

**JAIME EGUIGUREN**

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**José de Mora**

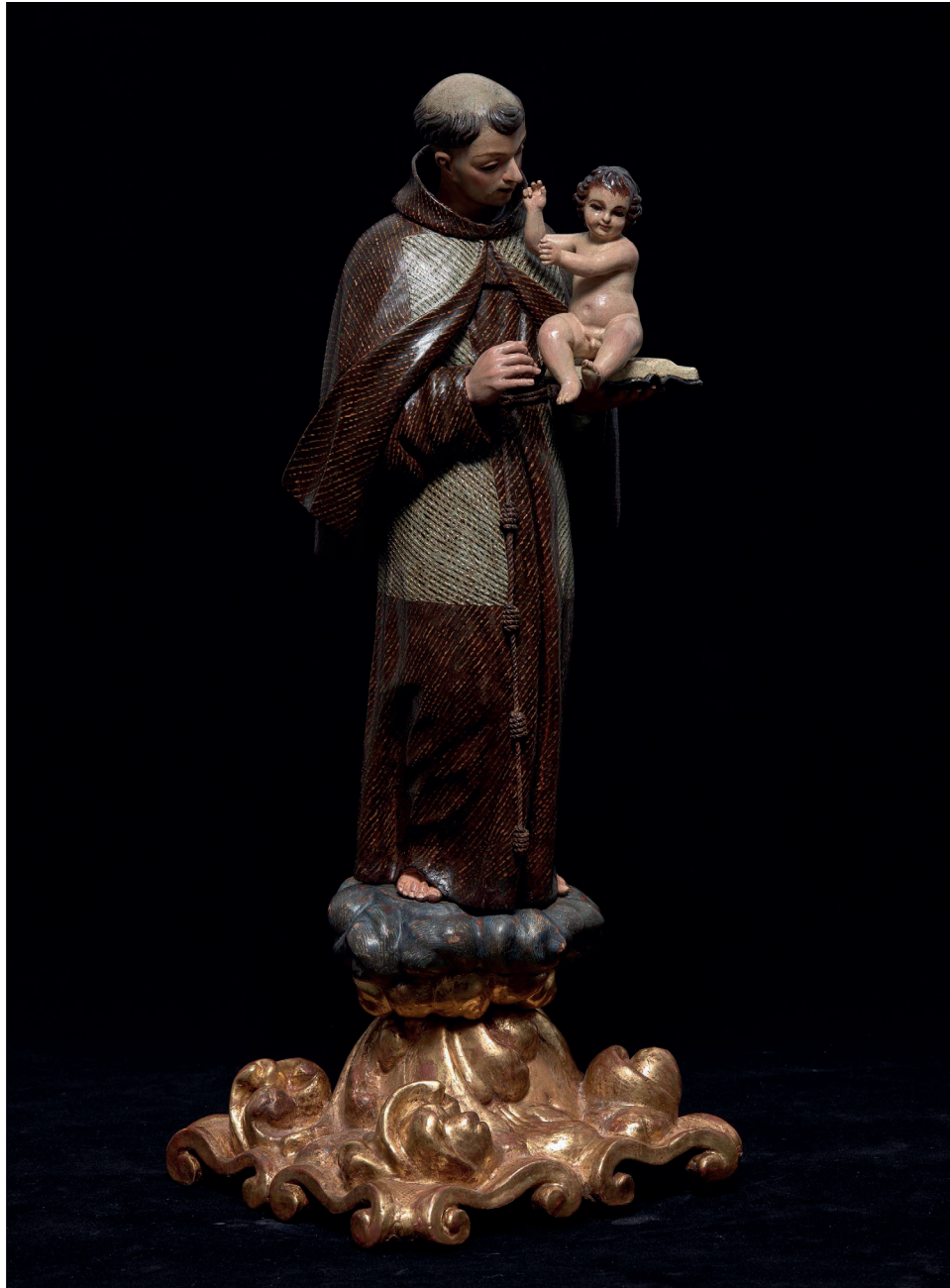
Baza, 1642 – Granada, 1724

**SAINT ANTHONY  
OF PADUA**

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Baza, 1642 – Granada, 1724

***Saint Anthony of Padua***

Ca 1700-1720

Polychrome wood

Saint: 40.5; plinth: 15; whole: 55.5 cm

Saint Anthony: height 56.5 cm, plinth base width 22x22 cm, plinth height 16 cm

Figure 40.5 cm



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Saint Anthony of Padua was actually of Portuguese descent, born to a noble family from Lisbon. When he was fifteen years old he became an Augustinian monk, changing into a Franciscan in 1221. As a preacher he traveled around Spain, northern Africa and Italy, where he even met Saint Francis. He taught theology in Bologna and later he toured France while exercising his pastoral ministry. He spent his final years in Padua, where he died in 1231. After the sixteenth century, his worship reaches an enormous dimension, and he becomes one of the most popular and beloved saints, his image being widely spread through many media.

The work under study results from the miraculous scene that will have the greatest impact on the iconography of the Portuguese saint, the appearance of the Infant Jesus, which during the Early Modern Period will become his most common attribute and one of the classic representations. In addition, it is also very common for the Child to appear standing or sitting on an open or closed book. In fact, this latter iconographic element does not appear in the hagiographic account. It might stem from some other traditions in which the miracle is said to have occurred while the Saint was preaching about the Incarnation dogma, so the vision allegedly arose from his reading, with the Child descending in order to attest it.

Whatever the case, this interesting carving unites these iconographic elements and shows the saint watching the Child seated on the book he is holding in his left arm. It is a small-sized, high-quality sculpture, with a stylized canon that grants it an elegant, sophisticated aspect. The saint slightly turns around his neck in order to look at the Child, while he slightly bends his right leg and bears the weight on the left one. This causes a soft motion and influences the plasticity in the imitation of the naturalistically achieved folds of the habit. He wears the characteristic Franciscan coarse woolen cloth and the short cowl of his order, fastened at the waist by the cincture with the knots of the order symbolically referring to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The artist has managed to reproduce meticulously and naturally the volume and undulations of the rough, coarse Franciscan habit made of serge fabric, as well as the already discussed play of creases, wrinkles and falling folds of the habit, imitating the effect caused on the heavy cloth by the cord tied around the waist as well as by the movement of the legs. Thus, the carving of the marked V-shaped fold at the chest is very characteristic, highlighting the deep furrow or central fold that enhances the effects of chiaroscuro. This can also be clearly seen in the wrinkles of the lower part of the habit caused by the cloth falling down up to the feet on both sides. Besides the high degree of naturalistic achievement of the folds, the same can be found in the simulation of the appearance and texture of the coarse, rough woolen fabric. For this purpose, an austere but convincing polychromy plays a key role, decisively contributing to strengthening the plastic and signifying values of the work with relation to the austerity and poverty of the Franciscan order. Thus, the fine striping of the habit imitates this type of coarse woolen fabric, also insisting, through the play of brownish-grayish tones, on portraying the large patches clearly referring to the poverty and extreme austerity both of the order and of the character himself. The gray color has a symbolic value to Franciscans associated with ash and dust in human condition, and it was the official color in their plain clothes until the mid-eighteenth century.

From the human point of view, Saint Anthony is represented following his traditional iconography as a young man with a tonsure, with a visible beard shadow achieved through polychromy. Undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable aspects of this piece lies in the head and the face, with a deep anatomical and highly realistic study in the representation and individualization of the countenance. The artist has given the saint from Lisbon some marked

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and very well-defined features, achieving a unique appearance and expression that grant an unquestionable, unique personality and also individualize the saint and place him within a stylistic context. It is a face with anatomical, fine and sharp features, with his mouth half-open, showing the teeth, protruding cheekbones and prominent ears. The upward arched eyebrows frame some large, almond-shaped, slanted crystal eyes – undoubtedly one of the most outstanding feature – , with somewhat droopy, swollen eyelids, all of which grants to him significant expressive strength with an engrossed air, as if enthralled by the miracle. The artist has succeeded, with acute sensitiveness, in imbuing the figure with a very personal spirit of his own, through these highly individualized features, and a penetrating look charged with thoughtful, ascetic depth and a yearning attitude.

Concerning the authorship, the sculpture shows high technical quality of a realistic nature, both in the accomplishment of the carving of volumes and folds in the habit and, above all, in the execution of the head and the deeply realistic, expressive and individualized face, which proves the expertise of the maker. In this sense, there is no doubt that this work should be associated with the Andalusian school in the second half of the seventeenth century and, more specifically and directly, with the school of Granada. The technical, stylistic and typological characteristics are evidently related to some of the most successful and repeated creations by Alonso Cano and Pedro de Mena, falling into the same aesthetic line and adding another interesting example to the already large group of works in this style and small size. Based on models of Franciscan saints by Alonso Cano, Mena will further explore the iconographic model, expanding the typology and creating some of his most successful and repeated works, mainly those referring to the many small-scale examples of Saint Peter of Alcántara (Fig. 1), Saint Anthony of Padua (Fig. 2) and Saint Didacus of Alcalá (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2. Pedro de Mena, *Saint Peter of Alcántara*, Private Collection.



Fig. 2. Pedro de Mena, *Saint Anthony of Padua*, Private Collection.



Fig. 2. Pedro de Mena, *Saint Didacus of Alcalá*, San Diego Museum of Arts.



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Fig. 4. Alonso Cano, *Saint Anthony of Padua* Fundación Rodríguez Acosta, Granada.



Fig. 5. Alonso Cano, *Saint Anthony of Padua*, Saint Nicholas church, Murcia.



Fig. 6. Pedro de Mena, *Saint Francis*, Private Collection.

Mena will also delve into a language stressing a greater naturalistic realism that appears engrossed, deeply ascetic, focusing on the intense and restrained expression of the religious feeling through the wise use of expressive means in faces, eyes, mouths and hands; he will achieve all this thanks to extraordinary gifts and formal and technical carving skills.

Thus, Cano-Mena's sculptural, aesthetic and plastic concept is perfectly perceptible in this Saint Anthony, not only in the iconographic and typological model, but particularly in the uniqueness of the realistic, perfectly individualized face that recalls the slanted features in works by Cano such as the small-sized Immaculate Conceptions, but above all in the various examples of small Franciscan saints such as those of Saint Anthony of Padua held at the Rodríguez Acosta Foundation (Fig. 4) and the church of Saint Nicholas in Murcia (Fig. 5); those of Saint Didacus of Alcalá at the Rodríguez Acosta Foundation and a private collection; as well as in similar examples made by Mena such as the Saint Anthony of Padua in a private collection, the Saint Francis (Fig. 6) also in a private collection, the various examples of Saint Didacus of Alcalá and the many more of Saint Peter of Alcántara. The detail of the tips of the robe turned backward appears in all the examples of this same iconography in Cano and Mena. Similarly, the treatment of the sober and accurate polychromy comes from Cano, but Mena takes it to a further stage, insisting on the distinctive detail of the large patches of the habit, after his exceptional Saint Francis in the Toledo cathedral, thereafter becoming a characteristic element of his style in his Franciscan male and female saints.

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Fig. 7. José de Mora, *Saint Bruno*, Cartuja de Granada.

Based on the powerful influence of the work by Alonso Cano and Pedro de Mena, to whose aesthetic values this Saint Anthony owes a debt, we can see more clearly the unique style of Granada-born artist José de Mora. He is one of the Andalusian sculptors who were most closely connected with the work both by Cano and by Mena, based on which he will create a very personal, distinctive style. A member of an important saga of sculptors, he was trained together with his brother Diego by their father Bernardo in Granada, where the latter had moved after Alonso de Mena's death. At that time the close connection with Pedro de Mena started, besides the decisive return of Alonso Cano to his native town in 1652. Subsequently, Cano required younger sculptors as assistants to accomplish his commissions, including, among others, both Bernardo de Mora and Pedro de Mena. When Cano stays one more time at court in 1656-1660 and Pedro de Mena moves his workshop to Málaga in 1658 to undertake the choir stalls for the Cathedral, the fruitful and prestigious sculpture workshop is left in the hands of Bernardo and his sons José and Diego. This is the atmosphere where both were trained, so they naturally inherited the peculiar plastic art of Cano-Mena, to which they would add their own personal character.

Around the time when Mena delivered his famous Magdalene to the Jesuits in Madrid, also José de Mora was there, after arriving around 1666 to work with Sebastián de Herrera Barnuevo, another disciple of Alonso Cano, even obtaining the position of King's sculptor granted by Charles II. Between that year and 1680, he will briefly stay several times at court, to finally return to Granada after that year. In the capital he made "different effigies of his devotion, with unique skill and fineness", as claimed by Palomino, who met him personally.

A very typical mark in José de Mora is the elongated canon of his figures and the melancholy, somewhat languid and strongly expressive air with which he imbues his figures' faces, with elongated heads, thin lips, arched eyebrows, marked cheekbones, sharp and aquiline noses, slanted, downward-looking eyes and swollen eyelids. These features become stronger and more marked during the turbulent final years of his career after the death of his wife.



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Figs. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13. José de Mora, *Saint Bernard, Saint Nicholas and Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Francis of Paola, Saint Dominic*, Cardinal Salazar's chapel, Córdoba Cathedral.

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Fig. 14. José de Mora,  
*Saint Anthony of Padua*,  
Our Lady of Sorrows  
Basilica (Granada)

Through this, Mora creates very specific aesthetics, style and models of a deeply expressive and realistic character, involving human types whose countenances deviate from idealization. He manages to imbue his figures with a spirit of transcendental drama that exudes spirituality and mystical intensity, granting to his works a profound emotional, devotional and suggestive charge.

All these characteristics can be seen in this small Saint Anthony, associating it with other works by José de Mora. Among them, we should mention the Saint Bruno (Fig. 7) in the Granada Charterhouse and particularly the series of full-scale saints he made for the chapel of Cardinal Salazar in the Córdoba Cathedral (Figs. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13). Among them, Saint Bernard, Saint Dominic, Saint Peter Nolasco, Saint Francis, Saint Francis of Paola and, especially, Saint Anthony of Padua, whose similar face seems to be a larger variant of the one under discussion. They show very closely related poses and compositions and, above all, a similar expressive treatment of faces and hands, to which he pays special attention. In addition, we will mention another series of works including the Saint Anthony in the Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica in Granada (Fig. 14), the Saint Dominic (Figs. 15 & 16) once located at the church of Saint Dominic in Granada or the Saint Pantaleon at the church of Saint Anne in Granada.

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Fig. 14. José de Mora,  
*Saint Dominic*, church of  
Saint Dominic (Granada).

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