



Polychrome technique of the Antequeran sculptor Andrés de Carvajal.

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Introduction

Antequera is a town in the agrarian entourage of the Málaga zone. It is located at the crossroads of the two well recognised Andalusian artistic styles of Sevilla and Granada. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were marked by the construction boom of convents and churches. The artistic splendour of the city continued during the eighteenth century. All these premises needed to be filled with artistic manifestations, such as altarpieces. These were designed with a specific iconography in mind in order to be used as a religious representation for the people attending the liturgical events. Several artists came and remained in the town, where they developed their careers and professional activities. Amongst them was Andres de Carvajal y Diego Márquez y Vega, who was also the most prolific.



Figure 1. The decoration on the garments of male saints. © Universidad de Sevilla

Many works of art originate from these prosperous years. The sculptures of Carvajal are particularly admired by experts, mainly because of his good artistic-technical skills, and secondly, for the richness of his work (Figure 1). The prodigious amount of production represented a third of the total baroque sculpture produced in the area of Antequera in a short period of time. Furthermore, Carvajal exported his work to border cities as Estepa, and Osuna.

Development

The three keys to the identification of the polychromy of his sculptures are presented in this paper. The work of Carvajal can be easily recognised by the following aspects, namely working procedures, iconographic models and decorative motifs.

Working procedures

Carvajal used three working methods to build the polychrome layers of garments or draperies. In the first method, the polished, gilded and punched layer covers the complete surface. The decorative motifs are made with brushes. In the second method, the polished, gilded punching is not covering the surface of the garments. It is used only for the decorative motifs, which are also individually painted by brush. The third method is the most complex one. The polished gilding covers the surface and a paint layer or *sgrafitto* layer is applied on top of this layer. However, the punching decoration is only applied to create the decorative motifs.

Iconographic models and decorative motifs

There are three iconographic models. San José wears a blue robe, which is decorated according method two or three. For the mantle, method one is used. For female sculptures, the method is exactly the opposite. Further, sculptures of saints wear habits which are polychromed according method two. These works of art have less artistic quality.

The decorative motifs used by Carvajal are fruits, bulbs, flowers, and polygonal shapes (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Decorative motifs used by Carvajal. © Universidad de Sevilla.

Results

By studying the three keys mentioned above, the personal style of Carvajal can be easily recognised. He had a deep impact on the sculptors of the following years in the region. His workshop had been the most important of the town during the first part of the eighteenth century. Visibly, the artistic style of this master is characterised by a mix of decorative motifs and precise methodology, strictly adapted to the iconography needed.

As a conclusion we can say that the polychromy of Carvajal is characterised by exclusive elements from own production, such as polygonal shapes, specific volumetric effects and the polished, gilded, punched layer with brushed details which covers the complete surface. These elements cannot be found in the production of Diego Márquez y Vega, his contemporary and direct competitor. The discrepancy allows us to identify and attribute new sculptures to the workshop of Carvajal.

Please use the following when citing this paper:

J. López and B. Prado. 2017. *Polychrome technique of the Antequeran sculptor Andrés de Carvajal*. In: S. Litjens and K. Seymour (eds). **Polychrome Sculpture: Decorative Practice and Artistic Tradition**. ICOM-CC Interim Meeting, Working Group Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration, Tomar, 28-29 May, 2013. ICOM-CC. Published Online: www.ICOM-CC.org 2017.