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LUIS TRISTÁN

(Toledo *circa* 1585/90-1624)

SAINT ANDREW

circa 1612

oil on canvas

130 x 104.5 cm; 51 1/8 x 41 1/8 in.

Provenance

Private collection, Portugal.

Literature

Redondo Cuesta, José. "Tristán en Italia", *Ars magazine* 33 (2017): pp. 108-118.

Herrero Starkie, Carlos. "An apostle by Luis Tristán: Relationship with Velázquez's Saint Thomas, El Greco, Ribera and The New Italian Naturalistic Currents", Institute of Old Masters Research, 2021.

Dury, Corentin, and Guillaume Kientz. *Sur les traces du "Saint Thomas" de Velázquez : dans la poussière de Séville*. Orléans, 2021.

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This portrait of Saint Andrew by the prominent Toledo-based painter Luis Tristán is a superb example of the canvasses produced by the artist, who was a close collaborator of El Greco.

After training in the studio of El Greco between 1603 and 1606, Luis Tristán went to Italy, where he studied and travelled with the celebrated painter Jusepe de Ribera. Other notable influences during his Italian sojourn included the monumental portraiture of Michelangelo and the radical new experiments undertaken by Caravaggio. Thanks to a few autograph notes in El Greco's personal copy of Vasari's *Vite*, we know that Tristán visited Milan, Florence, and Rome, and that he was especially impressed by the works of Titian. Indeed, the Venetian master's painterly manner is reflected in Tristán's style.

The young artist returned to Toledo, completely imbued with a new vision of reality, by 5 October 1611,¹ shortly before the death of his master. On his return to Spain, he proved to be up to date on Roman naturalist painting, and revealed that he had assimilated some of Jusepe de Ribera's striking compositional solutions. Combining what he learnt in Italy with his earlier stint in El Greco's studio, Tristán's post-1611 paintings are imbued with a sense of monumentality and masterful handling of light and shade.

Apostles were a staple of Tristán's post-Italian production, with the artist producing several such portraits as cycles known as *apostolados*. The *Saint Matthias* recently purchased by the El Greco Museum in Toledo, the *Saint Bartholomew*, the *Saint James*, and the *Saint Paul* in private collections (**Figs 1-4**) can all be related -- thanks to their similar handling, labelling, and the discovery of archival material relating to the commission-- to the *apostolado* carried out in 1612 for the Toledo councillor Luis Servindo.²

This rediscovered *Saint Andrew* sits perfectly with the four apostles made for Servindo. Moving his right hand as if he were about to speak to the spectator, the Saint embraces an x-shaped cross, the symbol of his martyrdom, with his left. A warm, yellow-orange light illuminates the protagonist from above and is reflected on the synthetic brushstrokes that form the geometric crests of the drapery. The rustic stone niche gives a three-dimensional appearance to the Apostle who jumps out of the canvas like an imposing polychrome sculpture. The woody and marked hands of Saint Andrew are similar to those of the formidable *Saint Francis* at the Louvre (**Fig. 5**), considered by Benito Navarrete and Alfonso Perez Sanchez to be one of the artist's best works.³ The strokes of light of the mantle are very close to the one that envelops the figure of Saint Joseph in the *Holy Family* at Minneapolis, signed and dated 1613 (**Fig. 6**).

¹ When the painter is documented as receiving Gaspar de Vargas in a house in the callejón Gaitán, see Marías, Fernando. "Nuevos documentos de pintura toledana de la primera mitad del siglo XVII", *AEA*, 204 (1978): p. 421

² "veinticuatro tablas grandes de pintura de vara y dos tercias de alto [1,39] y de ancho una y cuarta [1,04 m] (...), y en las veinticuatro grandes ha de pintar los doce apóstoles y un salvador y una nuestra señora", see Benito Navarrete Prieto and Alfonso Emilio Perez Sanchez, *Luis Tristán*. Madrid 2001, pp. 278-279, doc. no. 4.

³ Navarrete Prieto and Perez Sanchez 2001, p.229, n.86.

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This *Saint Andrew* shows how Tristán early implemented Caravaggio's innovations, making him one of the first importers of naturalism into Spain. This proved crucial in paving the way for later famed painters, above all Diego Velázquez, whose *Supper at Emmaus* (now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, **Fig. 7**), recalls Tristán's unique and psychological approach to the human figure.

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Fig. 1. Luis Tristán, *Saint Matthias*, 1612, oil on canvas
Toledo, El Greco Museum.

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Fig. 2. Luis Tristán, *Saint Bartholomew*, 1612, oil on canvas
Private collection.

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Fig. 3. Luis Tristán, *Saint James*, 1612, oil on canvas
Private collection.

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Fig. 4. Luis Tristán, *Saint Paul*, 1612, oil on canvas
Private collection.

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Fig. 5. Luis Tristán, *Saint Francis*, early seventeenth century, oil on canvas
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

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Fig. 6. Luis Tristán, *Holy Family*, 1613, oil on canvas
Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Art.

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Fig. 7. Diego Velázquez, *Supper at Emmaus*, 1622-23, oil on canvas
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.