

The Focus-Abengoa Foundation and the Prado Museum present the exhibition “Murillo and Justino de Neve. The art of friendship”

- **The exhibition is due to open on 26 June in the Prado Museum, where it will remain until 30 September. It will then go on display in the Hospital de los Venerables in Seville between 11 October this year and 20 January 2013. The project will end with an exhibition at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London between 6 February and 12 May 2013.**

Seville, 12 April 2012. The Prado Museum, the Focus-Abengoa Foundation and the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London today presented in Seville the exhibition “Murillo and Justino de Neve. The art of friendship”. The show will bring together a series of late works by Murillo, which resulted from his relationship with Don Justino de Neve, Canon of Seville Cathedral, who was also an important patron of the arts and a personal friend of the artist, and will make a significant contribution to the research on the painter. The exhibition, which is organised by these three institutions and curated by Gabriele Finaldi, Associate Director of Conservation and Research at the Prado Museum, will open on 26 June in the Prado, and then go on display in the Hospital de los Venerables in Seville, the headquarters of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation, before concluding next year at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London.

The exhibition “Murillo and Justino de Neve. The art of friendship” comprises almost 20 paintings, major commissions and portraits, in addition to allegories and devotional paintings. It will be shown at the Prado Museum from 26 June to 30 September, and will then go on to the Hospital de los Venerables in Seville – an institution created in the 1670s under the direction of Justino de Neve and the current headquarters of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation – where it will remain from October 2012 to January 2013. Finally it will go on display in the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London from February to May next year.

The exhibition is arranged in various sections: the *Self-portrait* of the painter is displayed alongside the 1665 portrait of his friend and patron (both in London's National Gallery); followed by a collection of the works created for the church of Santa María la Blanca in Seville (Prado, Louvre and Faringdon Trust, Buscot Park, Oxfordshire); the works produced for the Cathedral and the Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes (the great *Baptism of Christ* from the chapel of San Antonio, and the *Virgin and Child distributing bread to the priests*, today in Budapest Museum); and the paintings produced for the personal collection of Justino de Neve, including three small devotional works painted on Mexican obsidian which can be seen together here for the first time since the 17th century, and a miniature on copper recently identified as the work of the Sevillian master. Five works have been restored in the Prado for this exhibition:

three from the museum's own collection, one from Seville Cathedral and another from the Faringdon Trust.

The exhibition catalogue includes six essays written by Gabriele Finaldi, Javier Portús, Peter Cherry, Teodoro Falcón, Benito Navarrete and Ignacio Cano. These essays are accompanied by descriptive plates corresponding to the works on display (Gabriele Finaldi, Elena Cenalmor and Xavier Bray) and a documentary appendix on the life, family and activities of Justino de Neve.

Since the major exhibition on Murillo held in London and Madrid in 1982, there have been various shows devoted to specific aspects of the painter's work, such as those dedicated to the "Murillos" in the Prado Museum acquired by Queen Isabella Farnese (Seville, 1996), his paintings of children (Munich, Dulwich and Madrid, 2001) and his works in American collections (Fort Worth, 2002). There has also recently been a major exhibition in Seville and Bilbao featuring the youthful work of the artist (2009-2010). The present show focuses on the creative dynamism of the relationship between Murillo and Justino de Neve which generated a series of paintings of extraordinary beauty and quality, all dating from the last two decades of the artist's career.

Justino de Neve (1625-1685) is revealed in this exhibition as the patron of some of the most outstanding and original works by the painter from Seville, such as the large lunettes on the *Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore* – which are unveiled in their full splendour after their restoration and cleaning – and *The Immaculate Conception of the Venerables* (also known as the *Soult Immaculate Conception*) from the Prado Museum, here seen in its original frame which is still on one of the altars of the church of the Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes; the allegories of *Spring* and *Summer (Young man with a basket of fruit)*, from the Dulwich Picture Gallery and the National Gallery of Scotland, respectively; and some extremely intricate works on religious themes painted on obsidian, from the Musée du Louvre and the Houston Museum of Fine Arts (Rienzi).

The art of friendship

Justino de Neve was born into a Flemish family in Seville and ordained a priest in 1646. He was appointed Canon of Seville Cathedral in 1658. A cultivated and dynamic man, his friendship with Murillo from at least the early 1660s was instrumental in ensuring that the artist obtained some of his most important commissions: the decoration of the Church of Santa María la Blanca (1664-1665), the decoration of the Chapter Room in the Cathedral (1667-68), and the central panel in the altarpiece of San Antonio (with the *Baptism of Christ*) in the chapel dedicated to the saint (1667-68). Furthermore, Justino de Neve commissioned various works from the painter for his foundation for retired priests, the Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes, and had in his own collection some of the most outstanding works by the artist. Murillo painted his portrait in 1665 (National Gallery, London), featured in the exhibition, as a testament to his friendship, adding the inscription "*obsequium desiderio pingebat*" (painted to be given as a gift), and named him executor of his will in 1682.

Focus-Abengoa Foundation

The Focus-Abengoa Foundation was created in 1982 as a result of the cultural work begun in 1972 by Abengoa with the publication of the works *Temas Sevillanos* (Themes of Seville) and *Iconografía de Sevilla* (Iconography of Seville). A collection of documents, books and engravings on the Kingdom of Seville and by Sevillian authors was created during the same period. This initial cultural work showed Abengoa's directors the importance of the company's involvement in activities that directly benefit society, beyond the firm's core technology work, which led to the creation of the Seville Cultural Fund Foundation. The Hospital de los Venerables, a 17th century monument and the headquarters of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation in Seville, has housed the Diego Velázquez Research Centre, a leading institution for studying and disseminating the Baroque era and the Sevillian period of this universally renowned artist, since the acquisition of Velázquez's Santa Rufina by the Foundation in 2007.

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