

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME



The Flight into Egypt,
by Juan Sánchez Cotán

02-15
DEC 2022 JAN 2023



To celebrate Christmas, for the second year running the Fundación María Cristina Masaveu Peterson is showing a work related to the Nativity cycle at its Madrid headquarters. This year's painting belongs to the Foundation's collection. Acquired in 2022, it has been restored for the occasion.

Toledo-born painter Juan Sánchez Cotán (1560–1627), who trained with Blas de Prado (c. 1545–1599), is one of the most outstanding early naturalist painters in Spain. As well as religious subjects he also painted still life, and is acknowledged as one of the most prominent and skilled practitioners of this genre. In 1603, by then a highly acclaimed painter in Toledo, he joined the Carthusian monastery in Granada as a lay brother, making a will for this purpose. Two of the executors of his will, who owned two of his still lifes, were miniaturist Juan de Salazar and silversmith Diego de Valdivieso.

It is not possible to separate the artist's circle of friends during his Toledo period from the development of his religious painting, as he was immersed in a milieu of learned intellectuals who admired Pliny's *Natural History*. He produced most of his still lifes and his many religious works before entering the charterhouse, including





Juan Sánchez Cotán

The Flight into Egypt, before 1603

Oil on canvas, 127.5 x 106.5 cm

Fundación María Cristina Masaveu Peterson Collection



this *Flight into Egypt* recently acquired by the Fundación María Cristina Masaveu Peterson. It attests to his refined and delicate handling of subjects inspired by biblical passages and presented as everyday scenes set in natural environments familiar to the viewer.

This canvas belongs to a style of painting that might be termed 'reformed mannerism', characterised by the depiction of sacred themes in a setting that includes domestic elements recognisable to the spectator. The triumph of the anecdotal and the pursuit of empathy are two of its distinguishing features, which are evident here in the detail of the angel bringing dates to the Christ Child, who prepares to receive them, and in the other cherub descending from heaven to place a leafy crown on the Virgin's head. The scene, set in a Flemish landscape, shows the donkey moving along with the Virgin and Child on its back. Saint Joseph follows after them on foot carrying a water gourd and his carpentry tools over his shoulders.

The painting comes from the convent of the Sacramento in Madrid and was published in 1956 by Diego Angulo, who held it to belong to the artist's Toledo period, although it may also have entered the convent at a later date.



Emilio Orozco studied it when it was in a private collection in Málaga and noted its compositional similarity to a painting on the same theme by Vincenzo degli Azani, known as Vincenzo da Pavia (c. 1519–1557), now in the Galleria Regionale di Palazzo Abatellis in Palermo, as well as to a print from Alfonso de Villegas's *Flos Sanctorum*, a book on the life of Jesus and the saints published in Toledo in 1591. Orozco praised the exquisiteness of the work on account of the simplicity of its composition, to which the artist added details that demonstrate his knowledge of Venetian painting. This canvas's place in Cotán's output is understood very well when it is compared to the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* in the charterhouse of Granada, which also includes the group of angels hovering by a date palm.

Cotán's figures – inspired by the paintings of Luca Cambiaso (1527–1585) – are notable for their sculptural monumentality, as well as the use of marked drawing and vivid colours that lends them a powerful presence. Sánchez Cotán was probably familiar with the works produced by the Genoese painter for the monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial but introduced a new sensibility by including elements borrowed from the real world, a practice



begun by Navarrete the Mute (1526–1579), a key artist in Sánchez Cotán's training and development who explains his fondness for aspects taken from life.

Paintings of this kind reflect the characteristics of what Pérez Sánchez aptly called 'contemplative lyricism', that is, the incorporation of everyday life and divinity into the same scene – despite the fact that the sacred figures are depicted as if they were real people – together with a rigorous, symmetrical composition.

All these characteristics are evident in this canvas, which combines the candour of the subject with the vividness of the colouring – aspects that are powerfully present in his works and explain the popularity they enjoyed.

Benito Navarrete Prieto



PROGRAMME OF RELATED ACTIVITIES

LECTURE

The painter Fray Juan Sánchez Cotán,
by Benito Navarrete
20 December, 6.30pm
Auditorium of the Fundación
María Cristina Masaveu Peterson

MICRO-VISITS

The Flight into Egypt, by Juan Sánchez Cotán
Times:
Tuesdays: 11.30am, 12.30pm and 6.15pm
Wednesdays: 11.30am, 12.30pm and 6.15pm
Thursdays: 11.30am, 12.30pm and 6.15pm
Fridays: 11.30 am and 12.30pm
Saturdays: 12 noon, 1pm, 5pm and 6pm
Sundays and public holidays: 12 noon and 1pm





OPENING HOURS

Open:

Tuesday to Friday: 11am–8pm

Saturdays: 10am–8pm

Sundays and public holidays: 10am–3pm

Closed: Mondays (including public holidays) and 1 and 6 January, 8 March, 1 May and 24, 25 and 31 December.

FREE ADMISSION

Ticket office and website:

fundacioncristinamasaveu.com

Reduced capacity

Timed entry

The ticket office remains open until half an hour before closing time every day.

To prevent unnecessary waiting, you are advised to book in advance via the website.

More information about the programme of guided tours and cultural activities can be found on our website:

fundacioncristinamasaveu.com

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Before visiting us please check the availability of services and the centre's regulations on our website.

Photography and filming are not permitted.





FUNDACIÓN MARÍA CRISTINA MASAVEU PETERSON

C/ Alcalá Galiano, no. 6

28010 Madrid

fundacioncristinamasaveu.com

infomadrid@fmcmp.com

Tel.: +34 919 903 903

IMAGE

Juan Sánchez Cotán

The Flight into Egypt, before 1603

Oil on canvas, 127.5 x 106.5 cm

Colección Fundación

María Cristina Masaveu Peterson

© of the photograph:

Fundación María Cristina

Masaveu Peterson

Photographer: Marcos Morilla

FOLLOW US:   