



2016.013

Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos (1638-1711)

Colombia, Bogotá

*Woman of the Apocalypse*

1683

Oil on canvas, 50 3/8 x 37 inches

Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos was one of the most important South American painters of his time. He was born in Santafé de Bogotá to a family with Sevillian origins and at some unknown date entered the busy workshop of the Figueroa family of artists (also originally from Seville) as an apprentice. We know that he had his own workshop by 1657, when he was already signing paintings. Vásquez was a prolific artist, with around five hundred extant works attributed to him. His style is elegant, restrained rather than dynamic, with warm coloring and soft contours. His oeuvre reminds us that *mestizaje*, the blending of cultures reflected in art, did not affect all artistic production in Spanish America. His style was as European as he could make it at such a long remove from Seville.

The subject of this painting, the *Woman of the Apocalypse*, derives from the Biblical book of Revelation in which there appears “A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (12:1). She delivers a man child, awaited by a dragon (a serpent in the painting), hoping to devour the infant, but he is “taken up to God, and to his throne” (12:5). According to exegetes, the Woman so vividly described in the Bible is the Virgin Mary, and her son the Christ Child. The opening verse yielded the iconography of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, but the verses following were also used to create the vision described by Saint John on Patmos. Sometimes he appears in the landscape below, writing his revelations.

Vásquez doubtless used a print as his compositional model. His style seems to change very little over his long career. The silvery palette and limited hues of this painting of the *Woman of the Apocalypse* are typical of Vásquez's style.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt