

Our Lady of the Rosary with Saints Dominic and Catherine of Siena

Colombia, Bogotá

Seventeenth century

Oil on canvas

80 1/2 x 49 1/2 inches (204.5 x 125.7 cm)

Collection of Carl and Marilynn Thoma, 1998.007

In the Thoma painting, the Virgin Mary, with the infant Christ on her lap, offers the Rosary to Saint Dominic on the left of the canvas, and Saint Catherine of Siena kneels at the right. Some stylistic elements of the painting suggest a familiarity with the artistic legacy of the Italian artist Angelino Medoro, who traveled to South America and around it, leaving paintings in Tunja (Colombia), Quito (Ecuador) and Lima (Peru) before returning to Seville where he died (c. 1567-1631). Stylistic connections can be made between the Thoma painting and the *Descent from the Cross* that Medoro created for the Mancipe Chapel in the Cathedral of Tunja in 1588 (figs. 1 and 2), not long after his arrival there from Seville. The facial features are similar (small faces with cupid's bow lips), the figures are similarly elongated in purest Mannerist fashion, and the folds of the draperies are stiff and linear. The profile of Saint Dominic in the painting may be compared with that of Medoro's *Saint Bonaventure* (ca. 1603, Convento de San Francisco, Lima), which is also a relatively early work. On the other hand, the chiaroscuro, with the figures

emerging boldly from the penumbra surrounded them, is more like the Sevillian painting that Medoro would have seen if he had been there twenty years later.¹

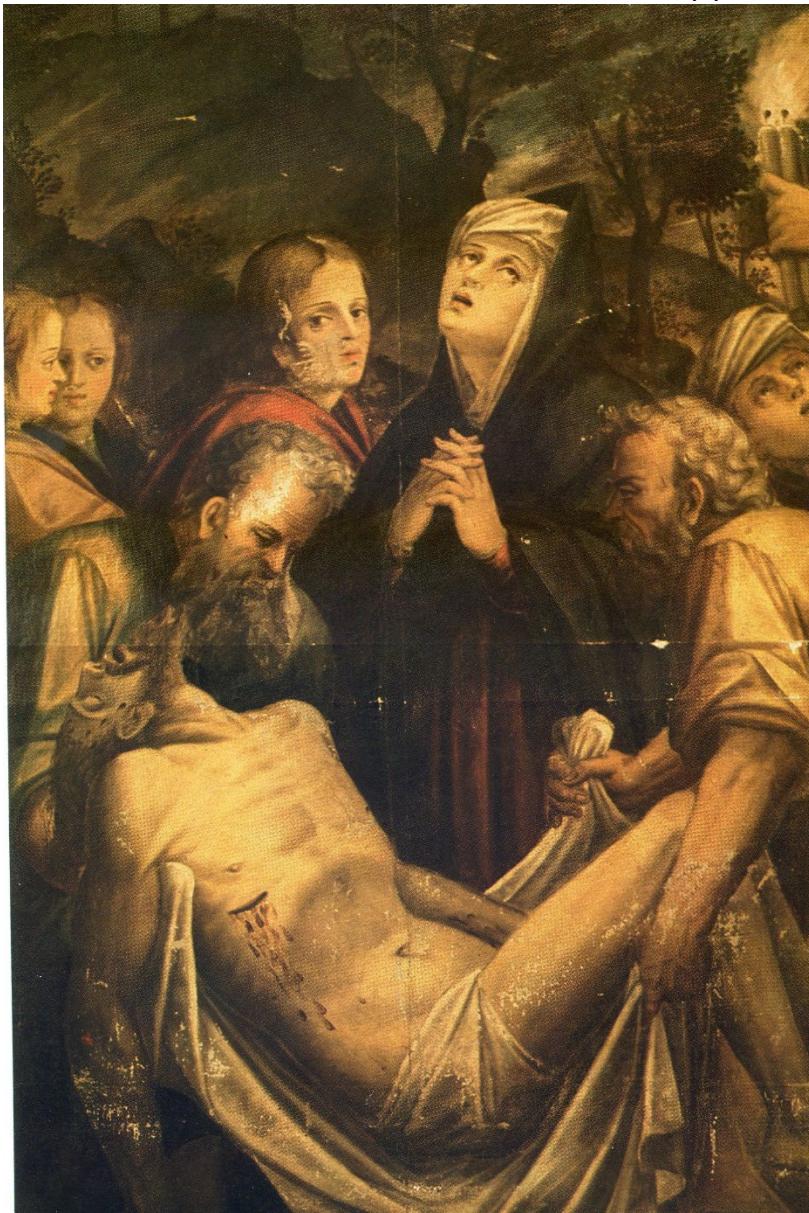


Fig. 1. Angelino Medoro, *Descent from the Cross*, 1588, oil on canvas, Capilla de los Mancipe, Cathedral of Tunja, Colombia.



Fig. 2. Detail of fig. 1.

This marked contrast between light and dark areas of the canvas (called *tenebrismo* in Spanish) apparently came to Bogotá, Colombia sometime after Medoro's activity in that region. The carriers of the style were members of a family of painters who emigrated from Seville in the mid-seventeenth century and who worked in the city of Santafé de Bogotá. The best known and most productive workshop was that of Baltazar de Vargas y Figueroa (fig. 3). However, most of the paintings given to Gaspar de Figueroa and Baltazar de Vargas y Figueroa are attributed rather than signed.ⁱⁱ



Fig. 3. Baltasar de Vargas y Figueroa, *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, signed and dated 1664, oil on canvas, 199 x 110 cm. San Agustín, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia.

Although the Thoma *Virgin of the Rosary with Saints Dominic and Catherine of Siena* cannot be attributed to a particular artist without further research, it can clearly be assigned to Bogotá as it is stylistically so different from works created in other cultural centers of South America during the colonial period.

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ⁱFor more about Medoro, see José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, “Angelina Medoro: De Colombia a Santiago de Chile,” in *El Manierismo en los Andes: Memoria del III Encuentro Internacional Sobre Barroco* (La Paz: Unión Latina, 2005), 85-104.

ⁱⁱ See examples pictured in *Catálogo Museo Colonial. Volumen I: Pintura* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia, 2016).