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THE BIRTH OF A PAINTER: ESTÊVÃO TOMÁS AND THE GREAT WORKS OF THE MANUELINE/JOHANNINE PERIOD IN ÉVORA

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The documentary surveys conducted by the Primar't Project (PTDC/CPC-EAT/4769/2012) lead to the discovery of documents regarding a painter whose artistic activity was hitherto unknown: Estêvão Tomás who, according to the historic sources, was already dead in 1534. However, these same sources reveal the work he made for Évora's female Cistercian monastery, the monastery of S. Bento de Cástris – an unfinished altarpiece. The then Manager (*Regedora*) of that Cistercian House, D. Violante da Silveira, came into possession of two finished paintings, the *Annunciation* and the *Birth of Jesus*, which were meant to be placed on an altarpiece that was being painted in the cenoby at the time, most likely to decorate the primitive chance's back wall.

So, the artist, whose identity was completely unknown, can now be reliably identified and associated with a solid artistic knowledge, which may allow finding new connections to the various *nebulous* Johannine works by the so-called «Ferreirim masters» whose authors remain unknown. The detailed study of the *Annunciation* preserved at the Évora Museum (inv. no. 1543) – a work that has now been ascribed to Estêvão Tomás – opens possibilities of comparisons with other paintings from the same period with a similar style, which may be the subjects of new research works.

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