



Portrait of Carlos II as a Child

Unidentified artist

Peru

After 1667

Oil on canvas

65 ½ x 42 ¾ inches

Inscribed: “Carlos II Rei de España”

Beginning with the reign of Philip IV (r. 1621-1665) in the seventeenth century, the Spanish king was called “Rey de las Españas y de las Indias” and his realms the “monarquía universal.”ⁱ During the 300 years that Spain controlled vast areas of the western hemisphere, not a single Spanish king ever crossed the Atlantic for a visit to these colonies. The “universal monarchy” was governed by viceroys sent from Spain, and the church in America, which was controlled by the Spanish monarchy by arrangement with the papacy, was led by bishops and archbishops also from Spain.ⁱⁱ The viceroys were thus present and powerful, and the monarchs very far away indeed. This made the traditional state portrait of the king a yet more important tool of propaganda than even in Spain itself, where the monarchy had been grandly represented by the brushes of Titian and Velázquez.

The absence of the king was only physical, because his image was continually present in American public life . . . An innumerable series of royal images – paintings, hieroglyphs, sculptures, portraits, etc. – enabled the king to make an appearance in colonial society.

Let us cite an example: the oaths or celebrations of the proclamation of a monarch upon

his ascent to the throne were presided over by a portrait of the new king—probably the first one seen there — that, raised upon a dais, received the homage of the city or kingdom in question. That portrait was surrounded by allegories, hieroglyphs and epigrams that sheathed the royal image with ideological content. Thus, suns, mirrors, lions and other symbols of power fixed their meaning in the minds of the attending public.ⁱⁱⁱ

Carlos II, son of Philip IV and his wife Mariana of Austria, was the last of the Spanish Habsburgs. When Philip IV died in 1665, his only living male heir was four years old. Carlos was weak and sickly as a child, so the court went to great pains to assure the world that he would be fit to rule when he came of age. During the years of her regency, the queen commissioned a number of painted and engraved portraits of the boy to assure the subjects of the Spanish Monarchy that they were in capable hands. These official portraits follow in the long European tradition of state portraits used for political reasons.^{iv} Antonio Feros has pointed out that in early modern Europe images of royalty were

perceived as something more than simple representations of the monarch. Within Catholic tradition, an image of the king not only represented the king but ‘was’ the king, just as the Holy Sacrament ‘was’ the body of Christ rather than its representation. . . in the seventeenth-century Spanish empire the images of monarchs, like other images perceived as sacred, were imbued with a symbolic force regardless of their aesthetic characteristics, qualities, and content.^v



Fig. 1. Sebastián Herrera Barnuevo, *Carlos II as a Boy*, ca. 16667-1671, Ayuntamiento (City Hall), Barcelona.



Fig. 2. J. García Hidalgo (1645-1717), *Carlos II and his Ancestors*. Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid.

Some time between 1667, when Sebastián de Herrera Barnuevo was appointed painter to the royal court in Madrid, and 1671, when the painter died, he created an image of Carlos II at the age of eight or nine (fig. 1)^{vi} which became the prototype for many other versions such as one attributed to the workshop of José García Hidalgo (1645-1717) (fig. 2).^{vii} Both these images of the boy king are strikingly similar to the Peruvian version in the Thoma Collection, and it is likely that a painted portrait from Spain (no engraving of this composition is known) served as a model for the colonial painter. We know that a portrait of Carlos II was brought from Spain by Manuel de Mollinedo y Angulo, who was sent by Clement X to serve as bishop of Cuzco, where he made his formal entrance in 1673. In his last will and testament dated 1671, Mollinedo listed the paintings he would take with him to Peru: “A large painting of the king, may God keep him, and another of the Queen Our Lady both by Don Sebastián de Herrera; a Saint Francis by the Greek [El Greco], a *vara* high; another painting of Christ and Our Lady by the same, a Magdalene a half *vara* high by [Eugenio] Cajés; . . . a portrait of Don Pedro Fernández del Campo by Juan Carreño [de Miranda].”^{viii} And there were more: genre scenes, male and female saints, images of the Virgen de la Almudena, and Flemish landscapes and still life paintings.

There was a great need for paintings of the Spanish king in his dominions overseas. In 1621 “the elites of the viceroyalty of Peru took oaths of loyalty to the new monarch, Philip IV, in a ceremony replete with symbols of obedience, loyalty, and adoration for the king. In the

absence of the monarch himself, a portrait of Philip, framed in gold and ‘seated’ on a throne beneath a canopy, presided over the ceremony.”^{ix}

On 17 July 1668 the Cabildo (municipal council) of Lima commissioned Diego de Aguilera, “maestro pintor,” to paint coats of arms of the Spanish king and of the city for the event celebrating the “raising of banners” in honor of Carlos II of Spain.^x The Cabildo also commissioned the master painter José de la Parra to paint a portrait of the young king in honor of the same ceremony – the *jura*, or taking of the oath of loyalty to the young king.^{xi} The portrait of Carlos II in the Thoma Collection might well have been commissioned to celebrate such an event. Herrera Barnuevo’s prototype proved remarkably durable. Even in the 1680s, when the figure of Carlos II was represented on a processional float created for the celebration of Corpus Christi in Cuzco, the image used was not of the then older king, but instead based on the younger model. Portraits of the king were needed throughout the realm for government buildings, but also for religious houses. Inventories of the Potosí convent of San Agustín taken between 1671 and 1680 record a total of 250 paintings, all of them religious subjects excepting the requisite portrait of “el rey nuestro señor D. Carlos.” The Thoma portrait of the boy king Carlos II is thus a rare extant example of an image that must once have been numerous.

Carlos II did not father an heir, so when he died in 1700, the Spanish throne passed to the French house of Bourbon whose dynasty in Spain began with the duke of Anjou who became Philip V of Spain.

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ⁱ Victor Mínguez Cornelles, *Los reyes distantes. Imágenes del poder en el México virreinal* (Castelló de la Plana Valencia: Universitat Jaume I: Servei de Publicacions, Diputació de Castelló, 1995), 15.

ⁱⁱ The papacy granted the Spanish monarchy autonomous authority over the church in the New World in exchange for Spain taking full responsibility – and the expense incurred thereby – for the conversion to Catholicism of the native population.

ⁱⁱⁱ “La ausencia del rey es sólo física, pues su imagen está presente continuamente en la vida pública americana . . . Una inacabable serie de imágenes regias – pinturas, jeroglíficos, esculturas, retratos, etc. – hacen posible la epifanía real en la sociedad colonial. Citemos un ejemplo: las juras o festejos de la proclamación de un monarca a su llegada al trono están presididas invariablemente por un retrato del nuevo rey – probablemente el primero que se contempla en el lugar – que, bajo un dosel, recibe el homenaje de la ciudad o reino en cuestión. Dicho retrato se rodea de alegorías, jeroglíficos y epigramas que revisten de contenido ideológico la imagen regia. Así, soles, espejos, leones y otros símbolos del poder fijan en la mente del público asistente las correspondientes consignas.” *Ibid.*, 17.

^{iv} See Marianne Jenkins, *The State Portrait: Its Origin and Evolution*. Study 3 (New York: College Art Association, 1947).

^v Antonio Feros, “‘Sacred and Terrifying Gazes’: Languages and Images of Power in Early Modern Spain,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Velázquez*, ed. Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 68-69.

^{vi} The portrait, which had been variously attributed to Juan de Carreño Miranda and Claudio Coello, was with more reason given to Sebastián de Herrera Barnuevo by Diego Angulo Íñiguez, “Herrera Barnuevo y el retrato de Carlos II del Museo de Barcelona,” *Archivo Español de Arte* 35 (1962): 71-72. I am grateful to Dr. Inmaculada Socías Batet for her help in acquiring a photograph of this painting.

^{vii} See Alfonso Rodríguez G. de Ceballos, “Retrato de estado y propaganda política: Carlos II (en el tercer centenario de su muerte),” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)* 12 (2000): 93-109.

^{viii} “una pintura grande el Rey que Dios guarde. Otra de la Reina Nuestra Señora entrambos de Don Sebastián de Herrera . . . Un San Francisco del griego de vara de alto. Otra pintura de Christo y Nuestra Señora del mismo . . .

Una Madalena de media vara de alto de Caxés. . . Un retrato de Don Pedro Francisco del Campo de Juan Carreño.” Quoted from Isabel Cruz de Amenábar, *Arte y sociedad en Chile 1550-1650* (Santiago, Chile, 1986), 40. First documented by Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Ensayo de un diccionario de artífices coloniales de la América Meridional* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos A. Baiocco, 1947), 40.

ix Feros, *ibid.*, 68.

x “Recibió 100 pesos por pintar en las cotas de los dos porteros del Cabildo limeño; y en las de los cuatro reyes de armas, las del Rey y las de la ciudad, con ocasión de las festividades de alzar pendones por el monarca Carlos II.”

xi “‘Maestro pintor’ por pintar el retrato del Rey Carlos II (lienzo que se ejecutó para la ceremonia de alzar pendones en nombre de este monarca y que luego fué colocado en un marco dorado), se le abonaron 38 pesos (*Libro XXVIII de Cabildos de Lima; Acta del 17 de Julio de 1668*).” *Ibid.*, 22.