



MEADOWS MUSEUM
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MEADOWS MUSEUM, SMU ACQUIRES RENAISSANCE PANEL PAINTING
ADORATION OF THE MAGI

*Lost composition from historic Spanish monastery
recently attributed to Aragonese Master of Sigena*

DALLAS (SMU) — June 8, 2018 — The Meadows Museum, SMU announces the acquisition of an early Renaissance oil painting by the artist known as the Master of Sigena, *Adoration of the Magi* (c. 1519). The painting is one of 16 extant panels originating from the monumental altarpiece at the Real Monasterio de Santa María de Sigena (Huesca) which was dismantled in the 18th century, sections of which are now held in other collections such as the Museo Nacional del Prado, the Museo Provincial de Huesca, the Museo Nacional de Arte de Cataluña (MNAC), the Museo Diocesano de Lleida, the Museo de Bellas Artes de Zaragoza, and the Museo de Santa Cruz in Toledo. Appearing recently on the market in Switzerland, where it was catalogued as the work of an anonymous Italian painter, subsequent research and technical analysis of the painting revealed it to be the work of the Master of Sigena, the artist commissioned to create the Aragonese monastery's retablo mayor in the 16th century.

Madrid's Galería Caylus, which sold the painting to the Meadows Museum, originally purchased it from Berne-based auction house Galerie Stuker in 2017. Recognizing that the painting had been mis-attributed, they invested resources in a full cleaning, conservation and technical study of the work, including infrared reflectography, x-radiography, and pigment analysis. The results of the study confirmed that the materials and techniques used for the panel's construction were consistent with other panels from the 16th-century altarpiece, and the painting was subsequently exhibited at TEFAF New York as the work of the Master of Sigena. It has subsequently been published with this attribution. When the Meadows was approached about the painting by Galería Caylus, Dr. Amanda W. Dotseth, the museum's Meadows/Mellon/Prado fellow and a noted international scholar of medieval Spanish art, investigated further, comparing the results of Caylus's study with similar technical studies undertaken on other panels associated with the same altarpiece in Spanish collections. As evidenced by its subject matter, size, underdrawing, materials and style, *Adoration of the Magi* is undoubtedly from the Master of Sigena's high altarpiece of Real Monasterio de Santa María de Sigena.

The oil painting on wood is in remarkably good condition and is a prime example of the painter's characteristically exuberant palette of reds and greens, crowded compositions, attention to texture and drapery, and expressive figures with boldly highlighted hair and naturalistic features. The work is also of historical significance, as the central magus is thought to be an idealized likeness of King Charles I of Spain (r. 1516–1556), who became Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, in 1519. The figure bears the pale complexion, reddish hair, and classic 16th-century coiffure common among portraits of Charles I. Of the three kings he is the most prominently featured, positioned below a banner with an imperial eagle, and is the only one who has not yet removed his crown in homage to the Christ child.

The Real Monasterio de Santa María de Sigüenza, once a powerful royal convent in Aragón, underwent a slow decline following the region's union with the kingdom of Castile. The altarpiece was dismantled and replaced in the 18th century and there is evidence of the sale of individual panels from as early as the late 19th century. The monastery was dissolved in the mid-19th century and it is documented that *Adoration of the Magi* had already been sold by 1908. Other panels from the same retablo remained at Sigüenza and were gradually sold or relocated to museums.

Mark A. Roglán, the Linda P. and William A. Custard Director of the Meadows Museum and Centennial Chair in the Meadows School of the Arts, says, "*Adoration of the Magi* represents a key work of the early Renaissance in the Meadows's collection; alongside other works in the Meadows's collection from this period, such as *Saint Sebastian* (c. 1506) by Fernando Yáñez de Almedina and Juan de Borgoña's *The Investiture of Saint Ildefonsus* (c. 1508–14), it forms a useful tool for studying the Hispanic artistic tradition as it transitioned from the late medieval period to the Renaissance."

Dotseth, who will assume the role of curator at the Meadows Museum this fall, adds, "This panel represents a small but notable part of the nuns' remarkable artistic legacy, which includes everything from Romanesque architecture and frescos to sculpture and immense altarpieces. As evidence of powerful female patronage in the Renaissance, it has the added advantage of challenging the misleading (at best) and inaccurate (at worst) view of the past as a place in which only men made art."

Adoration of the Magi was purchased with funds from The Meadows Foundation, with additional support provided by Susan Heldt Albritton, Gwen and Richard Irwin, and Catherine Blaffer Taylor. The painting will go on display in the Meadows galleries in August.

About the Meadows Museum

The Meadows Museum is the leading U.S. institution focused on the study and presentation of the art of Spain. In 1962, Dallas businessman and philanthropist Algur H. Meadows donated his private collection of Spanish paintings, as well as funds to start a museum, to Southern Methodist University. The museum opened to the public in 1965, marking the first step in fulfilling Meadows's vision to create "a small Prado for Texas." Today, the Meadows is home to one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Spanish art outside of Spain. The collection spans from the 10th to the 21st centuries and includes medieval objects, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures, and major paintings by Golden Age and modern masters.

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