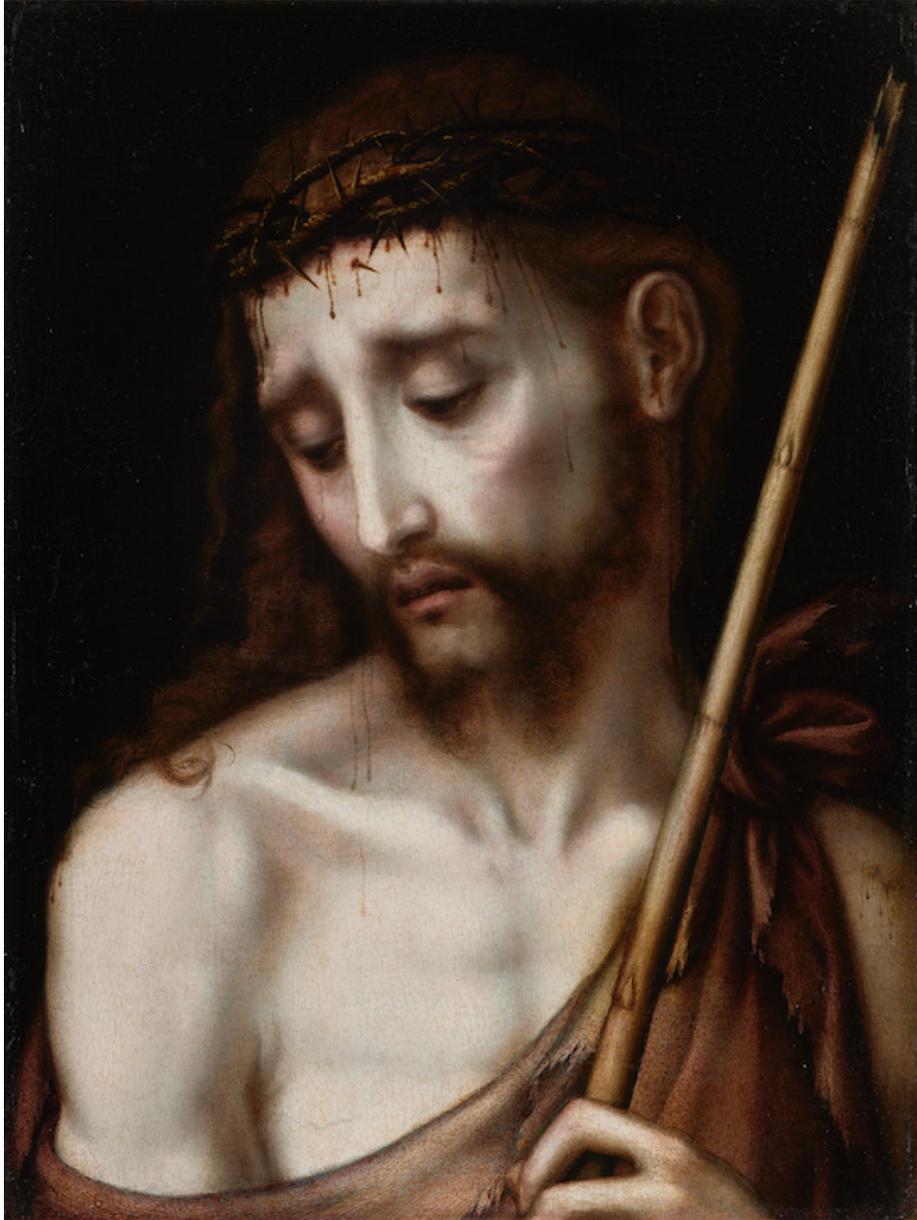


Caylus



LUIS DE MORALES
(Badajoz, ca. 1509– Alcántara, 1586)

Ecce Homo

Circa 1570

Oil on oak panel

37.5 × 27.6 cm

PROVENANCE:

Christie's London, 5 July 1996, lot 82; private collection, United Kingdom; Christie's London, 8 December 2004, lot 93; private collection.

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Luis de Morales, el Divino was probably born in Badajoz around 1510 and died in the same city in 1586. His training poses serious problems, although Palomino describes him as a disciple of the Flemish painter Pedro de Campaña, who lived in Seville between 1537 and 1563. Certainly the meticulousness and detail of his brushstrokes and the conception of the landscape are Flemish in origin, and most of his iconic themes are of late medieval tradition. However, his human types and use of colour and *sfumato* are related to the Lombard tradition of Bernardino Luini and Cristoforo Solario. However, the most personal aspect of his painting lies in the tormented, almost hysterical atmosphere in which his characters breathe, more focused on an intense inner life than on action, full of melancholy and ascetic renunciation and characteristic of the climate of tense religiosity imposed in 16th-century Spain by the reform movements, from the less orthodox Erasmianism and Alumbradism to the more genuine mysticism and Trentism.

Morales, called *the Divine* by Palomino because he painted only religious subjects with great delicacy and subtlety, reached his peak between 1550 and 1570, painting numerous altarpieces, triptychs and small and medium-sized works that were widely

distributed because they satisfied the popular religiosity of the time, although some of his canvases contain quotations and information of learned erudition, the result of contact with enlightened clients, first and foremost the bishops of the diocese of Badajoz, in whose service he worked. The enormous output and the constant demand for his most frequent and popular iconographic themes obliged him to maintain a large workshop in which his two sons, Cristóbal and Jerónimo, collaborated; a workshop responsible for many copies that circulate and are still considered to be Morales's autographs.

The present panel is an unpublished work. It depicts a scene from the Gospel of John (Jn 19:5) in which Jesus Christ is condemned to death before the crowd in the Praetorium. According to the evangelist, 'Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, 'Behold the man!''; a passage commonly summarised with the Latinism *Ecce Homo*. In this case, Morales depicts the Saviour crowned with thorns, focusing all attention on the submissive gaze, which takes us back to the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 27:28-29), when it says: 'and stripping him naked, they covered him with a scarlet robe, and put a crown woven with thorns on his head, and a reed in his right hand'.

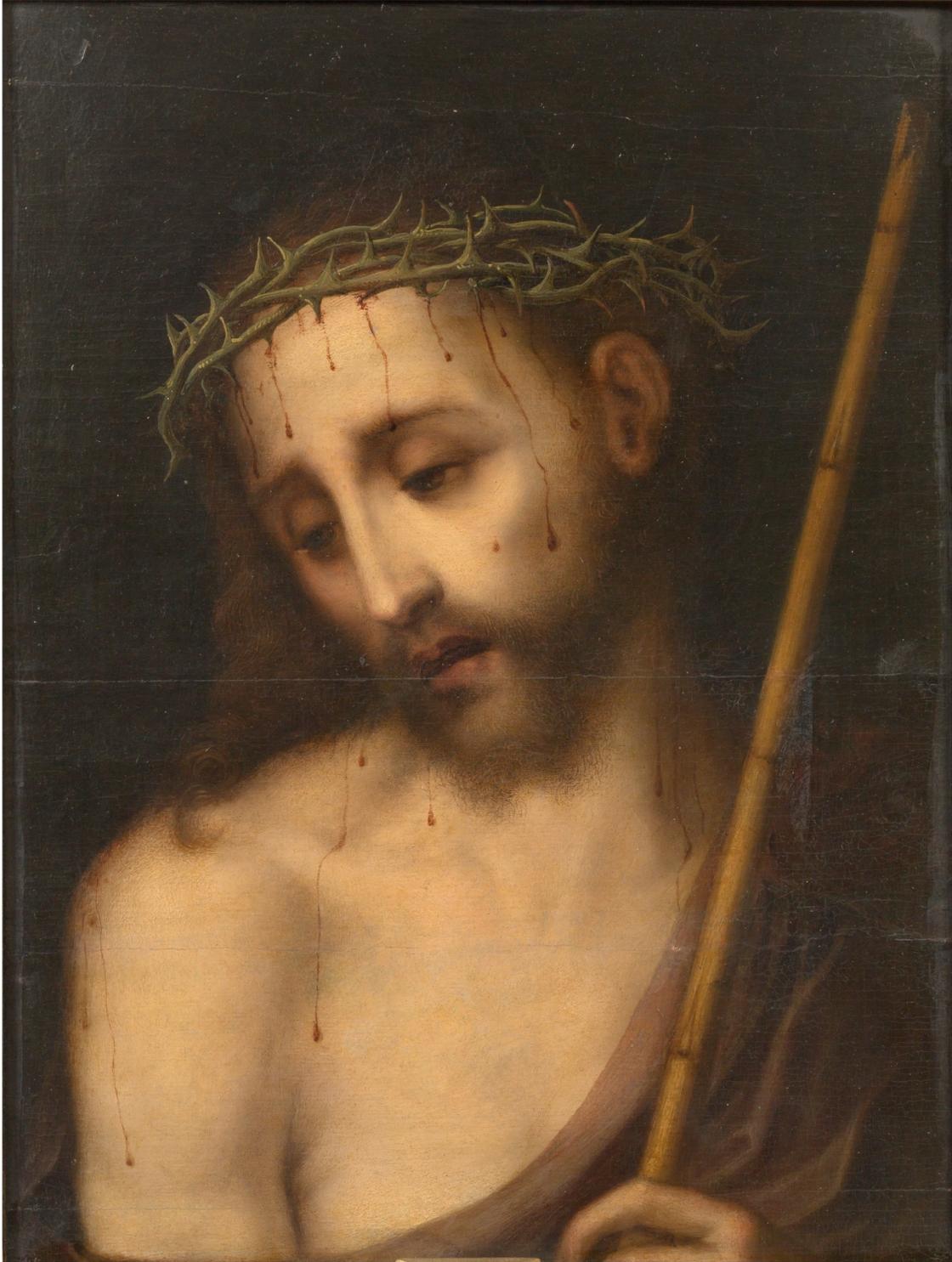


Fig. 1. Workshop of Luis de Morales, *Ecce Homo*, n. d., oil on panel, 40 × 28 cm.
Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado (P2770).