Throughout his long career in southern Italy, the Spanish artist Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652) showed a vested interest in the shifting practices and expectations that went into looking at pictures. As I argue, the artist's evident preoccupation with sensory experience is inseparable from his attention to the ways in which people evaluated and spoke about art. Ribera's depictions of sensory experience, in works such as the circa 1615 Five Senses, the circa 1622 Studies of Features, and the 1637 Isaac Blessing Jacob, approach the subject of the bodily senses in terms of evaluation and questioning, emphasizing the link between sensory experience and prudence. Ribera worked at a time and place when practices of connoisseurship were not, as they are today, a narrow set of preoccupations with attribution and chronology but a wide range of qualitative evaluations, and early sources describe him as a tasteful participant in a spoken connoisseurial culture. In these texts, the usage of the term “taste,” gusto, links the assessment of Ribera's work to his own capacity to judge the works of other artists. Both taste and prudence were crucial social skills within the courtly culture that composed the upper tier of Ribera's audience, and his pictures respond to the tensions surrounding sincerity of expression or acceptance of sensory experience in a novel and often satirical vein. Prudence, a courtly virtue enabling both judgment and dissimulation, appears in Ribera's work as a native trait of the judgment and dissimulation that the art of painting respectively invites and carries out. Far from representing a propagandistic or anti-intellectual expression of post-Tridentine visual culture, Ribera's oeuvre participates ambitiously in his generation's questioning of what pictures are, what it means to look at them, and what they have authority to do and say.
représentations de femmes barbues et celles de mendiants. Des figures perçues comme une menace à l'ordre social et naturel. En effet, si la femme barbue pose la question de la "nature" -homme, femme, hermaphrodite ?-, les mendiants, habitués du déguisement et du changement d'identité, s'échappent à toutes identifications. Jusepe De Ribera, Artemisia Gentileschi, Art collections by Neapolitan Viceroy in the 17th century., Casa de Pilatos. Anonymous (Dirck van Baburen? Jusepe de Ribera?), Beggar (catalogue entry). Galleria Borghese, inv. 325. Jusepe de Ribera, born in the Valencian town of Játiva in 1591, spent his entire career in Italy, principally in Naples, which was then governed by Spanish viceroys. He frequently asserted his Spanish nationality, as he does in this painting, by adding the word "'español'" to his signature. In 1618, the year Ribera received his first commission from the Spanish viceroy, the artist Ludovico Carracci wrote with admiration of the "'young Spaniard working in the manner of Caravaggio.'" Collection, Indianapolis, since 1958; On long-term loan to the Indianapolis Museum of Art since 1971 (C10066); Given to the Indianapolis Museum of Art, now the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, in 2000 (2000.345). - {1} In 1983 Eduardo Nappi, in his article "Pittori del '600 a Napoli: Notizie inediti dai documenti."