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El Greco: The Burial of the Count of Orgaz

Francisco Calvo Serraller

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"The Burial of the Count of Orgaz" is one of El Greco's most famous paintings, and a key work in the Mannerist tradition. Painted between 1586 and 1588 in the church of Santo Tome in Toledo, it was commissioned to commemorate the funeral of Don Gonzalo Ruiz Toledo, Lord of Orgaz. At this legendary event which had taken place two and a half centuries earlier, the congregation saw St Stephen and St Augustine descend from heaven to place the body in its tomb. El Greco not only painted the scene as it was described, but turned it into a mystical vision of Heaven and Earth, with the Virgin and John the Baptist interceding before Christ, surrounded by saints and angels. In this book the painting is reproduced as a whole, then section by section, and finally in a series of details. The circumstances of the commission are described, the composition is analyzed and a brief biography of El Greco is included.

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