

# ZURBARAN (INGLES)



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Starker than Velázquez and more ascetic than El Greco, Francisco Zurbarán (1598-1664) is easily among the finest of seventeenth-century Spanish painters. Apprenticed in Seville, he quickly gravitated toward the use of chiaroscuro, possibly having seen paintings by Caravaggio there: he was later to become known as “the Spanish Caravaggio.” But Zurbarán’s temperament, as it is realized in his painting, appears more melancholy, and therefore less foreboding, than Caravaggio’s, and his religious subjects are almost exclusively Christian.

He developed a characteristic image repertoire around monasticism and martyrs and made a speciality of the Carthusians, whose white robes he took evident pleasure in depicting. His best-known work may be his 1631 “Apotheosis of Saint Thomas Aquinas,” now housed in the Seville Museum. It was around this time that Zurbarán’s star reached its peak, as he was appointed court painter to Philip IV. Later, toward the end of his life, Zurbarán’s harsh chiaroscuro style fell from favor, but his reputation was restored in the twentieth century, in part through the concerns of Cubism and its attraction to precedents for an emphatic plasticity. In this monograph, illustrated with 114 color plates, Santiago Alcolea, a scholar of seventeenth-century Spanish art and the author of previous books on Velázquez and El Greco, provides us with an overview of Zurbarán’s artistic career, dividing it into four stylistic phases and repropounding his relevance for our times.