

For Immediate Release

Lost Painting by Francisco de Zurbarán Acquired by Minneapolis Institute of Art

"The Venerable Miguel Gerónimo Carmelo" Joins the Museum's Growing Spanish Art Collection After Rediscovery, Conservation and Research into Its Provenance

Minneapolis, MN – [September 20, 2023] – The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) announced today that it has acquired a lost masterpiece by renowned Spanish Baroque artist Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664). The recently rediscovered painting, titled "The Venerable Miguel Gerónimo Carmelo," exemplifies Zurbarán's distinctive style of religious painting and his remarkable facility with conveying light and texture. Executed between 1628 and 1630, the painting was created for a monastery in Seville, one of two Zurbarán commissions that hung in the monastery's *Sala de Profundis*, the room where deceased monks were prepared for burial. Both paintings were seized during the Napoleonic Wars, and the location of this work remained unknown until it resurfaced in a Spanish private collection in 1947. Even then, it was not until the work was authenticated by Zurbarán expert Odile Delenda after 2010 that it was accepted as the missing painting. The Zurbarán is on view in a new installation of Spanish works from Mia's collection.

"I am excited to share that we have been able to acquire this stunning Zurbarán work for Mia's collection," said Katie Luber, Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of Mia. "This remarkable painting deepens our understanding of Zurbarán's unparalleled talent, and of the Spanish Baroque more broadly. It also reflects our commitment to expanding the museum's holdings in Spanish art, which is essential for understanding European art traditions across many centuries, as well as tracing the impact and influence of those Spanish traditions on the styles of other cultures around the world. In the last three years, Mia has acquired works by Jaume and Perre Serra, two works by Joaquín Sorolla, and most recently, a 15th-century triptych by Fernando Gallego, creating a clear throughline in the history of Spanish painting. I am grateful to donors Ruth and John Huss, Nancy and Rolf Engh, and Nivin MacMillan for their leadership support in making it possible for us to share this masterpiece with our community."



Francisco de Zurbarán (Spanish [Seville], 1598-1664), *The Venerable Miguel Gerónimo Carmelo*, 1628-1630, oil on canvas. Gift of funds from Ruth and John Huss, Nancy and Rolf Engh, and Nivin MacMillan, and the John R. Van Derlip Fund, 2023.30

Tracing the Lost Zurbarán

Zurbarán, one of the leading artists of Seville in the 17th century, received several commissions from the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy, also known as the Mercedarians; at one point, he even took up residence in the monastery to focus on these works. For the *Sala de Profundis*, he was commissioned to paint two portraits: "Saint Serapion" (1628) and the pendant work "The Venerable Miguel Gerónimo Carmelo." Together the two works would have been a signal to those entering this important space, with "Saint Serapion"—who was martyred during the 13th century, having traded his life to save others—symbolizing the active religious engagement of the Mercedarian friars, and "Carmelo" representing their contemplative and monastic lifestyle.

Throughout the 18th century, guidebooks documented Zurbarán's two paintings as being on view at the monastery. However, the paintings were seized by the government of Joseph Bonaparte during the Napoleonic Wars and were transferred to the Alcazar in Madrid, where a

museum of Spanish art was planned but never created. When the Allied forces (including Austria, the United Kingdom, Prussia and other German states, and some Spanish forces) defeated the French in 1814, the paintings assembled at the Alcazar were scattered across various collections, many divided among the retreating French generals and other opportunistic parties, and subsequently found in collections in France, Russia, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. "Saint Serapion" was held by a series of Spanish and English collectors before being acquired by the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, CT, in 1951, but the location of the second painting was unknown.

Eventually, "Carmelo" was rediscovered in Barcelona in 2010. It had been part of the private collection of Antonio Ferré Paris (d. 1947) and descended through his family, until it entered the market in 2015 and was granted an export license by Spain in 2021. It was first published in 2010 by the scholar Enrique Valdivieso, listed as a Zurbarán workshop replica of the lost original from the Mercedarian convent in Seville. This judgment was based on the existence of another small, fragmentary version of Zurbarán's "Carmelo" in a private collection in Madrid, which was better known to scholars. Because this fragmentary piece had been included in an exhibition in Granada in 1953 and published as a work of Zurbarán, it was long assumed to be the original.

However, the Zurbarán scholar Odile Delenda had been able to study the two paintings in person and concluded that the proposed painting is by Zurbarán's hand, with only minimal workshop participation, while the work in the private collection in Madrid could not be the pendant to the "Saint Serapian" based on its smaller size (68 x 55 cm) and distinctive format. Another version of the painting was found in France, a copy dating from the 19th century which once belonged to one of Napoleon's generals, a prominent collector of Spanish art.

Zurbarán's "The Venerable Miguel Gerónimo Carmelo"

"The Venerable Miguel Gerónimo Carmelo" depicts Friar Carmelo of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy, in a moment of contemplation as he experiences a vision of the Immaculate Virgin Mary while writing his treatise on the subject. Zurbarán's meticulous attention to detail is evident in the portrayal of Carmelo's physical presence, accentuated by the tactile qualities of his monastic robes—the soft texture of the white wool, the graceful folds of the drapery, and the voluminous hooded cowl. The exquisite rendering of the garment also helps draw the viewer's focus to Carmelo and underscores his intense reverence. With quill lifted from the page, Carmelo turns his head to gaze at a luminous vision of the miniature Virgin Mary, which Zurbarán has inset in the upper right corner, and eloquently proclaims the Latin phrase "Tota pulchra est amica mea," which translates to "You are all beautiful, my darling."

"The Venerable Miguel Gerónimo Carmelo' is a remarkable example of Zurbarán's special talent for painting friars. He presents his subject with exceptional immediacy, emphasizing the monk's physical presence by pushing the figures to the foreground, illuminating him with a powerful light in a dark space and stressing the tactile qualities of his monastic robes. His inclination toward abstraction and restricted palette make the picture both mesmerizing and surprisingly modern.," said Rachel McGarry, the Elizabeth MacMillan Chair of European Art and Curator of European Paintings and Works on Paper. "This work underscores the historical importance of Zurbarán as one of the most celebrated painters of his time—and it is gratifying for us to be able to put it on public view nearly 200 years after it first disappeared."

Recent Acquisitions Highlights

In addition to acquiring the Zurbarán, the museum accessioned a number of other works, including an important gift of 21 photographs, and two Latin American works that are among the early acquisitions by Mia's relatively new Arts of the Americas department:

- "Amusements in a Mansion" (Japan, 1650). This Japanese screen—in which a scene of leisure unfolds, with people mingling in small groups, playing Japanese chess (shōgi), arm wrestling, reading, playing music, and drinking and eating—is a rare example of its kind that adds significantly to Mia's already strong collection of Japanese art. While screens depicting scenes in the pleasure quarters were not uncommon in the Edo period (17th to mid-19th century), most of the extant examples show female courtesans engaging with male clientele. In contrast, this screen shows a male prostitute tea house ("kagama chaya"), in which young boys

and men between the ages of 11 and 20 entertained older men. Painted images of such same-sex encounters are very rare—perhaps because they were destroyed after the introduction of certain Western ideals in the latter part of the 19th century. This work is a gift from Darwin and Geri Reedy.

- “Mountain with Cattle” (1918), by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (German, 1880–1938). In this painting, Kirchner presents a tranquil, bird’s-eye, and abstracted view of a herd of cattle grazing in the majestic Swiss Alps. His connection to this landscape was deeply personal: he had sought medical treatment there after suffering a mental crisis and physical collapse while serving as an artillery driver in World War I. The grand, vibrant scene seems to encapsulate the artist’s experience of nature in Switzerland at this sensitive moment of his recovery.
- “No. 6” (1957), by Elsa Gramcko (Venezuelan, 1925–1994). The first painting by a Latin American woman artist to enter Mia’s collection. The lines and planes of this abstract work are not rigid geometric forms; instead, as in much of Gramcko’s work, they evoke strange organic structures, loosely reminiscent of bones, snails, or fossils. Born to German-descent, by the 1960s, Gramcko was celebrated as one of the most important artists in the country, having had solo shows at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Caracas, exhibiting at the Venezuelan Pavillion of the Venice Biennale in 1964, and receiving the National Sculpture Prize at the 1968 Salón Nacional.
- A gift of twenty-one photographic works of art from the collection of Fay Gallus and Richard Sweet significantly adds to Mia’s collection of photography across multiple art departments: Americas, Asia, Europe, and Global Contemporary Art. The wide-ranging gift includes exceptionally rare vintage works by Carleton Watkins, Eugene Atget, Irving Penn, Walker Evans, and Weegee, with pieces such as “Animal Locomotion (Plate 336)” (c. 1887) by Eadweard Muybridge and Watkins’ “The Yosemite Valley from the Mariposa Trail” (1865). Other notable works include Tyrone Dukes’ “Untitled (Portrait of Muhammad Ali)” (ca. 1975), George Rodger’s “Maasai N’Dito Maiden Wearing Ceremonial Beads, Kenya” (1971), and Annie Leibovitz’s “Bette Midler, New York City” (1979).
- “Emblema 1972” (1972), by Rubem Valentim (Brazilian, 1922–1991). One of the first Afro Brazilian artists to achieve recognition in his lifetime and to be celebrated for the originality of his contribution, Valentim’s work is where the cultural legacy of the African diaspora and the trends of post-War European modernism combine to create a unique artistic vocabulary. His artistic practice can be read within two distinct canons: as an arrangement of geometric forms in an abstract composition, or as representations of a spiritual world of Yorubá religious practices, dominant within the African diaspora in Brazil, where deities are recognized through their attributes, expressed in geometric symbols. In this work, the symmetry and the ascending aspect of the composition reinforces to the viewer the idea of looking at an altarpiece.
- “Gina & April, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Domestic series (1995-98)” (1998), by Catherine Opie (American, born 1961). Opie rose to prominence in the 1990s for her bold and introspective photographs that explore themes of identity, gender, and the construction of social norms. Her portraits, often characterized by their striking compositions and vibrant colors, capture both the individuality and shared experiences of her subjects. “Gina & April, Minneapolis, Minnesota” is a powerful and intimate portrayal of a lesbian couple. Part of her expansive “Domestic” series (1995-98), the image captures two women embracing each other in a tender and affectionate pose, radiating love and vulnerability—and inviting viewers to reflect on the significance of representation and the power of human connection in shaping our understanding of diverse identities and relationships.

Press Contacts

Minneapolis Institute of Art
Molly Lax
mlax@artsmia.org
+1 612 870 3013

PAVE Communications and Consulting
Sascha Freudenheim
sascha@paveconsult.com

About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit artsmia.org

Mia

Minneapolis Institute of Art
2400 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404