

54a.

*Portrait of Antonio de Ulloa y de la Torre-Guiral*

Unidentified Artist

Spain

Ca. 1768-1770

Oil on canvas, 37 ½ x 31 ½ inches

54b.

*Portrait of Francisca Ramírez de Laredo y de Ulloa*

Unidentified Artist

Spain

Ca. 1768-1770

Oil on canvas, 37 ½ x 31 ½ inches

Antonio de Ulloa (1716-1795) was born in Seville, descended from a family famous in the maritime history of Spain.<sup>i</sup> In 1733 he enrolled as a cadet in the Naval Academy in Cádiz and two years later was appointed a member of the French scientific expedition to Ecuador, led by Charles-Marie La Condamine, to measure an arc of the meridian. Ulloa and his Spanish companion Jorge Juan wrote a *Relación histórica del viaje a la América meridional*, published in 1748 and then translated into French and German, recording their observations during the eleven-year journey of people and their customs, and the state of Spanish governance.

Ulloa spent the succeeding years devoted to learning, visiting France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark in order to bring Spain up to date in developments in road and canal construction and port dredging. He developed Spain's first botanical garden and museum of natural history. He was elected to the Royal Society of London, the Academy of Science in Bologna, and royal scientific academies in Paris, Berlin, and Stockholm. A crater on the moon that he discovered is named after him; he was instrumental in improvements in printing and clothmaking; and he helped to draw one of the first accurate maps of Spain, depicted in this portrait to the left.

Ulloa was awarded the Order of Santiago by King Ferdinand VI in 1757, and was appointed governor of Huancavelica, near Lima, which was important for its mercury mines, crucial to the amalgamation of silver ore. His six years there were not a triumph. His efforts to root out corruption led to conflicts with the viceroy, who brought (unproven) charges of malfeasance against Ulloa. In 1764 his replacement arrived, and Ulloa was free to return to Spain, but was waylaid in Havana by a royal dispatch ordering him to proceed instead to New Orleans as the new governor of Louisiana, where he arrived in March of 1766. This was another thankless administrative position in which Ulloa was an unpopular figure in an unpopular post, a Spaniard governing what had belonged to France. In 1767 he married Francisca Ramírez de Laredo, who traveled to Louisiana from Lima, where her father bore the title of Count of San Javier y Casa Laredo.<sup>ii</sup>

Once he was installed in New Orleans, Ulloa went to the Balize, the outpost at the mouth of the Mississippi River, to await her ship's arrival. When she got to Louisiana, Ulloa married her immediately, with the ceremony performed at the crude outpost by his personal chaplain.

New Orleans society regarded this as a deliberate snub. When Ulloa brought his bride to New Orleans, the French Creoles snubbed her in return.<sup>iii</sup>

More seriously, they plotted, spread propaganda, and instigated a popular uprising, which finally made Ulloa's efforts hopeless. He and his wife left Louisiana on a frigate bound for Havana on 1 November 1768, thence to Cádiz. The rest of Ulloa's life was spent as the naval man he had been at the start of his career. He was naval commander of the last important convoy of ships from Cádiz in 1776, commander of the Spanish squadron against English raiders in the American War of Independence. He was made a lieutenant general of the royal navies of Spain and retired to Cádiz as admiral of the fleet. Antonio and Francisca had seven children. When Antonio Ulloa died in 1795, he had completed writing his *Conversaciones de Ulloa con sus tres hijos en servicio de la marina* (Madrid, 1795).

It is most likely that these portraits were painted to celebrate the couple's marriage. However, the highly sophisticated style of the paintings suggests that they were done after they settled in Cádiz, following what must have been a traumatic first few months of marriage in New Orleans. Ulloa is identifiable by his attributes: the decoration of the Order of Santiago on his scarlet jacket, copies of the three-volume translation into French of his *Viaje*, books on geography, an atlas, and navigational instruments. The map of Spain that he and Jorge Juan had designed in the 1750s is tacked to a shelf, and in the distance, seen through the crook of his arm, is the eruption of the volcano Cotopaxi, near Quito, which erupted in 1744 during Ulloa's first trip to South America. A much later portrait of him (he lived for 27 years after returning to Spain) is in the Naval Museum in Madrid, which was reproduced as an engraving. In both, the bold eyebrows and long nose stand out as characteristic, while the narrower lips of the older man are natural to the aging process.

In her portrait, Francisca is beautifully dressed and bejeweled. Although her portrait dates a decade later than Ulloa's first trip to Peru, the style recalls the description of the famously bedecked women of viceregal Lima that Ulloa and Juan wrote in their *Voyage to South America*:

They are fond of white silk stockings, made extremely thin, that the leg may appear more shapely; the greatest part of which is exposed to view. These trifles often afford very sprightly sallies of wit in their animadversion on the dress of others . . . Besides diamond rings, necklaces, girdles, and bracelets, all very curious both with regards to water and size, many ladies wear other jewels set in gold, or for singularity sake, in *tumbago* [an alloy of gold and another metal]. Lastly, from their girdle before is suspended a large round jewel enriched with diamonds, much more superb than their bracelets, or other ornaments. A lady covered with the most expensive lace instead of linen, and glittering from head to foot with jewels, is supposed to be dress'd at the expense of not less than thirty or forty thousand crowns; a splendor still the more astonishing, as it is so very common.<sup>iv</sup>

A French visitor to Peru, having been there around the time of Ulloa's first journey, wrote particularly about the jewelry that adorned women of Lima:

. . . though jewels have a higher price in Peru than in Europe, yet they are much more common; so that without any exaggeration it may be said, that the bare dress of a woman of any figure at Lima, would be a very considerable fortune for a Parisian.<sup>v</sup>

It should be noted that this love of finery was found throughout the Hispanic world. Frances Calderón de la Barca's memoirs of her life in Mexico as wife of the Spanish ambassador there,

though written some time after independence (her *Life in Mexico* was first published in 1843), wrote extensively about the fashion consciousness of Mexican women.

While Francisca is somewhat more modestly dressed than the descriptions of her contemporaries in Lima, it is nonetheless clear that her father's dowry was generous. Ulloa himself is dressed in the French style, as were all Spaniards of the upper classes during the eighteenth century and the aristocracy of viceregal Peru.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

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<sup>i</sup> For the life of Ulloa, who was a significant figure of his time and whose accomplishments (and failures) can only be cursorily mentioned in a catalogue entry, see: Arthur P. Whitaker, "Antonio de Ulloa," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 15 (May 1935): 155-194, as well as the introduction to Don Jorge Juan and Don Antonio de Ulloa, *Discourse and Political Reflections of the Kingdom of Peru*, ed and tr. by John J. Tepaske (Norman, OK, 1978).

<sup>ii</sup> "El Virrey Conde de Superunda, a 7 de Junio de 1747, otorgó este título a D. Francisco Ventura Ramírez de Laredo, vecino de Lima, confirmado por Real Cédula de Carlos III a 28 de Mayo de 1783. Sucedióle D. José Ventura Laredo, casado con Josefa Baquijano y Carrillo y luego su hermano D. Gaspar Laredo." Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Títulos nobiliarios en el Perú*, 2nd ed. (Lima: Compañía de Impresiones y Publicidad, 1948), 36.

<sup>iii</sup> Jim Bradshaw, "Creoles were unhappy with Ulloa's administration," *Lafayette (LA) Daily Advertiser*, April 27, 1999 found at [http://www.carencrohighschool.org/la\\_studies/ParishSeries/Rebirth/CreolesWereUnhappy](http://www.carencrohighschool.org/la_studies/ParishSeries/Rebirth/CreolesWereUnhappy).

<sup>iv</sup> Quoted from Selden Rodman, *The Peru Traveler. A Concise History and Guide* (New York: Ward Locke, 1967), 43.

<sup>v</sup> René Courte de La Blanchardière, *A Voyage to Peru; Performed by the Conde of St. Malo, in the Years 1745, 1746, 1748 and 1749. Written by the Chaplain, to which is added an appendix, containing the Present State of the Spanish Affairs in America, in Respect to Mines, Trade and Discoveries* (London: Printed for R. Griffiths, 1753), 76.