

# Alonso Cano's rediscovered 'Immaculate Conception' for San Alberto, Seville

In 1628 the young Alonso Cano began work on three altarpieces for San Alberto, the church of the school of Calced Carmelites in Seville. All were dismantled and subsequently dispersed between 1810 and 1835. The appearance of one is recorded in a preparatory drawing by Cano. It combined *Christ bearing the Cross (Via Dolorosa)*, now in the Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts, with an *Immaculate Conception*, which has recently come to light.

by BENITO NAVARRETE PRIETO

**A**LONSO CANO OCCUPIES a key position in Spanish seventeenth-century painting. Despite his importance, however, he still awaits a retrospective to demonstrate the full scope and quality of his work as draughtsman, painter, sculptor, architect and printmaker.<sup>1</sup> Born in Granada in 1601, he moved to Seville in 1614 with his father, Miguel Cano, an architect and maker of altarpieces.<sup>2</sup> He was trained in draughtsmanship and painting by Francisco Pacheco (1564–1644), one of Seville's most distinguished painters, who ran an influential workshop, where Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), two years Cano's senior, was apprenticed from 1610 to December 1616. The contract for Cano's apprenticeship with Pacheco survives and is dated 17th August 1616.<sup>3</sup> According to the testimony dated 23rd December 1658 provided by Cano when Velázquez sought to join the Order of Santiago, the two artists had known each other since 1614, the year Cano moved to Seville.<sup>4</sup> Between August and December 1616 they worked together in Pacheco's studio and were trained in the same principles, a fact that is of central importance to an understanding of their early paintings. Their revolutionary combination of painting from life and skilled draughtsmanship was the foundation of the new path that painting was to take in Seville.

I am very grateful to Odile Delenda, thanks to whom I was able to study the *Immaculate Conception* in Paris in February 2020. I am especially grateful to Paul Smeets for allowing me to study it throughout the conservation process and for providing the high-resolution photographs that illustrate this article.

<sup>1</sup> See J.M. Matilla and Z. Véliz, eds: exh. cat. *Alonso Cano: dibujos*, Madrid (Museo Nacional del Prado) 2001; I. Henares Cuéllar, ed.: exh. cat. *Alonso Cano: Espiritualidad y modernidad artística*, Granada (Hospital Real) 2001–02; *idem*, ed.: exh. cat. *Alonso Cano: la modernidad del Siglo de Oro español*, Madrid (Fundación Santander Central

Hispano) 2002; D. Sánchez-Mesa Martín, ed.: exh. cat. *Alonso Cano: Arte e Iconografía*, Granada (Museo Diocesano) 2002; and Z. Véliz: *Alonso Cano (1601–1667) Dibujos: Catálogo razonado*, Santander 2011. <sup>2</sup> H.E. Wethey: *Alonso Cano: Painter, Sculptor, Architect*, Princeton 1955; A. Rodríguez G. de Ceballos: 'Alonso Cano y el retablo', in J. Álvarez Lopera et al.: *Figuras e imágenes del Barroco: estudios sobre el barroco español y sobre la obra de Alonso Cano*, Madrid 1999, pp.251–70; Á. Aterido Fernández, ed.: *Corpus Alonso Cano: Documentos y Textos*, Madrid 2002; and *Symposium internacional Alonso Cano y su época (14–17 de febrero de 2002)*, Granada 2002.

Opposite

**1. *Immaculate Conception*, here attributed to Alonso Cano. c.1628–29. Oil on canvas, 148.7 by 96 cm. (Private collection).**

The closeness of the links between the two young artists has sometimes led to debates about the attribution of their early works. This was the case, for example, with an *Immaculate Conception* now in the Fundación Focus, Seville: when it appeared on the art market in London in 1994 some experts attributed it to Cano, but it is now universally accepted as an early work by Velázquez.<sup>5</sup> The recent reappearance of new paintings by Velázquez, notably an *Immaculate Conception*, also known as the *Virgin Mary as a child* (private collection), has strengthened understanding of the debt that the young Velázquez owed to Pacheco.<sup>6</sup> Despite the claim by Lázaro Díaz del Valle – which has been disputed – that Cano spent only eight months in Pacheco's workshop, 'after which he returned to his father's house, devoting himself diligently to the study of symmetry and anatomy and exploring the range of muscle movements in the human body, soon outstripping all the city's other artists', his early style was also deeply influenced by the pictorial language of his master.<sup>7</sup>

After Velázquez left Seville for the royal court in 1623, only Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664) was a serious rival to Cano in Seville. It is no coincidence that Cano was the representative of the artists who in 1630

<sup>3</sup> Aterido Fernández, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp.36–37, doc. no.16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.381–82.

<sup>5</sup> Sale, Sotheby's, London, *The 'Immaculate Conception' by Diego Velázquez*, 6th July 1994. See B. Navarrete Prieto: 'Velázquez y Sevilla: La Inmaculada del Deán López Cepero recuperada', *Ars Magazine* 3 (2009), pp.100–17.

<sup>6</sup> P. Cherry: 'A newly discovered "Immaculate Conception" by Diego Velázquez', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 162 (2020), pp.1029–37; and B. Navarrete Prieto: 'La Inmaculada Concepción y los avances en el conocimiento del joven Velázquez', in R. Romero Asenjo and A. Illán Gutiérrez: *La Inmaculada Concepción de Diego Velázquez: creatividad y*

*metodología de un joven genio*, Madrid 2021, pp.5–9.

<sup>7</sup> 'Tuvo en sus primeros rudimentos por su maestro a Francisco Pacheco, vecino de Sevilla, pintor muy conocido, gastando debajo de su doctrina ocho meses de tiempo y dejando a este maestro retirándose a casa de su padre, se dio virtuosamente al trabajo de los estudios de simetría y a escudriñar la anatomía y variedades de movimientos que la naturaleza humana hace uso de los músculos, con que rehaciéndose en breve tiempo se aventajó a todos los artífices que en la ciudad había', J. Riello: 'Alonso Cano según Lázaro Díaz del Valle', *Anales de Historia del Arte* 17 (2007), pp.179–92.



## Cano's 'Immaculate Conception' for San Alberto, Seville

2. *St Francis of Borja*, by Alonso Cano. 1624. Oil on canvas, 186 by 120 cm. (Museum of Fine Arts, Seville).

Opposite

3. *The Crucified Christ appears to St Teresa*, by Alonso Cano. c.1628–29. Oil on canvas, 99 by 43.5 cm. (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid).

4. *Christ the Saviour appears to St Teresa*, by Alonso Cano. c.1628–29. Oil on canvas, 99 by 43.5 cm. (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid).

condemned Zurbarán for exercising his profession without having sat the mandatory painting examination.<sup>8</sup> Cano's earliest documented work, *St Francis of Borja* (Fig.2), commissioned by the Jesuit novitiate in Seville, dates from 1624 – two years before he had himself sat the examination – and it demonstrates the influence of the naturalistic vocabulary that was to be evident in Zurbarán's first paintings (both 1626) for the Dominican monastery of San Pablo Real, Seville. The painting also exemplifies the sculptural conception that was to be characteristic of Cano's work.

Cano first demonstrated his talent in three altarpieces that he made for San Alberto, Seville, the church of the school of the Calced Carmelites, where both Pacheco and Zurbarán also worked. Each consisted of a number of painted panels set within an architectural framework embellished with sculptures, all designed by Cano. This commission is mentioned in all the principal sources for knowledge of Cano's early career: the *Parnaso español* (1724) by Antonio Palomino,<sup>9</sup> Antonio Ponz's *Viaje de España* (1772–94) and Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez's *Diccionario histórico* (1800). The last is particularly eloquent: 'From this first period there are five altarpieces in Seville, three at the School of San Alberto and two at the monastery of Santa Paula, whose architecture, statues and paintings are by his hand and which surpass the works of Cano's teachers.'<sup>10</sup> Following the Napoleonic invasion of 1810, all three altarpieces were dismantled and their paintings and sculptures stolen. Their main themes – also the dedications to the chapels in which they were housed – were the Road to Calvary (Christ carrying the Cross), which was in the second chapel from the north on the west side of the nave, nearest to the sacristy door; the life of St Teresa in the opposite chapel, on the east side of the nave; and St Anne, in the southernmost chapel on the west side of the nave (all directions are geographic). The chapel of St Anne included a sculpture by Juan Martínez Montañés, *St Anne and the Virgin Child* (destroyed in 1931).<sup>11</sup> On the basis of the inclusion of the San Alberto paintings in an 1810 inventory of looted works stored in the Alcázar in Seville and other documents, the original appearance of the altarpieces and the history of the dispersal of their elements has been reconstructed by José Fernández-López.<sup>12</sup> The present article publishes a newly rediscovered *Immaculate Conception* that formed part of the Road to Calvary altarpiece, and confirms some of the suggestions about the altarpiece's appearance made by Fernández-López.<sup>13</sup>

The main element of this altarpiece, variously described in the sources as *Christ carrying the Cross*, the *Vía Dolorosa* or *The Nazarene*, was a painting



of Christ on the road to Calvary. Ponz describes the altarpiece, which he had seen, as follows: 'The ones [paintings] on the altarpiece adjacent to the sacristy are by the prebendary Cano, and the one in the middle portrays Christ carrying the cross; the others portray the Immaculate Conception and various saints'.<sup>14</sup> This description is confirmed by Fermín de Varflora, who in his history and description of Seville, published in 1789, attributes all the paintings on the altarpiece to Cano.<sup>15</sup>

8 Aterido Fernández, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp.133–34, doc. no.85: 'Alonso Cano representa a los pintores de Sevilla que exigen a Zurbarán que se examine para ejercer en la ciudad'.

9 A. Palomino, ed.: *Museo Pictórico y escala óptica*, Madrid 1947, pp.985–86.

10 'De este su primer tiempo hay cinco retablos en Sevilla, tres en el colegio de S. Alberto, y dos en el monasterio de Santa Paula, cuya arquitectura, estatuas y pinturas son de su mano, y exceden a las obras de los maestros de Cano', J.A. Ceán Bermúdez: *Diccionario históricos de los más ilustres profesores de las Bellas Artes*, Madrid 1800, I, pp.208–09.

11 L. Malo Lara: *La iglesia de San Alberto de Sevilla en el siglo XVII*, Seville

2015, pp.174–75. The photographic library of the Laboratorio de Arte, University of Seville, contains a photograph of Montañés's sculpture, inv. no.1-119-3, available at <https://citius.us.es/fototeca/ficha.php?id=2de31283116> accessed 13th November 2023.

12 J. Fernández-López: 'Los retablos de Alonso Cano en la Iglesia de San Alberto de Sevilla: Nuevos datos históricos e iconográficos', in *Alonso Cano y su época (Minutes of the International Symposium, Granada, Junta de Andalucía, 2002)*, pp.141–50. The conclusions and the proposed reconstruction are also cited in Wethey, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.155.

13 The painting was inventoried in 1810 in the Alcázar of Seville (no.60) as one

of the works stolen during the Napoleonic invasion and attributed to Cano. It must have been taken to France because it does not appear in any other inventory. It was rediscovered in February 2020 at the Aguttes auction house, Paris, where the present author was first able to study it. It then passed to Paul Smeets, who took care of its restoration, and it was exhibited by the Rob Smeets gallery in Tefaf Maastrich in March 2023. It is currently in a private collection.

14 'Las del retablo junto a la sacristía son del racionero Cano, y la del medio representa a Cristo con la cruz a cuestas; las demás, a la Concepción y varios santos', A. Ponz, ed.: *Viaje de España*, Madrid 1947, p.789. Ponz's

reference to Cano as a prebendary alludes to the painter's appointment, much later in his career, to the office of *racionero* of Granada Cathedral.

15 F. Arana de Varflora: *Compendio Histórico Descriptivo de la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Sevilla*, Seville 1789, I, p.51.

16 Aterido Fernández, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp.97–98, doc. no.55.

17 J. Aguado de los Reyes: 'Comercio, patrimonio, reputación y obra: Vivir y morir noblemente en Sevilla. los casos de Tomás de Mañara y Pedro de la Farja', in I. Lobato Franco and J.M. Oliva Melgar, eds: *El sistema comercial español en la economía mundial (siglos XVII–XVIII)*, Huelva 2013, pp.21–70.

18 Malo Lara, *op. cit.* (note 11), pp.77–78.

Cano's first altarpiece for San Alberto was that dedicated to St Teresa, commissioned by Francisco Ortega Jurado in 1628.<sup>16</sup> It is very likely that it included Cano's *The Crucified Christ appears to St Teresa* and *Christ the Saviour appears to St Teresa*, both now in the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (Figs.3 and 4). The chapel in which the altarpiece depicting the

Road to Calvary was located was sold by the Carmelites to a wealthy French merchant, Pedro de la Farja,<sup>17</sup> and his wife, Antonia de Antiñaque, on 29th August 1626. The funds generated from this sale allowed the order to complete the construction and decoration of the church.<sup>18</sup> However, the altarpiece and the other paintings in the chapel must have been





5. *Christ bearing the Cross (Via Dolorosa)*, by Alonso Cano. c.1628–29. Oil on canvas, 166.5 by 101 cm. (Worcester Art Museum, Worcester MA).

Opposite

6. Preparatory drawing for an altarpiece with *Christ bearing the Cross (Via Dolorosa)* and the *Immaculate Conception*, by Alonso Cano. c.1628–29. Pencil, pen and brown ink on paper, 38.9 by 27.9 cm. (Félix Palacios Remondo collection, Zaragoza).

St Peter and St Anthony Abbot, the patron saints of the donors, Pedro de la Farja and Antonia de Antiñaque.<sup>20</sup> These flanking paintings are set in semi-circular arched aedicules of differing design. Above each of these figures is a small bust of a bishop. The main panel is set in a frame with a broken triangular pediment with an inscribed oval cartouche held by putti above a frieze of ribboned laurel leaves. The frieze above the flanking figures incorporates garlands. These decorative motifs were taken from drawings by the Sevillian sculptor Juan Martínez Montañés that survive inside a copy of Vignola's treatise *Regola delli cinque ordini d'architettura* (1562) that belonged to Cano and was discovered by the present author in the College of Architects in Valencia.<sup>21</sup> These drawings were of great importance in the formation of Cano's architectural vocabulary, as exemplified by this altarpiece.

The upper tier consists of the *Immaculate Conception* flanked by saints, one male and one female. On the left is a saint-king with a crown, sword and sceptre, reputedly St Hermenegild, although he is very probably St Louis, King of France. This would be logical given the nationality of the commissioners.<sup>22</sup> On the right is a female saint, whose identity is discussed below. Each of these lateral paintings, like those below them, are framed by an arched aedicule, in this case surmounted by broken pediments incorporating shields, that on the right supported by putti and that on the left set between two spheres. The *Immaculate Conception* is capped by a *God the Father*. This panel is flanked by scrolling motifs of different designs; like the other variations between the design of the right and left sides of the altarpiece, this was probably to allow the patron to make a choice between them. The combination of the motifs of the *Immaculate Conception* and the Road to Calvary has no known parallels in Carmelite commissions, but they are integrally linked. The theme of redemption is an important component in each: the Virgin is a critical mediator between Christ and humanity, and she plays a major role in the Passion, symbolised by the image of Christ on the road to Calvary.

The combination in the drawing of the *Immaculate Conception* and *Christ bearing the Cross (Via Dolorosa)* makes it all but certain that it is a design for Cano's altarpiece in San Alberto as described by Ponz and other writers. The paintings are listed in two entries in the 1810 inventory of looted paintings in the Alcázar as being by Cano: 'Another, two varas high by one vara wide, Christ Carrying the Cross' and 'Another, 1 ½ high by 1 wide, The Immaculate Conception'.<sup>23</sup> The measurements given in the inventory match those of the *Christ bearing the Cross (Via Dolorosa)* in the Worcester Art Museum – 166.5 by 101 centimetres – which both Martínez Chumillas and Wethey linked to the San Alberto altarpiece (Fig.5).<sup>24</sup> Although Wethey argued that the drawing was not a design for the altarpiece, because it does not depict exactly the same moment in the narrative as the painting, which some scholars have dated as late as c.1635,<sup>25</sup> others believe that the drawing is indeed a design for

commissioned later, presumably around 1628, at the same time that the St Teresa altarpiece was made. Farja was the guarantor of the architect Luis de Figueroa in the contract he signed on 12th July 1628 to build the main altarpiece for the parish church of San Esteban in Seville, and as Cano had married Figueroa's daughter María in 1625, the commission for the Road to Calvary altarpiece probably came via her.

On the basis of Ponz's description of the main subject of the altarpiece as *Christ carrying the Cross* with the *Immaculate Conception* and other scenes and saints, Harold Wethey drew attention to a drawing formerly owned by Stirling Maxwell (Fig.6).<sup>19</sup> This shows a two-tier altarpiece of Vignolesque architectural design with four Corinthian columns on the lower tier and two on the upper. The main scene on the lower tier depicts Christ carrying the Cross at the moment he fell, flanked by paintings of

19 Wethey, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.155.

20 They were identified by Malo Lara, *op. cit.* (note 11), p.80.

21 B. Navarrete Prieto: 'El Vignola del Colegio de Arquitectos de Valencia y sus retablos de traza sevillana: Juan Martínez Montañés', *Archivo Español de Arte* 311 (2005), pp.235–44.

22 Malo Lara, *op. cit.* (note 11), p.80.

23 M. Gómez Imaz: *Inventario de los cuadros sustraídos por el gobierno intruso en Sevilla en el año 1810*, Seville 1896, p.64. This inventory has recently been republished, but with some major errors: see R. Ferrín Paramio: *El Alcázar de Sevilla en la Guerra de la Independencia: El museo Napoleónico*, Seville 2009, p.267. No.59, *Christ*

*carrying the Cross*, and no.60, *Immaculate Conception*, are listed in the lower room no.2 after paintings by Murillo and are clearly by Cano, not Murillo as stated by Ferrín Paramio.

24 Wethey, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.155; and M. Martínez Chumillas: *Alonso Cano: Estudio monográfico de la obra del Insigne Racionero que*

*fue de la Catedral de Granada*, Madrid 1948, p.72.

25 E. Valdivieso: *Pintura Barroca Sevillana*, Seville 2003, p.223. Malo Lara, *op. cit.* (note 11), p.82, goes as far as to date it to c.1635–37, comparing it to the paintings on the altarpiece in the church of the convent of Santa Paula, Seville.



Alonso Cano



7. Detail of Fig.9, showing the upper part of the body and head.

8. Detail of Fig.1, showing the upper part of the body and head.

9. *Immaculate Conception*, by Diego Velázquez. c.1622. Oil on canvas, 142 by 98.2 cm. (Fundación Focus, Seville).

the altarpiece.<sup>26</sup> This has now been confirmed by the rediscovery of the *Immaculate Conception* (Fig.1).

The canvas measures 148.7 by 96 centimetres, dimensions that coincide approximately with those given in the Alcázar inventory. One of Cano's finest works from his years in Seville, it reveals his awareness of iconographical ideas circulating in the city. Like Velázquez's *Immaculate Conception* in the Fundación Focus (Fig.9), it demonstrates familiarity with Pacheco's teachings. Comparison of the two paintings reveals similarities not only in iconography but also in their colour scheme and dimensions. Velázquez depicts the Virgin's head more frontally, showing her absorbed in thought (Fig.7), whereas in Cano's painting her head is turned to one side, and her eyelids are half-closed (Fig.8). Velázquez has used heavier impasto, with an even use of scumble with light, white strokes. The Virgin's red robe in Cano's painting is livelier and brighter in colour than its more crimson equivalent in Velázquez's painting, probably owing to the use of glazes. Another difference between the artists is the texture of the skin of the hands and face: in Cano's painting it is extremely smooth, and can be compared with, for example, the head in his destroyed *St Inés* (c.1630–35; formerly Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, Berlin).<sup>27</sup>

In Cano's *Immaculate Conception*, as in the preparatory drawing (Fig.10), the Virgin is shown crowned with stars, her hands joined in prayer, her head slightly inclined and her cloak wrapped around her proper left arm, but falling from her right shoulder to leave the sleeve exposed. In the landscape

26 See Véliz, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp.434–37, no.97; and Malo Lara, *op. cit.* (note 11), p.81. The present author disagrees with Véliz's argument that the drawing is partly the work of Cano's assistants or apprentices, because of both the quality of the

drawing and the fact that the young Cano then had no assistants who could have created such a drawing. It is characteristic of his work c.1626–28. Wethey, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.155, thought that the drawing might have been a copy of the



in the lower part of both painting and drawing there is a town or city with a tower to the left and a *hortus conclusus* on the right, motifs used by Pacheco in the landscape of his *Immaculate Conception with Miguel Cid* in Seville Cathedral (Fig.11), painted in 1619. As in the *Christ bearing the Cross (Via Dolorosa)*, Cano's grey, hazy landscape depicts the onset of evening. The Virgin stands on an inverted waxing moon with three cherubs' heads flanked by groups of three winged angels carrying flowers that symbolise the Virgin, roses on the left and lilies on the right. The angels are derived from Mannerist models in Jan Muller's prints after designs by Bartholomeus Spranger. They are somewhat different in the drawing, in which the flowers are absent, although the three cherubs' heads on either side of the moon, surrounded by clouds, are the same. The major difference between the drawing and the canvas is in the top corner: in the drawing there are two angels with Marian attributes, probably the Mirror of Justice and the Gates of Heaven, whereas in the painting there are two aureoles surrounded by cherubs' heads, which is closer to Pacheco's *Immaculate Conception*. Conservation of Cano's painting revealed that he originally painted angels bearing attributes, as in the drawing, but

altarpiece after its installation in San Alberto.  
 27 A colour photograph of this work is in Martínez Chumillas, *op. cit.* (note 24), pl.1, between pp.82–83. Another point of comparison is the anonymous *Adoration of the shepherds* in the National Gallery,

London, a work of crucial importance to the history of Sevillian painting, which the present author has attributed to Cano at around the same date: see B. Navarrete Prieto: 'Anónimo, La adoración de los pastores, Londres National Gallery', in A.E. Pérez Sánchez



10. Detail of Fig.6, showing the *Immaculate Conception*.

11. *Immaculate Conception with Miguel Cid*, by Francisco Pacheco. 1619. Oil on canvas, 160 by 110 cm. (Cathedral of St Mary, Seville).

then overpainted them with the aureoles and cherubs' heads (Figs.12 and 13), perhaps as the result of a request by the patron. Also noteworthy are the rays of light, like actual sunbeams, demonstrating Cano's knowledge of not only geometry and perspective, as described by Lázaro Díaz del Valle, but also optics and astronomy. This is important in view of his evident interest in depicting the stars that crown the Virgin Mary as effulgent points of light rather than sharply delineated pointed objects, as shown by Pacheco. Galileo had observed this property of stars by observation through his telescope, as described in his *Siderius nuncius* (1610).<sup>28</sup> This was a topical subject among the artists of Seville and reflects the attention that both Cano and Velázquez paid to the accurate depiction of natural phenomena.

Conservation of the *Immaculate Conception* has revealed colours similar to those used by Cano in other youthful works, such as the

and B. Navarrete Prieto, eds: *De Herrera a Velázquez: El primer naturalismo en Sevilla*, Seville 2005, pp.188–91, no.30.  
 28 F. Marías: 'Materia, objetos y pintura en Velázquez', in B. Navarrete Prieto, ed.: *El joven Velázquez: A propósito de la educación de la Virgen*

de Yale (*Minutes of the International Symposium held at Santa Clara de Sevilla 15th–17th October 2014*. Seville: Ayuntamiento, Instituto de la Cultura y las Artes, 2015), pp.243–73, at p.249. On the depiction of stars by Velázquez at this date, see Cherry, *op. cit.* (note 6), p.1033.

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characteristic cochineal pink seen in the Virgin's tunic, which also appears in the robe of the saint in *St John the Evangelist's vision of Jerusalem* (1635–38; Wallace Collection, London), originally part of an altarpiece dedicated to St John the Evangelist in the convent of Santa Paula, Seville. The same colour can also be seen in the robe of Christ in *Christ bearing the Cross (Via Dolorosa)*, just as the cobalt blue of his tunic is similar to that of the Immaculate Virgin's cloak. The same colour was used by Velázquez in his paintings of the *Immaculate Conception*, in which the pinkish colour has been achieved by mixing cochineal with white lead, resulting in a lighter tone. The approach to colour in both Cano's *Immaculate Conception* and Velázquez's painting in the Fundación Focus is clearly derived from Pacheco. The similarities between the approach of Cano and Velázquez to the subject are evident also in the way they have depicted the sleeves of the Virgin's tunic with such skilful naturalism. This prompts the thought that Velázquez's *Immaculate Conception* may be earlier than usually thought, and could perhaps have been painted c.1620–22.

Although the similarities between the *Immaculate Conception* and *Christ bearing the Cross (Via Dolorosa)* are sufficiently eloquent to dispel the doubts expressed by Wethey about the link between the drawing and the altarpiece, the differences between them are significant. In the *Christ bearing the Cross*, the three Marys shown in the drawing have disappeared, thus focusing attention solely on the figure of Christ, who has fallen to his knees under the weight of the cross and gazes imploringly to the heavens, while Simon of Cyrene helps him by supporting the upright of the cross. In the distance can be seen the executioners with horses and flags, at twilight. The drawing shows Simon in a different position, on the other side of Christ, which focuses attention more on the exchange of glances between Christ and his mother at the moment he falls to the ground, supporting himself on a rock.

A third work that can be related to the altarpiece is a painting of the Carmelite saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi (Fig.14), which was acquired

in 2021 by the Andalusian Regional Government (Junta de Andalucía) for the Museum of Fine Arts, Seville.<sup>29</sup> This is almost certainly the painting shown in the drawing to the right of the *Immaculate Conception*. This figure has been identified as St Teresa, but since there was an entire altarpiece devoted to her in San Alberto she is more likely to be the Carmelite saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi. This identification is supported by the fact that she wears a crown of thorns and a Carmelite habit, since Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi received the attributes of the Passion from Christ when he revealed himself to her in a vision and she believed she was lifting him from the Cross and drinking the blood from his wounds.<sup>30</sup> Further evidence that the painting was intended for this altarpiece is the fact that it has an arched top, unlike Cano's paintings of St Teresa for the San Alberto St Teresa altarpiece, which are rectangular.<sup>31</sup>

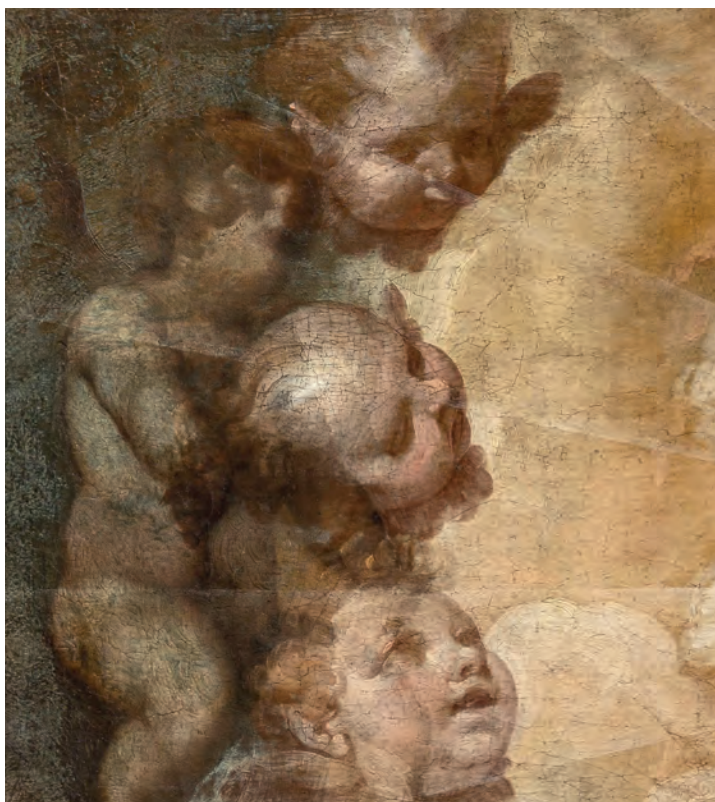
The reappearance of this *Immaculate Conception* adds to our knowledge of Cano's early years, a period about which a great deal remains to be discovered. Its rediscovery also raises the possibility that other elements of the altarpiece from which it was taken could re-emerge, given that the Alcázar inventory also mentions 'two similar,  $\frac{2}{3}$  high by  $\frac{1}{3}$  wide [28 by 55 cm.], two Carmelite bishops' as being by Cano.<sup>32</sup> These may be the paintings that surmounted *St Peter* and *St Anthony Abbot* on the lower tier. These have not been traced, nor has the painting on the upper tier identified as *St Louis King of France*, which is listed as measuring  $1\frac{1}{3}$  varas high by  $\frac{1}{2}$  a vara wide, approximately 111 by 42 centimetres.<sup>33</sup> This is similar in dimensions to those of the *St Anthony Abbot* listed in the Alcázar inventory, 'Another,

**12 and 13.** Details of Fig.1 showing cherubs painted over angels in the top corners.

Opposite

**14.** *Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*, by Alonso Cano. c.1628–29. Oil on canvas, 116 by 55 cm. (Museum of Fine Arts, Seville).

**15.** The drawing shown in Fig.6 with the surviving paintings from the altarpiece superimposed.





1 ¼ varas by ½ a vara wide of Saint Anthony the Abbott' (approximately 100 by 40 centimetres).<sup>29</sup> It is puzzling that the inventory lists as a possible companion piece to this last painting a *St Luke the Evangelist*, since the drawing clearly portrays St Peter, with the keys as his unmistakable attribute. This suggests a possible late alteration by Cano, but it could also be an error in the inventory. If these two paintings could be found, it would be possible to reconstruct virtually the entire altarpiece (Fig.15), a work of central importance to an understanding of naturalistic painting in Seville in the 1620s.

<sup>29</sup> Sale, Sotheby's, London, *Old Masters Evening Sale*, 8th December, 2021, lot 17.

<sup>30</sup> L. Reau: *Iconografía del arte cristiano: Iconografía de los santos de la G a la O, Toma 2*, Barcelona 1997, IV, pp.339–40. For the publication of this work and its identification as Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, see B. Navarrete Prieto and S. Salort Pons: 'El saber de un artista: fuentes formales y literarias en la obra de Alonso', in Henares Cuellar, 2001, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp.138–40. The suggestion that it may have been part of one of the altarpieces for San Alberto was also made in E. Valdivieso: 'Alonso Cano pintor, en su etapa sevillana' in *ibid.*, pp.51–52. See the complete entry on the work in B. Navarrete Prieto: 'Santa María Magdalena de Pazzi' in Henares Cuellar, 2002,

*op. cit.* (note 1), pp.114–15.

<sup>31</sup> The possibility that this painting was part of the San Alberto altarpiece, as shown in the drawing, has also been mooted by Fernández-López, *op. cit.* (note 12), p. 146, and Malo Lara, *op. cit.* (note 11), pp.85–86.

<sup>32</sup> Gómez Imaz, *op. cit.* (note 23), p.76, entry no.265.

<sup>33</sup> Fernández-López, *op. cit.* (note 12), p.146, suggested that the *St Louis King of France* recorded in the 1810 inventory (no.264) might be part of the San Alberto altarpiece. This *St Louis* was displayed in the Louis-Philippe Spanish Gallery of the Musée du Louvre, Paris, see J. Baticle and C. Marinas: *La Galerie espagnole de Louis-Philippe au Louvre 1838–1848*, Paris 1981, p.45, no.27.

<sup>34</sup> Gómez Imaz, *op. cit.* (note 23), p.73, inv. no.215.