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## **The Focus-Abengoa Foundation and Menéndez Pelayo International University bring the ninth edition of the Baroque School 2012 to a close**

- Over the course of three days, historians, curators and restorers have examined the central theme of society and artistic patronage in Seville at the time of Murillo.
- The School, directed by Gabriele Finaldi, deputy director of conservation and research at the Museo del Prado, was attended by more than 70 students.

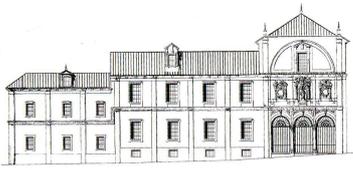
Seville, 21 November 2012. The Focus-Abengoa Foundation, in collaboration with Menéndez Pelayo International University (UIMP), today brought the ninth edition of the Baroque School to a close. Over the course of three days the School has hosted renowned art specialists at the Hospital de los Venerables in Seville, under the theme of “Society and artistic patronage in Murillo’s Seville”.

More than 70 students participating in this edition, as well as university staff and the general public, attended ten lectures that delved into Seville’s society in the second half of the 17th century from the perspective of artistic patronage, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the illustrious painter Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682) and the canon of Seville cathedral, Justino de Neve (1625-1685). The lecturers, all renowned historians, architects and art specialists, shared their insight and perceptions of the Seville society that forged the friendship between Murillo and his patron, Justino de Neve.

On the opening day of the School, its director, Gabriele Finaldi used the first lecture to outline the key points of the friendship between Murillo and Justino de Neve which, he said, “led to several of the best works of art of the second half of the 17th century”. The lecture was illustrated with the works in the exhibition entitled “Murillo and Justino de Neve, The Art of Friendship”, which is currently on show until January next year at the Hospital de los Venerables, the headquarters of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation, where the School also took place.

Tuesday began with a talk by Peter Cherry, lecturer in history of art at Trinity College, Dublin, who looked at the two sides of Murillo, firstly as a “universal though intrinsically Sevillian painter, and secondly as a classical but hugely innovative artist”. María Álvarez-Garcillán, a restorer from the Museo del Prado, continued the day with a lecture on Murillo’s *modus operandi*, scrutinising the style and technique used by the Sevillian painter. Describing his work, Álvarez-Garcillán, who was involved in restoring several pieces by the artist, confidently stated that, “when you examine Murillo’s work in detail, you discover his virtuosity”.

Tuesday continued with the lecture by Teodoro Falcón, professor of art history at the University of Seville, and Óscar Gil, lecturer at the Architecture College at the same institution. They presented a historical and archaeological analysis of the church of Santa María la Blanca in



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Seville, which played a fundamental role in the careers of Murillo and Justino de Neve, and in the history of Andalusia's capital. After their talk, students and other participants were given a guided tour by the two lecturers of the church, which is close to the headquarters of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation.

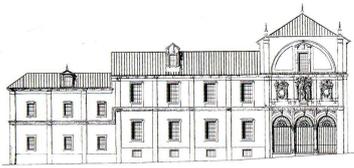
María Cruz de Carlos, lecturer in art theory and history at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, brought yesterday to a close with a lecture on the role of the Immaculate Conception in the 17th century in the world of art, with special emphasis on the *Inmaculada* painted by Murillo. Indeed, this painting has temporarily returned to its original home, after spending two centuries outside of Seville, and can be visited at the Hospital de los Venerables as part of the "Murillo and Justino de Neve. The art of friendship" exhibition.

On the final day today, the lecturers extended the analysis to cover more social and historical issues about Seville at the time of Murillo. Enriqueta Vila, director of the Royal Academy of Arts of Seville, spoke about the origins of the Neve family in the capital and some of their contemporaries, in a Seville that chroniclers of the period have referred to as "the other Babylon". She was followed by Juan Ignacio Carmona, professor of modern history at the University of Seville, who completed the historical study of baroque Seville with a talk about charity and welfare in a city known at that time for its, "huge inequalities and intense social polarisation".

After the morning sessions, Gabriele Finaldi gave a guided tour of the "Murillo and Justino de Neve. The art of friendship" exhibition, of which he is curator, and which features 16 works by Murillo that resulted from his relationship with Justino de Neve, his patron and close friend. Later on in the afternoon, the historian and documentalist, Fernando Olmedo, gave a talk on the urban landscape that surrounded Murillo and Justino de Neve, which was characterised by domineering religious buildings and the social importance of Flemish ancestry, from which Justino de Neve himself was descended. He was followed by Javier Portús, head of conservation of Spanish painting at the Museo del Prado, who rounded off the series of lectures with a talk on the proliferation of artistic literature in 17th century Seville as a result of what has been termed the "Golden age of Sevillian painting", with artists such as Diego Velázquez, Francisco Pacheco or Bartolomé Esteban Murillo.

The ninth edition of the Baroque School ended with an organ recital in the chapel of the Hospital de los Venerables, by José Enrique Ayarra, titular organist of Seville cathedral and the Focus-Abengoa Foundation, who brought these three days dedicated to the study of baroque Seville and Murillo and Justino de Neve to a perfect conclusion.

The Baroque School is the product of a collaboration agreement between the Focus-Abengoa Foundation and Menéndez Pelayo International University, which has resulted in the organisation of two schools with a three-year schedule, which carry out their programs and activities during the autumn and the spring at the Hospital de los Venerables, turning the headquarters of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation into a forum for learning and reflection, given by international lecturers and researchers.



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The two schools, which form part of the academic program of the UIMP in Seville, combine educational, scientific and cultural issues in an interrelated way, and reflect the aim of the Focus-Abengoa Foundation to contribute to satisfying general interest needs based on a multi-disciplinary perspective.

### **Menéndez Pelayo University**

The UIMP has an interdisciplinary academic and cultural program, which combines tradition and innovation with quality and prestige. It is currently the only presence-based university associated with the Ministry of Education, although it does not have its own academic staff. It operates by continually inviting the academic, intellectual, scientific and artistic elite in Spain and internationally, to lecture in its auditoriums.

### **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 its 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, following the acquisition of Velázquez's Santa Rufina by the Foundation in 2007.

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