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JOSÉ RISUEÑO

(Granada 1665-1732)

*SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA  
WITH THE INFANT JESUS*

Polychromed Terracotta

41.5 cm; 16 3/8 in. high, overall

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Provenance

Private Collection.

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Comparative Literature

E. Orozco Díaz, "Los barros de Risueño y la estética granadina" *Goya* 14, 1956, pp. 76-82.

E. Orozco Díaz, "Unas obras de Risueño y de Mora desconocidas (datos y comentarios para el estudio de un tema olvidado de la imaginería granadina)" *Archivo Español de Arte*, 175, 1971, pp. 233-257.

D. Sánchez-Mesa Martín, "Nuevas obras de Luisa Roldán y José Risueño en Londres y Granada", *Archivo Español de Arte*, 160, 1967, pp. 325-332.

D. Sánchez-Mesa Martín, *José Risueño. Escultor y pintor granadino, 1665-1732*, Granada, 1972.

B. Boloqui Larraya, "Obras inéditas del escultor y pintor granadino José Risueño en el convento de Capuchinas de Tudela en Navarra", *Príncipe de Viana*, 11, 1998, pp. 51-63.

M. García Luque, "José Risueño, un artista versátil al servicio de la catedral de Granada," *Laboratorio de Arte*, 25, 2013, pp. 433-454.

L. Gila Medina, "Un espléndido retrato inédito de José Risueño: el del obispo D. Rodrigo Marín y Rubio," *Laboratorio de Arte*, 26, 2014, pp. 447-456.

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*We are thankful to Dr. Álvaro Pascual Chenel for having drafted the following detailed study on the present terracotta sculpture by José Risueño.*

Although he is called Saint Anthony of Padua, the holy man presented in this sculpture was actually of Portuguese origin, born into a noble family of Lisbon. At fifteen years old, he entered the priesthood as an Augustinian monk, but later transferred to the newly formed Franciscan order in 1221. He served as a preacher in Spain, North Africa and Italy, where he became acquainted with Saint Francis of Assisi. He taught theology at Bologna and later preached around France. He spent his final years in Padua where he died in 1231. His cult acquired a tremendous following from the sixteenth century onwards, becoming one of the most popular and beloved saints with a large devotion to his image.

The sculpture presented here depicts a miraculous scene with the infant Jesus that would become a very important iconographical attribute associated with Saint Anthony during the early modern period. The present sculpture also offers a traditional composition of this scene with the child standing on or sitting on top of a book. In fact, this last iconographic element does not appear in hagiographical accounts of the saint. It instead comes from some other traditions that maintained that the miracle occurred when the saint preached on the dogma of the Incarnation. He experienced a vision following this lecture, thus the child Jesus descended from the heavens to bear witness to the event. This magnificent group unites these iconographic elements, depicting the saint kneeling and holding the child Jesus who in turn sits upon a white cloth placed on top of a large book.

The whole group demonstrates a great elegance in style and composition. Saint Anthony wears the traditional Franciscan habit with a hood, fitted around the waist by a knotted rope referring to the characteristic Franciscan vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The artist has managed to combine meticulous technique with a sense of ease in the volume of the rough Franciscan habit and the motion of the folds and drapes of the heavy fabric produced both by tight rope around the saint's waist as well as his kneeling posture. The polychrome, preserved in perfect condition, also contributes to the success of the figure. Fine lines of brown stripes on the gray habit impressively mimic this type of ordinary wool fabric. The artist's ability to differentiate between the qualities and textures of the fabric patches that allude to the saint's poverty is also quite remarkable. This polychrome technique is also very similar to representations of Franciscan saints by Alonso Cano and Pedro de Mena.

As expected for images of this holy figure, Saint Anthony is depicted with a youthful countenance in which one can appreciate the slight shadow of a beard, masterfully achieved through a careful application of the polychrome. He has a smooth and idealized face, demonstrating a certain sweetness that is reflected in both figures who

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gaze off into the distance. The great sensitivity of the composition is also evident in the way in which the sculptor links both figures through the tenderness of the body language—the child rests his left hand on the saint’s chest and embraces him with the right.

The sculpture demonstrates a high quality of technical expertise in the modelling of the figures, cleverly executed in response to a remarkable study of human nature. It succeeds in capturing great sweetness, beauty, elegance and finesse, as well as the perfect achievement of anatomy, volume and attitude. Furthermore, the sculpture offers different textures and qualities of materials and the ability to show its folds and bends.

Considering the technique and stylistic features of this sculpture, along with its subject matter, allows us to attribute this work of art to José Risueño of Granada.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1665, Risueño is one of the best examples of the transition of baroque sculpture from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. At this time, artists training in Granada were deeply influenced by the great figures of Alonso Cano and Pedro de Mena. This is particularly true in the work of José Risueño, where the influence of Cano can often be detected, as it is in the present work. Risueño learned the basics of sculpture in his father’s workshop, who was a carpenter by profession. He completed his training in the workshop of the brothers Jose and Diego de Mora, who adopted the style of Alonso Cano and Pedro de Mena. This partnership would also determine the style of Risueño, whose strong influence of Alonso Cano and by extension, José de Mora, can be detected in both the subject matter and modelling of his sculptures. With the work of these masters for inspiration, Risueño created his own style that emphasized a very refined and technical execution of sculpture and an impressive versatility in material (marble, polychrome wood and clay). In this sense, his figures are often of small size, especially in wood and terracotta examples, materials in which the sculptor best displays his mastery. It is also worth noting that in addition to his work as a sculptor, he was also a painter and an architect. This achievement links him to the very few seventeenth-century Spanish artists who practiced in these three arts, among them Alonso Cano and his disciple Sebastian de Herrera Barnuevo.

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<sup>1</sup> E. Orozco Díaz, “Los barros de Risueño y la estética granadina” *Goya* 14, 1956, pp. 76-82; D. Sánchez-Mesa Martín, “Nuevas obras de Luisa Roldán y José Risueño en Londres y Granada”, *Archivo Español de Arte*, 160, 1967, pp. 325-332; E. Orozco Díaz, “Unas obras de Risueño y de Mora desconocidas (datos y comentarios para el estudio de un tema olvidado de la imaginería granadina)”, *Archivo Español de Arte*, 175, 1971, pp. 233-257; D. Sánchez-Mesa Martín, *José Risueño. Escultor y pintor granadino, 1665-1732*, Granada, 1972; B. Boloqui Larraya, “Obras inéditas del escultor y pintor granadino José Risueño en el convento de Capuchinas de Tudela en Navarra”, *Príncipe de Viana*, 11, 1998, pp. 51-63; L. Gila Medina, “Un espléndido retrato inédito de José Risueño: el del obispo D. Rodrigo Marín y Rubio”, *Laboratorio de Arte*, 26, 2014, pp. 447-456.

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Although only a few of Risueño's works have been securely documented due to questions of style, his catalogue of attributed works is large.<sup>2</sup> Risueño created images of devotion and sensitivity that are characterized by a sense of restrained emotion and expressiveness presented in an almost mystical manner that recalls the work of Pedro de Mena, without falling into the drama of the latter. The naturalistic aspects of his figures are delicate, elegant, and serene with rapt expressions. His figures of children are sweet and plump in appearance and can also be identified by a peculiar arrangement of tousled hair curls. Like Cano, he executed polychrome sculptures with a masterful technique, inclining towards naturalistic flesh tones and preferring matte colors and shades for the fabric.

As noted above, formal connections of the present sculpture with the work of Cano are evident, not only technically and stylistically but also in the use of compositions and models derived from the paintings and sculptures of the *racionero*. Cano's painting of the *Vision of Saint Anthony of Padua* from around 1660 to 1662, for example, exhibits models present in his oeuvre of sculptures of Franciscan saints by Cano himself and collaborations with Mena, such as those versions of the two *San Diegos* and the two *San Antonios* in the Foundation Rodríguez Acosta and Museum of Fine Arts in Granada respectively (Fig. 1). The *Saint Anthony* in the church of San Nicolas de Murcia also provides a similar comparison (Fig. 2). To these figures, Mena's many versions should also be added to these comparisons, such as the figure of *Saint Didacus* in the San Diego Museum (Fig. 3) or another in the Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art of Vitoria. The profound influence of these important sculptures in the present work is certainly evident. Along with these comparative examples, one should also mention some of the prototypes created by the Mora brothers, such as the *San Bruno* by José de Mora for the Cartuja (Carthusian Monastery) of Granada (Fig. 4) and the *Saint Anthony of Padua* in the Basilica of Our Lady of Sorrows in Granada (Fig. 5); or the *San Juan de Dios* by Diego de Mora in the Hospital San Juan de Dios in Granada. Of the works pertaining to Risueño himself, we can also compare this sculpture to his *San Diego* (1700) which was also purchased by Coll & Cortés,<sup>3</sup> the *Saint John the Baptist* in the Church of Nigüelas in Granada and his *San Juan de la Cruz* in the Church of San José, also dated to around 1700. Comparisons must also be drawn with his exquisite small figures in clay, such as the figure of the *Virgin and Child* in the Museum of Fine Arts of Granada (circa 1700-1712) and National Museum of Sculpture (1715) or *Saint Joseph and Infant Jesus* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, 1720 (Fig. 6); as well as the extensive number of figures of the *Infant Saint John the Baptist* in the church of San Francisco in Priego, the convent of Santa Paula in Seville (1700) and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1700 (Fig. 7).

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<sup>2</sup> M. García Luque, "José Risueño, un artista versátil al servicio de la catedral de Granada," *Laboratorio de Arte*, 25, 1, pp. 433-454; R. Bravo de Laguna, "Una Santa Teresa, firmada y fechada por José Risueño," *Cuadernos de Arte de la Universidad de Granada* 37 2006, pp. 413-418.

<sup>3</sup> *Faces*, Coll & Cortes, Madrid-London, 2013, pp. 214-219.

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Risueño also repeated the theme of *San Anthony and the Infant Jesus* several times in some of his paintings, which owe a debt, as does his sculpture, to Alonso Cano.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See examples of Alcalá Subastas, 3-4 December 2013, lot 681; Sánchez-Mesa Martín, Domingo, *José Risueño...*, 1972, p. 267, n° 143; Museum of Fine Arts Granada.

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Fig. 1. Alonso Cano, *Saint Anthony of Padua*. Granada, Fundación Rodríguez Acosta.

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Fig. 2. Alonso Cano, *Saint Anthony of Padua*. Murcia, Saint Nicholas Church.



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Fig. 3. José Risueño. *Saint Didacus of Alcalá*, San Diego Museum of Arts.

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Fig. 4. José de Mora. *San Bruno*, c. 1713. Sacristía de la Cartuja de Granada.

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Fig. 5. José de Mora. *Saint Anthony of Padua*. Granada, Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica.

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Fig. 6. José Risueño. *St Joseph with the Christ Child*, c. 1720. London, Vitoria & Albert Museum.

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Fig. 7. José Risueño. *The Infant St John the Baptist*, c. 1700. London, Vitoria & Albert Museum.