

Northern Influence On Spanish Painting In The Golden Age

: The Golden Age of Spanish painting is not confined only to painters of its native soil, as Spain was connected to both Italy and Flanders in various respects. Spain may have dominated the political world of Europe, however it itself was artistically dominated by the cultures of Italy and Flanders. Although Spain is not simply a regional school of either one, as it always retained its own mark of originality, it owes a great deal to these two regions which were major centers of art during the time. Considering the influence of Titian on El Greco, or Carravaggio on Velázquez, for instance, it is no mystery why of the two regions, Italy is considered to have had the strongest impression on Spanish art. The Italian influence may be more easily and apparently traced, however the Northern impression was incorporated into Spanish art in a much more subtle and interesting manner. The effects of Flemish art can be felt throughout Spain ranging from the late 15th century to the early 17th century. In the 15th century, the political ties between Flanders and Spain had an effect on painting. Under the union of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, due to Isabella's notable collection of Flemish paintings, Northern art and artists became well known in Spain, especially in Castile. Seeing as the Low Countries and Castile were incorporated under a single ruler, the contacts between the two regions were increased. According to Brown, "the importance of Flemish art in Spain was intensified" (36) as a result. The Flemish style consisted of very careful drawings of meticulous detail and a glazing technique that yielded remarkably realistic figures. For example, the glazing techniques of Flemish painter Jan Van Eyck captivated artists in Spain. Jan Van Eyck's visit to Spain in 1428 prompted Spanish painters to visit Flemish cities and artists. Flemish subject-matter and techniques were thus eventually being passed on to Spanish artists such as Bermejo, Huguet, and Gallego. *From 1474 to 1555, the Italian Renaissance basically dominated Europe, however, and arrived in force on the Iberian Peninsula. During this time, it was the styles of Italian masters that were chiefly studied and copied in Spain. The 16th century heralded a new era for painting in the Netherlands and Germany. Northern artists were influenced by the great innovations in the South; many artists traveled to Italy to study; and the Renaissance concern for bringing modern science and philosophy into art was also evident in the North. There was, however, a difference of outlook between the two cultures. In Italy change was inspired by Humanism, with its emphasis on the revival of the values of classical antiquity. In the North, change was driven by another set of preoccupations: religious reform, the return to ancient Christian values, and the revolt against the authority of the Church. Juan de Flandes (active 1496-1519), otherwise known as 'John of Flanders' moved to Spain near the beginning of the 16th century, to work for the court. He paid service to Queen Isabella, whose collection inspired several of her Castilian courtiers despite the strong Italian influence. In his works, Juan de Flandes demonstrates a preference for clearly articulated space and refined color schemes. Characteristic of painters from the city of Ghent, charming narrative vignettes frequently enlivened the backgrounds of Juan's pictures. In *Christ Carrying The Cross* (1509-18), Juan presents a refined, painstaking execution filled with specific details. Near St. Veronica, for instance, at the right, is a basket of laundry, which is intended to explain why she had a cloth nearby to wipe the brow of Christ as He made His way up Mount Calvary. This use of specific narrative detail is a derivative of the Northern style of painting. In Juan's *The Temptation Of Christ* (@1500), this Northern narrative detail is also present, emanating an effect of profound realism. Here, the dramatic encounter is set in a

landscape typical, not of the biblical wilderness described in the Gospels, but of a Northern town. Juan de Flándes. The Temptation Of Christ. @1500

Ostentatious decoration is less evident in the painters, whose austere style, carried to the point of harshness, was inspired by Flemish artists. A distinctive drawing and modeling, sober and sometimes hard colors, an insistence on realism and a certain solemnity of tone give the works of Fernando Gallegos, for example, an essentially Spanish character. The impact of Schongauer's engravings together with Flemish influences can be seen in the work of the Master of Avila and even more directly in Toledo in the work of the Master of the Sisle. In 1508, Alejo Fernández (active 1510-1540) settled in Seville, where he was considered the almost unchallenged master for the next 37 years. Although his true heritage is basically unknown, his father was considered to be of Northern origin, and his mother of Spanish descent. Fernández's early works "indicate his familiarity with Italian as well as Flemish art" (Brown 28). For instance, in The Last Supper (1505), the figure types used point towards Northern inclinations. Brown claims that they "could only have been painted by an artist trained in the Netherlands" (28). Also, The Adoration Of The Magi (1508) "in fact is based on a print by Martin Schongauer, the first of hundreds of paintings by Sevillian masters of the Golden Age to rely on Northern prints for their compositional sources" (Brown 28). At the end of the century, with the coming of the Renaissance, the influence of Italian art joined that of Northern art in Spain in the painting of Pedro de Berruguete. Pedro de Berruguete (1450's-1503), a Spanish painter working in the late 15th century, was initially influenced by Flemish artists. He is considered to have been "grounded in the Hispano-Flemish manner, a forceful, somewhat brittle Spanish interpretation of mid 15th century Netherlandish painting" (Brown 12). This is evident in The Holy Man Of St. Bernard (@1500), in which the three vignettes, portraying an image of the Inquisition, present a typically Northern use of narrative detail. Also, in Berruguete's The Beheading Of The Baptist (1490), the stylized figures and faces prove that he has taken on an innately Flemish character in his painting. Next, Luis de Morales (1520-1586), a Spanish painter working in the mid 16th century, was influenced by artists from Lombardy and Antwerp, in the North. Spain was becoming more artistically organized around this time. Philip moved the court to Madrid, from which Morales was isolated. Thus, because he was outside of that sphere of influence, his style was very personal and devotional, and was generally more Flemish in origin than Italian. Also known as 'El Divino', Morales's forms are drawn out and sharpened by his emotionalism. In his Pieta (@1550), which is accurately considered a chiefly Spanish piece, a trace of Northern detail is apparent in the agitated, meticulously portrayed hands of the figure. In fact, according to Brown, "his way of painting the human figure in no way relates to central-Italian painting of the early 16th century, and is much closer to Flemish painting of the period" (52). In addition, Brown suggests the hypothesis that Luis de Morales may have learned to paint in Seville, perhaps studying with Pieter Kempeneer. Pieter Kempeneer (1503 -1580), a Northern painter from Brussels, was known in Spain as 'Pedro de Campaña'. He was both influenced by, and influenced Spanish painters. As part of the school of Northern painters whose renescent Mannerism succeeded in expressing the Spanish sense of religious tragedy, he basically helped to introduce the Mannerist style in Seville. Working with elongated forms and passionate subjects, his deep shadows portrayed tragedy very intensely. In fact, it is said that he painted so well in the popular Spanish style that his works were part of the beginning of the great Baroque movement of the 17th century. His Northern heritage, however, is revealed in works such as The Descent From the Cross (@1550). In this artwork, the specificity, detail, and overall linear quality is indicative of work being done by Flemish artists at the time.

Also, his angular depiction of the figure of Christ points to his Northern tendencies. Furthermore, Kempeneer's Purification Of The Virgin (1555), based on a print by Dürer, is also deemed a "fine example of Flemish portraiture" (Brown 46). Kempeneer's Northern realism and Sevillian figure type can also be seen in Pedro de Villegas's Visitation (1566). By the end of the 16th century, the work of Northern painters such as Martin de Vos and Martin van Heemskerck resulted in a mixture of Flemish and Italian elements. The resulting synthesis of these two styles became a main mode of expression until well into the 17th century (Brown 118). It is initially apparent in the work of Alonso Vázquez. Alonso Vázquez (1564-1608) was a Spanish painter working within the mid to late 16th century. In The Last Supper (1588-1603), there are several Northern qualities. For instance, the facial types, the figure types, the specificity and the balance of composition all point towards Northern propensities. Vázquez's correspondence to the paintings of Heemskerck, de Vos, and Cornelis Cort (Northern late Mannerists), is "close enough to suggest that Vázquez had been able to study their works, perhaps in the collections of the resident Flemish community, if not in Flanders itself" (Brown 118). Heemskerck. Faith Washes The Heart Of People In Blood Of Jesus Christ. 1559. Also during this time, the court painter Antonis Mor (1519-1576), also known as 'Antonio Moro', was imported by the King from Utrecht into Spain. His Dutch sense of character affected the development of the court portrait in Spain, setting the standard for the next 150 years. Recent cleaning of his Portrait Of Alessandro Farnese (1561) has further revealed the alert, intelligent expression and focused gaze of this unknown sitter. The man's posture and countenance convey a strong personality. Equally impressive is the depiction of the clothing. The painter clearly distinguished a range of textures, including the leather of the gloves, the white linen of the collar and cuffs, and shimmery black silk of the jacket. His "physiognomic accuracy" and "dazzling exactitude" of costume and jewelry are obviously due to his Northern roots in detail, realism and startling specificity (Brown 98). Mor is also said to have "prepared the way for Alonso Sánchez Coello". At court, from the most illustrious of the school of portraiture, founded by Mor, evolved Coello (his student). This cold objective school, which produced aristocratic and distinguished effects by the use of grays, later influenced Velázquez's palette. Antonis Mor. Portrait Of Alessandro Farnese. 1561. Alonso Sánchez Coello (1531-1588), had a characteristically Northern eye for light and texture. In Prince Don Carlos (1565), the tactile opulence of the portrait, although somewhat idealized, is clearly a Northern trait. Coello also borrowed the use of extreme detail from the North, as seen in his The Infant Don Diego (1577), in which he demonstrates a desire to replicate the child's face exactly. During this next phase, roughly between 1550 and 1630, King Philip II broadened the artistic boundaries of Spain. As an important patron of the arts, he imported distinguished painters from both Italy and Flanders, thus introducing new styles into Spain. Under the reign of Philip III, the Italian influence still ruled, but the doorway had been opened to new styles. King Philip IV followed through this doorway, collecting works by the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens. Having introduced Rubens to Spain, eventually a new phase was inspired. According to Brown, "a revolution was underway in which Flemish painting captured the attention of painters in Madrid and Seville, the remaining centers of major artistic ability" (3). In Castile, the Flemish influence was also predominant. Pictures imported from the Low Countries by the court and by other patrons of art, and Flemish works sold in the fairs of Medina del Campo, helped, as did German prints, to spread the taste for Northern art, to which the local workshops now adapted themselves. According to Brown, "until the end of the century, which brought a new dynasty to the Spanish throne and with it another radical shift of taste, the painters of

Madrid and Seville found novel ways to interpret Rubens' energetic style of painting" (Brown 3). In addition, the unremitting realism during the first half of the 17th century may also be credited, at least in part, to Northern art and artists. By completing the fusion of the realistic tradition of Flemish painting with the imaginative freedom and classical themes of Italian Renaissance painting, Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) fundamentally revitalized and redirected Northern European painting. In 1609, Rubens was engaged as court painter to the Austrian archduke Albert and his wife, the Spanish infanta Isabella, who together ruled the Low Countries as viceroys for the king of Spain. The number of pictures requested from Rubens was so large that he established an enormous workshop in which the master did the initial sketch and final touches, while his apprentices completed all the intermediary steps. Besides court commissions from Brussels and abroad, the highly devout Rubens was much in demand by the militant Counter Reformation church of Flanders which regarded his dramatic, emotionally charged interpretations of religious events as images for spiritual recruitment and renewal. His initial roots in the Northern tradition is apparent in works such as *Self Portrait With Isabella Brandt* (1609-1610). The emphatic use of excruciating detail in this piece derives from his Northern descent. In 1628 Rubens was sent to Spain by the Flemish viceroys. While in Madrid he received several commissions from King Philip IV of Spain, who made him secretary of his Privy Council. Rubens also served as a mentor to the young Spanish painter Diego Velázquez. Although the great Flemish master did not have a direct impact on the style of the younger painter, their conversations almost certainly inspired Velázquez to visit the art collections in Italy that were so much admired by Rubens. During this final decade he continued executing commissions for the Habsburg monarchs of Austria and Spain. Dating from around the late 1630's and early 1640's, Rubens painted pictures of personal interest, especially of his wife and child and of the Flemish countryside. In other words, Rubens turned more and more to portraits, genre scenes, and landscapes. These later works, such as *Landscape with the Chateau of Steen* (1636), reflect a masterful command of Northern detail and an unflagging technical skill. The genre painting basically originated in the Netherlands, mostly amongst the Protestants, who were more simple-minded than the Catholics and did not necessarily adapt to the Baroque style of painting. In the 1650's, Spanish painter Juan Carreño de Miranda is said to have been strongly influenced by Rubens. According to Brown, Carreño's *Assumption Of The Virgin* "stems from prints after Ruben's *Assumption in Antwerp Cathedral*" (237). Although Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (1590-1660) may not have been directly influenced by the Northern Rubens, he did pick up on a few things. In *The Triumph Of Bacchus* (1629), for instance, Velázquez's Northern antecedence is evident. This scene of revelry in an open field, picturing the god of wine drinking with ruffian types, testifies to the artist's interest in Northern realism. In fact, this piece has been considered to have been influenced by Rubens, and by Northern etchings being circulated at the time (Class lecture 03/18/98). Velázquez. *The Triumph Of Bacchus*. 1629.

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