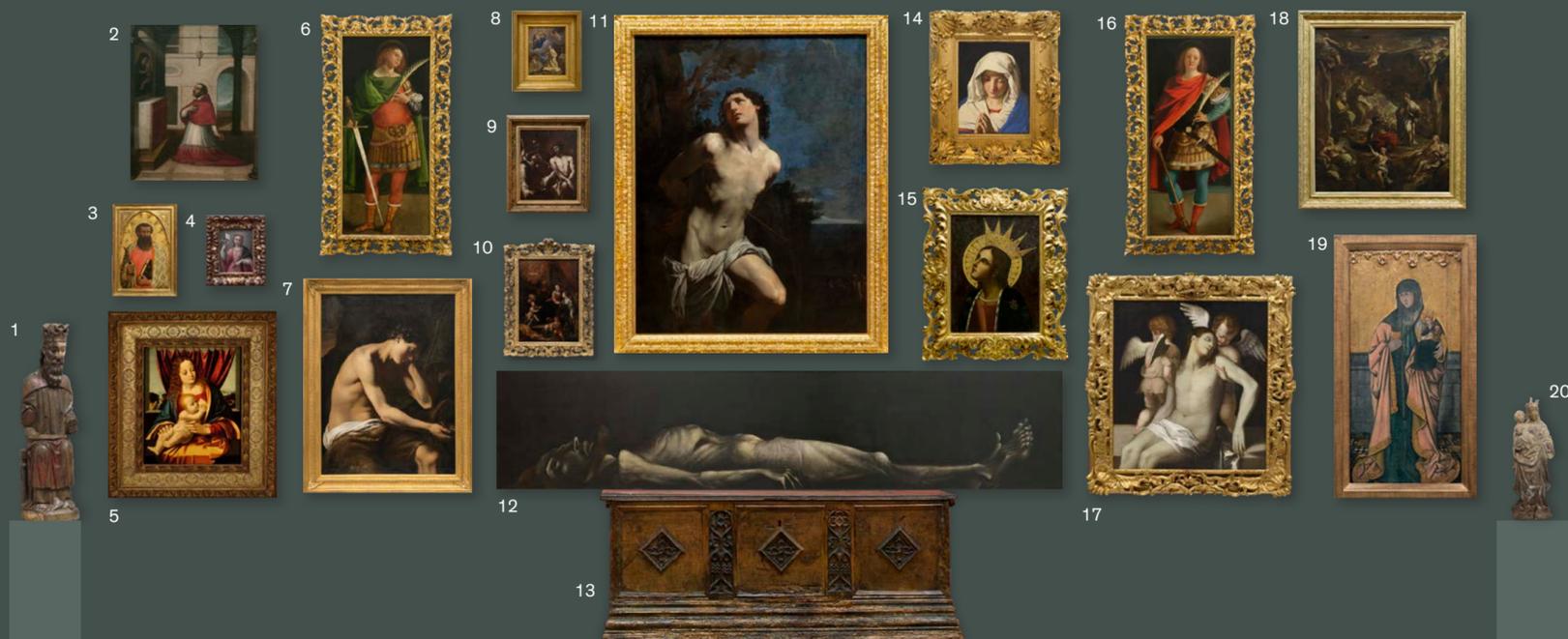


# THREADS OF FAITH



1

**Unknown artist**

Spain

***Christ in Majesty*** 12th century

polychromed wood  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with the assistance of Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, and the Watson Bequest, 1966

A late Romanesque/Gothic sculpture from Barcelona, this figure is believed to have come from a convent on the pilgrimage route between Pamplona and Santiago. These convents were placed at convenient stages of the long journey to provide physical and spiritual sustenance for the devout. Although missing lower arms and some of its polychrome surface, the 12th-century *Christ in Majesty* retains its formal dignity, indicative of its original power.

2

**Unknown artist**

Italy

***St Carlo Borromeo in Adoration*** 1620s

oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1953

The Catholic Church's use of lace is highly symbolic. In this painting, spidery Venetian needle lace, known as *punto in aria* or 'stitch in air', adorns the white surplice worn by the cardinal Carlo Borromeo (1538–1584), who kneels before an image of Christ in the arms of the Virgin. By wearing lace, Borromeo symbolises the Church as a virginal bride in divine union with God. The lace trimming the white altar cloth references Christ's shroud.

3

**Antonio da Venezia** (circa 1340–circa 1387)

Italy

***Saint Bartholomew*** circa 1376

gesso and tempera on panel  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with assistance from the National Art Collection Fund and the Watson Bequest, 1965

One of the Twelve Apostles, Saint Bartholomew holds a Bible and wears a red robe that indicates he died a martyr. In his other hand he grasps the large knife by which he met his grisly death by being flayed alive and then beheaded. Bartholomew became the patron saint of people who worked in the leather trades, which were then – as now – a vital sector of the fashion industry.

4

**Giuseppe Cesari also known as Cavaliere d'Arpino** (1568–1640)

Italy

***Saint Ursula*** 1590s

oil on panel  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

According to legend, the English princess Ursula embarked on a pilgrimage to Rome with her virginal handmaidens, but was shot dead by Huns near Cologne. In this painting she grips the English banner of Saint George in one hand and in the other her martyr's frond with the arrows that caused her death. Her pear-shaped pearl earrings and long-chain pendant reflect late Renaissance fashion.

5

**Marco d'Oggiono** (circa 1467–circa 1524)

Italy

***Madonna and Child*** circa 1490

tempera on panel  
Mackelvie Trust Collection  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with the assistance of the National Art Collection Fund, 1966  
Conserved 2021

Fabric is the primary conveyor of symbolic meaning in this image of the Virgin Mary feeding her plump, squirming baby. The crimson curtain hanging across the window recalls the 'Cloth of Honour' behind the Virgin's throne, its colour hinting at the Passion to come. The lining of Mary's robe, which frames and cushions her naked son, is 'cloth of gold', the richest of ceremonial textiles, woven in Florence from gold-wrapped strands of silk.

6

**Gerolamo Giovenone** (1486–1555)

Italy

***Saint Protase*** 1530

oil on panel  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

The twin brothers Protase and Gervase (see **16**) were said to have been flogged and then decapitated in the 2nd century for refusing to renounce their Christian faith. Because they were noted in sacred texts for their youthful or epehebic beauty, Gerolamo Giovenone portrays the pair with red-gold hair in feminised *contrapposto* poses. Protase's cuirass or body armour has been transmuted into a red figure-hugging garment with golden embroidery.

7

**Michele Desubleo** (1602–1676)

Flanders, Italy

***Saint John the Baptist*** circa 1650

oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

The animal pelt across Saint John the Baptist's thighs symbolises his physical and spiritual self-discipline. According to the Bible (Matthew 3:4), Saint John wore an uncomfortable garment of camel's hair as a means of repentance. Since then, pious extremists have followed John's example by wearing *cilices* or sackcloths, garments made from coarse cloth or hair designed to irritate the skin, as a bodily mortification.

8

**Emilio Taruffi** (1633–1696)

Italy

***The Virgin and Child Appearing to Saint Bruno*** 1677

oil on copper  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

Christian monastic orders required its members to wear long tunics known as scapulars, which were regarded as a 'yokes of Christ' and signified their wearers' acceptance of Church authority. The Carthusian order added a hood. In this scene, Saint Bruno, the order's tonsured and barefooted founder, experiences an ecstatic vision of the Virgin Mary after refusing to be made a bishop in favour of a life of secluded prayer.

9

**Attributed to Giuseppe Crespi** (1665–1747)

Italy

**after Anthony van Dyck** (1599–1641)

Flanders, England

***The Scorning of Christ (Christ Mocked)***

1720s

tempera on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

The removal of Christ's clothes by soldiers was just one stage in a series of humiliations – known as the 'Passion' – that he was forced to endure before his death. Although stripping was intended to deprive him of social distinction and to render him vulnerable and dejected before his persecutors, Christ's dignity when naked only proved the opposite: that distinction inheres not in clothing but in the qualities of the person.

10

**Vincenzo Spisanelli** (1595–1662)

Italy

***The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine***

mid-17th century

oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of J Yock Esq, 1960  
Conserved 2021

Saint Catherine's dedication to God is symbolised in this scene as a marriage with the infant Christ: as Joseph overlooks, Mary extends Catherine's hand towards her son to receive a ring. Catherine of Alexandria is shown in 17th-century bridal attire, wearing a white ruffled chemise beneath layers of expensive, richly coloured garments. Her reddish gold hair was much coveted by upper-class Italian women at the time.

11

**Guido Reni** (1575–1642)

Italy

***Saint Sebastian*** circa 1625

oil on canvas  
Mackelvie Trust Collection  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of James Tannock Mackelvie, 1882  
Conserved 2001

Forbidden by the Catholic Church from depicting saints with a 'beauty exciting lust', Baroque masters of figure painting like Guido Reni found ways to cover their nude subjects without compromising their sensual beauty. Saint Sebastian was a 4th-century Christian soldier who was shot by archers of the Roman emperor Diocletian. As he writhes against a tree, Sebastian's twisted loincloth sinks under its own weight, suggestively revealing what it is supposedly intended to conceal.

12

**Tony Fomison** (1939–1990)

New Zealand

**after Hans Holbein the Younger** (1497–1543)

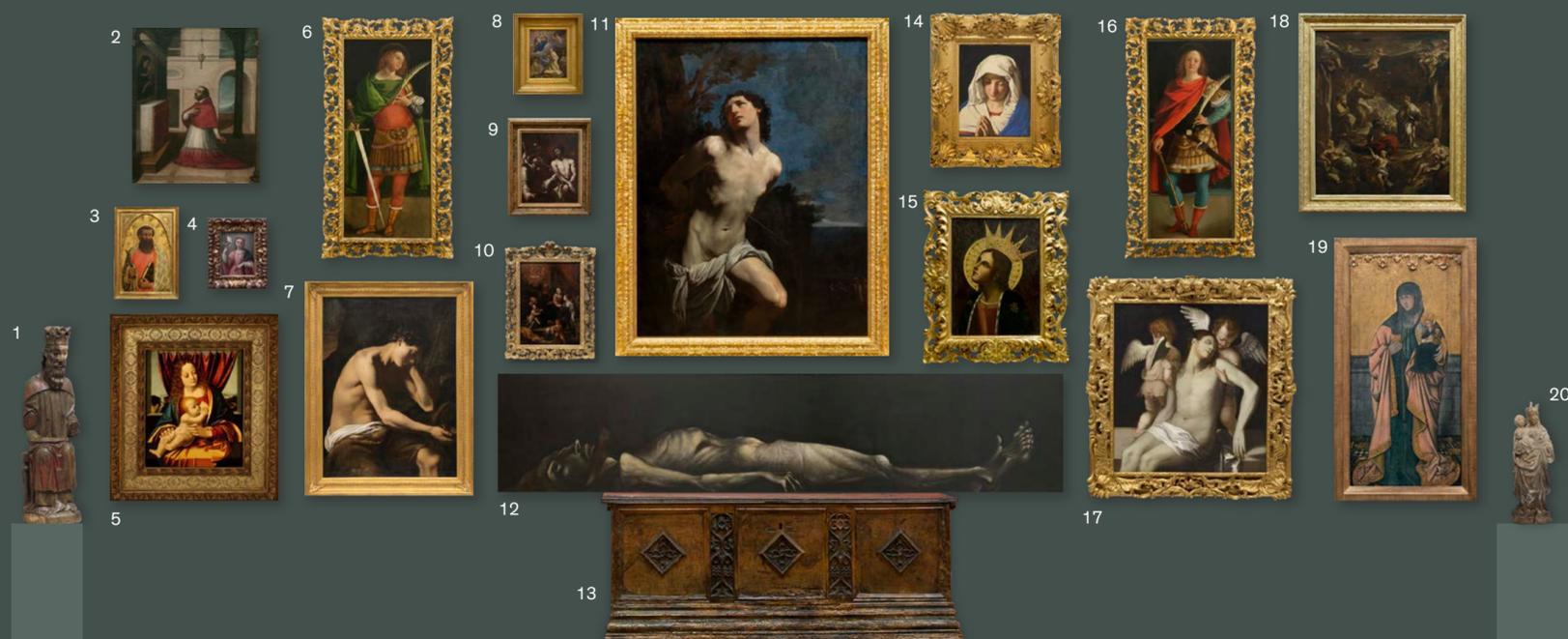
Germany

***Study of Holbein's 'Dead Christ'*** 1971–73

oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with assistance from the MA Serra Trust and the Elise Mourant Bequest, 1996

During a trip to Europe, Christchurch artist Tony Fomison was entranced by the mysterious full-length painting of the dead Christ by German Renaissance painter Hans Holbein the Younger. After returning to New Zealand, he embarked on making a close version. Inflected perhaps, by his recent experiences of drug addiction, hospitalisation and acute poverty, Fomison's image, which is painted with thin dark glazes, exhales an even greater sombreness than its famous prototype.

# THREADS OF FAITH



13

## Unknown workshop

Spain

### *Chest with Leaf and Flower Motifs*

15th century

walnut with traces of polychrome  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Mr Norman B Spencer, 1968

Carved and painted wooden chests like this were typically commissioned in pairs for brides' dowries during the Renaissance. Known as marriage chests or *cassone*, these lockable boxes stored valuable textiles and bedding safe from theft, while their high bases protected contents from treacherous damp.

16

## Gerolamo Giovenone (1486–1555)

Italy

### *Saint Gervase* 1530

oil on panel  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

The twin military saints Gervase and Protase (see 6) were 2nd-century Christian martyrs, said to have been murdered during the reign of the pagan emperor Nero. An early account described the siblings as 'most beautiful youths' who wore hose and short boots. Gerolamo Giovenone depicts Gervase decoratively as a Roman soldier, wearing a defensive skirt of leather strips known as *pteruges*, a martyr's red cloak, red boots and a splendid bright-blue hose.

19

## Joan de Rúa also known as Pere Girard

(active 1470–1510)

Spain

### *Saint Anne, Mother of the Virgin Mary*

circa 1470

tempera and gesso on panel  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Friends of the Auckland Art Gallery, 1966  
Conserved 2011

To remind viewers that Christ's family was from the East, or 'Holy Land', imitation Arabic calligraphy was often incorporated as a decorative element in the textiles, halos or frames of devotional imagery. In this early Spanish image of Saint Anne, made in the Moorish-influenced region of Catalonia, the mother of the Virgin Mary is shown wearing a gown edged with embossed 'pseudo-Kuphic' script and holding a tiny Virgin and Child.

14

## Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato

(1609–1685)

Italy

### *Virgin in Prayer* 17th century

oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, on loan the Yockney Family Trust

Sassoferrato produced numerous versions of the Virgin in prayer, each with a strikingly simple palette of red, white and blue, for use in private devotions. Simplicity did not come cheap, however. Mary's blue garment was painted using lapis lazuli, a mineral mined from Afghanistan. Known as Marian blue, the colour cost more than gold and its use was carefully negotiated between artists and clients.

17

## Unknown artist

Europe

### *Dead Christ Supported by Two Angels*

16th century

oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, on loan from the Cathedral of St Paul, Wellington

The loincloth or strip of fabric that casually covers Christ's genitalia has multi-layered significance in Judeo-Christian tradition. Symbolising the covering used by Adam and Eve to conceal themselves after sinning, it is regarded as the first clothing. It recalls the swaddling clothes that bound the infant Christ at his birth and anticipates the grave clothes or shroud in which he was later entombed.

20

## Unknown artist

France

### *Madonna and Child* circa 1460

wood and gesso  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with funds from the Watson Bequest, 1965

The Madonna and Child was a favourite theme of Gothic sculptors. The bold S-shaped curve of this Madonna figure and the rhythmic folds of her drapery reflect the International Gothic style which began in Burgundy, a leading centre of fashion and courtly culture. The Virgin's robe would once have been richly coloured and gilded to imitate the most valuable fabrics, which were woven in Flanders from English yarn.

15

## Unknown artist

Europe

### *The Annunciate Virgin (Santissima Annunziata)* 17th century

oil on panel  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, on loan from St Andrews Anglican Church, Epsom  
Conserved 2022

Although the jewel-like, archaic character of Byzantine and Gothic art was mocked by fashionable Renaissance artists such as Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), it continued to be preferred by the pious. This 17th-century panel reproduces a revered 13th-century fresco of the Virgin, said to have been painted by an angel in the Florentine church of Santissima Annunziata, which has long been associated with miracles.

18

## Luca Giordano (1634–1705)

Italy

### *Saint Anthony of Padua Rebuking the Tyrant Ezzelino* 1692–1702

oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1962

Saint Anthony was a 13th-century saint who preached and cared for the sick and the defenceless in Italy. He appears to the left wearing the brown habit or scapular of the Franciscan order, confronting the rich and cruel warlord Ezzelino da Romano, who is holding enemies hostage. In this scene, Anthony's moral authority, evidenced by his simple garb, is enough to convert Ezzelino to Christianity and avert the massacre of his prisoners.