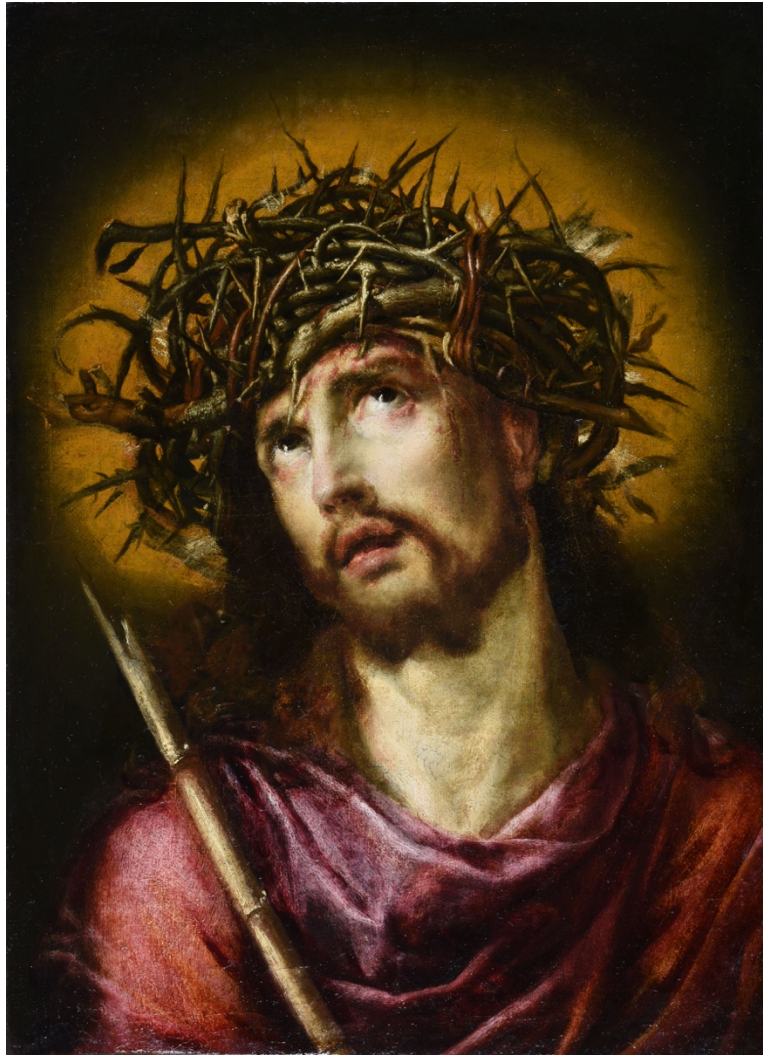


# Caylus



**ANTONIO DE PEREDA Y SALGADO**  
(Valladolid, 1611 - Madrid, 1678)

*Ecce Homo*

Ca. 1641  
Oil on canvas  
61 × 44 cm

#### PROVENANCE:

Don José Fontagud Aguilera (1867-1939)

Doña Ángela Fontagud y Valenzuela, Countess of Torrejón, until 1963

Doña María Travesedo y García-Sancho, Marchioness of Guevara y Onteiro, until 1969

Don Mariano Rodríguez-Casanova y Travesedo, until 2002

Don Florentín Rodríguez Casanova y González del Valle, Marquis of Onteiro

#### RELATED LITERATURE:

ANGULO ÍÑIGUEZ, D. & PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, A.E. *Historia de la pintura española. Escuela madrileña del segundo tercio del XVII*. Madrid, Instituto Diego Velazquez, CSIC, 1983, pp. 138-239.

PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, A.E. *Don Antonio de Pereda (1611-1678) y la pintura madrileña de su tiempo*. Exhib. cat., Madrid, Ministerio de Cultura, 1978.

According to Antonio Palomino, Antonio de Pereda was “one of the most illustrious creators who has brought honour to the Spanish nation with his brushes.”

The son of a modest painter from Valladolid, on the death of his father and at a “tender age” Pereda entered the Madrid studio of the enigmatic painter Pedro de las Cuevas. Although no works by the latter’s hand are now known, an illustrious generation of artists trained in his studio, including Jusepe Leonardo, Antonio Arias, Juan Carreño de Miranda and Francisco Camilo. Pereda’s abilities in painting were soon noted and he attracted the attention of important patrons, starting with Francisco de Tejada (judge to the Consejo Real) and subsequently Juan Bautista Crescenzi, Marquis of La Torre, who not only encouraged Pereda in his studies but also promoted him, introducing him at court. There he received commissions of the importance of *The Relief of Genoa by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Santa Cruz* for the Hall of Realms in the Buen Retiro, a project in which the greatest painters of the day competed.

The death of his patron when Pereda was only twenty-four distanced him from the court as there had existed a well known rivalry between the marquis and the Count-Duke of Olivares, who soon excluded Pereda from any royal patronage. During the more than forty remaining years of his life he developed a career judiciously producing works of a devotional nature for religious institutions and private patrons. In addition, of particular interest are his “small still lifes of such excellence that no one surpasses him”, and within these the sub-group of “vanitas” compositions such as the celebrated *Allegory of Vanity* in

the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, works that can be considered among the most appealing and refined of the artist's output.

Interestingly, it is known that both Pereda's library and his studio were exceptionally fine, the latter filled with sketches, models, sculptures, prints and drawings, and the former with numerous copies of books in Latin and foreign languages, a fact that seems to contradict the idea of his supposed illiteracy, as stated by Palomino. A spelling error in the signature on *Still Life with a Clock* in the Pushkin Museum, Moscow, has, however, encouraged this suggestion. A painter of great technical skill, Pereda masterfully combined the tradition of Flemish detail with the Venetian love of colour.

The present, powerfully expressive work is an *Ecce Homo* in which Christ is shown in profound solitude, his head tilted and looking up to the heavens. The term "Ecce Homo" is applied to the iconography of Christ presented by Pilate to the people in the praetorium in the episode prior to his crucifixion. In this case the figure, which is located in the immediate foreground and set against a black background, holds a reed sceptre. He wears a red mantle of shot tones very characteristic of Pereda while on his head is a superb crown of thorns with intricate, interlaced branches that produce small trickles of blood down his forehead and cheek. Behind the crown of thorns is a halo of yellow light which the painter intelligently uses as a device to emphasise the drama of the figure. Christ's expression is one of intense sadness but also nobility and dignity, while around his neck is a natural hemp rope of exceptional plasticity that is visible to the naked eye but clearer in the X-radiograph of the image, as is a compositional change to the reed sceptre, which was originally in a different position [fig. 1]. Of great spiritual profundity and formal beauty, this canvas is an outstanding example of Pereda's art which aims to move the viewer through the use of pathos.

The Museo del Prado has a larger version of this composition entitled *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*, in which the figure, wearing a red mantle, embraces a wooden cross, its texture and material depicted with unparalleled tactile precision [fig. 2]. Its date of 1641 allows the present work to be similarly placed in that period.



Fig. 1. Antonio de Pereda. *Ecce Homo*. X-radiograph



Fig. 2. Antonio de Pereda. *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*. Oil on canvas, 97 x 78 cm. 1641.  
Museo del Prado, (inv. no. P-001047).