About the cover art  El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos) was born in 1541 in Crete. He is considered one of the leading figures of the Spanish Renaissance and a formative influence on modern painting, particularly on the development of Cubism. In 1577, he moved to Toledo, Spain, where he lived and made his best-known paintings until his death in 1614. El Greco’s Laocoön (ca. 1610–14) is a mythological painting that draws from Virgil’s Aeneid. In the Aeneid, Laocoön, a Trojan priest, hurls a spear at the belly of a wooden horse—the spurious gift from the Greeks. Minerva then sends two serpents that kill the priest and his sons, Antiphantes and Thymbraeus.

In this Mannerist-style painting, El Greco expressively renders Laocoön’s terror as he realizes his fate. His body torqued, Laocoön looks up at the somber and tumultuous Toledo sky, or heavens (please see Judith Butler’s essay in this issue, “Solidarity/Susceptibility”), and also at the bystanders, Apollo and Minerva, who take no action. One of the elongated, muted gray bodies is Laocoön’s dead son; Laocoön’s other son writhes and fights for his life against a serpent about to kill him.


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Cover
El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos)
Laocoon (detail), ca. 1610–14
Oil on canvas
54 × 68 in.
Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC