



2003.006

Saint George and the Dragon

Unidentified Artist

Ecuador, Quito

Late 18th-early 19th century

Oil on canvas, 67 x 50 inches

Inscription: *S Jorge Martyr*

This painting of Saint George and the Dragon may have been one of a series depicting warrior saints on horseback, perhaps including Saint Eustache, Saint James Major, and Saint Ferdinand III of Castile and Leon like the series of four by Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos in the cathedral of Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia. The rather secular feel of this painting, in which the saint is dressed like a Roman soldier, complete with a lion-faced pauldron on one shoulder, and the inclusion of an angel who bestows a laurel wreath upon the victorious horseman, suggests that the painting was made to decorate a civic or domestic space.

The painted framework suggests a borrowing from the engravings of the Klauber family of Augsburg, which had a notable influence on decorative elements in Quito paintings. The palette, with its pink and clear blue tones, reflects the Rococo: the iconographical details (Roman costume, laurel wreath) hint of the advent of Neoclassicism. Alexandra Kennedy Troya has noted that from the late eighteenth century artists in Quito reformulated their style toward a more systematic, academic and finally Neoclassical manner that suited the taste of a better educated and wealthier clientele.ⁱ The Thoma *Saint George and the Dragon* reflects what Kennedy Troya has called the “appropriation, creollization, and secularization” of religious sculpture, painting and architecture by a “culturally dominant, but minority” sector of Quito society.ⁱⁱ In like manner, the Saint George in this painting has transcended his original role in the defeat of heresy to become a graceful image of confident horsemanship, handsomely draped, accepting the laurel of fame as his due, subduing the dragon without even a glance.
Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

ⁱ Alexandra Kennedy Troya, “Criollización y secularización de la imagen quiteña (Siglos XVII y XIII),” p. 28, in: Ana María Aranda, et al., *Barroco Iberoamericano: Territorio, arte, espacio y sociedad*, vol. 1 (Seville: Giralda, 2001), 1:28. This essay is also published as “Algunas consideraciones sobre el arte barroco en Quito y la “interrupción ilustrada (Siglos XVII y XVIII)” in: Alexandra Kennedy, ed., *Arte de la Real Audiencia de Quito, siglos XVII-XIX* (Madrid: Nerea, 2002), pp. 43-65.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*, 1:31.