

ALTARPIECE

Altarpiece of Souls

Neoclassical altarpiece designed in 1817 by the architect Benigno de Moraza and commissioned by the Confraternity of Souls. The titular carvings and high relief are in the style of the sculptor Mauricio de Valdivielso, known as the “santero of Payueta”. The ensemble has a proportioned linear layout that follows the typology of “painting-altarpiece” and it consists of a single section and an attic. It is presided over by a high relief of the Virgin with Saint Prudentius as intercessor and the Souls of Purgatory. It has a moulded frame and is flanked by two columns with smooth shafts and Corinthian capitals that support an entablature with an unornamented frieze and cantilevered, denticulated cornice on which a pedestal-like finial rests. The ensemble is crowned with an oval tondo that bears the inscription “MISEREMINI MEI / MISEREMINI MEI / SALTEM / VOS AMICI MEI”, in addition to two marble angels on either side and surmounted by a winged, crowned skull. The polychrome work was done by Bartolomé Basco, who worked together with Mauricio de Valdivieso. According to Díaz de Arcaute, the painter made a mistake in the use of canonical colours; instead of the brown and white of the invocation of Carmen, he used the blue and carmine of the invocation of the Rosary. The story goes that the Confraternity of Souls was so satisfied by the results that it wanted to reward the sculptor by admitting him as a member.



Author: Sculpture: Mauricio de Valdivielso (1760-1822), Architecture: Benigno de Moraza, Painting: Bartolomé Vasco

Date: 1817

Technique: Polychrome stone carving

Measurements: Approx. 563 x 240 x 66 cm

Place: Saint Mary's Cathedral (Vitoria-Gasteiz). Chapel of Saint James. Today's Saint Mary's Church.



Basic bibliography:

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A Living Treasure

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