



Unidentified artist

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

Peru

Early seventeenth century, with gold embellishment added in the eighteenth century.

Oil on copper, 8 ½ x 6 3/8 inches.

Provenance: Acquired in Washington, D.C. in the 1950s-1970s; private collection of Colonial Tins, Seattle, Washington; Osuna Art & Antiques

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The practice of praying with a string of beads called a rosary was widespread throughout Europe and the Americas. Rosary prayers began in the twelfth century, when it was said that the Virgin Mary herself gave the first rosary to Saint Dominic of Guzmán with instructions to offer prayers to her. In this painting Saint Dominic is identified not only by this event and by the black and white habit of the order he founded, but also by the presence of the dog below. According to the *Golden Legend*, Dominic's mother, while pregnant with him, had a dream that she would give birth to a dog with a torch in its mouth that would "burn the world." This forecast Dominic's foundation of the Dominican order that would preach throughout the world.

In a number of paintings, both European and Spanish colonial, Dominic is accompanied by Saint Catherine of Siena, who is identified by the stigmata on her hands received during one of her visionary experiences of God. The object below her in the painting probably represents a book referencing her writings, including *The Dialogue of Divine Providence* and many letters and prayers.

This small painting on copper would have been used for private devotions, like another example of the subject painted on copper from the early seventeenth century that includes Saint Francis instead of Catherine (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. *Our Lady of the Rosary with Saints Dominic and Francis*, early 17th century, oil on copper. Barbosa-Stern Collection, Lima

Both small paintings on copper can be stylistically dated to the early seventeenth century, with the date of the Barbosa-Stern painting additionally supported by the engraved image on the reverse of the copper plate representing a *cacique* confessing his sins to a Jesuit priest. Like other paintings on copper from colonial Spanish America, this example reflects a new use of a plate originally intended for printing.

The Thoma painting, however, was painted on an unused plate. The finely painted, and quite small, facial features point to the influence of the Mannerist style on artists in the early years of the Viceroyalty of Peru. The painting was originally without the gold embellishment



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that was probably added in the eighteenth century, reflecting a change in taste as well as a wish to enhance the value of the work. While well done, the gold is painted on with a heavier hand than the one that created the original oil painting.

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