



## DOMÍNIKOS THEOTOKÓPOULOS KNOWN AS EL GRECO (1541-1614)

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

1541

Domínikos Theotokópoulos was born in Candia, now Heraklion, on the island of Crete. The city was the main centre for the production and export of icons until the Ottoman conquest in 1669. His father Georgios, who died in 1556, was a merchant and tax collector for the Republic of Venice, to which Crete had been subject since 1204. His older brother, Manoussos, was also a tax collector in the service of the Venetian magistrates.

1563

He already boasted the title of master icon painter.

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1567

He arrived in Venice, where he stayed for about three years, working in the shadow of his brother Manoussos and passing through the two prestigious workshops of Titian and Jacopo Tintoretto. During this period, he painted the so-called *Modena Triptych*, an early masterpiece executed in a style still reminiscent of Byzantine iconography.

1570

On 16 November, the Croatian miniaturist Giulio Clovio recommended him in a letter to the powerful Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, nephew of the late Pope Paul III, writing that “a young man from Candia, a disciple of Titian”, has arrived in Rome, described as “rare in painting”, but particularly in the genre of portraiture, so much so that he had painted a self-portrait “that amazes all these painters in Rome.” He was assigned private accommodation in the Farnese Palace, where he would stay for the next nineteen months.

Around this time, he painted the *Portrait of Giulio Clovio*, depicted with the book of hours he illuminated in 1546 for Cardinal Farnese, better known as the *Ore Farnese* and now preserved at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York.

1572

Removed from the Farnese circle, on 6 July he wrote a letter to the cardinal asking for an explanation, complaining that he had been “driven away and sent away in this manner”. On 18 October, he enrolled in the Compagnia di San Luca and at the end of the year he opened a workshop in Rome.

### 1576-1577

After a stay in Madrid in the autumn of 1576, where he delivered the *Allegory of the Holy League* or *Adoration of the Name of Jesus* to Philip II in the hope of obtaining a commission from the King of Spain for the monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, he moved to Toledo. In the former Spanish capital, where he painted two famous views around 1597 and in 1608–1614, the dean of the cathedral commissioned him to paint the altarpiece for the main altar of the church of the convent of Santo Domingo el Antiguo.

### 1586-1588

He painted one of his most grandiose masterpieces, *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, a work centred on the funeral of the wealthy dignitary Gonzalo Ruíz de Toledo (1256-1323), butler to Ferdinand IV of Castile, tutor to Alfonso XI of Castile and financier of the rebuilding of the church of Santo Tomé in Toledo.

### 1597-1607

A period of intense activity for various convents and monasteries in Toledo and Madrid.

### 1608

Last major commission for the chapel of the Hospital Tavera in Toledo.

### 1614

On 7 April, he died in Toledo without leaving a will, but receiving the sacraments according to the Catholic rite. His workshop was inherited by his son Jorge Manuel (1578-1631).