

KLAAS MULLER

S P A N I S H S C H O O L

Mater Dolorosa

The Mater Dolorosa, or Our Lady of Sorrows, is one of the key subjects in Christian religious art. The cult of the Virgin Mary was one of the cornerstones of the faith for many centuries; her Seven Sorrows were a popular Catholic devotion. These sorrows include not only well-known episodes from her life, such as the death and entombment of Christ, but also the prophecy of Simeon and the loss of the child Jezus in the temple.

Iconographically, the Mater Dolorosa is represented either by a sad and anguished depiction of herself, often with a tearful or lamenting expression, or with seven swords in her heart – a reference to the prophecy of Simeon, who had foretold the crucifixion. The present work obviously falls into the former category; looking to the sky in desperation, her mouth opened in a long, sad wail, she is the embodiment of maternal suffering. The expression on her face is one of sadness and hopefulness, beautifully captured by the artist.

The polychromy, which is original, was applied on a white ground layer, some of which can still be seen. The surface of the terracotta – excluding the face – was entirely covered in small scratchings, possibly in order to make the ground layer more adhesive to the sculpture. Although it is not known whether this was a model for a larger sculpture, it is very well possible that this work was meant as an independent artwork – for many similar independent works by contemporary Spanish artists are known.

Height: 26 cm



Circa: Ca 1580-90