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Andrés Solano (active 1732-1789)
Trinidad, Cuba
Portrait of Ana Josepha de Castañeda y de la Reguera
1776
Oil on canvas, 28 x 21 11/16 inches.

Inscription: "...Mujer Legitima de D. Juan Lazaro Merino y Zaldo. En la Villa de Scta. Spiritus de la Ysla de Cuba. Año de Sr. de 1776/Solano me fecit."

An artist named Andrés Solano, a native of the island of Santo Domingo, now the Dominican Republic, was recorded in the town of Trinidad in the province of Sancti Spiritus in central Cuba in 1732.¹ Many years later, in 1789, an artist named Andrés Solano was commissioned to paint four portraits of kings for the *jura*, Trinidad's oath of fealty to King Carlos IV. Probably in preparation for the same celebration, Solano also retouched the paintings on the main altarpiece

of the parish church.ⁱⁱ It is possible that the Solano noted in 1732 and 1789 was the same person, but he would have been a very old man when he was asked to paint the royal portraits and “all the other things” he did for the royal event. Nonetheless, the Solano signature on this 1776 painting in the Thoma collection is that of Andrés Solano, either father or son.

The portrait represents Ana Josepha de Castañeda y de la Reguera, wife of Juan Lázaro Merino y Zaldo, whose last names are still well known in the Spanish region of La Rioja. It is probable that he was a sugar planter in Trinidad. The Herrero Fontana family, which was engaged in the wool and cattle trades in Cuba and elsewhere in Spanish America, evidently brought this portrait with them to Spain in the mid-nineteenth century.ⁱⁱⁱ

Ana Josepha is presented as a relatively unadorned woman who gazes at the viewer from her large eyes, a very slight double chin her most distinguishing feature. The dark green of her gown is picked up in the picture frame, whose extravagance reflects her position as a wealthy peninsular. The gilt rococo embellishments of the frame contrast with Ana Josepha’s forthright appearance, so different from contemporary portraits of woman in Peru and Ecuador, with all their jewelry on display.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

ⁱ [www.ecured.cu/Cultura de Trinidad](http://www.ecured.cu/Cultura_de_Trinidad)

ⁱⁱ Ibid. and www.monografias.com/trabajos79/galeria-arte-institucion-historia/galeria-arte-institucion-historia2.shtml

ⁱⁱⁱ I am grateful to Valery Taylor for sharing her e-mail correspondence with Victor Soriano in 2015.