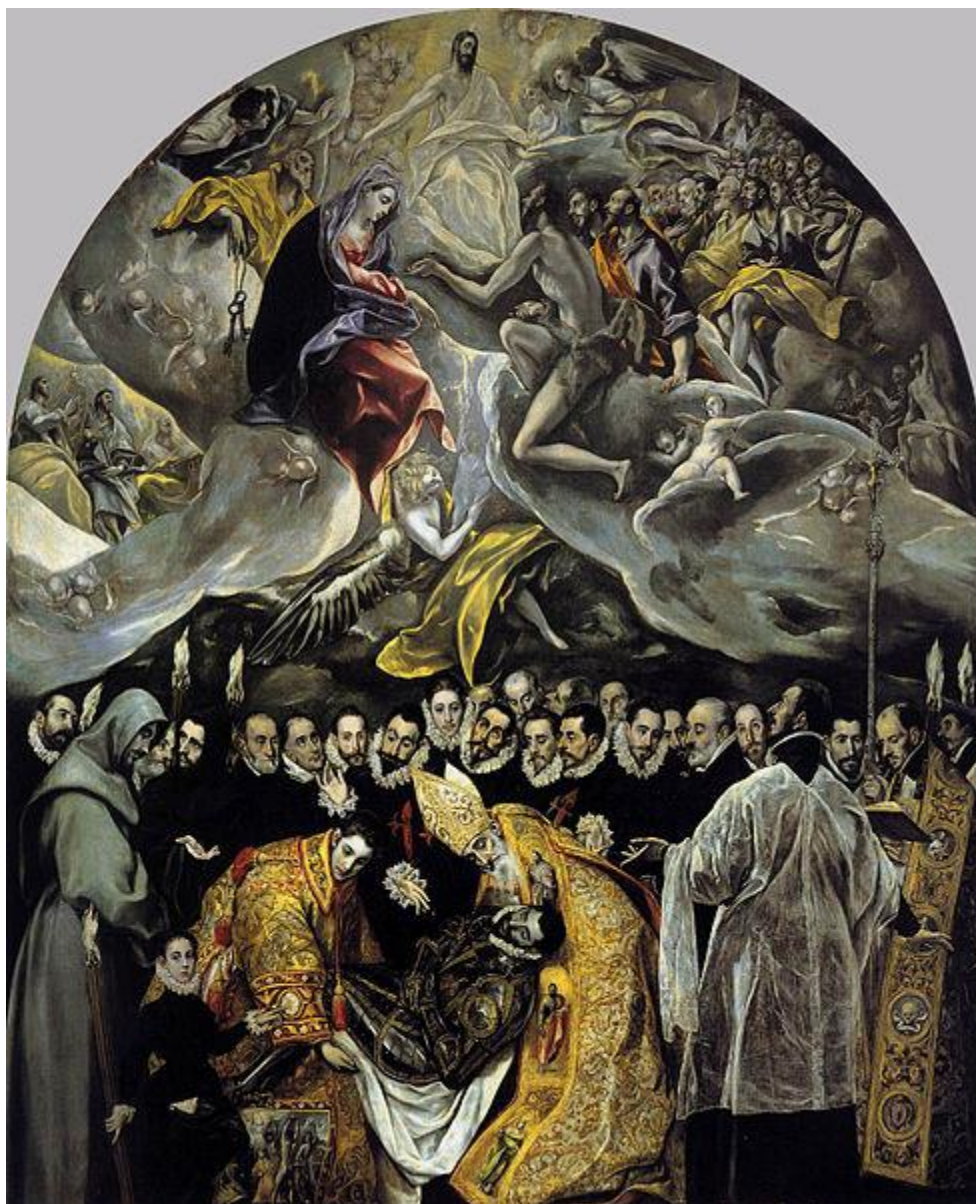


ART APPRECIATION GROUP – Report by Tony Seward

At the start of our November meeting we looked at two major painters of the Counter Reformation, the period stretching roughly from the Council of Trent, starting in 1545, to the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648. In art, the Catholic Church encouraged a much more personal approach to religious experience, emphasising the humanity of the actors in the sacred drama. To achieve this, artists developed new forms of composition, with striking use of colour and chiaroscuro.

El Greco took the spirituality of personal religious experience to new extremes. His 'Burial of the Count of Orgaz' in Toledo attempts to link heaven and earth by bringing the divine and human figures almost – but not quite – within touching distance, while the soul of the deceased count rises heavenwards in a kind of amniotic sac.



The Burial of Count Orgaz

Caravaggio was the most daring and innovative artist of his time, the excitement of his canvases reflecting his own adventurous life. His characters are mostly based on people he knew, using them as models in scenes of unprecedented psychological insight. He is a master of light and shade, often using a deep black background to focus our attention on the action before us. Professor Kloss chose to analyse 'The Entombment', which draws on treatments of the subject by other masters (notably his contemporary Michelangelo's 'Pieta') while making it entirely his own – as for example in his portrayal of the Virgin as a sorrowing old woman. A National Gallery talk then outlined his career in more detail, including his sensuous and often startling secular paintings, such as 'Boy bitten by a Lizard'.



Boy Bitten by a Lizard

After the break, we watched the first episode of John Berger's groundbreaking 1972 TV series 'Ways of Seeing'. We were struck by how it is even more relevant today, in this age of incessant manipulation of images in advertising, propaganda, etc. He ended with an entertaining demonstration of his thesis by inviting a group of London

schoolchildren to give their interpretation of what is going on in Caravaggio's 'Supper at Emmaus'. With their 'innocent eye' they saw what few adults would, notably the androgynous nature of Jesus (no beard, no bristles!).



Supper at Emmaus

Next up - Wednesday 7 February 2024: French Realism – Courbet, Millet and their influence on Van Gogh.