composition Annibale accentuated the dramatic aspects of the scene by representing the Ascension in profile, rather than from the front, as was then customary. He included numerous naturalistic touches, especially in his portrayal of the Apostles and the Virgin, which allowed him to depict a miraculous event with unprecedented realism. The Assumption of the Virgin was only declared an article of faith in 1950, after many centuries in which belief in it was a question of personal piety.

Ludovico Carracci

Italian c. 1555–1619

The Ecstasy of Saint Francis

L'estasi di san Francesco

c. 1601–03

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P70

Saint Francis is one of the most venerated of all Christian saints. Born in 1182, he chose a religious life after a youth filled with empty pleasures. He was followed by a considerable number of disciples who congregated in Portiuncula, a small hermitage in the foothills of Assisi, where Saint Francis spent most of his life and died in 1226. This painting depicts him in a state of rapture as the Virgin, Christ, Saint John the Baptist and a group of angels appear to him. This painting exemplifies the influence that Raphael, Correggio and Venetian painting had on the Carracci. It is a paradigm of the classically inspired balance present in their compositions, combined with the heightened naturalism they advocated at their teaching academy. There, artists were taught to rediscover what they called the ‘truth in nature’.

Francesco Albani

Italian 1578–1660

The judgement of Paris

Il giudizio di Paride

c. 1650–60

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P2

Albani's *The judgement of Paris* shows the shepherd prince deciding which of three goddesses he will award with a golden apple for being the most beautiful: Venus, in the centre, accompanied by a dove; Minerva, on the right, identified by her helmet and the weapons lying abandoned on the ground; and Juno, associated with the peacock. In the sky, Cupid hastens to fit an arrow to his bow. The numerous putti here might reference Albani's own twelve children who, according to Malvasia, Albani's principal biographer, he hung from the ceiling to use as models. This painting was among those works in the Spanish Royal Collection that in 1762 the prudish Charles III wanted to burn because of their perceived erotic sensuality.

Francesco Albani

Italian 1578–1660

The toilet of Venus

La toilette di Venere

c. 1635–40

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P1

Francesco Albani was a very talented pupil of Annibale Carracci (1560–1609). He achieved success through mythological paintings such as this, and his refined and lyrical view of nature helped disseminate the classical ideals embodied in Carracci's own landscapes. In this composition, one of numerous paintings Albani devoted to the subject, Venus reclines on a chair while three servants, possibly the Three Graces, as well as five putti, attend to her. The iconographic source for Venus being groomed by the Graces may lie in Homer's *Odyssey* (VIII, 266–365). There, Venus is said to have committed adultery with Mars and then fled to Cyprus, where 'The Graces washed her and anointed her with immortal oil'.

For Kids

Venus is the beautiful Roman goddess of love. Here she is in a garden, surrounded by nature. The artist shows off his skill in painting the landscape, people and even shiny silver. Servants are preparing Venus to be dressed, and the putti, who look like babies, have put down their bows and arrows to help. The Spanish Royal Family loved these paintings of mythical stories about gods and goddesses.

What are the busy putti doing?

Art of the Counter-Reformation

By the 1580s many Italian painters were turning away from the artifice of Mannerism seen in the late works of Michelangelo and Giorgio Vasari. At the forefront of this trend were the Carracci family of artists from Bologna and Caravaggio from Lombardy, a region in northern Italy that was under Spanish rule. By the beginning of the seventeenth century almost all major centres in Italy witnessed a shift towards a more realistic and earthy style of painting.

This transformation was in part prompted by those leading the Catholic Reformation in the mid sixteenth century. Catholic reformers clarified the role of devotional painting in the face of Protestant attacks on the worship of images. The Catholic leaders who met at the Council of Trent (1545–63) reaffirmed the importance of sacred art as a universal language. They also encouraged artists to practise a more explicit style of visual communication that would be immediately intelligible to the viewer. Such ideas were rapidly absorbed by artists throughout Italy.

The changes in approach and values inspired a host of other artists, such as the Bolognese Guercino and the Tuscan Pietro da Cortona who also invested his work with a profound understanding of the classical past. The examination of classical literature and art had a lasting effect on artists throughout the century and can be seen in the work of Andrea di Lione and Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione.

Guido Reni
Italian 1575–1642

The Apostle Saint James the Greater
L'Apostolo Santiago il Vecchio
1618–23
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P212

This work depicts Saint James the Greater, who was Saint John's brother and one of the Apostles closest to Christ. James witnessed Christ's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, accompanied him at the Sermon on the Mount and was present at the Taking of Christ. According to tradition Saint James visited Spain, and while he returned to Jerusalem, where he was martyred, his body was buried centuries later in Compostela in northwest Spain. His tomb is the second most important site of Christian pilgrimage in Europe, after Rome. Guido Reni was a pupil of the Carracci and, following their death, became the pre-eminent exponent of the school of Bologna and a key figure in Baroque art.

Guercino
(Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)
Italian 1591–1666

Susanna and the Elders
Susanna e i vecchioni
1617
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P201

According to the Old Testament (Daniel 13), Archian and Sedechia were two elderly judges who regularly visited the home of a rich man named Joachim to discuss certain cases. One hot day, Joachim's wife, Susanna, was bathing in one of the fountains at her house without noticing that the old men were watching her from a hiding place. They desired her and attempted to molest her. After Susanna resisted the old men, they accused her of adultery. A third judge found in Susanna's favour, however, and the men were sentenced to death. This biblical story was a favourite of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists, as it offered them an opportunity to depict a scene charged with eroticism and to display their skills at representing nudes.

Guido Reni
Italian 1575–1642

Saint Sebastian
San Sebastiano
1615–20
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P211

Sebastian was a Roman soldier who suffered martyrdom for his Christian faith during the reign of Diocletian and Maximian at the end of the third century. He was made a patron saint of the city of Rome and his cult became popular throughout Europe as he was invoked at times of plague. Guido Reni trained in the Carracci Academy in Bologna where young painters were taught to study the nude model and to draw the sculptures of Antiquity. Between about 1601 and 1614 he lived in Rome and came briefly under the spell of Caravaggio, evidence of which is apparent in the dramatic nocturnal lighting of this painting. Reni's numerous depictions of Saint Sebastian are celebrated for their languid eroticism.

Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione

Italian c. 1609–64

Diogenes seeking an honest man

Diogene ricerca un uomo onesto

c. 1645–55

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P88

An inquiring and original artist from Genoa, Castiglione worked throughout much of Italy. The scene he depicts here is drawn from a passage in Diogenes Laërtius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (third century AD) that tells how the Cynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (fifth–fourth centuries BC) walked the streets of Athens carrying a lit lamp in the middle of the day in his quest to find an honest man. A satyr, a pagan idol, a man reaching out to a goat and other animals and objects scattered around the floor (dead birds, shells, bones, vessels) are the detritus of the decadent, vice-ridden society in rapid decline that Diogenes was railing against.

Carlo Maratti
Italian 1625–1713

The Virgin and Child in Glory
*La Vergine ed il Bambino in
Gloria*

c. 1680
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P3291

Carlo Maratti was the most important painter in Roman art circles during the second half of the seventeenth century. His patrons included popes and influential aristocratic families. He also painted portraits of some English aristocrats when they passed through Rome. A master of exactitude, Maratti is considered heir to the classical tradition of Raphael and the Carracci. His grand compositions, harmonious colours and elegant figures with delicate features inspired by the statues of Antiquity are free of the excessive sweetness visible in works by some of his imitators.

Andrea di Lione

Italian 1610–85

Jacob's journey

Il viaggio di Giacomo

c. 1635–65

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P86

This painting belongs to the tradition of depictions of voyages of Old Testament patriarchs. These pastoral paintings with biblical subjects allowed painters to depict large groups of figures, animals and objects in motion. The scene represents a passage from Genesis that recounts the moment when Laban catches up to Jacob on Mount Galaad and rebukes him for having fled with his daughters, Leah and Rachel, and his flocks. Laban, with a grey beard, appears at the right. At the left Jacob is shown on horseback with Rachel, who holds her son Joseph in her arms. Leah, the woman on the right wearing a blue scarf, has her back to the viewer. Lione's paintings often bear many similarities to that of G. B. Castiglione, as the two were close and even lived near one another both in Naples and Rome.

Guido Reni
Italian 1575–1642

Cupid
Cupido
1637–38
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P150

Here Cupid raises his left hand towards a dove, and holds a bow in his right hand. The loosened bowstring indicates that he has been disarmed; his remaining arrows lie in a quiver discarded on the ground. The subject could be a variation of 'Love tamed' from Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (first published 1593), in which Cupid is represented seated on a rock with his bows and arrows under his feet, holding a bird in his left hand and an hourglass in his right. Instead of holding the bird, however, Cupid is shown by Reni receiving an arrow from the dove, a symbol of Venus, in order to recommence his work. If so, the message of the painting is that the taming of love is only temporary.

Guercino
(Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)
Italian 1591–1666

Cupid spurning riches
Cupido disprezzando ricchezze
c. 1654
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P205

A letter from Camillo Massimo to his friend, the antiquarian Giovanni Pietro Bellori, establishes that this painting and the adjacent *Cupid* by Guido Reni were diplomatic gifts to Philip IV given by Massimo in 1655 in his role as papal *nuncio* (ambassador) to Spain. The presentation of gifts by ambassadors on arrival at court was an essential part of diplomacy, and paintings were particularly appropriate for Philip IV who was known to be an avid collector. The Modenese ambassador wrote in 1652 that ‘Nowadays nothing pleases the king as much as the gift of notable pictures, because his inclination for the art of painting is greater than before’.

For Kids

Chubby, winged Cupid is the god of desire and love. Even today, if we say we are 'struck by Cupid's arrow' it means we have fallen in love. Here we see Cupid emptying a bag of gold coins because he believes love is much more important than money. In the second painting of Cupid nearby, the dove of peace hands Cupid an arrow to add to his quiver on the ground. Cupid needs to keep working, as love never rests.

Do you think he is real or imagined?

Annibale Carracci

Italian 1560–1609

Studies for a section of architectural decoration [Galleria Farnese?]

Studi per una sezione decorativa architettonica, [Galleria Farnese?]

c. 1597–1601

pen and brown ink and brown wash on beige paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2123

Annibale's naturalistic style was partly based on his study of the Antique, Raphael and Correggio. In 1594 Annibale was summoned to Rome by Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, who commissioned him to decorate the ceilings of the *camerino* and the Galleria in the Palazzo Farnese. The frescoes of scenes from ancient mythology on the Galleria's ceiling is Annibale's masterpiece and most influential work. This drawing relates to the ceiling decoration of the Galleria Farnese and the planning of its ingenious and seemingly weightless architectural framework.

Guido Reni
Italian 1575–1642

**Landscape with Rest on the Flight to
Egypt with Saint John**
*Paesaggio con riposo nella fuga in Egitto
con san Giovannino*
c. 1595
pen and brown ink on beige paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2131

Guido Reni trained under Denys Calvaert before moving to the Carracci academy. He went to Rome around 1601 in the wake of the great success of Annibale's spectacular frescoes in the Galleria Farnese, and with his Bolognese colleagues became a key figure in the establishment of a classical style that dominated Rome for decades. Drawing from nature in pen and ink was a major component of the teachings of the Carracci. This drawing offers a free and direct representation of nature close to Agostino Carracci's work in style and spirit.

Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)
Italian 1591–1666

Saint Agnes
Santa Inés
1650–60
red chalk on beige paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

D2165

Saint Agnes probably died in Rome around 300 AD, at the age of thirteen, a victim of the persecution of Christians under the Roman Emperor Diocletian. Her violent martyrdom is told in the Golden Legend (c. 1250). In traditional iconography the young saint is often depicted naked, covered only by her long hair and always portrayed with a lamb. The lamb symbolises purity, depicting Agnes's chastity, while the palm in her hand evokes her martyrdom. This highly finished drawing was probably intended to be made into an engraving.

Giovanni Lanfranco

Italian 1582–1647

Study for Saint John the Evangelist

Studio per san Giovanni Evangelista

1640–44

black chalk and red chalk grid on beige paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2183

Lanfranco, who was originally from Parma, began his apprenticeship with Agostino Carracci and continued it under Annibale. He later worked for ten years in Naples where he made this drawing, a preparatory study gridded for transfer to a larger format, for a fresco in the church of Santi Apostoli, Naples. Largely due to his influence, Neapolitan artists embraced bold foreshortening and perspective that were prevalent in northern Italian art of the sixteenth century. Correggio, also from Parma, particularly inspired Lanfranco and was a precursor of the dramatic illusionism of the Baroque.

Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)
Italian 1591–1666

Study of a prophet with an angel
Studio di un profeta con un angelo
c. 1627
pen and brown ink on beige paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2180

Although not a student of the Carracci, Guercino was a prominent painter in the Bolognese school and one of the most accomplished draughtsmen of the Italian Baroque. This drawing displays his mastery of the pen, used here with a dark ink to render strong contrasts of light and shadow, which he achieved despite using a rapid and sketchy drawing technique. This is a preparatory study for *Prophet Jeremiah*, one of a group of six prophets painted in fresco by Guercino for the cupola of Piacenza's cathedral in 1627.

Lodovico Cigoli (Lodovico Cardi)
Italian 1559–1613

Saint Peter healing the lame
San Pietro guarisce lo storpio

1606

pen and brown ink and brown wash over black
chalk on brown paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2991

A decisive breakthrough for the Tuscan painter Lodovico Cigoli came with his contribution to a series of paintings for new altars in St Peter's Basilica in Rome. In 1604 the intervention of the Florentine Grand Duke Ferdinando de Medici was critical in Cigoli being awarded the contract for the large slate altarpiece *Saint Peter healing the lame*. Sadly, Cigoli's altarpiece was almost completely destroyed by a fire in the eighteenth century. All that survives as a record of it is a group of preparatory drawings, including this one.

Cavaliere d'Arpino (Giuseppe Cesari)

Italian 1568–1640

The Virgin and Child adored by a kneeling angel

La Vergine ed il Bambino adorato da un angelo in ginocchio

c. 1606

red chalk

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D3173

The late Mannerist Roman painter Cavaliere d'Arpino was especially fond of red chalk, and his finished studies in the medium have a graceful, almost porcelain-like finish. Here the animated figures engage each other with a penetrating gaze. No painting by the Cavaliere corresponding with this drawing has been identified as yet. As the drawing's oval shape and relatively small size suggest, it may have been made as a design for a pattern for embroidery, perhaps to decorate some ecclesiastical vestment.

Pietro da Cortona
Italian 1596–1669

**The Metamorphosis of Florilla and
Melissa into flowers and bees
(Allegory of the House of Barberini)
*La metamorfosi in fiori e api di Florila
e Melissa (Allegoria della Casa dei
Barberini)***

1631

pen and brown ink, watercolour, brush and sepia
ink and white lead over pencil on brown paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2091

This drawing depicts the story of the nymphs Florilla and Melissa, twin daughters of Heaven and Earth. The young nymphs were transformed into flowers and a swarm of bees to punish Apollo, who had fallen in love with Melissa – shown here fainting in the act of metamorphosis. Pietro da Cortona was a favourite artist of Pope Urban VIII (Barberini) and his family, and this drawing was commissioned by Francesco Barberini, the Pope's nephew. Bees are the emblem of the Barberini family whose Roman palace appears on the left of this drawing.

The rise of the Caravaggisti

Along with the Carracci, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610), from Lombardy, was instrumental in introducing realism to Italian painting. Caravaggio would closely record models posed in his studio, usually lit from a single light source. This created the strong chiaroscuro and dramatic shadowing that he rendered with unprecedented illusionism. His paintings of an exotic and dangerous urban underclass proved irresistible to a whole movement of artists known as the Caravaggisti.

At the turn of the sixteenth century Caravaggio was active in Rome, where he gained many followers. Among them was Orazio Gentileschi, who trained in an earlier tradition yet transformed his technique under the influence of Caravaggio. Cecco del Caravaggio also adopted Caravaggesque realism (depicting saints with dirty feet, for example), as well as the use of sharp raking light, deep shadows and the sculptural treatment of figures.

In 1606, after killing a man, Caravaggio fled Rome for Naples, where he painted several altarpieces. His influence remained strong in the city and some of the finest Neapolitan painters, such as Jusepe de Ribera, followed his example. Ribera assimilated Caravaggio's naturalism, chiaroscuro and lighting, creating a distinctive style that would be much imitated by his own followers, including Luca Giordano, Pietro Novelli and Andrea Vaccaro.

Matthias Stom

Dutch c. 1600– after 1652,
worked in Italy c. 1630– after 1652

The incredulity of Saint Thomas *L'incredulità di san Tommaso*

1641–49
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P2094

This subject is taken from the Gospels (John 20:24–28). The scene depicts the moment when Thomas, seeking proof of the Resurrection, places his fingers in the wound in Christ's right side. In Stom's painting the wonderfully observed naked torso of Christ is indisputably the main focus of attention. Powerful lateral lighting transforms his torso into a source of light, which in turn illuminates the scene. This transformation of Christ may relate both to his state as a luminous resurrected body – which would explain why neither the nail holes in his hands nor the wounds from the crown of thorns on his forehead are shown – and to the new meaning of the Corpus Christi in Counter-Reformation doctrine.

Jusepe de Ribera
Spanish c. 1591–1652,
worked in Italy c. 1611–52

Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence
Martirio di san Lorenzo
1620–24
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds donated by Allan
and Maria Myers and Andrew Sisson, 2006 2006.390

The *Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* is a seminal autograph work by Ribera dating from around 1620, and the primary version of a composition that he and his studio often replicated. It is a complex painting created by an experienced artist who fully grasped his influences, yet is invested with great individuality and flair. It exemplifies Ribera's blending of Spanish and Caravaggesque tenebrism with an Emilian approach to Baroque realism that he absorbed looking at paintings by Caravaggio in Rome and Naples, and works by Guido Reni and the Carracci in Rome.

Orazio Gentileschi

Italian 1563–1639,
worked in England 1626–39

Saint Francis supported by an angel

San Francesco sorretto da un angelo

c. 1605–07
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P3122

Orazio Gentileschi moved from Pisa to Rome around 1576 and found employment in the large workshops executing decorative painting cycles in the city's basilicas. His late Mannerist style of the 1590s changed radically after 1600 as a result of his contact with Caravaggio, whom he befriended. He is known to have shared artistic props with Caravaggio, including a capuchin habit and some theatrical angel's wings. It is possible that these were used for this work, a defining example of Gentileschi's highly refined and lyrical Caravaggism.

Cocco del Caravaggio
(Francesco Buoneri)
active in Italy 1610–20

**Guardian angel with Saints
Ursula and Thomas**
***Angelo custode con sant'Orsola
e san Tommaso***
c. 1615
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Acquired with funds from the
Villaescusa Legacy, 1993

P7678

According to tradition, the guardian angel accompanies and protects a specific person, whose soul is depicted here as a nude youth being comforted by the angel. Devotion to guardian angels is rooted in the Middle Ages, but was encouraged during the Counter-Reformation to combat Protestant invectives, and was finally made official by Pope Clement X (r. 1670–76). Little is known about Cecco de Caravaggio. The small number of works currently attributed to him have an intense realism that evidently derives from Caravaggio.

Valentin de Boulogne

French c. 1591–1632,
worked in Italy 1611–32

The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence

Il martirio di san Lorenzo

1620s
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P2346

Restored for this exhibition and on display for the first time ever outside the Prado, this painting depicts the martyrdom of Deacon Lawrence (c. 225–258), who was executed on a grill for refusing to surrender the Church's treasures to the Roman Emperor Valerian. Instead, Lawrence distributed them among the poor. Appearing before Prefect Cornelius with a group of homeless individuals, he declared that the latter were the Church's true treasure. The unclothed figure of Saint Lawrence here is not an idealised nude, but rather a faithful representation of a model posing for the artist. This was the custom popularised by Caravaggio and his immediate followers in Rome, including the French artist Valentin de Boulogne.

Pietro Novelli

Italian 1603–47

The raising of Lazarus
La resurrezione di Lazzaro
1635–40
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Museo de la Trinidad, Madrid

P3338

It is very likely that this is one of the works by Pietro Novelli brought to Spain by the ninth Admiral of Castile, Juan Alfonso Enríquez de Cabrera (1597–1647), Viceroy of Sicily from 1641 to 1644, who appointed Novelli Engineer of the Royal Court on 29 January 1643. This painting depicts the New Testament miracle in which Christ raised Lazarus from the dead. At its centre a dynamic, muscular Lazarus emerges from his tomb and looks at Christ, who has just shouted: ‘Lazarus, come forth’ (John 11:43). This is a work of undoubted originality in which Novelli rose to the challenge of representing no less than eleven life-size figures on what is not an especially large canvas.

For Kids

A Bible story tells how Lazarus died and was brought back to life by Jesus. The people who saw it happen could hardly believe their eyes. This work was painted to hang in a church for decoration and to teach the story of Lazarus. The hands and faces are painted brightly so that they stand out.

See the hands and the expressions on people's faces. How do they help tell the story?

Daniele Crespi

Italian c. 1597–1600 – 1630

Pieta

Pietà

1626

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P128

Pieta was acquired by Charles II in 1689 at the auction of Gaspar de Haro y Guzmán, seventh Marquis of Carpio, who was the Spanish King's ambassador to Rome and subsequently his viceroy in Naples. In Italy, de Haro patronised numerous artists, becoming the leading private Spanish collector in the second half of the seventeenth century. After the King acquired this work, it was sent to the Alcázar Palace in Madrid, where it survived the fire of 1734 that completely destroyed the building and part of the Royal Collection of paintings. This much-admired work was often imitated by Spanish painters, who made numerous copies and versions of it. These artists were no doubt drawn to Crespi's very direct and moving naturalism.

Pietro Negri

Italian 1628–79

Vanitas

1662

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Pablo Bosch y Barrau Bequest, 1916

P2711

This work was originally considered to depict a penitent Magdalene, who was usually shown semi-nude, wearing rough clothing and with tangled hair, accompanied by objects that alluded to penitence, such as a Bible, a cross and a skull. Negri's figure, however, is luxuriously adorned – the rich cloth that barely covers her is cinched at the waist with a fine belt bearing precious stones. The iconographic elements that accompany the figure allude not so much to penitence as to the fleeting nature of life: a skull, a burning candle and an hourglass. As such, this painting is a memento mori, an allegory of the impermanence of life and the perishable character of its pleasures.

Francesco Furini

Italian 1603–46

Lot and his daughters

Lot e le sue figlie

c. 1634

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P144

This sensual painting depicts the Old Testament story of Lot, who escaped the destruction of Sodom thanks to a warning from the angels charged with its obliteration (Genesis 19:30–38). Lot's wife, who failed to obey their order not to look back, was turned into a pillar of salt, while Lot made a new home with his daughters in a cave. Having lost their respective husbands when Sodom perished, the two daughters decided to inebriate their elderly father and have sex with him in order to assure the continuance of their lineage. This theme permitted Baroque painters to legitimately depict nude women in sensual poses.

Alessandro Turchi

Italian 1578–1649

The flight into Egypt

La fuga in Egitto

early 1630s

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P461

Alessandro Turchi came to Rome from his native Verona probably in the early 1610s and had a successful career as a painter of altarpieces and smaller pictures for collectors. He was prominent in the Accademia di San Luca, the association of artists in Rome, and was its *principe* (principal) on several occasions. *The flight into Egypt* was painted in the first half of the 1630s for the church of San Romualdo in Piazza Santi Apostoli, Rome, consecrated in 1633 (now demolished). It became one of the artist's most celebrated and admired public works in the city. The subject tells the story of when Mary, Jesus and Joseph had to flee the persecution of King Herod. The monument on the right crowned with two Egyptian obelisks signals that the Holy Family is approaching its destination.

For Kids

The Holy Family is running away from mean King Herod. An angel points the way and the family are probably at the start of their journey. This famous story from the Bible was painted for a long, tall wall above an altar in a church. The artist has filled the painting from top to bottom with the angel and Holy Family, as they are the most important characters in the story.

Who is the baby towards the top of the picture?

Patronage in Rome and Naples

Unprecedented levels of private and Church patronage in Rome during the early seventeenth century made it the most dynamic artistic centre in Italy since Florence during the High Renaissance. In his reign as Pope Urban VIII (1623–44), Maffeo Barberini, along with members of his family and circle, engaged nearly every major artist working in Rome. Their patronage inspired other wealthy families who helped transform the city through the construction of lavish palaces. Dozens of churches were also built or renovated in the new Baroque style, leading in turn to major new commissions of paintings and sculpture.

The most notable artists of the century were then drawn to Rome, including the Carracci, Caravaggio and vast numbers of their former pupils or followers. Rome also attracted hundreds of artists from outside Italy. From the Netherlands came Matthias Stom and Jan Miel, and from Spain came Jusepe de Ribera. Among dozens of French artists also active in Rome were Valentin de Boulogne, Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain.

Many of the artists working in Rome were also enticed south to the Spanish-ruled Kingdom of Naples, a meeting point of Italian and Spanish cultures. The Caravaggisti thrived in Naples where patrons engaged artists to create works for their homes and churches, as well as to send back to Spain. Many of the works seen here made their way across the Mediterranean Sea soon after their completion. In this way Spanish artists were exposed to the reforms in Italian Baroque art and the taste for Italian art flourished, particularly at the Spanish Royal Court.

Luca Giordano

Italian 1634–1705,
worked in Spain 1692–1702

Christ carrying the cross

Cristo portacroce

c. 1697
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P174

The Neapolitan artist Luca Giordano spent ten years (1692–1702) in Spain, where he painted important mural decorations at the monastery of El Escorial and the Buen Retiro Palace, Madrid, as well as numerous oil paintings. Until recently his status was affected by the harsh criticism of late eighteenth-century classicist critics, but modern scholarship has restored his much-deserved fine reputation. In this powerful composition Christ is shown, rope around his neck, painfully carrying the cross, with a glistening halo around his head and blood running down his body. His serene face and bony hands evoke pathos and invite the viewer to reflect upon his Passion.

Bernardo Strozzi

Italian 1581–1644

Saint Veronica

Santa Veronica

1620–25

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P354

Veronica is a legendary saint who appears in medieval apocryphal texts, where she is said to have dried Christ's sweat and blood as he carried his cross to Calvary. When she removed the cloth from Christ's face, Veronica discovered that, miraculously, it bore his image. Various churches in Italy and abroad claim to possess the original cloth, but the one depicted by Strozzi here closely resembles that venerated at St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. Bernardo Strozzi was one of Genoa's most outstanding early Baroque artists. His approach was inspired by the Bolognese artist Giulio Cesar Procaccini and the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens, both of whom were working in Genoa at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Andrea Vaccaro

Italian c. 1604–70

The ascension of Saint Gennaro

L'ascensione di san Gennaro

1635

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P469

During the persecution of Christians by Rome at the turn of the third century, Gennaro (or Januarius), the bishop of Benevento, was imprisoned, tortured and finally killed in Pozzuoli, north of Naples. Fittingly, he became the patron saint of Naples, where his evocation is credited with extinguishing a plague epidemic in 1526 and with protecting the city from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1631. The latter miracle is alluded to in this painting, and Andrea Vaccaro has also included two glass vials of Saint Gennaro's blood – symbolic of martyrdom. Vaccaro worked principally on ecclesiastic commissions, and his particularly sensitive and expressively devout depictions of saints and martyrs rendered him one of the most celebrated and sought-after artists by the Church during the Counter-Reformation.

Jusepe de Ribera
Spanish c. 1591–1652,
worked in Italy c. 1611–52

Allegory of touch
Allegoria del tatto
1632
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P1112

Allegorical figures of the five senses and depictions of philosophers were among Jusepe de Ribera's favourite themes. Here, a poorly dressed blind man is shown touching a sculpted bust with his hands. This bust, and painting of a face on the table, might be a veiled allusion to the contrast between painting (which is two-dimensional) and sculpture (which is three-dimensional and can be perceived both visually and by touch). Ribera's occasional taste for paradox appears in the contrast between the aged and wrinkled figure of the blind man, marked by a lifetime of experiences, and the youthful but lifeless appearance of the statue.

For Kids

There are three faces in this painting: one of an old, blind man, one of the sculpture he is holding and one in a painting on the table. These faces and the man's hands are the brightest parts of the dark picture. It looks as if a light is shining on them. By touching the sculpture the man can tell what the head is like, how big its nose is and how much hair it has.

This painting is about the sense of touch. We have four other senses. What are they?

Giovanni Battista Gaulli (Baciccio)
Italian 1639–1709

Temperance, Hope, Wisdom and Chastity
*Temperanza, Speranza, Sapienza e
Verginità*

1669–1671

pen and brown ink, grey wash and white lead over
black chalk on brown paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2137

In the late 1660s Bernini negotiated Gaulli's first commission for Prince Camillo Pamphilj, the nephew of Pope Innocent X: the decoration of the four pendentives of the cupola of Saint Agnes in Agony in the Piazza Navona, next to the Palazzo Pamphilj. In Gaulli's drawing, Temperance is the woman in the centre accompanied by a putto holding reins, a symbol of moderation of the soul. She places a crown on the figure of Hope, represented by a female figure holding a bunch of lilies.

Giovanni Battista Gaulli (Baciccio)
Italian 1639–1709

Truth unveiled by Time
Verità svelata dal Tempo
1665–69
pen and brown ink, brush and brown ink

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

D2115

Giovanni Battista Gaulli came to Rome in 1657 following his apprenticeship in Genoa, where his precocious talents came to the attention of the greatest Baroque sculptor, Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). Bernini supported Gaulli and influenced his artistic development. This drawing relates to the sculpture *Truth* that Bernini undertook in 1646–52 (Galleria Borghese, Rome), in which he originally planned to show old Father Time floating in the air, scythe in one hand and lifting the cloth covering the naked form of his daughter, Truth, with the other.

Luca Giordano

Italian 1634–1705, worked in Spain 1692–1702

God commanding Abraham to sacrifice Isaac

Dio chiede ad Abramo il sacrificio di Isacco

c. 1694/96

black chalk and brown wash

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

D2141

This is a preparatory drawing for a painting now in the Royal Palace of La Granja de San Ildefonso. It was for one of eight pictures representing the stories of Abraham and Isaac that Giordano painted between 1694 and 1696 for one of the minor buildings of the Buen Retiro Park, the Hermitage of San Juan. How Giordano laid out this scene on paper reveals his remarkable ease in covering pictorial surfaces, a skill that is matched by the rapidity of execution that distinguishes his paintings.

Luca Giordano

Italian 1634–1705, worked in Spain 1692–1702

The presentation of the Virgin at the Temple

La presentazione della Vergine al Tempio

c. 1697

black chalk, pen and brown ink and brown wash

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

D2158

When the Virgin Mary was three years old her parents, Anna and Joachim, led her to the Temple of Jerusalem. There the young Virgin climbed the staircase leading to the priest who embraced and blessed her. This drawing relates to Luca Giordano's painting of the same name now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. It is one of eight paintings dedicated to the history of the Holy Family that are believed to have been created for one of the royal residences of Charles II, around 1697.

Francesco Fracanzano
Italian 1612–c. 1656

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

Salomone e la regina di Saba

c. 1640–50

pen and brown ink, brush and brown ink and brown
and red wash on laid paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2136

Fracanzano trained in the Neapolitan studio of Jusepe de Ribera. His natural inclination was to employ a rugged naturalism in the manner of Ribera, drawing lowlife types often bordering on the grotesque. But he sometimes tempered this by introducing surprisingly refined figures in the Roman style, with elegantly disposed draperies and classical profiles, as seen in this drawing. The root of Fracanzano's technique here lies in the work of his Spanish master, who also produced highly worked sheets drawn largely or entirely with the brush and with touches of red wash.

Pietro Novelli

Italian 1603–47

Moses and the Israelites following the pillar of fire

Mosè guidato dalla colonna di fuoco

early 17th century

pen and brown ink and brown and grey wash over black chalk on brown paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D2121

According to the Old Testament, Moses guided the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt and into the Promised Land. God showed them the way by appearing to them as a pillar of cloud by day, and as a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21–22). In this drawing the fire appears top left, framed by an oval cloud, which Moses points to with his staff. The crowds pass a temple on a hilltop in the distance, its fenestrated drum, topped with a dome and lantern, resembling many Baroque churches in Sicily.

The Buen Retiro Palace

The Buen Retiro (Good Retreat) Palace was built in Madrid, not far from where the Museo del Prado is today. Begun somewhat modestly in the early 1630s, over the next ten years the palace was dramatically enlarged under the direction of the Count-Duke of Olivares, the favourite and mentor of King Philip IV. With an intricate network of approximately forty buildings set amidst lavish gardens, Buen Retiro became one of the more ambitious architectural projects undertaken in Europe to that time.

The palace interiors necessitated an unprecedented decoration scheme including the installation of more than 800 paintings by artists working in Spain, Italy and, to a lesser extent, northern Europe. Spanish diplomats in Italy and the Viceroys of Naples were tasked with sourcing paintings that would fulfil Philip IV's desire to acquire works by the most renowned contemporary artists. Many Italian pupils of the Carracci, the Caravaggisti and foreign artists working in Italy were also engaged to contribute paintings. Many works were added to the palace in later years, with Luca Giordano making a major contribution in the 1690s.

While all genres of painting were included, some groups of works with strict thematic guidelines were planned for particular rooms. These occasionally matched older works already in the Spanish Royal Collection. Most of the paintings seen here were either conceived in Italy for the Buen Retiro project or once graced its walls. Due to a number of fires and large-scale damage suffered during the Napoleonic era, little is left of the Buen Retiro today. Sadly, few documents exist to attest to the splendour and intricate nature of the program.

Jan Miel

Flemish 1599–1664

Carnival in Rome

Il Carnevale a Roma

1653

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P1577

Acquired by Philip V for the Royal Palace of La Granja de San Ildefonso, *Carnival in Rome* is one of the best known paintings by Flemish artist Jan Miel. It depicts a popular feast comprising dances, masquerades and large and varied gatherings whose excesses were intended to ‘prepare’ believers for the imminent arrival of Lent, the liturgical period preceding Easter that calls for fasting and penance. Three apparently inebriated figures in the foreground wear the uniform of the Pope’s personal escort, the Swiss Guard. From the right, two figures dressed as the Doctor and Polichinela, typical *commedia dell’arte* characters, ride into the scene on mules.

Nicolas Poussin
French 1594–1665,
worked in Italy 1624–65

**The hunt of Atalanta and
Meleager**

La caccia di Atalanta e Meleager
1634–39
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P2320

The story portrayed here appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Oeneus, King of Calydon, offended Diana, who sent a giant wild boar to his kingdom to destroy its farmland and terrify its inhabitants. The monarch's young son, Meleager, formed a group to hunt down the beast, including such well-known figures as Jason, the brothers Castor and Pollux, as well as the very beautiful Atalanta, with whom Meleager fell in love. Poussin depicts the beginning of the hunt, before they enter a thick forest where Atalanta and Meleager become isolated from the group but find and kill the boar. This painting was commissioned as part of the *History of Ancient Rome* cycle for the Buen Retiro Palace.

Giovanni Lanfranco

Italian 1582–1647

An augur sacrificing for a

Roman emperor

*Una trivella sacrificando per un
imperatore romano*

c. 1635

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P236

This painting belongs to the group of scenes of the life of an ancient Roman emperor that were ordered in the early to mid 1630s in Naples by the Spanish Viceroy, the Count of Monterrey, to decorate the Buen Retiro Palace. It was painted in a deliberately schematic and in places sketchy manner that typifies Lanfranco's late style. By deliberately suppressing the background and keeping the composition shallow, Lanfranco was able to fill his canvas with dramatically gesturing monumental figures that seem to loom out of the shadows, almost as if they were an ancient Roman relief sculpture come to life.

Jusepe de Ribera
Spanish c. 1591–1652,
worked in Italy c. 1611–52

Women gladiators fighting
Donne gladiatori combattenti
1636
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P1124

Female gladiators were not uncommon in ancient Rome. The Roman historians Dio Cassius and Suetonius describe games held in honour of the Emperors Nero and Domitian in which women fought one another, and Juvenal in one of his satires thunders in disgust against this particular form of spectacle. While it is unlikely that Ribera knew ancient images of female gladiators (very few actually survive), he must have known the print of women fighters in Justus Lipsius's *Saturnalium* (Antwerp, 1604), an illustrated compendium of Roman gladiatorial practices which was used as a source by other artists engaged in Buen Retiro commissions.

Luca Giordano

Italian 1634–1705,
worked in Spain 1692–1702

The taking of a stronghold

La presa di una Fortezza

c. 1697–1700
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P183

While working in Spain, Luca Giordano decorated three spaces in the Casón, an outbuilding of the Buen Retiro Palace, Madrid. For one of these he painted the spectacular *The taking of a stronghold*. The work refers to battles that took place during Ferdinand the Catholic's capture of Granada in the late fifteenth century. However, it is impossible to identify the composition with a specific event, as Giordano created a generic battle scene that captures the confusion and violence of war. The only narrative element in this painting is the kneeling, Turkish-looking figure who points to the fortress in the background as though accepting his defeat and surrendering his stronghold.

Andrea di Lione

Italian 1610–85

Elephants in a circus

Gli Elefanti in un circo

c. 1640

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P91

Artists who were commissioned to contribute to the *History of Ancient Rome* cycle for the Buen Retiro Palace often drew on Antiquarian literature that began to be published from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards. This often included illustrations of newly discovered antiquities which inspired artists such as Lione. Authors discussing this cycle often try to establish analogies between historical events and contemporary Spain. However, it seems more likely that the artists simply sought to illustrate public entertainments in ancient Rome, as Lione did here with his vivid parade of elephants and dancers.

For Kids

Circuses have been entertaining people for several thousand years. Hundreds of years ago in ancient Rome, elephants were part of the act. This big, colourful painting shows elephants dressed up and waving their trunks from side to side. The dancers also add to the fun. What an exciting scene to hang in a Spanish Royal Palace!

Have you ever been to a circus and seen elephants perform?

Salvator Rosa

Italian 1615–73

A harbour scene

Il porto

c. 1638–39

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P324

Salvator Rosa was a controversial character in his day, and remains one of the most colourful individuals in Italian art history. He initially studied painting in his home town of Naples, where he was influenced by the brooding violence of Jusepe de Ribera's religious paintings. He also developed a love of landscape painting and reportedly worked directly from nature. Rosa became renowned for his darkly lit, turbulent landscape compositions. In later years Rosa's work developed in a more Baroque and expressive manner, often incorporating macabre narrative elements, bold colours and dynamic handling of the brush. He was an ideal choice to participate in the Buen Retiro project.

Viviano Codazzi

Italian c. 1606–70

Domenico Gargiulo

(Micco Spadaro)

Italian c. 1609–10 – c. 1675

**Perspectival view of a Roman
amphitheatre**

*Vista prospettica di un anfiteatro
romano*

c. 1638

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P2632

This is one of four views of ancient Roman gladiatorial and sporting combats commissioned around 1636–38 for the Buen Retiro Palace. Viviano Codazzi, a painter from the Bergamo area first recorded in Naples in 1633, painted the architecture, and his regular collaborator, the Neapolitan painter Domenico Gargiulo, painted the thousands of figures. Within the arena various combats are taking place, mostly the slaughter of wild beasts, known as the *venatio*, while the spectators, including an emperor, look on.

For Kids

Rome was famous for its buildings, art and entertainment, and its amphitheatre was full of action. In this painting the Roman amphitheatre has been changed from what it really looked like. A big part of the venue has been cut away to show how it is made, revealing stairs, bricks and arches.

To prove their strength, gladiators fought wild beasts in front of huge crowds. The Spanish Royal Family was so impressed by these events that they paid artists to paint them.

How many animals can you see?

The *History of Ancient Rome* cycle

The *History of Ancient Rome* cycle was commissioned for the Buen Retiro Palace, Madrid, around 1633. All of these paintings were created solely by artists based in Italy; most of them from Naples, and others from Rome. The series was completed by 1641, when some of the works were among seventeen crates of paintings shipped from Rome to Spain, destined for the Buen Retiro. The number and size of these paintings and the high status of the artists involved made this the most impressive series of all those undertaken to decorate the palace. In Naples, negotiations were conducted by Viceroy Manuel Fonseca y Zúñiga, Count of Monterrey, brother-in-law of Philip IV's all-powerful favourite, the Count-Duke of Olivares.

Three distinct themes are evident in the cycle. One illustrates entertainments staged for the Roman people, including gladiatorial contests and bullfighting. A further group is based on ancient mythology, and a third shows ceremonies associated with the life of an Emperor.

The *History of Ancient Rome* cycle is one of the more remarkable and unprecedented sets of paintings created in the Baroque period. Sadly, no documents exist that indicate there is an underlying subtext behind the cycle. It is therefore uncertain whether there was a subtle or overt association with contemporary Spanish politics. However, the equating of Madrid with the most powerful and illustrious empire of the ancient world is one possible reading of the scheme.

Claude Lorrain

French 1604–05 – 1682,
worked in Italy 1617–82

Landscape with the embarkment of Saint Paula Romana in Ostia

***Paesaggio con l'Imbarco ad
Ostia di santa Paola Romana***

1639–40

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P2254

A noble Roman widow and mother of five children, Saint Paula sought to retreat into the desert and abandon her worldly ways in favour of a life of prayer and penitence. In 285 AD she abandoned Rome with her son, Eustace, and moved to Antioch, where she joined Saint Jerome to share a hermit's life. Claude Lorrain's painting depicts her departure, offering an imaginary re-creation of the port of Ostia. The canvas includes an inscription clarifying the subject, as it was not a common one and therefore difficult to identify. Claude completed this work in Rome as one of a group of four paintings intended for the decoration of the Buen Retiro Palace.

For Kids

The Buen Retiro Palace was a big new palace built in Spain in the 1630s. The king bought new paintings, including this one, from around Europe to fill its walls.

Ports where sailing ships came and went were a favourite topic for French artist Claude Lorrain. Claude was famous for his paintings of the outdoors with glowing skies. He was much more interested in painting places than he was in painting people. No-one had ever done this before and the king was very impressed.

How can you tell what time of day it is in this painting?

Claude Joseph Vernet

French 1714–89,
worked in Italy 1734–53

Roman landscape at sunset

Paesaggio romano a tramonto

1781–82

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P2348

Claude Joseph Vernet was the most renowned eighteenth-century French landscape painter and *veduttista* (view painter), best known for his seascapes and views of Rome and Naples. His dramatic or poetic representations of storms and other atmospheric phenomena seen at different times of the day were inspired by the work of fellow countryman Claude Lorrain. In 1752 Vernet received a commission from King Louis XV of France to paint a series of views of French ports, and the resulting masterpieces brought him international patronage. This work was one of six commissioned from Vernet in 1781 by Charles, Prince of Asturias. The future King Charles IV of Spain ordered them for a cabinet at the Casita del Príncipe in the Royal Seat at El Escorial, Madrid.

Still lifes

Some of the most beautiful paintings in this exhibition are the landscape and still-life images of flowers, many of which once hung in the Buen Retiro Palace. Usually placed above doors and windows, they were integral to the architectural aims of the building. This architectural setting instigated a shift in the direction of still-life painting, which was still a relatively new genre in the seventeenth century. Caravaggio was instrumental in popularising still life and his method of lighting and use of darkness influenced Giuseppe Recco and the elusive Master S.B., both of whom were active in Naples.

The earliest still lifes were typically small works with simple compositions that focused on a single vase or basket of flowers and were intended to be viewed at eye level. For the Buen Retiro project, however, artists were asked to paint in vertical or very wide horizontal formats and on much larger canvases than had ever been attempted before.

Mario Nuzzi's paintings, for instance, reveal the rapid development of his art as he confronted this new genre. In a presumed early work in the series, *Vases of flowers*, there is little cohesion between the two vases and bunch of flowers that are set on an incongruous rocky ledge. The light sources do not unify the composition. Yet in Nuzzi's *Vases and onions* the flowers read perfectly as a unified and coherent composition. This is also true of the two other paintings by the artist displayed here, which are splendid riots of colour containing endlessly interesting details.

Giuseppe Recco

Italian 1634–95

Still life with fish and a turtle *Natura morta con pesci ed una tartaruga*

c. 1680

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P319

Giuseppe Recco was a member of one of the most famous families of Neapolitan still-life painters in the seventeenth century. His vast output was consistently high in quality and is characterised by a marked cultural eclecticism, taking in a number of different still-life styles, from Spanish to northern European to Roman, infused with an unusual iconographic versatility. Here Recco creates an evocative composition featuring sea creatures on the rocks of the seashore – bass, mullet, bream, squid and a large sea turtle. The turtle is depicted with startling naturalism and in minute detail, from its shell to its flippers which project from the rocks, to its wrinkled neck and head with hooked beak.

Master S.B.
active, Rome 1633–55

Kitchen still life
Natura morta di cucina
1640s
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection P1990

The mysterious Master S.B. is a still-unknown artist who appears to have been active in Naples and Rome between 1633 and 1655. This work is a beautiful example of the imaginary still-life paintings attributed to him. Carefully arranged on descending levels of stone slabs, as if placed in slots, are a variety of foods, straw-covered flasks and terracotta pots. Among the leitmotifs of the unmistakable iconographic repertoire of the Master S.B. are the straw-covered flask tied up with string, the salami cut open on the plate on the right and the wedge of cheese resting on the sheet of music which sits precipitously at the edge of the main stone slab. The work was recorded as being in the Buen Retiro Palace in 1794.

Mario Nuzzi
(Mario dei Fiori)
Italian 1603–73

Vases of flowers
Vasi di fiori
1640–42
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P250

Mario Nuzzi studied with his uncle Tommaso Salini (c.1575–1625), a Roman follower of Caravaggio and one of the first still-life specialists active in Rome soon after Caravaggio's death. Nuzzi drew his interest in Caravaggio's rigorous naturalism from Salini, a quality evident in the depiction of the vases, violin, sumptuous cloths, wicker basket and a squirrel that are scattered among the group of paintings by Nuzzi here.

Mario Nuzzi
(Mario dei Fiori)
Italian 1603–73

**Overturned silver vase on
a cloth**
***Vaso d'argento capovolto
su un panno***

1640–42
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P252

Nuzzi's specialisation and pre-eminence in the genre of flower painting earned him the nickname 'Mario dei Fiori' (Mario of the Flowers), and he became the most celebrated Italian still-life artist in Europe during the mid-seventeenth century. He received a further prestigious commission from Spain for a series of four *Garlands*, 1650, now in the monastery of El Escorial, Madrid, which includes his only known signed and dated work.

Mario Nuzzi
(Mario dei Fiori)
Italian 1603–73

Vases of flowers
Vasi di fiori
1640–42
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P251

Nuzzi's tour de force was painting flower-pieces on a grand scale, where his dramatically lit and highly detailed rendering of sumptuous floral arrangements were well suited to the elaborate decorative schemes of Baroque interiors. Nuzzi's acute observation of nature – he is known to have kept a botanical garden in Rome, tended by his father – gave his paintings a realism that was unmatched by his contemporaries and followers.

For Kids

Mario Nuzzi was called ‘Mario of the Flowers’ because painting flowers was his passion. He even kept his own botanical garden so he could study flowers for his art. Nuzzi was known all over Europe as the best flower painter. The Spanish Royal Family asked him to paint these pictures; just the thing to decorate their new palace in Madrid! Nuzzi’s paintings are big and filled with flowers from the four seasons: summer, autumn, winter and spring.

Can you match a season to each painting?

Mario Nuzzi
(Mario dei Fiori)
Italian 1603–73

Vases and onions
Vasi e cipolle

c. 1640–42
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P3239

A group of flower-pieces were commissioned from Mario Nuzzi between 1637 and 1642 to decorate the newly built Buen Retiro Palace in Madrid. Instructions given to him must have specified the large size and horizontal format for the works – which would have posed serious challenges – and may also have indicated the need to consider that they would be hung very high at the palace, probably above windows and balconies. The four works exhibited here reveal Nuzzi's ambition and inexhaustible catalogue of resources for making his compositions varied and surprising, masterfully juxtaposing a vast range of objects.

Andrea Belvedere

Italian 1652–1732,
worked in Spain 1694–1700

Flowerpiece

Fiori

c. 1694–1700
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P549

This pair of formidable, eminently attractive and spectacularly diverse bouquets was painted by the renowned Neapolitan still-life painter Andrea Belvedere during his stay in Madrid at the end of the seventeenth century. The brilliance of Spain's *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Century) was then fading as the Habsburg dynasty fell into decline under Charles II, its last, feeble sovereign. Belvedere belonged to the fertile Neapolitan school of painting which had cultivated an acute observation of life, a powerful realism and strong chiaroscuro effects. He stands out as the last and most exquisite representative of a tradition that produced superb still lifes and floral paintings.

Andrea Belvedere

Italian 1652–1732,
worked in Spain 1694–1700

Flowerpiece

Fiori

c. 1694–1700
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P550

The light background in the lower part of this pair of floral paintings by Andrea Belvedere becomes progressively darker towards the top, powerfully emphasising the multicoloured and grandiloquent flower arrangements. This technique leads the viewer to appreciate the masterful volume and striking variety of the flowers. These prodigious bouquets are skilfully arranged with contrasting textures and colours that generate a marvellous spray of plant life whose lavish design occupies almost the entire surface of each canvas. Both works perfectly exemplify the shift from a Baroque to Rococo sensibility that was occurring at this time.

Mariano Nani

Italian 1725–1804,
active in Spain 1759–1804

Kitchen still life with a hare and two partridges

***Natura morta di Cucina con una
lepre e due pernici***

late 18th century
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P263

When still-life painting emerged in Italy as a distinct genre in the early 1600s, compositions of interiors with game were made by specialist practitioners for wealthy clients as indicators of their wealth and high social status. Mariano and his father Giacomo (1698–1755) were prominent still-life artists who worked together in Naples until Mariano travelled to Spain in 1759 with Charles III's entourage. In Madrid Mariano helped establish the Royal Porcelain Factory and was appointed drawing master to the Prince of Asturias, the future Louis I, King of Spain.

Spain and Italian art in the eighteenth century

Italy was still the leading artistic centre of Europe in the eighteenth century, and the Spanish court continued to look to Italy for its artists. This was despite the example set by the brilliant Spanish artist Diego Velázquez when he was court painter to Philip IV.

From 1692 to 1702 the Neapolitan artist Luca Giordano worked in Spain, where he painted frescoed ceilings in the Buen Retiro Palace and El Escorial monastery, but for a later generation the opportunity to shine came with the rebuilding of the Royal Palace in Madrid. As with many palaces designed in the eighteenth century, its architecture required an extensive series of frescoes. Italy boasted the finest specialist decorative painters and Corrado Giaquinto, who trained in Naples but made his name in Rome, was invited to Madrid in 1753 to paint the ceilings of the new palace. Giaquinto possessed a fluid and virtuoso technique and was a master of illusionistic effects. He was also a genius at striking beautiful colour combinations which make his paintings seem illuminated from within. Giaquinto augmented the popular Rococo style with a Neapolitan intensity perfectly suited to the flamboyant architecture of the new palace and taste of those at court.

Spanish collections also reflected the phenomenon of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, which created a new generation of mainly British collectors. Both small- and large-scale easel paintings became extremely popular as portraits, view paintings and genre scenes found a new and wealthy audience of travelling aristocrats. Some of these very beautiful works, and even some of the artists who made them, also found their way to Spain.

Giandomenico Tiepolo

Italian 1727–1804,
worked in Spain 1762–70

The New World

Il nuovo mondo

c. 1765
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Donated by Isabel de Borbón y Esteban de Léon,
Marchioness of Balboa, 2002

P7805

Giandomenico Tiepolo's incisive humour is revealed in his depictions of everyday life in the *campi* of Venice. He was especially inspired by the exotic and indulgent world of the *Carnevale*, presenting the masks, costumes and disguises of the revellers. He was also attracted by the entertainments of street theatre, puppetry, comedians, fortune tellers and charlatans who swarmed the streets and piazzas of Venice during the festivities. His work was often tinged with an ironic critique of Venetian society. In *The New World*, the viewer, faced with the backs of the audience, is drawn into the scene as both witness and participant in this novel public spectacle. A *Mondo nuovo* was the term for a peep show, which is shown here in the tent at the left of the composition.

Giandomenico Tiepolo

Italian 1727–1804,
worked in Spain 1762–70

The Crown of Thorns

La corona di spine

1771–72

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Museo de la Trinidad, Madrid

P357

In 1762 Giandomenico Tiepolo accompanied his father Giambattista to Spain, where he remained until his father's sudden death in 1770. *The Crown of Thorns* is one of a series of eight scenes from Christ's Passion that Giandomenico made in Venice after returning from Madrid. This work is deliberately claustrophobic and disquieting, despite the fact that the event takes place outdoors. Its highly dramatic atmosphere, artificial gradation of colours, theatrical props and the almost expressionist appearance of some of the faces imbue the scene with a deliberate feeling of unreality that transports us to an event of particular religious significance.

Giandomenico Tiepolo

Italian 1727–1804,
worked in Spain 1762–70

The Venetian charlatan

Il ciarlatano veneziano

c. 1765
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Donated by Isabel de Borbón y Esteban de Leon,
Marchioness of Balboa, 2002

P7804

Giandomenico Tiepolo was the son of Giambattista Tiepolo, as well as his pupil and collaborator. While he drew many of his ideas and techniques from his father's work, Giandomenico also developed his own personal mode of expression, which freed him from slavishly following Giambattista's aesthetics. Giandomenico's genre work is marked by a tendency towards the intimate, and his caricatures, such as this small depiction of everyday life in Venice, are caustic and purely humorous by turns. This distanced him from the formidable pomposity of the world of gods, kings, myths and symbols that characterised his father's grandiloquent oeuvre.

Corrado Giaquinto

Italian 1703–66,
worked in Spain 1753–62

Spain pays homage to Religion and to the Church

Spagna rende omaggio alla Religione e alla Chiesa

1759
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P6715

In Madrid's Royal Palace, Corrado Giaquinto developed a program depicting the Spanish Monarchy, its virtues and historical mission to serve and defend Religion. This large canvas is a model for that fresco. Allegorical representations of Religion and the Catholic Church appear at the centre of this composition. Religion is depicted as a woman carrying a cross in her left hand and resting her right on a pagan-looking altar. The Catholic Church is represented by a young woman who reaches towards a tiara held by an angel. Beneath them Spain is shown as a woman wearing warrior's garb and offering wheat spikes to the two figures above.

Corrado Giaquinto

Italian 1703–66,
worked in Spain 1753–62

Allegory of Justice and Peace *Allegoria della Giustizia e della Pace*

c. 1753–54
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P104

Corrado Giaquinto was the leading exponent of the Roman Rococo during the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1740, while based in Rome, he began working for the Spanish court, supervising Spanish scholarship students at the Accademia di San Luca. From that time onwards he exerted a decisive influence on Spanish artists. In 1753 he was called to Madrid as Ferdinand VI's first chamber painter. There Giaquinto directed and carried out the decoration of the Royal Palace and supervised decorative work on the court's other palaces. This allegorical work shows two women, representing Justice and Peace, embracing – an allusion to the peaceful reign of Ferdinand VI, for whom this work was painted.

For Kids

King Ferdinand VI of Spain wanted everyone to know he ruled a peaceful and fair country. He asked Giaquinto, who usually painted ceilings and walls of Italian churches and palaces, to paint this picture of Justice and Peace. It is full of symbols. Justice, who stands for fairness, wears a crown, holds a sceptre and has an ostrich at her feet, the evenly spread feathers of which are a sign of fairness. Peace holds an olive branch, and the lamb stands for meekness.

What does the lion stand for?

Corrado Giaquinto

Italian 1703–66,
worked in Spain 1753–62

The birth of the Sun and the Triumph of Bacchus

***La nascita del Sole e il Trionfo
di Bacco***

1761
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P103

This is a highly finished sketch for the fresco that Giaquinto painted in the former stairway of Madrid's Royal Palace, which is now the Hall of Columns. At the top is the figure of Apollo, identified with Sol (Helios), god of light and by extension of purity, the enemy of darkness and bad deeds. He is shown holding a flaming torch and with the solar disc that identifies him. Above the disc are the signs of the zodiac, reflecting Apollo's rule as the divinity who orders time. His image is one of a benevolent god, identified here with the Spanish Monarchy. Apollo's role as god of light was interpreted in a moral and spiritual sense and he was thus seen as the emblem of order and legality, and hence of good government.

Giambattista Tiepolo

Italian 1696–1770,
worked in Spain 1762–70

The Immaculate Conception *L'Immacolata Concezione*

1767–69
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

P363

Giambattista Tiepolo was the most brilliant Italian artist of his age, renowned for his supreme draughtsmanship, colouristic control and dramatic illusionism. In 1762 he was summoned to Madrid by Charles III of Spain, for whom he worked until his death in 1770. This majestic image was part of a cycle of seven altarpieces commissioned in 1767 for the new royal church of San Pascual Bailón at Aranjuez, founded by Charles III in the same year. The Immaculate Conception was a cult strongly promoted by the Franciscan Order. This Catholic dogma proclaimed that Mary, mother of Christ, was herself free from original sin when conceived by her own mother, Saint Anne.

A change in taste

Giambattista Tiepolo arrived in Spain from Venice in 1762 to eventually replace the ailing Corrado Giaquinto, who subsequently retired as court painter and returned to Naples. Tiepolo was accompanied by his two sons, Giandomenico and Lorenzo, who worked as his assistants. The Tiepolos created some majestic paintings while in Spain for courtly and church patrons, but they did not attain the same level of success as earlier Italian visitors such as Luca Giordano or Giaquinto. A subtle but distinct shift in taste occurred at the Spanish court in the second half of the eighteenth century which saw a decline in interest in Italian art and culture. Indeed, the Tiepolos were the last great Italian artists to work in Spain.

The preference at court moved away from the Rococo towards a more austere and academic classicism, a trend that was met and fostered by the influential German neoclassical artist Anton Raphael Mengs, who dominated the arts of Spain in the late eighteenth century. Later, a combination of drastic political and social changes in Spain and Europe contributed to the decline of the Spanish desire for contemporary Italian art. The Napoleonic era also brought an end to Spanish rule on the Italian Peninsula. Taste at court began to focus more on French art and that of Spanish artists, such as Francisco Bayeu y Subías, Luis Paret y Alcázar and Francisco de Goya, although Old Master Italian paintings were occasionally still acquired for the Royal Collection.

Nevertheless, for three hundred years the arts of Italy and Spain were inextricably linked and during this time Italian painting was fundamental to Spain's historical and cultural heritage.

Pompeo Batoni

Italian 1708–87

Francis Basset

1778

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P49

This full-length portrait shows a young English nobleman dressed in a scarlet coat posing against the Roman countryside. The picture conforms to the Grand Tour portrait model in which the subject is placed in an Italian environment, surrounded by classical statuary and Antique fragments – a genre in which Pompeo Batoni became one of the leading practitioners, attaining success particularly among British visitors to Italy.

The sitter is Francis Basset (1757–1835), aged twenty-one, on a Continental Grand Tour. He must have posed for Batoni during his Roman sojourn from December 1777 to May 1778. The portrait entered Spain after the British frigate it was aboard, the *Westmorland*, was captured by the French and diverted to the Spanish port of Malaga in 1778.

Giuseppe Bonito

Italian 1707–89

**The Turkish Embassy to the
Court of Naples in 1741**
*L'ambasciata turca alla Corte di
Napoli nel 1741*

1741

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P54

This painting was commissioned in 1741 by Charles VII of Bourbon, who was then king of Naples and later, between 1759 and 1788, ruled Spain as Charles III. He sent this work back to Spain as a record of his reception of Hagi Hussein Effendi, the Ottoman Sultan's ambassador, on 30 August 1741, a political ceremony that served to emphasise good relations between the two states. Bonito's approach to portraiture here lies halfway between the realism of the seventeenth century and the decorative tastes of the eighteenth century, with its fondness for exotic scenes from remote countries.

For Kids

These men from the Turkish Embassy, wearing turbans and slippers, looked very different to the men they were visiting at an Italian court. The Turkish men are painted in a realistic way and almost look like a photograph. Cameras had not been invented yet and painting portraits was a way of recording and remembering special occasions like this.

Compare the way the people in this painting are dressed with the way the famous Italian singer Farinelli and his friends are dressed in a portrait nearby.

Jacopo Amigoni

Italian c. 1685–1752,
worked in Spain 1747–52

Portrait group: the singer Farinelli and friends

*Ritratto di gruppo: il cantante
Farinelli e gli amici*

c. 1750–52
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1950

2226–4

Jacopo Amigoni was a Venetian painter who worked throughout Europe during the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1747 he accepted the appointment as court painter to Ferdinand VI of Spain, almost certainly at the suggestion of his friend, the renowned Italian castrato Farinelli, who had been engaged by the King in 1737. This striking portrait, showing Madrid in the background, presents Farinelli at the centre of an intimate circle of friends, including Teresa Castellini, the prima donna of the Madrid opera; Pietro Metastasio, the librettist for many of Farinelli's most famous performances; and the artist himself with his page and his dog.

Alessandro Magnasco

Italian 1667–1749

Antonio Francesco Peruzzini

Italian c. 1646/47–1724

Christ served by angels

Cristo servito dagli angeli

c. 1705

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Acquired, 1967

P3124

In Magnasco's narrative invention, angels busy themselves with driving a band of gesticulating demons, which symbolise vice, away from Christ. Magnasco frequently painted unusual subjects – synagogue services, inquisition scenes, bandit gatherings, disasters and catastrophes, gatherings of witches and devils – in eerie scenes distinguished by diminutive, elongated figures. This is a collaborative work in which Magnasco painted the figures into a landscape created by Peruzzini.

Antonio Joli
Italian c. 1700–77

**Queen Maria Amalia of Saxony
visits Trajan's Arch of Triumph in
Benevento**

***Visita della regina Maria Amalia
di Sassonia presso l'Arco di
Traiano a Benevento***

c. 1759
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Donated by the Friends of the Prado Museum
Foundation, 2011

P8066

A painter of theatre sets and *vedute* (views), Antonio Joli of Modena worked for theatres in Venice, London and Madrid. In 1756 he accompanied the Englishman Lord John Brudenell on a two-year trip through southern Italy, where he visited and made the first contemporary oil paintings of the Doric temples of Paestum, rediscovered by archaeologists in 1747. This architectural landscape shows the ancient Roman city of Benevento, near Naples.

For Kids

Antonio Joli travelled all around Italy studying ancient buildings to paint. It was very fashionable to visit ancient sites, especially Greek ruins. The buildings are decorated with carvings that tell stories of legends and gods. To show how popular it was to tour these sites, in this painting Joli included a Spanish queen, a tour guide and an artist drawing the buildings.

Can you find them?

Gaspare Vanvitelli

Dutch 1652–53 – 1736,
worked in Italy 1675–1736

The Villa Martinelli and the Palace of the Duke of Aquale in Posillipo (Naples)

***La Villa Martinelli e il Palazzo
del Duca di Aquale a Posillipo
(Napoli)***

early 18th century
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Xavier Lafitte y Charlesteguy Bequest, 1930

P2462

This painting shows a small bay in the gulf of Posillipo, a leisure spot for foreign visitors and Neapolitan noblemen west of Naples, whose name derives from the Greek *Pausílypon*, meaning 'rest from worries'. In 1699 the Dutch artist Gaspare Vanvitelli, who had spent the majority of his career in Rome, was invited by the Spanish Viceroy of Naples to paint views of that city. Vanvitelli stayed for two and a half years, producing charming *vedute* (views) filled with detailed observations from life. Their accuracy is such that he may have used a camera obscura as an aid.

Sebastiano Conca

Italian 1680–1764

The education of Achilles

L'educazione di Achille

1727

oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Spanish Royal Collection

P2869

On 25 July 1727 prince Luis Antonio Jaime, last son of King Philip V of Spain, was born. To celebrate this joyous event, a temporary architectural folly was erected in Rome's Piazza di Spagna under the direction of Sebastiano Conca. The folly took the form of an artificial rock of considerable size surmounted by a round temple. This unlikely structure represented an allegory on the education of a prince, an apt theme to mark the birth of a new *infante*. A Greek myth recounts how on an isolated rock, pierced and battered by the sea, the goddess Thetis delivered the child Achilles to the centaur Chiron in order to begin his education and send him to the Temple of Glory. At one time *The Education of Achilles* hung in the queen's chamber in the Buen Retiro Palace.

Gaspare Vanvitelli

Dutch 1652–53 – 1736,
worked in Italy 1675–1736

The grotto at Posillipo (Naples)

La grotta di Posillipo (Napoli)

early 18th century
oil on canvas

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Xavier Lafitte y Charlesteguy Bequest, 1930

P2463

This painting depicts the entrance to the well-known Seiano Grotto in Posillipo, a 700-metre Roman tunnel built by Coccio Nerva in 37 AD that linked Naples to Pozzuoli and to the volcanic Phlegraean Fields, where Virgil set his oracle of the famous Cumæan Sybil. It was a 'must-see' destination for Englishmen on their Grand Tour and a favourite view for Vanvitelli's clients, which explains why there are eleven surviving versions of this scene. Here we see a group of elegant travellers reading the inscription on a monument commemorating successive improvements to the grotto by various Spanish rulers, while the locals pass by, going about their daily business.

Gaetano Gandolfi

Italian 1734–1802

Hercules and Omphale

Ercole e Onfale

1780–90

red and white chalk on brown paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1177

Painter, sculptor, engraver and draughtsman Gaetano Gandolfi trained at the Accademia Clementina in Bologna and later studied Venetian painting during a one-year sojourn to Venice in 1760. He was invited to spend six months in London in 1787, and travelled there by way of Paris. Gandolfi's contact with both countries' artistic traditions influenced his later style and left a clear mark on his work. This drawing depicts the story of Hercules who, having committed murder, was condemned to serve as a slave and was sold to Omphale, Queen of Lydia.

Gaetano Gandolfi

Italian 1734–1802

The martyrdom of Saint Eusebius

Martirio di san Eusebio

c. 1784

red chalk on beige paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D3359

This drawing is a preparatory study for a painting commissioned in 1784 by the Archbishop of Alba. It was intended for a chapel dedicated to Saint Eusebius then under construction at Vercelli Cathedral in Piedmont. The scene represents the moment when Saint Eusebius, Vercelli's first bishop and an outstanding opponent of Arianism (a splinter sect of early Christianity), was supposedly speared and stoned to death by his executioners in the fourth century AD.

Giandomenico Tiepolo

Italian 1727–1804, worked in Spain 1762–70

Centaur with cherubs

Centauro con putti

1759–91

pen and brown ink, brush and brown ink and grey wash over pencil

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1283

This drawing is taken from one of Giandomenico Tiepolo's most original creations, a series of centaurs, fauns and other mythological creatures. Like many from this series, it is drawn with great freedom and with a rapid facility. It is difficult to precisely identify the subject of this drawing – the youth armed with bow and arrows at the right of the centaur indicates that the latter might be Nessus, which would make this a representation of the kidnapping of Deianira and her rescue by Hercules.

Lorenzo Tiepolo

Italian 1736–76, worked in Spain 1762–76

Young man smoking

Giovanotto fumando

1770s?

white and red chalk on green paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

D1297

Lorenzo Tiepolo trained in the workshop of his father Giambattista in the 1740s and 1750s, and moved to Madrid in 1762 with his father and brother. In Madrid he married the daughter of bookseller Ángel Corradi and positioned himself as a specialist in pastel portraits, and he remained there following his father's death. On arriving in Madrid, Lorenzo had no Spanish competitors in the pastel medium in which he created a repertory of drawings of outstandingly expressive faces.

Giambattista Tiepolo

Italian 1696–1770, worked in Spain 1762–70

Saint John the Evangelist

San Giovanni Evangelista

c. 1769

pen and brown ink and brown wash over pencil

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1286

Traditionally this work was considered a preparatory sketch for one of the frescoes on the dome of the collegiate church at the Royal Palace of La Granja in the small town of San Ildefonso, north of Madrid. In 1768 Charles III initiated the decoration of that church. Here Tiepolo has applied washes over pencil lines to create volume, using the whiteness of the paper to create highlights. Finally a few rapid, broken pen strokes complete the figures' contours.

Francesco Galli da Bibiena

Italian 1659–1739

Theatre set

Set teatrale

early 18th century

pen and ink and grey wash on beige paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1091

Francesco Galli da Bibiena was raised in a family of artists and took an early interest in architecture and set design. He worked in various Italian cities before being appointed architect to the court of Mantua and moving to Vienna, where he took charge of the construction of the new opera theatre. Later trips took him to London and Nancy, but by 1726 Francesco was settled in his native Bologna again, where he became director of the Accademia Clementina. This drawing is a fine example of the architectural fantasies that characterise his oeuvre.

Donato Creti
Italian 1671–1749

Male nude
Nudo maschile
1714–22
oil on paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Fernández Durán Bequest, 1931

D1139

Donato Creti lived in Bologna for most of his life and is a quintessential part of the Bolognese artistic tradition. This work is a fine example of an academic drawing from nude models, as practised by apprentices and artists in the seventeenth century. This drawing is linked to Creti's *Male nude and cherub*, painted as part of a series of over-door paintings commissioned by his leading patron Marcantonio Collina Sbaraglia. They were part of a set of sixteen works Creti made between 1714 and 1722, now in the Collezioni Comunali d'Arte, Bologna.

Pompeo Batoni
Italian 1708–87

Academic drawing
Academia
1765–68
white chalk and pencil on green tempera

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Spanish Royal Collection

D3084

Along with Anton Raphael Mengs, Pompeo Batoni was the leading exponent of Roman classicism during the second half of the eighteenth century. This work is an example of Batoni drawing from a life model, as practised in Roman academies at this time. Batoni here used a technique whereby he prepared the paper with a thick coat of greenish tempera to give the usually rough surface of the paper a velvety finish. This required considerable dexterity as it was impossible to erase errors without destroying the prepared surface.

Anton Raphael Mengs

Bohemian 1728–79, worked in Italy 1756–61,
1770–79, worked in Spain 1761–70, 1774–77

Study for the dead Christ

Studio per Cristo morto

1768

pencil, white chalk and pencil grid on laid beige
paper

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Acquired, 2006

D7826

German neoclassical painter Anton Raphael Mengs spent some eleven years in Spain, working primarily on the decoration of Madrid's Royal Palace for King Charles III. For the King's bedroom, Mengs made a series of easel paintings on the Passion of Christ, most importantly a *Descent from the Cross*, 1768–69. This is a final study for that work, indicated by the grid for its transfer to a larger format. It is a perfect example of Meng's mastery of drawing and of the beauty and perfection of his classicised figures with unblemished skin, elegant and slender limbs and delicate hands with refined gestures.

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