

# The Count of Los Arcos as Collector and Patron of El Greco

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## RESUMEN

*Pedro Laso de la Vega, Count of Los Arcos (1567-1637) was a prominent courtier during the reigns of Philip III and Philip IV. A noted patron of the arts, Arcos amassed a collection of approximately 500 paintings, including eight by El Greco. This article offers a brief biography of the patron together with an detailed analysis of his art collection. Arcos' relationship with El Greco merits particular attention, as do the reasons why Arcos, towards the end of his life, saw fit to sell most of the El Greco paintings in his collection.*

## SUMMARY

*Pedro Laso de la Vega, Conde de los Arcos (1567-1637) era un cortesano eminente en la corte de Felipe III y Felipe IV. Conocido por su mecenazgo artístico, Arcos amontonó una colección de alrededor de 500 cuadros, entre ellos, ocho de mano de El Greco. Este artículo ofrece una biografía breve del mecenas junto con una análisis detallado de su colección de arte. Su relación con El Greco merece atención particular, también las razones por las que Arcos, antes de su muerte, determinó vender la mayoría de los cuadros de El Greco de su colección.*

At the risk of repeating myself, I would like to begin by quoting what I wrote at the beginning of my essay in the catalogue of the 1982 exhibition, *El Greco of Toledo*:

«No artist works in a vacuum. The culture, economy, and institutions that surround him, the people he knows—all influence his work, although in ways that are not always easily discernible. If we are to reach a full understanding of the achievement of an artist, we must have an accurate portrait of the world in which he lived.»<sup>1</sup>

Since these lines were written, over nine years ago, much has been learned about El Greco's connections to his adopted Spanish home. Studies by Rosario Díez de Corral Garnica and Fernando Marías, for example, have provided new information that allows us to compare El Greco's achievement to that of other artists and architects working in the Toledan milieu.<sup>2</sup> Richard Mann's impor-

tant book has illuminated the complex religious iconography embedded in three of El Greco's altarpieces together with the nature of the artist's relationship with two of his major Toledan patrons: Diego de Castilla, the ecclesiastic responsible for El Greco's paintings in the church of Sto. Domingo el Antiguo, and Pedro Salazar de Mendoza, the canon lawyer who commissioned El Greco to decorate the altarpiece for the Hospital of St. John the Baptist.<sup>3</sup> We have also learned, more clearly than ever before, that El Greco's life in Toledo was not that of an isolated mystic whose artistic creativity was sparked by some kind of internal light. Rather he now appears an «artist-philosopher» surrounded by learned clerics and intellectuals who shared his interests in art, philosophy, and the classics. This circle included Antonio de Covarrubias, maestrescuela of Toledo's cathedral and a noted scholar of Greek; Martín

<sup>1</sup> Richard L. KAGAN «Toledo of El Greco,» in Toledo Museum of Art, *El Greco of Toledo* (Boston, 1982), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> The relevant studies are Rosario DIEZ DEL CORRAL GARNICA, *Arquitectura y mecenazgo: La imagen de Toledo en el Renacimiento* (Madrid, 1987). Fernando MARIAS, *La arquitectura del Renacimiento en Toledo* 4 vols. (Madrid, 1983-1986).

<sup>3</sup> Richard MANN, *El Greco and his Patrons* (Cambridge, 1986). For Salazar de Mendoza, see Richard L. Kagan «Pedro de Salazar de Mendoza as Collector, Scholar, and Patron of El Greco,» *Studies in the History of Art* 13 (1989): 85-93.



Ramírez de Zayas, the theologian who awarded El Greco the commission for the Capilla de San José; as well as Gregorio de Angulo, the lawyer, amateur poet and city councilman who helped the artist obtain the commission for the Oballe Chapel in 1607.<sup>4</sup> Pedro Laso de la Vega, the one titled nobleman known to have belonged to El Greco's circle in Toledo and an important art collector in his own right, is the subject of this essay.<sup>5</sup>

Born in 1559, Pedro Laso de la Vega, Niño y Guzmán belonged to one of Toledo's most prominent families.<sup>6</sup> With the exception of his paternal grandfather, who had helped to organize the comunero revolt in Toledo against Charles V in 1520, most of Pedro Laso's ancestors had been loyal servants to the crown. His great grandfather, for instance, was the Catholic Monarchs' ambassador in Rome, and his father, Garcilaso de la Vega Guzmán served both Charles V and Philip II in various capacities and was subsequently received awarded a knighthood in the Order of Alcántara in addition to other honors. Pedro Laso's mother, doña Aldonza de Guevara, was also courtier, and in the 1580s served as *guardamayor de las damas* for Queen Anne of Austria. Even more distinguished was Pedro Laso's uncle, Garcilaso de la Vega (d. 1536), Spain's most famous Renaissance poet and a nobleman whose dedication to arms and letters epitomized the life of the perfect courtier popularized by Castiglione. Pedro Laso seems to have preferred letters to arms but like most of his ancestors, he dedicated himself to the service of the Habsburg crown.

Following his father's death in 1567, Pedro Laso was educated at the royal court in Madrid where he served as a *menino* (or page). He was back in Toledo by 1590, managing his estates together with those of his brother, Rodrigo, an infantry captain who was shipwrecked in the Armada and captured in Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Much is still to be learned about his record as an estate manager, but Pedro Laso appears to have been the Castilian counterpart of England's improving landlord, a señor who continually planted new olive groves and vineyards, built dams, houses, and mills, and purchased additional lands in an effort to increase the size and profitability of his estates. Even in his testament Pedro Laso boasted about the more than six hundred olive trees that he and his wife planted near Batres and which they raised «at great cost.»<sup>8</sup>

In Toledo Pedro Laso lived in the parish of San Lorenzo in a large seigneurial palace—the casa de Munárriz—that his father had remodelled in the 1530s according with the help of the Renaissance architect, Alonso de Covarrubias.<sup>9</sup> In these comfortable surroundings Pedro Laso indulged his interest in *letras*, which apparently included a special appreciation for Italian literature and culture. In 1590, for example, Luis Gaytán de Vozmediano, dedicated his translation of Giovanni Battista Giraldo's *One Hundred Novels* to «Pedro Laso de la Vega,» a man of «singular ingenio». <sup>10</sup> Book-collecting was another Pedro Laso's interests and one occasion this hobby even managed to get him into trouble with the Inquisition. In 1594 it was discovered that Pedro Laso de la Vega, caballero de Alcántara, owned a copy of *The Adventures of Antonio Perez*, the vindictive treatise written by Philip II's exiled secretary. The Holy Office immediately confiscated the book in an effort to keep Perez's seditious ideas out of circulation, but otherwise took no action against Pedro Laso. <sup>11</sup> By his death Pedro Laso assembled a library of more than five hundred (approved) volumes that included a Plantin Bible, «libros de umanidad en latin, toscano, y castellano,» together with twenty four «libros de estampas finas de Italia y Flandes» described as books «of great value that cost a lot».

It is not certain when Pedro Laso first developed a **taste for painting**, but by 1596 he was already sufficiently friendly with El Greco to have agreed to serve as the artist's bondsman or fiador in his contract with the College of Doña María de Aragón. <sup>12</sup> A fiador was required to pay a certain indemnity in the event that the artist failed to complete his contract, and in this instance Pedro Laso, together with two other fiadores, pledged a total of 6000 ducats. In 1600 Pedro Laso did a similar favor for another Toledan painter, Juan Sánchez Cotán, by agreeing to take out a *censo* worth two million maravedis payable to the artist.<sup>13</sup>

Little is known about Pedro Laso's other activities in Toledo. Some time before 1597, he married Doña Mariana de Mendoza, daughter of the Count of Orgaz and a member of another distinguished Toledan clan. Following the birth of their son Luis in 1597, Pedro Laso was named *mayordomo de la reyna* and the couple made what appe-

<sup>4</sup> For Angulo and others in El Greco's circle, see KAGAN, «Toledo of El Greco», pp.61-72.

<sup>5</sup> A useful introduction to Pedro Laso de la Vega and his collection is Balbina M. CAVIRO «Los Grecos de Don Pedro Laso de la Vega», Goya 184 (1985): 216-227.

<sup>6</sup> The family history is discussed in Marqués de Laurencín, *Garcilasso de la Vega y su retrato* (Madrid, 1914), and Hayward KENISTON, *Garcilaso de la Vega* (New York, 1965).

<sup>7</sup> Pedro Laso inherited the señoríos Arcos, Batres, and Cuerva, located north and west of Toledo. He later acquired the señorío of Juncos as well. His brother Rodrigo was señor, and later count of Añover de Tajo.

<sup>8</sup> Archivo histórico y provincial de Madrid [hereafter AHPM]: Protocolo 4666, 90v.

<sup>9</sup> For the house, see Linda MARTZ y Julio PORRES, *Toledo y los toledanos en 1561* (Toledo, 1975), p. 101, and MARIAS, *La arquitectura del Renacimiento en Toledo*, 4: 103. The architects of the house's Renaissance patio and stairway were Enrique Egas and Alonso de Covarrubias.

<sup>10</sup> Luis GAYTAN DE VOZMEDIANO *Cien novelas de M. Juan Bautista Giraldo Cinthio* (Toledo, 1590).

<sup>11</sup> British Library: Egerton Ms. 1508, fol. 290.

<sup>12</sup> Francisco de Borja SAN ROMAN, *El Greco en Toledo* (Toledo, 1982), p. 313. The second fiador was Alonso de Fuente Montalbán, who occupied the office of *tesorero de la casa de moneda de Toledo* in the absence of its title holder, Rodrigo Laso de la Vega, Pedro's brother. The third was Francisco Pantoja, secretary of Cardinal Archbishop Albert of Austria. Since was Rodrigo Laso was soon named a member of Albert's household, it may be presumed that Pantoja's appearance in the contract had something to do with the influence of the Laso de la Vega family.

<sup>13</sup> Archivo de los Laso de la Vega. Estado Batres. F. 10-11. The document is dated 14 Dec. 1600.



ars to have been a definitive move to Madrid.<sup>14</sup> Once at court, they apparently supported efforts to establish the Camadulense Order in Spain. The Camadulenses, an offshoot of the Benedictine, were an order known for the rigorous, isolated life of its monks as well their dedication to mental prayer. Negotiations to found Camadulense hermitage outside Madrid had begun in 1596, and the following year the *regimiento* of Madrid even set aside lands for this purpose. However, the Royal Council of Castile opposed the establishment of the new order, and the project eventually failed.<sup>15</sup> Although Pedro Laso is not mentioned in any of the documents pertaining to the project, he seems to have commissioned El Greco for the *Allegory of the Camadulense*, an unusual composition that resembles the contemporary engraving of a Camadulense hermitage published in Antonio de Yepes' early seventeenth-century history of the Benedictine Order.<sup>16</sup> The painting includes the Laso de la Vega and Mendoza coats of arms and later figured in Pedro Laso's collection of paintings. Otherwise, his connection to the new order remains undocumented.

The accession of Philip III in 1598 furthered Pedro Laso's fortunes at court. Following the appointment of his maternal uncle Fernando Niño de Guevara to the powerful office of Inquisitor General, Pedro Laso received the title of Conde de los Arcos in 1599. The monarch's confidence in Arcos was further expressed the following year when he was designated one of four mayordomos who were dispatched to Vinaroz to greet Margarita de Austria on her arrival in Spain.<sup>17</sup> In 1606 the chronicler Cabrera de Córdoba described Arcos as a «gentleman of excellent intellect». This may explain why Arcos, who had little previous experience in the affairs of state, was offered the important ambassadorship to the Imperial Court in 1606.<sup>18</sup> Arcos refused this position, partly because he had previously agreed to serve as guardian for the children of his absent brother Rodrigo, who, after being ransomed from the English, had remained in Flanders.

Having decided to remain in Madrid, Arcos occupied himself with his estates and other family business, and in 1608 made a small charitable bequest that consisted of a yearly allotment of six *arrobas* of oil for the lamp in the shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Caridad in Illescas.<sup>19</sup> Presumably, light from this lamp helped to illuminate El Greco's recently completed paintings for the shrine's altarpiece.

The following year Arcos made a token appearance at the beatification hearings of Teresa of Jesus. His mother, doña Aldonza de Guevara (d. 1604) had been a staunch supporter of Teresa and had founded the Discalced Carmelite convent of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación in her village of Cuerva. Doña Aldonza apparently had considerable influence on Pedro's brother Rodrigo, who, prior to becoming a soldier, once expressed interest in becoming a Discalced Carmelite.<sup>20</sup> Pedro Laso, it seems, harbored no such ambitions, but he helped his mother to secure a license to establish the convent in Cuerva and in 1609 admitted to owning some of Teresa's books, describing them as «muy santo». Pedro Laso also testified to having been surprised when he heard a Dominican denounce Teresa's works as «malsonantes y escandalosas.»<sup>21</sup> Other than his role as patron of the convent his mother had established, however, this testimony constitutes the only evidence of Arcos's interest in either Teresa or the Discalced Carmelites.

The remainder of Arcos's career in Madrid is known only in barest outline. In 1614, he was named mayordomo to the infante Philip, a position he retained after Philip became king in 1621.<sup>22</sup> Arcos later became the king's first mayordomo, but other than attending to his ceremonial duties and providing the monarch with money needed to pursue the war in Flanders, his activities at court are poorly documented. According to one report, he never received an appointment to the Council of State because of the «cunning and guile» («maña y astucia») with which he pursued his affairs, but whatever the precise reason, the count stayed in the background at Philip IV's court, eschewing direct involvement in the politics of state.<sup>23</sup> In his testament, prepared in 7 May 1631, Arcos boasted about having served «three kings and four queens and having spent more than 120.000 ducats in the crown's service.» Yet he was quick to add that «I do not die as poor or as indebted as others whose estates are larger than mine»<sup>24</sup>. In 1632 Arcos calculated his «bienes libres» to be worth a total of 40.000 ducats, would have put him in a class with some of Castile's wealthy grandees.<sup>25</sup>

By 1632, however, Arcos' life was in disarray. His brother Rodrigo had died in 1620, leaving his title of Conde de Añover and the lucrative office of treasurer of Toledo's *casa de la moneda* to Arcos' son Luis, a *gentilhombre de cámara* and close confidante of the king's younger brother,

<sup>14</sup> By 1601 Pedro Laso's *casas principales* were already rented. See Archivo histórico provincial de Toledo [hereafter AHPT]: Protocolo 2140, fol. 1601.

<sup>15</sup> For these negotiations, see Archivo Segretto di Vaticano: Nunziatura Spagna, libro 48, fols. 353-56; libro 283, fols. 303-06; libro 323, fol. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Antonio de YEPES, *Cronica general de San Benito* (Valladolid, 1609-1621) 5:312.

<sup>17</sup> Diego de GUZMAN, *Reyna Católica. Vida y muerte de doña Margarita de Austria* (Madrid, 1617), p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> Luis CABRERA DE CORDOBA, *Relaciones de las cosas sucedidas en la corte Felipe III desde 1599 hasta 1614* (Madrid, 1857), pp. 288, 292.

<sup>19</sup> Archivo Laso de La Vega. Estado Batres. F 30. The bequest is dated 7 June 1608. See also AHPM: Protocolo 4666, fol. 92v.

<sup>20</sup> Archivo de los Laso de la Vega. Estado de Añover. Letra F. No. 43.

<sup>21</sup> For this testimony, see *Escritos de Santa Teresa*, ed. Vicente de la Fuente, *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* (Madrid, 1862), 55: 386, and Silverio de Santa Teresa, *Procesos de beatificación y canonización de Santa Teresa de Jesús* (Burgos, 1935), 3: 303-06.

<sup>22</sup> See Archivo del Palacio Real (Madrid), Sección Histórico, Caja 65/3-4. The first appointment is dated 6 February 1614, the second May 1621.

<sup>23</sup> BNM: Ms. 18447, Josef Antonio de Armona, «Noticias de Madrid, 1636-1638,» fol. 32v. See also APR: caja 65/3, letter of 10 June 1636, in which Arcos responds to a request to a *donativo* by claiming that he has already given the monarch more than 15.000 ducats to the king. On this occasion, he asks to be excused from another grant on the grounds that he had entrusted his entire estate to an executor following the death of his son in 1632.

<sup>24</sup> AHPM: Prot. 4666, fol. 103.

<sup>25</sup> AHPM: Protocolo 6133, fol. 623r. The calculation is part of a codicil of 3 Aug. 132.



the infante don Carlos. Arcos's wife, doña Mariana, died in 1627, and her demise was followed by that of their son Luis on 11 March 1632. Arcos arranged for their burial in the family chapel he had previously established in the parish church of Cuerva. The chapel, dedicated to the Holy Sacrament, was decorated with family portraits (those of his son Luis and Magdalena Pacheco, his daughter-in-law, by Bartolomé González and that of his wife by Rodrigo de Villandrando are still *in situ*) together with what Arcos described in his testament as «la imagen de la magdalena, copia de la que el rey tiene en San Lorenzo El Escorial.»<sup>26</sup> By the time he drafted this document, Arcos, then aged over seventy, was already preparing his own death. Following his son's demise, he began to dispose of some of the paintings and other artefacts that he had collected, although he made a point of adding to his mayoralty the objects he and his son had installed «con tanto gusto y cuidado» in the family fortress at Batres,<sup>27</sup> noting specifically that he wished to preserve for posterity these «pinturas, mesas de piedra y otras alajas curiosas y de estima» because they were of «such delight» («tanta recreacion»).<sup>28</sup> Arcos lived out his remaining years in Madrid, attending daily punctually, at 2 P.M. to a small garden he had planted at one of the shrines in the Buen Retiro. He died suddenly of a stroke on 18 January 1637.<sup>29</sup> According to instructions previously outlined in his testament, Arcos was buried in Cuerva «without sermon and pomp... and with the least noise and gathering of people that is possible, after midnight». In keeping with this austerity, the count's gray and white granite tomb was of simple, classical design. Arcos's activities as a collector are mostly undocumented, although a series of inventories prepared shortly after the death of his son in 1632 reveals that he obtained works of art from several sources.<sup>30</sup> Evidently, Arcos inherited some paintings from his father and mother. These were mostly family portraits and included one of «Fernando Niño, Arzobispo de Sevilla, inquisidor general sentado en silla.» This is generally thought to be the portrait of the Cardinal by El Greco now in New York, but the identification of this painting has recently been challenged and its provenance remains in dispute.<sup>31</sup> Arcos's wife had also inherited some pictures from her father, the Count of Orgaz, and on another occasion had received the gift of a painting described as a *magdalena* from

Catalina de Ribera, marquess of Malpica and daughter of the I duke of Alcalá de los Gazules, the Spanish viceroy in Naples.<sup>32</sup> The death of various family members also added to his collection. For example, he acquired the «lamina pequeña del nacimiento... de mano de Federigo Zuccaro», from the estate of his uncle, Cardinal Niño de Guevara, who had died in 1609.<sup>33</sup> Guevara reportedly purchased this small painting in Rome, and Arcos subsequently bequeathed it to the king. (It is now in the Escorial). The death of Arcos's brother Rodrigo in 1620 represented another artistic windfall. Rodrigo, who spent much of his life as a soldier in Flanders and later became mayordomo at the court of Albert and Isabella Clara Eugenia in Brussels, had a taste for northern art that included still-lives, landscapes, and genre scenes, all of which found their way into Arcos's collection. It is difficult to identify these paintings, but they included such works as «dos quadros al olio grande de Flandes: una carniceria con seis o siete figuras al natural; un mercado con cinco figuras al natural». On the other hand, Arcos found that another of brother's acquisitions, a painting described as a «junta de los dioses y adulterio de Venus» was not to his liking and he subsequently gave it away to a friend. Finally, Arcos inherited some paintings from his son Luis whose small collection of about two dozen paintings included a copy of Cambiaso's *Prayer in the Garden* (possibly that in Genoa's Chiesa de la Annuziata di Portoria).

Arcos was also active in what can be described as Madrid's incipient art market. He apparently haunted estate sales and acquired certain «vidrieras» at the almoneda of Cardinal Sandoval y Rojas in 1616. He also managed to obtain what are described as «siete quadros de fiestas», from the *almoneda* of the duke of Infantado in 1624. The inventories offer no indication as to where he obtained his other paintings, but together he assembled more than five hundred pictures. This was no «mega-collection» but was certainly one comparable in size, if not in quality, to that of duke of Alcalá, the count of Monterrey, and other early seventeenth-century Spanish aristocratic collectors.<sup>34</sup>

Arcos's collection was dispersed among several sites. His palace in Madrid—apparently the *casas principales* in the plaza de San Salvador that he purchased in 1616 at the almoneda of Cardinal Sandoval y Rojas—housed about 150 paintings. These included a series of family portraits,

<sup>26</sup> AHPM: Protocolo 4666, fol. 100v.

<sup>27</sup> AHPM: Prot. 6133, fol. 624. Codicil of 3 Aug. 1632.

<sup>28</sup> AHPM: Procolo 6170, fol. 811. Codicil of 20 Sept. 1632. In this document Arcos claims that the objects in Batres were estimated be worth more than 86.000 reales.

<sup>29</sup> Armona, «Noticias de Madrid», fols. 30, 32.

<sup>30</sup> The first inventory, undertaken by the painter Fray Juan Bautista Maino, dates from 26 April 1632. Copies exist in the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan (see Appendix) as well as the AHPM: Protocolo 6175, fol. 1178 ff.

<sup>31</sup> See Jonathan BROWN y Dawson A. CARR, «El 'Retrato de un cardenal': simbolo o simulacro?», in *Visiones del Pensamiento. Estudios sobre El Greco*, ed. Jonathan Brown (Madrid, 1984): 59-73. A 1632 inventory of the count's paintings does not attribute this portrait to El Greco. «Un retrato del Cardenal D. Fernando Niño appears in an early eighteenth-century inventory of Batres, but once again without attribution. A 1805 inventory of Batres lists portraits of two unidentified (and unattributed) cardinals and a painting described as «un arzobispo con un libro en la mano». See Archivo Laso de la Vega. Batres. No. 4. The identification of the Niño de Guevara portrait in the Metropolitan is complicated by the fact that the Cardinal's burial chapel in Toledo's Convent of San Pablo, established in 1613, originally contained a «retrato del fundador». The location of this painting is unknown. See Archivo del Convento de San Pablo, Legajo 4, no. 29.

<sup>32</sup> AHPM: Prot. 2121. Bequest of 20 March 1590. Catalina de Ribera was the sister of the Juan de Ribera, Archbishop of Valencia.

<sup>33</sup> See AHPM: Protocolo 6133, fol. 629. Arcos was one of the Cardinal's *albaceas*. See Archivo del Convento de San Pablo, leg. 4, no.4.

<sup>34</sup> For Alcalá, see Jonathan BROWN and Richard L. KAGAN, «The Duke of Alcalá: His Collection and its Evolution», *Art Bulletin* LXIX (1987): 233-255. For Monterrey, see A.E. PÉREZ SANCHEZ, «Las colecciones de pintura del conde de Monterrey», «*Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, CLXXIV (1977): 417-59. For a general study of early seventeenth-century Spanish collecting, see M. BURKE, «Private Collections of Italian Art in Seventeenth-Century Spain», Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1984.



others of the kings and queens of Spain, a portrait of Saint Teresa and other historical figures, some landscapes, two bodegones, devotional paintings, and maps of Madrid. Among the paintings that can be identified, three were by El Greco: a *San Francisco*, probably the one now in Bilbao,<sup>35</sup> and a *San Pedro*. More interesting is the painting described as a «pintura grande del Aucon [de lacon] del Domenico», presumably one of the two large Laocoons listed in the 1621 inventory of Jorge Manuel's studio. It should be noted, however, that Arcos, rather than add these paintings to his mayorgazgo, elected to sell all three.<sup>36</sup>

Outside Madrid, Arcos had eighteen paintings in his house in Toledo, and another ten, all devotional paintings originally acquired by his son, in the family chapel in Cuerva.<sup>37</sup> Most of the collection was in Batres, and the inventory lists the paintings' location room by room. The central patio contained paintings of the «sitios y guerras de Flandes», a landscape and a hunting scene, «un retablo grande del soldado aleman con los de enanos», and another of «brixida del rio, la barbuda de peñaranda», almost certainly the painting by Juan Sánchez Cotán now in the Prado. The room described as the «sala grande de cierço» contained a gallery of famous men: forty six portraits of «hombres insignes en letras y armas». Elsewhere were several Venetian paintings and four others, described as copies of Bassano, illustrating Noah's ark and the flood. Nearby was another Italian painting that depicted «cuando el angel parecio a Noe». This canvas was flanked by «dos medianos de domenico greco, el uno retrato de un pedaço de Toledo, el otro retrato del monasterio de la gran camaldula». The Oratory contained another two paintings attributed to El Greco: *Nuestra Señora de la Leche* (identified by Wethey as the version in the Hispanic Society) and *San Lucas Evangelista* (Hispanic Society).<sup>38</sup> An early eighteenth-century inventory of the same oratory indicates that a painting listed simply as «San Esteban en el martirio» was also by El Greco.<sup>39</sup>

The fortress's main salón was the sala or quadra «de los reyes». Here was a series of royal portraits—all by Bartolomé González—together with portrait of the Prince Don Carlos «con el capote de los lobos q hizo una dama de la reyna Isabel», a description which suggests that the well-known Prado portrait of don Carlos, traditionally attributed to Alonso Sánchez Coello, may actually be the work of Sofonisba Anguisciola.<sup>40</sup> Also in this sala was a copy of

Parmigianino's *Cupid with a Bow* attributed to the Toledan painter, Hernando de Avila. Philip II owned the original—it is now in Vienna—and the copy now in the Prado—attributed to Eugenio Cajés—may be similar to the painting referred to here.<sup>41</sup> Rounding out the decoration of this room were a series of portraits—including one of Juanelo Turriano, the famous clockmaker, by Felipe Liaño, several bodegones, a painting of Lepanto, another of the Escorial «echo en Flandes por un gran pintor», city views, maps, engravings of Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* a camarín with various curiosities, and several alacenas filled with pottery from India, Portugal, Italy, and elsewhere. The inventory also describes «un arbol de los señores desta casa». Was this what is described in Jorge Manuel's studio in 1621 as «un lienzo de los arcos»? <sup>42</sup>

Overall, Arcos' collection is best described an up-to-date assemblage of works representative of the principal schools of European painting, with emphasis on Italy and Flanders. Aside from El Greco, Spanish art was represented chiefly by portraits realized by court artists (González, Liaño, Villandrando, etc) with whom Arcos would have come into contact. In this sense, it was the run-of-the-mill collection of a kind that many Spanish courtiers in the early seventeenth century possessed. By no means should it be considered a distinguished or otherwise unusual assemblage of paintings, and aside from Avila's replica of the Parmigianino and a few engravings, copies (let alone originals) of the great Italian Renaissance masters were few. Like many early seventeenth century collections, moreover, its thematic character was extremely diverse; there were family portraits, still lifes and landscapes, and history paintings, together with a stock portfolio of saints and other spiritual works that indicates little in the way a particular religious or spiritual orientation.<sup>43</sup> Despite this diversity, the inventory does suggest that the Count paid some attention to the decorative scheme at Batres. Devotional paintings were confined to the oratory whereas other rooms displayed portraits and works of a more secular character. Yet with the exception of the «sala del rey» and its gallery of famous men, it does not appear that the collection was so arranged as to convey a particular message or theme.

Finally, what of Arcos' ties to El Greco? The Count's willingness to provide financial backing for the artist suggests that El Greco enjoyed Arcos's confidence and support. But Arcos does not appear to have been as nearly

<sup>35</sup> See Harold WETHEY, *El Greco and his School* (Princeton, 1962), 2: 135. Wethey indicates that the painting was in Cuerva until 1940.

<sup>36</sup> The Laocoon sold for 400 reales, and the San Pedro and San Francisco together fetched 12,920 mrs. Among other paintings sold were «cuarenta cuadros de pinturas...de la historia de los infantes de Lara» that brought 16,000 reales.

<sup>37</sup> The house in Toledo was situated in the parish of San Antón, «lindantes al hospital de San Anton extramuros.» He had purchased these *casas principales* in 1616. See Archivo de los Laso de la Vega. Estado Batres. Leg. 4, no. 23.

<sup>38</sup> For both paintings, see WETHEY, *El Greco*, 2: 72, 149. A 1712 inventory of Batres lists a «Nuestra Señora de la Leche del Greco», and later inventories of this fortress (1747, 1805) suggest that the painting remained at this location, Batres, until the early nineteenth century.

<sup>39</sup> Archivo de los Laso de la Vega: Estado Batres. F. No. 4. This inventory lists «una pintura de S. Esteban protomartyr...de mano de Domenico Greco.»

<sup>40</sup> See *Alonso Sánchez Coello y el retrato a la corte de Felipe II* (Madrid, 1990), pp. 140-41. The catalogue's admission that the style of this portrait bears little resemblance to the rest of Sanchez Coello's *oeuvre* leaves open the possibility that it might be the work of another artist.

<sup>41</sup> For this painting Sydney J. FREEDBERG, *Parmigianino. His Works in Painting* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 185-86. Freedberg notes that original was acquired by Philip II's secretary, Antonio Pérez, sometime before 1585. Philip III then sold it, along with Correggio's *Ganymede* to the Emperor Rudolf in 1603. He further claims that the copy entered the royal collection in 1636.

<sup>42</sup> SAN ROMAN, p. 361

<sup>43</sup> In this respect, there is little support Davies' assumption that Arcos formed part of a «spiritual reform movement.» See David DAVIES, «El Greco and the Spiritual Reform Movements in Spain», in *El Greco: Italy and Spain. Studies in the History of Art* 13 (1984): 61.



as close to El Greco as many of the other artist's other friends, among them, Gregorio de Angulo, the lawyer who appeared regularly in the artist's life. Arcos's bequest to the shrine of Illescas points to another connection with El Greco, although unlike Angulo Arcos does not appear to have helped the artist in his dispute over the value of the paintings he had realized for the shrine's altarpiece. Nor did Arcos ever offer the artist a major altarpiece commission. The *Allegory of the Camadulense* must have been painted expressly for Arcos, but most of the other El Grecos in the collection were of the off-the-rack variety that could have been easily picked up during an occasional visit to the artist's studio. The one exception is the *Laocoon*, but as this painting was evidently still in Jorge Manuel's workshop in 1621, it seems unlikely that Arcos had influenced either its subject matter or design.

In conclusion, what distinguishes Arcos' relationship with El Greco is his ownership of at least eight of the artist's original works—more than any other known contemporary. Clearly, Arcos at one point had acquired a special appreciation for Greco's distinctive style. Yet his decision to sell the *Laocoon* along with two other of the artist's paintings in 1632 suggests that his taste for El Greco changed later in life.<sup>44</sup> If so, Arcos was not alone. El Greco's peculiar style of artificial, mannerist art was out of vogue in the 1630s, having been replaced by the naturalism of Caravaggio and Velazquez, the classicism of the Carracci and Poussin. Arcos may not have been a particularly discerning connoisseur, but his «deaccession» of El Greco prefigured late seventeenth-century criticism of the artist's «capricious» and «extravagant» style of art.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Arcos's other El Grecos remained in the family. An early eighteenth century inventory of Batres indicates that the oratory still contained three of El Greco's paintings, including the «Nuestra Señora de la Leche», a San Esteban protomartyr, and «una pintura del evangelista S. Lucas.» Without mentioning the name of the artist, the inventory includes a «pintura de vara y media de la fundacion de los hermitas de San Benito;» and «un retrato del Cardenal D. Fernando Niño.» An unattributed portrait of Fray Felix Hortensio Paravicino is listed in the 1632 inventor of Batres as well as in later ones (1709, 1805), however, there is no indication that it was by El Greco. Wethey (I, 109) notes that Paravicino portrait now in Boston belonged to the Duque de Arcos (no relation of the Condes de los Arcos) in 1724. If Wethey is correct, the Batres portrait could not have been the El Greco portrait of Hortensio now in Boston.

<sup>45</sup> These comments by Jusepe Martínez and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century criticisms of El Greco are summarized in BROWN, *El Greco of Toledo*, p. 19.



## APPENDIX

### PEDRO LASO DE LA VEGA, CONDE DE LOS ARCOS. INVENTORY OF PAINTINGS.

Source: Instituto Valencia de Don Juan (Madrid): Documentos sueltos No. 26-V-18.

Inventory by Fray Juan Bautista Maino 15 abril 1632.

Pinturas en Madrid:

- 40 quadros de los infantes de Lara
- imagen de San Francisco del domenico 30 duc[ados]
- imagen de San Pedro del mano del mismo 200 rr [=reales]
- otra de San Juan Baptista 50 rr
- quadro de la coronación de espinas, copia de Bassan
- un S Antonio
- quadro de S Gerónimo 500rr
- pintura de la adoración de los reyes flamenco
- un nacimiento del mano de Federigo Zuccaro 100 duc enbiose a Escorial
- Cristo pastor
- ece homo
- S francisco con ávito capucho
- S Juan
- pintura de Nuestra Señora con el niño en braxos
- quadro de S Pedro [vendido por 40 rr]
- S Tomás Apóstol
- S Pablo de Pluma
- Santa Teresa de Jesús
- retrato: Condesa de los Arcos
- dos retratos de dos señores
- condesa de Priego
- 7 quadros de fiestas [from the almoneda del duque del Infantado]
- 6 paisés grandes al temple
- 2 bodegones [100 rr cada uno]
- 1 quadro de navios en el mar
- 4 retratos pequeños a lo toscano
- 2 ramilletes
- 2 de fiestas
- 12 quadros pequeños de perspectiva
- una mapa
- quadro de Madrid
- mapa de la plaza de Madrid
- 4 liencos de paisés grandes
- 4 paisaxes
- retrato del rey de Escocia
- 5 paisés
- quadro de moriscos
- 10 quadros de arquitectura pequeños
- 2 retratos de los reyes católicos
- 2 retratos: el Emperador y la Emperatriz
- 2 retratos: Felipe II y Ana de Austria
- 2 retratos: Felipe III y Margarita
- 2 retratos: Felipe IV y Isabel
- 2 retratos: Conde de los Arcos y Marianna de Mendoza
- 2 retratos: Conde de Añover y Magdalena Pacheco
- retrato: duque de Feria, Lorenzo Suárez de Figueroa
- Fernando Niño, Arzobispo de Sevilla, inquisidor general, sentado en silla 100 duc

- Garcilasso de la Vega, padre del conde
- Conde de Añover. Rodrigo Lasso
- Garcilasso de la Vega, Príncipe de los Poetas
- Conde de Orgaz-pequeño
- don Franciscó de Mendoza
- Duquesa? de Feria
- Henrico 4 de Francia
- Jácome de Inglaterra

- retrato sobre un caballo del duque de Feria de mano de un caballero milanés 200 duc
- pintura grande del Aucon del Domenico en 60 duc [vendiose en 400 rr]

Memoria de lo q se entrego d Francisco de Pinedo en la casa de San Antón de Toledo 17 de mayo de 1632:

- retrato de Pedro González de Mendoza
- dos tablas grande al temple de Venezia y Xénova
- cuatro lienzos de los elementos
- cuatro lienzos de la historia del hijo Prodigio
- un lienzo de monteria
- seis retratos de medio cuerpo
- ocho cabezas de venado

Pinturas en Cuerva :

- quadro de la magdalena 200 rr
- en el aposento bajo del patroncillo de residuos del almoneda del conde de Añover
- quadro de la oración del huerto, copia de la del luquete [Cambiaso] 250 rr. [sent to conde in Cuerva]
- un david con su marco 220rr vendido
- una pintura de San Juan Baptista
- una de San Gerónimo 500 rr vendido
- una de Christo pastor
- una de San Gregorio
- una de San Juan Evangelista
- una de San Pablo de Pluma
- una pequeña de Nuestra Señora
- tres paños antiguos de las virtudes; cinco de la historia de Adán y Eva; cuatro de los lobos; un paño de la Fama

Casa y fortaleza de Batres

Pinturas:

en el patio:

- cuatro al temple de los sitios y guerras de Flandes
- diez paisés al temple que estan repartidas por los portales del dicho patio
- tres pinturas sobre puertas: una cazeria; uno de los palacios del duque de Ferrara; un pais
- un retablo grande del soldado alemán con los dos enanos -otro de brixida del rio la barbuda de peñaranda
- veinte cabezas de venados con sus cuernos y las cabezas de madera pintadas con sus tornillos y clarijas
- una linterna de vidrio

alcobilla del invierno:

- siete paisés al temple 18 rr cada uno
- dos quadros pequeños al olio con dos figuras desnudas 60rr
- un quadro al temple de las fiestas de bruselas por las treguas de las islas 40 rr
- cuatro retratos: de papas Pio V y Sixto V; San Ignacio de Loyola; Cardenal Espinosa
- dos fuelles y dos manparillas colgadas a los dos lados de la chimenea



- un chapa de yerro con las armas imperiales q esta en la chiminea
- unos morillos

sala siguiente de invierno:

- dos quadros grandes q estan en los testereros: un pescaderia de Flandes y un bodegón
- dos quadros paisés y una sobreventana al temple
- tres lienzos nevados de aldeas y casas de campo de Flandes
- cuatro retratos al natural de cuatro señores que los tres murieron degollados y otro de un alcabucaco q son Alvaro de Luna, Conde de Ornos y de Agamon [Egmont] y Príncipe de Orange

otra quadra se sigue:

- seis paisés al temple
- un país sobreventana
- un retrato de un cardenal
- dos quadros al temple de danças y convites en las aldeas de Flandes

quadra donde duerme al cierço:

- tres quadros al olio, dos muy grandes, uno mas pequeño de carnestolendas de Venecia y un mercado de la misma ciudad; una cocina o bodegón de Italia [ los dos grandes, 600 rr ea; los dos pequeño, 500 rr]
- en los dos testereros—dos quadros al olio grande de Flandes. una carniceria con seis o siete figuras al natural; un mercado con cinco figuras al natural [50 duc cada uno]
- retrato del Conde de Añover quando moco [200 rr]
- retrato de Garcilasso, el poeta medio cuerpo al natural [note: es de Ruy Gómez de Silva 100 rr]
- veinte mapillos
- una alacena de vidrios y barros [mas de 100 piezas de Portgual y de la India

sala grande del cierço:

- por la canesta alta: cuarenta i seis retratos medianos de hombres insignes en letras y armas y algunos deudos de los señores desta casa [ 2 duc cada uno] a mano derecha como se entra por la puerta principal
- quadro al olio de la Quaresma de Venezia [600 rr] luego sobre la puerta de la quadra donde se duerme un
- quadro mediano del cerro de potosi [150 rr]
- otro quadro de un mercado de Venecia
- otro quadro echo en Venecia
- otro quadro echo en Venecia de la novia q llevar acostar [600rr]
- cuatro quadros grandes copias de originales de basan[no] echos en Venecia del arca del noe y diluvio
- un quadro grande de Italia encima de la puerta q entra la quadra de los Rexera? de quando el angel parecio a Noe mas estan a los dos lados de esto quadro dos medianos de domenico greco, el uno retrato de un pedaço de Toledo, el otro retrato del monasterio del gran camaldula [300 rr a cada uno]

sobre la puerta del oratorio:

- retrato entero al natural del Pio V sentado en una silla [200 rr]
- en el hueco de la ventana un árbol de los reyes de portugal y otro de Francia
- una pintura en tabla de una colación

oratorio:

- tiene por retablo un quadro del nacimiento echo en Venecia
- quadro de Nuestra Señora de la Leche de domenico greco
- quadro del salvador
- doce retratos de los doce apóstoles
- cuatro quadros de cuatro doctores de la iglesia griega y latina
- cuatro retratos: S Catalina de Siena; S Teresa de Jesús; el mártir Tomás Moro, Sra doña Aldonza; también uno del Padre Cogolludo
- quadro de Cristo en el lagar echo en Flandes
- quadro enzima deste de S Lucas Evangelista de mano de domenico greco [200 rr]
- quadro en tabla: S Esteban en el martirio
- diez i ocho quadrillos de los ermitanos
- calendario orden Alcántara en pergamino

quadra que llaman de los reyes

- dieziseis retratos de los reyes y reinas de España y de sus hijos comencando desde el rey catolico d Fernando. el ultimo infanta dona Isabel. hizolos Bartolomé González, pintor del rey Felipe III. diosele por cada uno 300 rr.
- dos quadros de los retratos de Felipe II y Príncipe don Carlos con el capote de los lobos q hizo una dama de la reyna doña Isabel. costo 400 rr. el del rey. el otro 340 quadro muy grande del escurial echo en Flandes por un gran pintor. costo 1000 rr.
- seis fabulas al olio echo en Flandes
- el cupido, retrato del original q tiene el Rey del pamesano. copiole Hernando de Avila, su pintor [300 rr]
- dos quadros angostos sobreventanas
- catorce diseños de la fabrica y iglesia y retablo y sitio del escurial
- cuatro espexos de cristales
- en la chiminea: dos morillos; marapillas;
- tres alacenas de vidrios [de Venecia, Nápoles, Barcelona [includes two plates depicting the Escorial]

en la bóveda de la quadra de los reyes:

- un retrato del duque de Lerma
- 27 mapas
- 28 cabecillas de corços de madera pintada
- 6 quadros de paisés fábulas al temple de Flandes
- 6 quadros echos en Madrid--6 ducados cada uno--nevados los dias y otros de huertas y payses
- dos pinturas al olio en tabla q las trujo garcilasso de Flandes-un retrato de un follero y su mujer y otro carniceria [100 ducados cada uno] --dos quadros--a los dos lados de la ventana del poniente-de las dos plazas de Venezia [costo 600 reales cada uno]
- cuatro cuadros muy grandes al olio de Flandes: dos mercados o bodegones; uno con unos diosas; uno con banquete de villanos [ 600 reales cada uno] entre los dos primeros estan cuatro retratos medianos: dos del Conde de los Arcos, Pedro Lasso de la Vega y su esposa, dona Mencía de Mendoza; el Conde de Añover y su esposa, María Magdalena Pacheco [costo 100 reales cada uno]
- sobreventanas con seis fruteros
- 22 mapillas abajo destas pinturas

la boveda grande abaxo:



- en el testero mapa general grande
  - a los dos lados dos mapas: España y Francia
  - encima destas, dos arquitecturas y dos mapillas
  - otro testero: un arbol de los senores desta casa; dos quadros de la abande y de un elefante
  - en la boveda, 42 mapillas
  - en el hueco de la ventana: dos quadros, uno de la villa de Amsterdam con las islas de Holanda y el otro de la ciudad de Roma
  - quadro de la batalla naval con el numero de las galeas y galezas asi del Rey Catolico como de las del Gran Turco. el sitio de Lepanto y la forma de batalla. 150 reales
  - retrato del don Alonso el Sabio com dos quadricos, estampas finas del juicio de Michelangel y diseño de gran camadula
  - un quadro pequeño de un retrato en habito santiago
  - dos alacenas, uno con 62 barros de Portugal, otro con 50 de Zamora
- corredor alto:
- 20 lienzos al temple de Flandes: Historia del hijo prodigo
  - 19 retratos de diferentes personas, entre ellos, un original q es de estima de la Juanillo el Truán q lo hizo Felipe liaño, retratador del Rey Felipe II
  - sobre las dos puertas q entran al aposento de las mujeres y a la sala de los trucos, dos retratos: un mozo enceniendo una vela; un animal puercu
  - dos alacenas con platos, jarros, etc.
- sala de los trucos:
- cinco quadros al temple de fuerzas y sitios de los estados de Flandes
  - sobre la puerta: retrato de Cristóbal Colón; un país; quadro grande de un convite y una danza de villanos de Flandes
  - en los dos huecos de ventanas: cinco quadros--mapa de Francia; estampa de los metamorphoses de Ovidio, un arbol de Sto. Domingo; dos retratos de S Gregorio y de Cornelio Muso
  - la mesa de los trucos
- el camarín:
- cosas para el monte y caza
  - tabla con cuatro figuras y cuatro caballos y una acemilla
  - corneta de marfil-era del marques de Sarría, montero mayor de Felipe II

- Additional paintings (inventoried in June, 1636):
- seis retratos de los electores del imperio y del emperador. estan en la bóveda despues de la quadra de los reyes
  - tres retratos pequenos en tabla, sobreventana en esta bóveda
  - estantes de libros
    - todas las historias de España, latin y toscana
    - libros de umanidad en latin, tocano, castellano
    - 24 libros de estampas finas de Italia y Flandes son de gran estima y an costado mucho
    - libros de oracion --en el oratorio 428 libros [titles not listed]
    - biblia grande de plantino
    - 30 libros de manuscritos

Additional paintings (inventoried in June 1636):  
en el patio: una danza

en la quadra de invierno: 7 paises; entre ventanas: retratos de Arias Montano y Cronista Valencia; genealogia de los reyes de Portugal; otra de los reyes de Polonia; 2 figuras desnudas

pieza segunda: dos pinturas: carnerias y cosas de comer; 4 paises con figuras; retrato de Francisco Suárez

pieza tercera: retratos del Padre Márquez y Ortensio [Paravicino]. Rodrigo Niño. Padre Castro[verde]. Tomás Moro. Gregorio López. Padre Vázquez. Padre Florencio. Padre Rojas.

Sala Grande: retratos de Lope de Vega; don Luis de Góngora; Cornelio Tácito; caballero con la Maria dorada en la mano; uno muy chico de Tomás Moro; dos retratos de concha de tortuga con cercos del evano--uno de Aeneas, otro de S Lorenzo; retrato de Padre Mariana; otro de un padre domenico debajo; dos de cardenales; uno de Tomas Moro, Gustavo, rey de Suecia

en la bóveda q sigue: retraos del duque de Lerma y conde de Olivares

en el oratorio-- un retrato de la Condesa de los Arcos quadra ultima de mediodia: junto al retrato de Juanillo el Truhán, q es original de Felipe Liaño, hay cuatro retratos de los tiempos



