



2017.071

Unidentified artist

Peru

*The Return from the Flight into Egypt*

Eighteenth century

Oil on copper, 20 ¼ x 9 1/16 inches

An engraving after a painting by the Italian artist Giovanni Battista Paggi (fig. 1) was widely known in Spanish America and there are quite a number of adaptations of it in paintings and even in bas-relief (in the church of San Francisco, Bogotá, Colombia). The subject, depicting the return of Jesus, Mary and Joseph from Egypt, is told in Matthew 2:19-23.

While the unknown painter of the small oil painting on copper in the Thoma collection mostly hewed to the graphic model in creating a colored version of it, he also adapted the print to local taste. The angels no longer cavort athletically above the central figures, but instead carefully toss blossoms that create a flowery carpet beneath the feet of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. As well, the use of gold to illuminate the haloes and along the hem of Mary's mantle is a luxurious embellishment that appealed to the Creole elite for whom this precious work of art was probably intended.



Fig. 1. Engraving by Cornelis Galle (1576-1650) after a painting in the Uffizi, Florence by Giovanni Battista Paggi (1554-1627), published by Philips Galle (1537-1612).

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt