



# A radiological examination confirms that 'La Moreneta' was white

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The image of the Virgin of Montserrat - popularly known in Catalonia, where it is a religious and catalanist symbol, like *La Moreneta* - was originally white. The current figure, with black hands and face, has undergone a transformation of the color due to the fumes that were given off by the candles of veneration or to the chemical reaction of the varnish that was used to fix the painting.

*The Newspaper of Catalonia* published this news yesterday, which has not surprised the Benedictine community of Montserrat. The spokesman of the monastery, the father Josep Maria Foses, yesterday undertook importance to the published thing and affirmed: 'The garlic soup has been discovered for some time'. According to him, 'in Montserrat we have assumed for years that the image is not black'. Anyway, the analysis of the size that has been carried out in the last months has not yet concluded, and the Benedictine community does not want to advance results until the technicians have definitive conclusions. The data could be made public in about 15 days, close to the celebration, on April 27, of the feast of the Virgin.

That the image of the Virgin of Montserrat was not black was already exposed, for example, in the catalog of the exhibition *Nigra sum* (1995), and had also been previously noted by Father Josep Maria Albareda, author of *La historia de Montserrat*, published in the thirties. The scientific work, according to Foses, will provide new information about the Virgin beyond its color, which is already admitted to be that of the original wood.

## Face and hands

The study on the size of the Virgin of Montserrat, which carries out the service of restoration of personal property of the general direction of the Cultural Heritage of the Generalitat, shows that the color is not the original. The current appearance of *La Moreneta* is due to a process of darkening of the face and the hands of the carving, which are the parts on which the analysis on coloration has focused.

The scientific research, in addition to discerning from which time the coloring dates, also intends to provide data to know precisely the state at the origin of the size, as well as the current one; the parts that remain intact since the twelfth century, when it is considered that it could be carved, and those that have been superimposed. To analyze the size, several studies and tests have been carried out, among which are the capture of radiological images taken in the same monastery.

The last coloration of the image dates from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, when it is known that the face was painted black. In the first third of the nineteenth century, the image also suffered an intervention, because of this date is the child who holds on the legs and part of the hands.

The Benedictine community indicated that the studies that have been carried out have been commissioned by the monks who want more information about the most venerated image of Catalonia.

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