



2011.013  
Unidentified Artist  
South America (Colombia?)  
*The Flight into Egypt*  
Late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Oil on canvas, 19 x 29 1/4 inches

The composition of this painting of the Flight into Egypt is based on an engraving by Johann Sadeler (1550-1600) after a painting by Maarten de Vos (1532-1603) (fig. 1). In the foreground, Saint Joseph leads a donkey bearing Mary and the Christ Child. In the middle distance is the scene in which the Roman soldiers stop to query the farmers reaping wheat. The soldiers ask whether the farmers have seen the Holy Family passing by and they answer, truthfully, that they were seen when the wheat seed was planted. Since the crop had miraculously reached maturity overnight, the Roman soldiers were thwarted in their search. As the family passes by, a pagan idol falls from its perch in the tree on the right.



Fig. 1. Johann Sadeler, *The Flight into Egypt*, after Maarten de Vos, published in Cologne *cum privil. C.M.*

Although the “Flight into Egypt” is part of the life histories of both the Virgin Mary and of Christ, it must have been often painted as a single canvas, for there are innumerable versions of the subject in Spanish colonial painting. This is probably because the theme was not only revered for its religious content but also enjoyed for its landscape setting.

In this painting earth tones predominate, which suggests that it might have been painted in or near Bogotá, where painters seem to have been influenced by the dark palette of early seventeenth-century Sevillian artists than elsewhere in South America. Painters in Cuzco, Peru, for example, were much more likely to work with bright reds and blues, and landscape paintings

in Peru were more likely to reflect the brown/green/blue palette typical of Flemish landscape painting.

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