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Our Lady of Mercy with Saints

Cipriano de Toledo y Gutiérrez (active 1761-1775)

1764

Oil on canvas, 37 ¼ x 27 11/16 inches

Provenance: Casa Pardo, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Josefina Albuquerque de Enguín, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Federico Cia, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Carl and Marilynn Thoma Art Foundation, Santa Fe, NM and Chicago, IL, December, 2016.

Inscription on cartouche at bottom: "*Mirad Madre Sober.^a ver Al Cautibo en duras penas Romped, las mias romped Y me hareis de tus Cadenas Abito de gran Merced. A dev.ⁿ de D.ⁿ Joseph Antonio Monterrozo Año de 1764.*" On a banderole beneath the cartouche: "*Cipriano Toledo fecit año de 1764.*"



Cipriano de Toledo y Gutiérrez (active 1761-1775)
Our Lady of Mercy with Saints
1771

Oil on linen, bound with silk

Collection of Carl and Marilyn Thoma, inv. no. 1997.11.

In 1997 Marilyn Thoma acquired a version of this subject that was dated 1771, but bore no signature. When the painting was published in the exhibition catalogue *The Virgin, Saints and Angels* it was therefore unattributed although the similarity of its style to the known work of a circle of Cuzco painters that included Cipriano Toledo was noted in the study devoted to it.ⁱ There is an inscription in a cartouche at the bottom of that composition, as in the present painting, but it only says “Se pinto esta lamina en 1771.” Since the acquisition of that painting, this one and another in the collection of Gérard Priet and Catherine Gaudibert in Versailles, France have appeared on the art market, both of them signed by Cipriano de Toledo y Gutiérrez, the latter example dated 1772.ⁱⁱ

The existence of these three paintings, and there may be others extant, tells us much about the workshop practices of Cuzco painters. Although much has been written about the works created for the art market, two of these three works were clearly commissioned by devotees of Our Lady of Mercy and the Mercedarian order. The inscription on the present painting can be roughly translated as “Look, sovereign Mother, see the suffering captive. Break, break my chains and I will make of your chains the habit of the great Mercedarian order.” The identification of the donor as a captive in chains refers to the foundational dedication of the Mercedarians to freeing Christians held for ransom in North Africa. The Thoma painting is an offering to Our Lady of Mercy from her devotee Joseph Antonio Monterrozo. The painting in

the Priet-Gaudibert collection was commissioned by Manuel Prego de Montaos, described in the inscription as a resident of the city of Potosí (Bolivia).ⁱⁱⁱ

These paintings clearly point to a workshop practice in which a popular composition, undoubtedly based on an engraving that has not been identified, is specially requested, even by a donor in distant Potosí. How the art dealers working out of Cuzco might have handled such a commission from someone in Potosí has not been studied. However, the prolific Cuzco artist Mauricio García also painted devotional images for specific patrons, some of whom may have been residents of Potosí.^{iv} Following the efforts in decades past to attribute paintings to specific artists, more focused attention on teasing out the workshop practices of Spanish colonial artists is needed. These signed and attributable examples show the way.

ⁱ See Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, “The Virgin of Mercy with Saints” in *The Virgin, Saints and Angels. South American Paintings 1600-1825 from the Thoma Collection* (Stanford, CA: Skira in association with the Iris & B. Gerald Cener for Visual Arts at Stanford University, 2006), 156-57, cat. no. 28.

ⁱⁱ Another painting in the Thoma collection, depicting Our Lady of Characato, is signed by the same artist: “Sipriano Gutierrez fecit.”

ⁱⁱⁱ I am grateful to Gérard Priet for sharing his research with me.

^{iv} See Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, “Our Lady of Mount Carmel” in *Painting the Divine: Images of Mary in the New World*, eds. Josef Diaz and Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt (Santa Fe: The New Mexico History Museum, 2014), 102-103, cat. no. 31.