



2013.045
Unidentified Artist
Peru, Cuzco
Our Lady of Miracles of Cuzco
Eighteenth century
Oil on copper with gold, 9 2/3 x 7 3/4 inches

There are a number of devotions to a Virgin Mary “of Miracles” in South America. This small painting on copper repeats the iconic images of a particular version based on a miracle that occurred in seventeenth-century Cuzco.ⁱ

At the Franciscan monastery in Cuzco there was a painting of the Virgin Mary placed at the doorway to the choir where the friars would traditionally sing a hymn following vespers. During the earthquake of March 31, 1652 Mary’s face was damaged, and at some time later arrangements were made for a painter to repair the spoiled image. However, the artist found the painting to be in perfect condition, even better than before the earthquake, repaired without human hands ever having touched it.ⁱⁱ

The copies of the miraculously restored painting, such as this small oil on copper in the Thoma Collection, are all nearly identical. In all of them the unusual placement and shape of Mary’s mantle are replicated. The mantle does not quite rest on the head of the figure and it is painted with sharp, asymmetrical folds. It is possible that this angular treatment of the textiles has origins in paintings by Bernardo Bitti.ⁱⁱⁱ The composition often includes bust-length figures of Saints Francis and Diego de Alcalá at the bottom,^{iv} but here the Franciscan saint on the left is

probably not Francis of Assisi, as there are no stigmata on the hands, and the saint on the right is clearly Anthony of Padua with his usual attributes, the Christ Child, and a stem of lilies. Along the vertical sides of the painting are symbols of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception and Mary rests on the crescent moon that also visually recalls that doctrine so dear to the Franciscan order. Although the blue mantle with its gilded stars and gilded lining gives an impression of flatness, the faces of Mary and the two saints are delicately rendered in a naturalistic style.

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ⁱ See Héctor Schenone, *Iconografía del arte colonial: Santa María* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Universidad Católica Argentina, 2008), 441-442.

ⁱⁱ “. . . pero se halla entera y sin señal de rotura, mayor el lienzo que de antes, y la efigie tan Hermosa que no hubiese necesidad de que humanas manos no llegasen a ella, con haber sido tan manifiesto el daño del golpe.” As told by Diego de Esquivel y Navia, *Noticias cronológicas de la Gran Ciudad de Cuzco* vol. 1 (Lima: Fundación Augusto N. Wiese, 1980), 93-94.

ⁱⁱⁱ Schenone, as in note 1 above, refers to paintings of the Virgin Mary by Bitti in La Merced and the convent of Santa Teresa in Cuzco.

^{iv} Schenone, *ibid.*