



2022.69

Unidentified artist

Our Lady of the Rosary of the Dominican Monastery, Potosí

Bolivia, Potosí

Eighteenth century

Oil and gold on canvas,

42 1/8 x 33 1/2 in.

The painting records the appearance of a dressed statue in the Dominican church in Potosí, Bolivia, the so-called “City of Silver,” beautifully referenced by the ornate frame that continues to enhance the cart on which the sculpture appears in processions (fig. 1). Saints Francis and Dominic appear with the Virgin Mary in their roles as “the emblematic fathers of the missionary effort in the Andes.”¹ The sculpture is said to have been brought to Potosí by the Dominican order in the sixteenth century and was possibly the one that Francisco Tito Yupanqui studied before creating his sculpture of Our Lady of Copacabana.

There are a number of paintings of this image extant, for example Figs. 3, 4, and 5. There can be no doubt about the identification of the subject of the Thoma painting, for the texts at the bottom of the latter two paintings make it clear. The painting in the Casa Nacional de la Moneda (fig. 4) is inscribed as representing Our Lady of the Rosary “of the Convent of Preachers in the Imperial Villa of Potosí.”² Most paintings of local devotions to the Virgin Mary picture the dressed sculpture on a fictive altar, but these paintings all prioritize the role of the image in festival processions, with a variety of imaginative carts depicted.

The Thoma painting includes Saints Francis and Dominic, as in Fig. 2. Mary holds the Christ Child, dressed as an eighteenth-century gentleman, to her left, and both of them offer rosaries (see also acc. no. 2017.001). The unidentified artist has painted the gown and jewels of the Virgin Mary with exquisite care and recreated the silver arch with full mastery of the *grisaille* technique.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

¹ Maya-Stanfield-Mazzi, “Uniquely American Visions of the Virgin Mary/*Imágenes univócamente Americanas de la Virgen María*,” pp. 251-271 in: Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, ed., *The Art of Painting in colonial Bolivia/El arte de la pintura en la Bolivia colonial* (Philadelphia, PA: Saint Joseph’s University Press, 251-271, at p. 268.

² Ibid.



Fig. 1. Our Lady of the Rosary in procession in Potosí.



Fig. 2. Unidentified artist, *Our Lady of the Rosary of the Dominican Monastery, Potosí*, 18th century, Potosí, Bolivia, Museo de la Casa Nacional de Moneda.



Fig. 3. (left) Nicolás Ecoz, *Our Lady of the Rosary of the Dominican Monastery of Potosí*, 1763, Sucre, Bolivia, Museo de Charcas. Fig. 4. (right) Unidentified artist, *Our Lady of the Rosary of the Dominican Monastery of Potosí with the name saints of the patrons*, 1723, Potosí, Bolivia, Museo de la Casa Nacional de Moneda.