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Joaquín Gutiérrez (c. 1715-c. 1805)

*Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá*

Before 1767

Bogotá, Colombia

Oil on copper, 20.5 x 26.8 cm.

Inscribed: “*Esta tocada en su original, año de 1767. Pintada en Sta. Fee de Vogota por Joaquin Gutierrez*”

Joaquín Gutiérrez’s first known commission, documented in a contract of 1750, was for twenty-six paintings on the life of Saint John of God for the church of San Juan de Dios in Bogotá, Colombia, of which six canvases still exist. Gutiérrez is also documented through his work as the appraiser (*tasador*) of Solís Folch de Cardona, appointed viceroy of New Granada in 1753. Although Gutiérrez created religious paintings, he is best known today for his portraits, including the signed and dated pendant images of Folch de Cardona and his wife, the Marquises of San Jorge (1775, Museo de Arte Colonial, Bogotá).<sup>i</sup>

This painting is a “true portrait” of a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary. According to the written history of this advocacy by the Dominican Pedro de Tobal published in Madrid in 1694, the original painting was commissioned for a chapel on the *encomienda* in present-day Colombia granted to the Spaniard Antonio de Santana in 1560. The Dominican friar Andrés de Jdraque commissioned the Spanish painter Alonso de Narváez, who lived in nearby Tunja, to paint Our Lady of the Rosary accompanied by Saint Anthony of Padua (a Franciscan who was a favorite saint of the *encomendero*) and Saint Andrew (the friar’s name saint). The canvas remained in the simple, straw-thatched chapel for a decade before its dilapidation due to humidity. When the figures could hardly be seen, the damaged painting was removed to a house

in the nearby village of Chiquinquirá that was occasionally used as a chapel or oratory. In 1586 a local woman began to pray for the rehabilitation of the painting, on which she could discern the image of the Virgin Mary. Her prayers were rewarded by the return of the painting to its former brilliance. The modest sanctuary cared for by the Dominicans was eventually replaced by an imposing basilica which draws numerous pilgrims to Boyacá to see the miraculous image that represents the patron saint of Colombia.

The many paintings that represent the original are faithful to its composition, as are the copies of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. The Thoma version, also like a number of paintings of Guadalupe, claims in an inscription that it was touched (*tocada*) to the original painting. This physical connection to the original miraculous and miracle-working image suggests that the object has been invested with spiritual power. Gutiérrez may not have painted the image in 1767, but that was when the inscription claims that it was touched to the original, perhaps taken there from his studio in Bogotá. Or sometimes the claim rests with the hands of the artist, who himself touched the original and passed that special contact along to the copy through his brush.

There is another painting of Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá in the Thoma collection that includes a donor portrait (2013.046).

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

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<sup>i</sup> Alicia Lubowski, "Joaquín Gutiérrez," in *The Arts in Latin America 1492-1820*, Joseph J. Rishel and Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, eds. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006), 530-531.