

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 10am to pick up a new 60-second mini talk led by SDMA curators spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

For today's talk, we tackle a subject that curators get asked about more than almost anything else—frames.

[Music]

Today's masterpiece is an antique Spanish frame. It was specifically selected for Zurbarán's *Virgin and Child with Saint John* and acquired by the Museum in

2018. The frame was carved around 1650 in Seville, where Zurbarán spent most of his life. The reverse profile—in which the inside rail is higher than the outer—is a hallmark of Spanish frames of this date.

Since the 1860s, the painting had been in an ornate British frame in knock-off French rococo style of the late 1700s. In other words, not a great choice for a Spanish painting of the 1650s.

After more than a year of scouring the frame market in London and Madrid, the right frame finally came to light in New York. It had been in the dealer's warehouse—without a painting—for more than 20 years. A master carpenter then retrofit the frame to the exact dimensions of the Zurbarán.

We don't know what picture it originally framed, but nearly 400 years after both painting and frame were made, it looks like a match made in heaven.

Fun Fact! During its two decades in New York, several cast replicas were produced of the frame for film and stage sets due to its due to its strong visuals and traditional Spanish design.

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

