



Icon of St. Matthew 2017

The tradition of commissioning a work of art to represent our Patron Saint, Saint Matthew, this year brings us an icon from Spain. In my last pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James, I stopped in the town of Sarria, and there visited the small woodshop, Arte-San, of Jose Luis Garcia Moreira. Perusing the work displayed, I was captivated by the artist's precision in replicating the Stone Choir of Master Mateo, which encases the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

While the image of St. Matthew is not part of the 24 figures of the choir, at my request, Mr. Garcia Moreira, designed the image of St. Matthew following the Romanesque style used by Master Mateo in his creation of the choir. The image was then sculpted out of the wood of the Chestnut tree. The completed masterpiece arrived at our door in late July and will now become part of the collection of beautiful art inspirations that depict our Patron Saint.

Romanesque Art

Romanesque art is a fusion of Roman, Byzantine, Carolingian and other art forms, which became prevalent throughout Europe from the 11th to the early 12th century with the expansion of Christianity and growth of monasticism. The style is characterized by its massive architecture and monumental sculpture depicting biblical history and church doctrine.

In church building, the Romanesque style incorporated semicircular arches for the building's windows and doors, vaults to support the roof, and massive walls. The buildings were well defined and symmetrical in structure. To decorate the churches or monasteries, sculptural themes were carved into the walls, around the doors, and on the tops of columns with images of scenes from the Old Testament and the Gospel. Most prevalent were the sculpted figures carved around the portal, or entrance of the church, symbolizing the transition from the outside world to the liturgical feast and the holiness of the faith.

The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

An example of the Romanesque style of architecture and sculpture is the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, in Spain. Constructed between 1075–1211, the church is built over the grave of the apostle St. James. Built in the shape of a cross, the Cathedral is a blend of



Romanesque,

Gothic, and Baroque architectural styles. It boasts of four façade, each designed and built by a different Master.

But perhaps the one that best represents the Romanesque style is the Obradoiro façade, located on the western side of the Cathedral.

Master Mateo

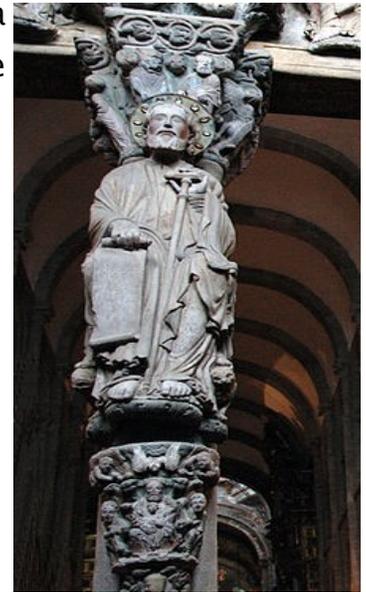
Commissioned to Master Mateo, the Obradoiro façade houses the Portico of Glory, which is the main entrance of the Cathedral. The Portico has a three-part

format with over 200 sculptures of Old and New Testament figures and biblical stories.

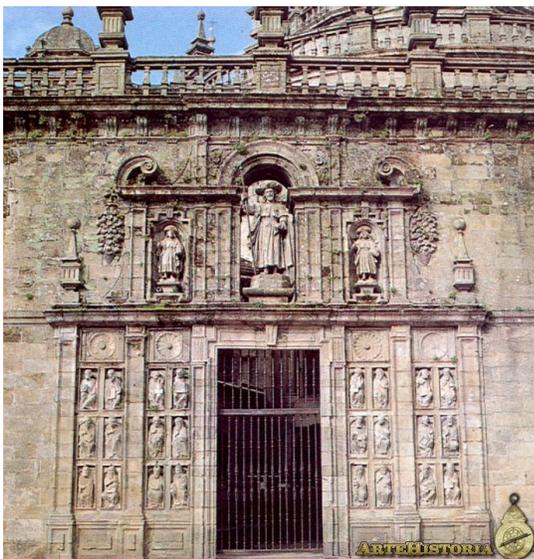


The lintel of the doorway is supported by a mullion with the figure of St.

James, which sits atop a base of figures depicting the genealogy of Christ, a bearded figure, and the kneeling figure of the artist. The style and technique employed to the iconography of the sculptures are unique to Master Mateo and are simple, yet expressive representations of the stories they tell. While, Master Mateo constructed other work that appear throughout the Cathedral, the Portico appears to be his last known work.



The Porta Santa (Holy Door)



After the Obradoiro façade was completed, the north façade was commissioned, followed by the Quintana façade on the eastern side of the Cathedral. This façade was designed in the Baroque style in the late 17th century, and has two gates: the Porta Real and the Porta Santa. It was at this time, that part of Master Mateo's work, known as the Stone Choir was removed from the nave of the Cathedral and installed outside the gate of the Porta Santa (Holy Door) of the Cathedral.

The Stone Choir

The Choir consists of 24 carved stone figures of prophets and apostles that encase the outer façade of the entranceway that leads to the Porta Santa.



1. King Solomon
2. Moses
3. Prophet Daniel
4. Prophet Isaiah
5. Aaron
6. Prophet Nahum
7. St. Luke the Evangelist
8. Prophet Haggai
9. King Saul
10. Prophet Zechariah
11. St. Andrew the Apostle
12. St. Simon the Apostle



1. Prophet Micah
2. Prophet Hosea
3. Samuel
4. St. Philip the Apostle
5. Prophet Obadiah
6. St. Thomas the Apostle
7. Prophet Malachi
8. St. Mark the Evangelist
9. Prophet Jeremiah
10. St. James the Greater
11. Prophet Habakkuk
12. Prophet Jonah

Arte-San Woodshop

The Arte-San woodshop of Jose Luis Garcia Moreira is nestled in the small town of Sarria in the region of Galicia, Spain. Opened in 1995, the shop is a treasure house of wood and stone sculpture carved with care and detail by Mr. Garcia Moreira. The work ranges from original sculpture done at the request of a client, to the restoration of art pieces that have been damaged.



The town of Sarria boasts of the work of this Artisan, as many of the buildings display the sculpture as part of their building or free standing art pieces.

One of the most curious pieces of work is the wood rendition of the Stone Choir of Master Mateo. Mr. Garcia Moreira carefully carves the details of the biblical figures into the wood of the chestnut wood, replicating the beautiful work that Master Mateo sculpted into stone in centuries



past.



It is this work that inspired Father Kevin to ask Mr. Garcia Moreira to design and sculpt the image of St. Matthew in the same style as Master Mateo's Stone Choir.