

## SCULPTURE

### Little Saint John

The Little Saint John of Saint Mary's Cathedral is a piece of exceptional quality. It is clearly associated with the Sevillian circle of the sculptor Juan Martínez Montañés (1568-1649), specifically to his disciple Juan de Mesa (1583-1627), who was much more passionate and vehement than his master. It must have been executed around the first third of the 17th century, although we do not know when it arrived in our cathedral. We only know that it was placed in one of the urns on the back of the chest of drawers in the sacristy of the cathedral in 1734, and it remained there until 1998, when it was deposited in the Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art.

Little Saint John is depicted as a child of four or five years of age, unclothed and with a well-defined anatomy. He adopts a slight *contrapposto* by resting the weight of his body on one of his legs, with his right hip therefore appearing higher and jutting outwards to give an overall effect of greater dynamism. The Child is pointing to the divine lamb at his feet, which represents Christ. In his left hand, he holds a cruciform labarum with a small standard. Both Little Saint John and the lamb rest on a base that simulates stony ground. The base rests on a rectangular gilded pedestal with two forms decorated with eight large ribs.



*Author: Circle of Juan Martínez Montañés*  
*Date: First third of the 17th century*  
*Technique: Polychrome stone carving*  
*Measurements: 77 x 27 x 18 cm*  
*Place: Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art (Vitoria-Gasteiz)*



### Basic bibliography:

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- BARTOLOMÉ GARCÍA, Fernando R. “Niños montañesinos en Álava”, *Ars Bilduma*, n.º 5, 2015, pp. 45, 49-51.
- VÉLEZ CHAURRI, José Javier. “La escultura religiosa del siglo XVII en el País Vasco. Del naturalismo de Gregorio Fernández a la teatralidad barroca”. En CAÑESTRO DONOSO, Alejandro. *Estudios de escultura en Europa*. Alicante: Instituto Alicantino de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert, 2017, pp. 522-523, 526.
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## A Living Treasure

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