

ON THE TEARS OF VAN DER WEYDEN

Lecture at the National Prado Museum

2026

Lecture given in May 2016, as part of the 'Enfoques' series

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Lecture at the Prado National Museum

There are no tears in the history of painting like the tears of Van der Weyden.

Shortly after the opening of the Rogier Van der Weyden exhibition at the Prado Museum last year¹, we, the members of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, were invited to attend a session at the museum given by one of the curators, Juan José Pérez Preciado, in front of the paintings on exhibit. The session was wonderful. And that was where I discovered those famous tears. Well, not exactly there, it was when I got home and sat down at my computer the miracle happened. The tears, which to the naked eye cannot be seen from the distance at which the Prado Museum allows you to approach the paintings, appeared on the computer screen so clearly that one could not help but burst into tears. And I burst into tears. And that's where it all began.

I thought it was so beautiful that I began digging deeper, and deeper. When it comes to digging that diabolical invention of Google is divine! There I found texts by Natividad Pulido² recommending going to the exhibition with a magnifying glass, and so many other things. So many that I wrote a text with the expressive title *Stabat Mater dolorosa juxta crucem lacrimosa*, in which I included all these findings.

Later, having discussed the text with Francisco Calvo Serraller during a plenary session at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, he asked me for it and I sent it to him. One reaps what one sows, and so Paco commissioned me to give a lecture at Enfoques, for the Friends of the Prado Museum, on the tears of Rogier Van der Weyden. Me of all people, such a latecomer to the work of the Maestro of Tournai! And since then, I have done nothing but seek and find material on and around these wonderful tears of Van der Weyden. And part of the result of this veritable abduction is this text³.

I ONLY KNOW THAT I KNOW NOTHING

Every day I meet more and more experts on Van der Weyden, and every day I feel I know less about the subject. Because it's not just Lorne Campbell and Juan José Pérez

1 In 2015, from 24 March to 28 June, the Prado Museum held an outstanding exhibition *Rogier van der Weyden* to showcase the restoration of *Crucifixion* in El Escorial.

The three works — *The Crucifixion*, *The Descent from the Cross*, and the *Miraflores Triptych* — attributed to Van der Weyden by Lorne Campbell, renowned expert on the Flemish painter, were displayed together for the first time, something their creator never had the opportunity to witness.

2 In her article *Van der Weyden, Emotion Put to Canvas*, published in ABC.es, Natividad Pulido gives us the following advice: take a magnifying glass with you when you go to the exhibition so that you can appreciate even the smallest details. And how right she was!

3 The lecture, based on this text published here today for the first time, was given as part of the Enfoques series organized by the Friends of the Prado Museum Foundation on 26 May 2016 at 8.30 p.m. in front of Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*.

Preciado, curators of that exhibition, but also Joaquín Yarza and Víctor Nieto with their magnificent book on *The Descent from The Cross*. And M^a Teresa Dávila and Carmen Garrido, who beautifully restored the painting in 1994. And Loreto Arranz, Marina Valcárcel and Natividad Pulido, who were already talking about those tears. And Ramiro Pinto and Francisco Doña. And Joan Rae, J. van Asperen de Boer, Roger van Schoute and José María Cabrera, who wrote an interesting article about the painting in the Prado Museum Bulletin in 1983⁴. All of them know much more than I do.

PERGOLESI

Francisco Doña⁵ recommends viewing the painting while listening to Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. That is exactly what we did on 26 May 2016, when I had the honor of giving a lecture to the Friends of the Prado Museum in front of Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*. The version we heard, conducted by Nathalie Stutzmann and sung by countertenor Philippe Jaroussky and soprano Emöke Barath, was divine. Can you imagine giving a talk in front of Van der Weyden to the sound of Pergolesi, with Velázquez or Goya standing next to you in the flesh? Stunned, that's how I felt, utterly stunned, on the day I was granted that huge privilege. To speak in the Prado! Not even Eugenio D'Ors had that privilege⁶. And after the music, we began revealing the tears of our Van der Weyden.

THE THREE PAINTINGS BY VAN DER WEYDEN

Accounts from Van der Weyden's time tell us that '*his works adorned the courts of all kings*' and that he became '*the greatest and noblest of painters*'.

The three paintings that, according to Lorne Campbell⁷, the world's foremost expert on

4 I highly recommend studying this work, published in volume 4 of the Prado Museum Newsletter 1983, which provides detailed information on everything relating to the restoration of *The Descent from the Cross*.

5 In his blog Following Letamendi dated 2 April 2015, besides giving a medical diagnosis for some of the characters in Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*, Dr. Francisco Doña, recommends listening to Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* while contemplating the painting. A piece of advice that we follow regularly.

6 Eugenio D'Ors Three Hours in the Prado Museum. How could the great critic fail to include Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross* in his scholarly tour?

"*The Descent from the Cross*", he says, "appears before our eyes like a triumphal arch at the entrance to Flemish painting. Van der Weyden was in Rome, and they say he was the first Flemish artist whose talent was recognized by the Italians. He is surely one of the best at keeping the classical style alive. His works are not too far from sculpture. They remind us of artists like Poussin and Mantegna, with their painted bas-reliefs. In *The Descent from the Cross*, the close grouping of the figures highlights their statuesque nature, an aspect even more clearly perceived in other panels in the museum, painted in monochromatic grisaille".

7 Lorne Campbell stated during the exhibition at the Prado Museum that Van der Weyden '*was capable of painting anything, ignoring the logic of space and transcending the space between painting and sculpture.*' He considers the Flemish artist's works to be '*supreme works of art of the highest quality,*' in which we always discover something new.

Van der Weyden, are the only three works that can be unequivocally attributed to him, based on reliable and early documentary evidence: *The Descent from the Cross* in the Prado Museum, the *Miraflores Triptych*, and *The Crucifixion* in El Escorial. I will focus on these three paintings to reflect on these tears in which Van der Weyden revels.

In chronological order, *The Descent from the Cross*, from 1435, is the first time the maestro painted tears. And, also in chronological order, *The Crucifixion*, from 1455, is the last work in which he painted tears. Van der Weyden never saw the three paintings together, as we have had the privilege of seeing them, all together, at the Prado Museum Exhibition.

THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

The painting was commissioned in 1435 by *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-van-Ginderbuiten* the Greater Guild of Crossbowmen of Leuven, for their chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, on the outskirts of Leuven, where Van der Weyden painted it. In 1548 it was acquired by Mary of Hungary⁸, sister of the Emperor Charles V, for Binche Castle in exchange for an organ and a copy of the painting by Michel Coxcie. A year later, according to the testimony of Vicente Álvarez one of the courtiers who accompanied him, her nephew, Prince Philip laid eyes on it, while touring his lands in Lower Saxony, Brabant and Flanders. Two years later he wrote that it was the best painting in the castle and perhaps in the whole world⁹. Purchased by Philip II from his aunt in 1555, Karel van Mander recounts that, while it was being transported to Spain, the ship on which it was travelling sank, but the panel floated and was saved with hardly any damage. Philip II instructed Navarrete el Mudo to repair the damage on condition that he did not touch the Virgin's face 'or anything else other than her dress or the background, as I have indicated today'. In 1564, the artwork was installed in the chapel of the palace of El Pardo, where it was hung in the sacristy next to *The Crucifixion* from the Carthusian Monastery of Scheut, until its transfer to El Escorial in 1574. Much later, however, Velázquez reorganized the collection and transferred them to the choir library in 1656, where they survived the fire of 1671. Although the flames did not reach it because it was in the chancel, the intense heat caused blisters on the surface of the painting.

8 The Hapsburg Queen, Mary of Austria (1505–1558), was the third daughter and fifth child of Philip the Handsome, Archduke of Austria and Duke of Burgundy, and Joanna of Castile, known as Joanna the Mad, and heiress to the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. She was an Infanta of Spain and Archduchess of Austria as well as queen consort of Hungary through her marriage to King Louis II of Hungary.

Queen Mary was a remarkably cultured woman of high moral character and outstanding political and administrative skills. Thanks to her, acting as mediator between her brothers Charles V and Ferdinand, the dynasty was saved from ruin by keeping the relationship between the two brothers alive.

9 Vicente Álvarez, a courtier to Prince Philip, bears witness to the prince's most felicitous journey through those lands, writing that *The Descent from the Cross* was the finest painting in the castle and perhaps in the whole world. And so it turned out that, as king, Philip II purchased Van der Weyden's work from his aunt, Mary of Austria, in 1555.

On the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the Republican government decided to move the painting from the monastery of El Escorial to the Prado Museum for safety reasons. However, in view of the bombing of Madrid, it was temporarily transferred to Geneva, along with some of the museum's other masterpieces. When the war ended, it was returned to Spain in 1939 and included in the Prado collection in 1943. The painting remains in superb condition, especially after undergoing major restoration¹⁰ work in 1992-1994 at the hands of María Teresa Dávila and Carmen Garrido.

It occurs to me that if, from the short distance at which the Prado allows us to view the painting, we cannot see the tears with the naked eye, they would be even less visible from the distance at which an altarpiece is placed. A good friend of mine has been known to say that our venerable Rogier painted more for God than for men, even though the altarpiece is ultimately a mediating mechanism.

MARY OF HUNGARY

Queen Mary of Hungary, daughter of King Philip I of Castile (Philip the Handsome) and Queen Joanna of Castile (Joanna the Mad), purchased the *Descent from the Cross* in 1548. Governor of the Netherlands and sister of Charles V, she it was who also commissioned Titian to paint the marvelous *portrait of Charles V on horseback and in armor after the Battle of Mulberg*, now housed in the Prado Museum. She must have been an extremely cultured lady.

THE MIRAFLORES TRIPTYCH

This altarpiece was donated by John II of Castile to the Miraflores Charterhouse in 1445, which he himself founded. John II is the one to whom Juan de Mena, who entered the king's service as secretary of Latin letters in 1444, refers in his '*verses of greater art*':

To the powerful Don Juan the Second / he who Jupiter was so jealous of that he gave him as much of the world / as he gave himself of the heavens.

In 1809–10, General Jean Darmagnac¹¹ took the triptych to France, and having travelled through England and Holland, it ended up in Berlin, where it is now owned by the Gemäldegalerie.

The altarpiece, supposedly given by Pope Martin V to the King of Castile, was described in detail by Antonio Ponz in volume XII of his *Viage de España*, published in Madrid in

10 María Teresa Dávila, restoration expert at the Prado Museum, and George Bissaca, curator at the MET in New York, completed an exemplary restoration of the painting and its mount in 1993.

11 The altarpiece remained in Miraflores until 1783. It was then moved to Burgos Cathedral in 1809, from where it was taken by the Napoleonic general Jean Darmagnac. In 1835, it turned up in London, where it was auctioned by Christie's as part of the Darmagnac collection and purchased by a wine merchant. It was subsequently sold to Chrétien Jean Nieuwenhuys, a Brussels dealer, who sold it to King William II of the Netherlands in 1842. Upon the king's death in 1849, it was auctioned in 1850 in The Hague and acquired by the Gemäldegalerie (Berlin), where it is currently located.

1788, in which he recounted the news of the donation taken from the monastery's Becerro book, where, unusually, the name of the painter was mentioned as '*Magistro Rogel, great and famous Flemish artist*'.

In addition, a copy of the triptych, once believed to be the original version by Van der Weyden and now attributed to Juan de Flandes, belonged to Queen Isabella the Catholic, daughter of Juan II. From her collection, it passed on to the Royal Chapel in Granada, where the triptych was dismantled and the panels depicting the *Nativity* and the *Descent from the Cross* are preserved, albeit in a reduced form. The panel depicting the *Risen Christ Appearing to His Mother* is now housed in the MET in New York.

THE CRUCIFICION

In 1448, Cornelis, Van der Weyden's son¹², entered the Carthusian monastery in Scheut, and the painter donated *The Crucifixion* to them. It was later installed in the chapel of the Palace of Valsaín, from where it was moved in 1574 to the Monastery of El Escorial, leaving a copy made by Navarrete el Mudo in Valsaín..

In 2011, an agreement was signed between the Spanish National Heritage Agency and the Prado Museum for the comprehensive restoration of the painting, mount and frame. The work, which was carried out in the museum's workshops with the collaboration of the Iberdrola Foundation and the Government of Flanders, was arduous and complex. The painting, measuring 3.24 by 1.94 meters, was in extremely poor condition. In 1671, there was a fire at the Monastery of El Escorial, and although the flames did not reach it because it was in the chancel where Velázquez had taken it, the intense heat caused blisters on its surface.

Van der Weyden used thirteen oak panels, joined horizontally. The combined weight of each panel, 200 kilos in total, caused great tension in the painting. The restoration of the painting was carried out by Loreto Arranz, while José de la Fuente took charge of the mount, incorporating a new frame with a flexible spring structure. To do this, the thirteen panels had to be separated and then rejoined. There were cracks on the surface, one of which was almost half a centimeter wide and ran across the middle of the painting, at the height of Christ's knees. The cracks have been filled in; the paint losses have been restored, and the repainting and varnishes that concealed the original colors have been removed. The master's splendid palette has been rescued; the vermilion of the canopy at the back of the composition is wonderful, contrasting with the white of the robes of the Virgin and Saint John. *The Crucifixion* has regained the three-dimensionality of the

¹² Roger Van der Weyden's eldest son, Cornelis, studied arts at the University of Leuven and entered the Carthusian monastery in Herne in 1449, to which Rogier donated a painting of Saint Catherine. It is possible that his son's vocation also prompted his donation of *The Crucifixion* to the Carthusian monastery of Scheut, founded in 1454. It was later purchased from the monks by Philip II and has been housed in the Monastery of El Escorial since 1574.

figures and all its splendor. There is a beautiful video explaining the whole process that is well worth watching¹³.

Strangely enough, in *The Crucifixion*, Christ's face has tears, three of them, but the faces of the Virgin Mary and Saint John do not. As Natividad Pulido points out: "*It is worth noting the three almost imperceptible tears, which no one else in the history of art has ever painted in the same way, falling from the face of the crucified Christ in The Crucifixion, alluding to the three times Christ wept. One trickles from his right eye, two from his left*".

Loreto Arranz, who was in charge of this magnificent restoration, says that the artwork was in ruins when they started and has now been restored to its former glory. She adds that after the presentation of the restored painting, someone approached her to thank her because '*before, they used to cry in front of the painting, and now they pray.*' That is what Van der Weyden wanted; there is no better compliment.

MORE VAN DER WEYDEN

In addition to these three works, there are two others accepted by specialists as paintings by the master: *The Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*, from the Koninklijk Museum in Antwerp, and the *Durán Madonna*, in the Prado Museum.

ON THE TEARS SHED BY THE CHARACTERS IN THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

The seven characters in the *Descent from the Cross* are ineffable. From left to right, Mary of Clopas is overcome with tears, and although they should not be counted, I counted up to seven, the same number as Nicodemus.

Saint John is also tearful, with six tears rolling down his unshaven face, a detail that the painter has captured beautifully. Next to him is Mary Salome, sister of the Virgin Mary, her beautiful face streaked with five tears, the same number as on the face of the Virgin Mary, whose arm she is cradling.

Christ's face appears without tears. The young servant at the top, Joseph of Arimathea and the bearer of the jar also appear without tears. Nicodemus has the most tearful face with seven large tears and a two-day beard. The painting is completed by the figure of Mary Magdalene with three tears on her face.

¹³ Video of the restoration of the frame of The Crucifixion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54rSTENHnxo> This video clearly shows the impeccable restoration of the structural framework of Van der Weyden's panel, which will ensure its preservation for many years to come. It is a truly extraordinary piece of work.

FROM THE MARVELOUS BOOK BY VÍCTOR NIETO ALCAIDE

Víctor Nieto Alcaide is Professor of Art History and a full member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando. I was fortunate enough to have him as a teacher, in the 1960s, as Fernando Chueca Goitia's assistant at the School of Architecture in Madrid. I still have his autographed card. And I have fond memories of his wonderful classes, although now we see each other every Monday at the plenary sessions of the Royal Academy, where he also acts as librarian.

Thanks to Google – God bless Google! - I found out about his book¹⁴ on Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*. As it was published in 2003, the book was not only long out of print, but also selling at exorbitant prices on the second-hand market. As luck would have it, I persisted in my search and was rewarded for my efforts. The La Central bookstore at the Reina Sofía Museum had it, and at a very reasonable price. When I got my hands on it, I found it to be a real gem. Víctor Nieto's text is magnificent, offering an analysis of the painting from various points of view.

It describes *The Descent from the Cross* as 'a pictorially developed sculptural altarpiece, a theatrical staging' that 'allows us to see details that the eye cannot see, because the Flemish artists portrayed things that cannot be seen'.

And then we are treated to a beautiful display of large-scale images of the *Descent*, where our tears appear gloriously, millimeter by millimeter.

OTHER TEARS IN THE PRADO MUSEUM

In the wake of Van der Weyden's moving tears, I set out in search of more tears at the Prado Museum. As you might expect, I started with Velázquez and Goya. Velázquez, who had moved Van der Weyden's paintings from the ground floor of El Escorial to the Library, was well acquainted with those tears, which he always admired. But it seems that neither Velázquez nor Goya ever painted tears. Of course, to make up for it, I found beautiful tears in the Prado in Antonello da Messina and Fernando Gallego and Juan de Flandes. And in Luca Giordano and Luis de Morales, and even in Pedro Machuca. And that is what I am about to describe for you.

In Antonello da Messina's *Christ Supported by an Angel*¹⁵, the angel's tears are deeply moving. Moreover, in his *Christ at the Column*, in the Louvre Museum, Antonello da Messina painted beautiful tears on Christ's face and in another of his paintings, *Christ*

14 Víctor Nieto's book, published by T.F. Editores in Madrid in 2002, is perhaps the most comprehensive work on Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*. Its high-quality images clearly depict the tears that Van der Weyden paints so well.

15 Three works by Antonello da Messina are particularly moving thanks to his skillful depiction of human tears: *Ecce Homo* at the MET, dated 1470; *Christ Supported by an Angel* at the Prado Museum, dated 1476; and *Christ at the Column* in the Louvre, dated 1479.

Crowned with Thorns, housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, there are also sublime tears on Christ's face.

And following Antonello da Messina, Fernando Gallego¹⁶, in whose *Pietà* in the Prado Museum, the Virgin Mary is depicted with a slight smile and her eyes bathed in tears. Pilar Silva describes it as a '*deeply pensive face covered in tears*'.

And after Fernando Gallego, comes Juan de Flandes¹⁷, who was in the service of Queen Isabella and who made several copies of Van der Weyden's paintings. His *Crucifixion* in the Prado Museum, formerly in the Cathedral of Palencia, is a torrent of tears. Except for the figure of Mary Magdalene, all the characters on the left side of the painting seem to be weeping torrents rather than tears.

Then there is Luca Giordano with his deeply moving portrait of *Saint Peter*, which, unlike the one recently attributed to Velázquez, does indeed have tears that stir our emotions.

And Luis de Morales in three beautiful works: *La Piedad*, *Ecce Homo* and *Virgin and Child*. Their tears are incredibly delicate.

And Pedro Machuca, the architect who built the prodigious Palace of Charles V in the Alhambra in Granada, has a beautiful *Descent from the Cross* in the Prado Museum, which depicts the Virgin Mary with delicate tears.

And if we keep on looking for tears in the Prado, we'll never finish.

MANTEGNA

I still don't know why I turned to Mantegna¹⁸, but I did. When we say the name Mantegna, we immediately think of the *Death of the Virgin* in the Prado Museum and the *Lamentation of Christ* in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, with its sensational perspective. But if we take a closer look, we discover to the left of Christ the face of the Virgin in tears, which immediately recalls the figure of Mary of Clopas in Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*.

16 The *Pietà* by Fernando Gallego in the Prado Museum was painted around 1470 using mixed media on a panel measuring 118 x 111 cm. It is clearly influenced by Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*. Fernando Gallego (1468–1507) was one of the leading Spanish-Flemish painters of the last third of the 15th century.

17 Juan de Flandes, Prado Museum. The *Crucifixion* panel (1509–1519), oil on panel (123 x 169 cm), dates from the time of the Catholic Monarchs and was created for the main altarpiece of Palencia Cathedral. Documents relating to the panel, from the time it was commissioned in 1509 until it was sold in 1944, are preserved in the cathedral archives. The work arrived at the Prado Museum in 2005 as a form of tax payment.

18 Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1470-1474) offers a striking perspective of Christ's reclining body and is housed in Milan's Pinacoteca di Brera. The 68 x 81 cm piece is painted in tempera and is thought to have been intended for his funeral chapel. The similarity between the posture of the Virgin and that of Mary of Clopas in Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross* is remarkable.

From a chronological standpoint, Van der Weyden and Mantegna could very well have met. Van der Weyden travelled to Rome in 1450 for the Holy Year. Mantegna, meanwhile, was in Mantua at the time, aged around 20. If I were a writer and not an architect, I would invent a novel in which both characters, Van der Weyden and Mantegna, meet in Rome to talk about tears, perspective and painting. For if we look at the figure of the Virgin covering her face with her tears, we cannot help but think of Van der Weyden's *Mary of Clopas*. They are so similar.

HOMER

Then there is the story of John Flaxman, a 19th-century English neoclassical sculptor, illustrator and draughtsman, who also lived in Rome. He was the author of widely disseminated illustrations for Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*¹⁹. And to illustrate the *Odyssey*, specifically the episode recounted in Book VIII, he produced a wonderful drawing in which Ulysses is seen weeping and covering his face in the manner of Mantegna's *Virgin* or Van der Weyden's *Mary of Clopas*.

Homer tells it much better than me:

“This was the bard’s song, and Odysseus clutched at his long purple cloak with his great hands, and dragged it over his head to hide his handsome face, ashamed lest the Phaeacians see the tears pouring from his eyes. Whenever the divine bard stopped singing, Odysseus wiped the tears away, drew the cloak from his head, and reaching for his two-handed cup made libations to the gods. But when the bard began again, prompted by the Phaeacian lords who enjoyed his song, Odysseus covered his head once more and wept”.

VELAZQUEZ

And although as far as we know Velázquez never painted tears, he did paint some extraordinary drops of water, which are those that drip from the jug in his *Waterseller of Seville*, now in the Wellington Museum in London. ‘Unsurpassable drops of sweat’ is how Julián Gallego described them in the catalogue of the wonderful Velázquez exhibition at the Prado in 1990. Not to mention that marvel of transparency that is the glass of water held by the child in that astonishing painting. As for the painting, *The Tears of Saint Peter*, from the Villar Mir Collection, now attributed to Velázquez, there isn't a single tear in sight. I asked a fellow academician Alfonso Rodríguez G. de Ceballos, an expert in religious painting from Seville for his view on the authorship of the painting and we both agreed that it was not by Velázquez.

¹⁹ John Flaxman (1755–1826) was an exceptional English neoclassical artist who, among other works, produced some splendid illustrations of *The Odyssey* during his stay in Rome (1793), including the scene described here.

FINALE

Since this whole story started out with the discovery of tears on a computer screen, I can only conclude by recommending that you download the SEOND CANVAS Museo del Prado app²⁰, which the Prado Museum has made available to us and which allows us to see every detail of the museum's masterpieces. What's more, you can even access the x-radiographs of the paintings and, even more surprisingly, their reflectography, using infrared to reveal the layer underneath and allowing you to see the underlying drawing in each painting with astonishing clarity. Something no painter could ever have imagined.

It is clear that the Prado Museum, under the direction of Miguel Falomir, is performing outstandingly well in all areas, including communications. It is gratifying to see public institutions functioning effectively, and in the case of the Prado Museum, exceptionally well. Blessed be the tears of Van der Weyden, and blessed be the Prado Museum.

²⁰ Second Canvas Prado Museum – Master Works <https://www.museodelprado.es/apps/second-canvas-museo-del-prado> The Prado Museum has created an app for smartphones and tablets that allows users to delve into the museum's masterpieces in Gigapixel (ultra HD) format, making it possible to appreciate every last detail of these works, even the underlying drawing. The result is astonishing. In the case of Van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross*, it is wonderful to be able to view the drawing underneath, something that was unimaginable until recently. The app is well worth downloading.