

Other versions

Anton van Dyck (Antwerp, 1599 - London, 1641)

Christ and the Adulteress

ca. 1620-22

oil on canvas

169 x 252 cm

inv. n.º. 581



Another excellent version of this work is kept at the Hospital de la Venerable Orden Tercera church in Madrid. The work is probably the one that was above the main entrance to the sacristy of the El Escorial monastery in the 17th century, as described in the Tratado written by Father Santos (1657):

Above the main door through which we enter, there is a large canvas painting representing the story of the adulterous woman painted by Van Dyck [...] The colours and clothes are similar to those used by Titian, who rendered them more graciously and who was imitated by this artist.

The importance of the document lies in the fact that it was written in van Dyck's time and that it probably reproduced the comments Velázquez (1599-1660) would have made about the work as he was the person in charge of the selection of paintings for the monastery sacristy and chapterhouse. Also worth mentioning is that this work is shown in that location within the painting by Claudio Coello (1642-1693), *La adoración de la Sagrada Forma por Carlos II* (1685).

It is also cited in several documents from the 17th and 18th century, and it did not change location until 1809, when Joseph I Bonaparte (1768-1844) ordered a selection to be made of the best paintings in the monastery with the idea of creating the never accomplished Museo Nacional. The lot from El Escorial was deposited in the Palacio Nuevo, from which it would have been probably taken to the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts. Some of the works went to the Musée Napoléon and to three of the French generals who took part in the Iberian war. The painting *La adúltera* was given to Sebastiani, although when he sold his collection it did not feature in the list of his works.

In the catalogue from 1857, Vicente Poleró considered the work lost. Between this last record and 1922 the painting was probably moved to the Hospital de la Venerable Orden Tercera church although there is no documented evidence to support this.

Matías Díaz Padrón believes that the El Escorial version was the one the artist painted first, and that he would have made the work in the BBVA Collection afterwards. The latter boasts greater consistency and space between the masses of the characters, thus make the painting less compact.