

NEAPOLITAN NATIVITY SCENE A COLLECTION BY GARCÍA DE CASTRO BROTHERS

One of the most renowned Neapolitan nativity scenes in the world, the result of a search made with patience, passion and critical viewpoint of the pieces which were collected throughout many years of arduous work by Emilio and Carmelo García de Castro brothers, will be exhibited at Salzillo Museum during the months of December 2013 and January 2014. The nativity scene consists of one of the most important private collections in Spain, together with some others such as the collection of Fundación March in Palma de Mallorca and of Certosa de San Martino in Naples and of the National Museum of Baviera in Munich, considered as some of the best of their kind in this artwork.

These artworks, whose period covers from 1725 to 1790, were small wonders which, as said by a traveller of the epoch, were made by artisans and artists and meant the full involvement of the whole town of Naples, in particular the noblemen. The majority of these artworks were dispersed in the XIX century, hence the desire of the art devotees to reunite these splendid *Presepi* "Nativity Scenes", which reach about ten thousand in numbers in the whole world.



DISEÑO: JOSÉ LUIS MONTERO / IMPRIME: A.G. NOVOGRAF D.L.: MU 665-2014

NEAPOLITAN NATIVITY SCENE OF THE XVIII CENTURY





IN COMPARISON with the famous nativity scene at Salzillo Museum of Murcia, Spanish par excellence for being a set of sacred mysteries in which domestic piety and narrative nature of sacred history predominate, Neapolitan nativity scenes are more laic and the absolute protagonist is the town of Naples depicted in an urban setting. The artworks of Salzillo are made with clay or wood as small sculptures, compared with the Neapolitan pieces, which from the XVIII century, were transformed in *Manichini Vestiti*, made with terracotta or painted wood only on the heads, feet and hands, held with a wire frame structure, dressed with rich ornaments and attires.

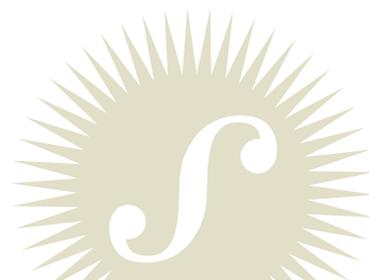
In the Nativity Scene by Salzillo, we perceive recognisable Neapolitan features. Francisco Salzillo's father Nicolás who was a native of Santa Maria Capua Vetere, was trained in the art workshop of the brothers Perrone de Nápoles between 1689 and 1697, before his arrival

in Murcia. This important sculpture workshop worked for many customers in Spain, given that Naples formed part of the Kingdom of Spain, the same happened with nativity scenes which were also ordered by the viceroys. As told by Baquero, Nicolás Salzillo himself together with his son Francisco completed the Nativity Scene at the convent of Augustine Nuns in Murcia, an important precedent for the posterior Nativity Scene for the Riquelme family.

However, in the Nativity Scene belonging to the García de Castro family, we have a *Presepe* which is purely Neapolitan. It consists of over six hundred pieces, of which three hundred are human and animal figures, some from the House of Borbon and from the personal collection of Charles III. There are some which are truly masterpieces such as the Naked Blind, by the renowned sculptor Giuseppe Sanmartino. It has rich and diverse objects, containing arms for the royal Cortijo to domestic utensils.

Neapolitan nativity scenes combine courtesans with religion, sophistication with popular scenes and show life in the XVIII century with different scenes of taverns and markets drawn from daily lives, which intermingle with the Royal Cortijos of Three Kings, resulting in popular and picturesque scenes which give rise to a spectacular urban setting. All of this is present in this Nativity Scene.

Therefore, having the chance to contemplate a *Presepio* of this magnitude in Salzillo Museum is a unique experience which will allow us to compare the Neapolitan nativity scene creating traditions with those that are typically Spanish, as well as the chance to delve into the Neapolitan roots of the grand sculptor Francisco Salzillo of the XVIII century Spain.



EXHIBITION
 CURATORS
 D. Emilio García de Castro
 D. Carmelo García de Castro
 TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
 D. Isidro Brunete Hernández