



Virgin of the Immaculate Conception Victorious over the Serpent of Heresy

Date

late 17th-early 18th century

Primary Maker

Unknown artist, Peruvian (Cuzco School)

Medium

Oil on canvas

Description

The Virgin, dressed in blue, inhabits the Heavens with angels in cloud-like forms. She is crowned above by 13 stars and the Trinity, and flanked by attributes of her immaculacy in round rosary beads. She stands on a crescent moon, yet also crushes a coiled serpent as a victorious symbol of the Church over heresy. The symbols on either side come from the Marian Litany of Loreto. The Cuzco School was an artistic tradition that arose in and around the major Peruvian city following its conquest by the Spanish in 1534. The new Cuzqueño tradition was bolstered by the arrival of Italian Mannerist and Jesuit priest Bernardo Bitti (1548-1610) in 1583, who was sent to Cuzco by the Jesuit mission and the Viceroyalty of Peru. Members of the Cuzco School were restricted to painting only religious scenes and portraits using contemporary European techniques. Scholar Guy Brett notes that “all colonial painting began in a process of copying,” but that “after a period of sheer copying, some themes took off.” Furthermore, as time passed,

Cuzqueño works took on an increasingly independent style influenced primarily by indigenous artists. Paintings by the Cuzco School can typically be characterized by their religious subject matter, a lack of perspective, and the use of distinctly warm tones (red, yellow, brown). The paintings also exhibit a stylistic looseness that cannot be found in their contemporary European counterparts. Sources: Brett, Guy. “Being Drawn to an Image.” *Oxford Art Journal* 14, no. 1 (1991): 3–9. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1360273>. José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la Pintura Cuzqueña* (1982) (Most thorough discussion of the Cuzco school, in Spanish)

Dimensions

Overall: 51 3/8 x 35 3/4 in. (130.5 x 90.8 cm) Frame: 58 1/4 x 42 1/2 x 2 7/8 in. (148 x 108 x 7.3 cm)