

Caylus



DIEGO DE MORA
(Granada, 1658-1729)

Christ on the cold Stone

Circa 1700-1720

Carved and polychromed pine wood, glass paste eyes, natural glue-sized cord
26 × 14 × 12.5 cm

PROVENANCE:

Private collection, Reims

Emmanuele Soubielle Works of Art, Paris

LITERATURE:

DIAZ GÓMEZ, J.A. "De Cano, Mora, Risueño y Sarabia: piezas inéditas del barroco granadino"
in *Cuadernos de Arte de la Universidad de Granada*. No. 54, 2023, pp. 115-133.

Inheriting the mastery of sculpture characteristic of other family members, Diego de Mora was predestined for this discipline as the grandson of the altarpiece maker Cecilio López, great-nephew of Alonso de Mena, son of the sculptor and architect Bernardo de Mora, nephew of Pedro de Mena and brother of José de Mora. He trained from a very early age in the family workshop, becoming the principal and most revered exponent of sculpture in Granada, particularly after the departure of Mena for Malaga in 1658 and the death of Alonso Cano in 1667. Diego Antonio de Mora López adhered to the studio's stylistic canons, with a particularly evident influence of Pedro de Mena and of his elder brother, skilfully and judiciously maintaining this approach but employing a softer, more idealised and less bloody expressivity which reflected the evolution of the High Baroque as a whole. In 1682 and from fear of family opposition he secretly married Ana de Soto, his father's housekeeper. They adopted a daughter, Francisca Ruiz Velázquez, the child of some deceased friends. On the death of the head of the family and at the age of just 26, Diego and his brother Bernardo jointly inherited the studio which their father had in turn inherited from his cousin, Pedro de Mena. He ultimately had as many as 22 apprentices, a number that conveys his prestige and renown during his own lifetime, as well as the extensive dissemination of the studio's models, which acquired the status of devotional icons in Granada and its surrounding area. While Diego de Mora had the good fortune to be born into a revered artistic dynasty, as is often the case his reputation has been overshadowed by the genius of his brother, José de Mora, the great sculptor of Baroque Granada and sculptor to Charles II.

Despite the lack of a specific documentary source for this episode from Christ's Passion, prints and paintings on the subject of "Christ on the cold Stone" are known from the 15th century. However, it was in the field of sculpture that this iconography, which is of Flemish origin and was rarely adopted in Spain, was most frequently represented.

Depicting a profoundly moving moment described by Émile Mâle as “Christ seated and waiting for death”, it corresponds to the hours prior to the Crucifixion. Due to its apparently similarity, this episode is frequently confused with subjects such as the “Ecce Homo”, although that title only applies to the image of Christ presented by Pilate to the people in the praetorium and in which Christ wears a red cloak, or with “Christ as the Man of Sorrows”, which depicts a moment after his Resurrection, again wearing a red cloak and clearly showing the wound to his right side. “Christ seated on the cold Stone” is always a seated figure, does not wear a cloak and does not show wounds aside from those received prior to his arrival on Mount Calvary.

In this powerfully expressive image Christ is shown entirely alone and exhausted, awaiting the culminating moment of his Passion; his death on Golgotha. Seated on the cold stone, which is skilfully represented here as a coloured, rocky mass, his face reflects his absorption in his thoughts while his body is tensed. Naked apart from a small loincloth which is notable for the plasticity of the folds, the artist presents a powerful, carefully depicted body in slight *contrapposto*. With an expression of intense but restrained sadness charged with nobility and dignity, Christ is shown as bound by a piece of natural cord that extends around his neck.

He has large, sunken eyes below pronounced brow ridges, an angular nose and prominent cheekbones, while the gaunt, bloody face adheres to the typical Mora family model.

The marks of his suffering from the Flagellation are evident in the form of bruises and streams of blood running down his forehead, torso and limbs. The blood running down his forehead, cheeks and temple suggests the presence of a crown of thorns referred to in this episode but now missing. Similarly, some small holes in the stone seem to indicate the presence of another, now missing attribute, perhaps a basket with hammers and nails or a skull, elements that have unfortunately not survived. Of great spiritual power and enormous formal beauty, this is a brilliant example of the youngest of the Mora dynasty’s use of the chisel and a work that should assume the place it merits in the hierarchy of religious sculpture.