



Unidentified artist

*Our Lady of the Forsaken of Lima*

18<sup>th</sup> century

Peru, Cuzco

Oil with gold on canvas, 64 1/3 x 40 inches

A devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken was brought to Peru as early as 1629 when a native of Valencia resident in Lima built a chapel there devoted to the cult. Later, the 10<sup>th</sup> Count of Lemos, appointed Viceroy of Peru by King Charles II, and his wife Ana de Borja, brought their devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken with them. With their support a church in Lima devoted to *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados y San Francisco de Borja* was completed and

dedicated in 1672. For more about the cult in Valencia and Peru, see the object essay for *Our Lady of the Forsaken* (2014.067), which illustrates and discusses the type of image that was far more widely disseminated in South America.

The Thoma painting is closely based on an eighteenth-century print, in which Mary is pictured as a traditional “dressed sculpture,” with the Christ Child held in her proper left arm and her right hand bearing a stem of Madonna lilies (fig. 1). This iconography of the “Forsaken” is quite generic, with the only distinguishing feature being the addition of the children at the base. In fact, when the cult was first established in Lima, an image of Our Lady of the Pillar that belonged to Ana de Borja was simply adapted to a new purpose. The present-day appearance of the devotional image in its current location (fig. 2) shows how little the details of a fully dressed sculpture actually matter.

It is probable that the Thoma painting was commissioned in Cuzco by a member of Lima’s elite, who preferred a restrained image, though enriched with gold *brocateado* in homage to the patron’s dedication to *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados*. The cult was established in Lima by none other than the Viceroy Count of Lemos and so must have had a distinguished following. A portrait of the count that was probably painted soon after his death (fig. 3) is inscribed to note that, at his request, his heart was interred at the feet of the image in the church he had built in honor of Our Lady of the Forsaken.<sup>1</sup> At the upper left of the canvas, the viceroy kneels before the Valencian image, declaring his devotion.

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<sup>1</sup> The whole history of the devotion and the building of the church, now destroyed and rebuilt in Breña, is recounted by Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Historia de culto de María en Iberoamérica y de sus imágenes y santuarios más celebrados* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huarpes, 1947)



Fig. 1. Unidentified artist, *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados de Lima*, 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 2. Dressed sculpture of *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados* in the eponymous church, Peru, Lima (Breña)



Fig. 3. Unidentified artist, *Portrait of the Count of Lemos*, 1673?, Peru, Lima, Palacio del Gobierno. Photo: Daniel Giannoni.