



2016.012

Unidentified Artist

Peru, Cuzco

Second half of the 18th century

Mary Immaculate, Queen of Heaven

Oil on canvas, 43 5/16 x 30 5/16 inches



Fig.1. Unidentified Artist. Cuzco, Peru. Ca. 1793-1803. *Saint Joseph with the Christ Child*, Oil on canvas, 49 ½ x 36 inches. Lima: Casa de Torre Tagle. Photo: Daniel Giannoni.

The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception in this painting, identifiable by her blue and white garments and the crescent moon and serpent beneath her feet, is pictured in the heavens, surrounded by saints and angels (aptly described as the “celestial court”¹), and crowned by the Trinity. The assortment of holy figures surrounding Mary Immaculate in the Thoma painting were likely personally selected by the patron. At the top are the Guardian Angel, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. The unlettered artist has made some errors in transcribing the names (“Migel” and “Grabiell”) from what may have been a print source. Most of the saints depicted are founders of the orders or their major exponents, but Saint Pasqual Baylon is included, as well as depictions of the Virgin Mary as “Our Lady of Mount Carmel” and “Our Lady of Consolation.” Along the bottom of the composition are the Sorrowing Virgin, Saint Lucy and the Christ of Burgos. At the top, Christ and God the Father, accompanied by the dove of the Holy Spirit, steady the imperial crown that rests on Mary’s halo.

In his discussion of a similar composition featuring Saint Joseph (fig. 1), Luis Eduardo Wuffarden noted that this type of composition, in which the central holy figures are surrounded by numerous small images of saints, “whose selection responded to the devotional preferences” of the person who commissioned the painting reached its height of popularity in the 1760s.ⁱⁱ

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ⁱ In the words of Luis Eduardo Wuffarden, *El arte de Torre Tagle. La colección del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Perú* (Lima: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Perú, 2016), 68.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*