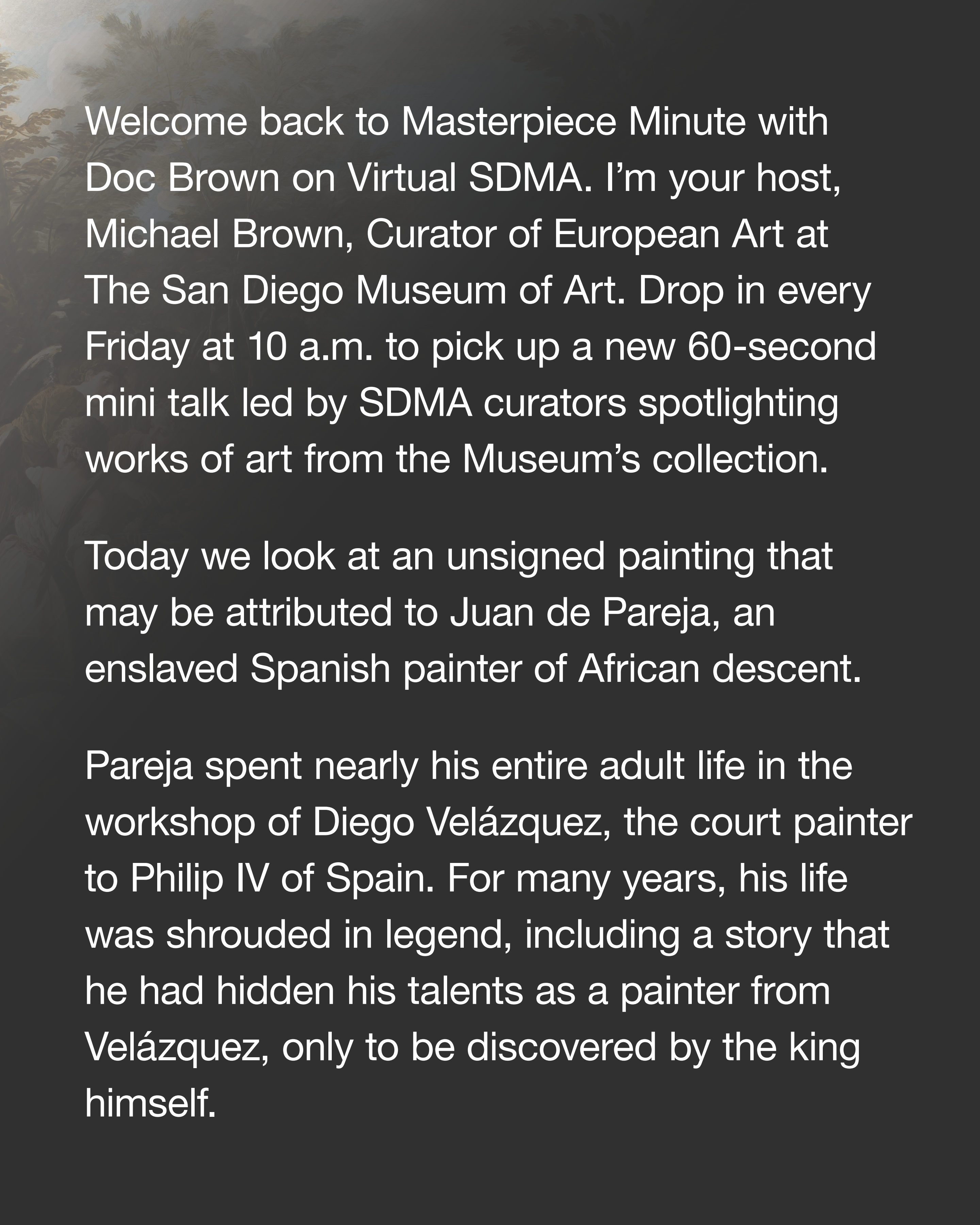


MASTERPIECE  
MINUTE







Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute with Doc Brown on Virtual SDMA. I'm your host, Michael Brown, Curator of European Art at The San Diego Museum of Art. Drop in every Friday at 10 a.m. to pick up a new 60-second mini talk led by SDMA curators spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

Today we look at an unsigned painting that may be attributed to Juan de Pareja, an enslaved Spanish painter of African descent.

Pareja spent nearly his entire adult life in the workshop of Diego Velázquez, the court painter to Philip IV of Spain. For many years, his life was shrouded in legend, including a story that he had hidden his talents as a painter from Velázquez, only to be discovered by the king himself.

In 1983, a prominent historian stumbled upon a crucial document in the Roman archive. It was a legal document, in Latin dated 1650, in which Velázquez granted Juan de Pareja freedom from enslavement. The record also tells us that he was born in Antequera which had a large population of people of African origins, many of whom would have been forced to convert from Islam to Christianity in order to remain in Spain.

Pareja's emancipation meant he could pursue his art as an independent master painter, which he did, prominently signing his works as evidence of their demand.

From 1649 to 1651, Velázquez and Pareja traveled together to Rome to buy paintings for the king. While in Rome, Velázquez painted Pareja's portrait and put it on public

display in the Pantheon building to enormous acclaim. This famous portrait, which uses a composition reserved for nobility, hangs in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

For many years, scholars have agreed that today's painting shows two different artists at work, one for the landscape, and one for the figures. It might seem a bit unusual, but it wasn't uncommon in the 1600s.

Attribution can be a tricky business, but nearly identical poses and faces of several of the angels on the left of SDMA's painting show up in other signed works by Juan de Pareja, leading to the hypothesis that he is the figures' author. Also, X-rays have shown that the urn at lower right was painted over a kneeling figure of another angel, an over-painting process common in Pareja's practice.



Juan de Pareja continued to paint at the royal court in Madrid until his death in 1670.

This has been Doc Brown with Masterpiece Minute. Thanks for joining us here on Virtual SDMA—catch ya next Friday!

BALBOA PARK

THE SAN DIEGO  
MUSEUM OF ART