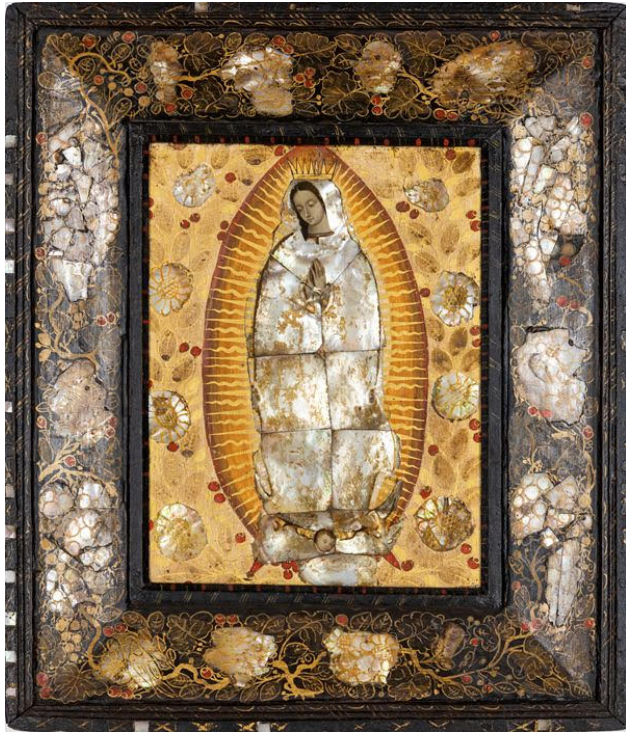


COLNAGHI



MIGUEL GONZÁLEZ

(Mexican, 1664-1704)

VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE

Oil on panel, with mother of pearl incrustation

52.4 x 74 cm.; 20.6 x 29.1 in.

Provenance

Convent of the Augustinian Nuns, Grenada, Spain;
Bought by Francis and Mary Lloyd, 1882;
Anonymous sale, Arcadia casa d'aste, Rome, 29 March 2023, lot 248.

Literature

Dujovone, Martha. Paintings with mother-of-pearl inlay. National Autonomous University of Mexico. Mexico, 1984.

Ocaña Ruiz, Sonia, "Inlay frames: autonomy and appropriation of Japanese art forms in the painting of New Spain". National Autonomous University of Mexico, Annals of the Institute of Aesthetic Research, number 92, Mexico, 2008.

Ocaña Ruiz, Sonia, "Mother-of-pearl inlay works: tastes, strategies and prices in New Spain". Annals of the Institute of Aesthetic Research. Volume 37. Number 106. Year 2015.

García Lascurain Vargas, Gabriela, "News regarding mother-of-pearl inlay paintings and painters in Oaxaca". National Autonomous University of Mexico. Annals of the Institute of Aesthetic Research. Volume 33. Number 98. Year 2011.

COLNAGHI



LONDON

NEW YORK

MADRID

COLNAGHI

This marvellously rendered work by Miguel Gonzalez depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe is an excellent example of the Mexican *enconchado* technique, whereby panels were lined with linen, lathered in paste, and inlaid with nacre (mother-of-pearl). This arrangement was then delicately drawn out and coloured by means delicate layers of glaze in varying colours. Lastly, the surfaces were polished and lacquered until a smooth shiny sheen was attained. This exquisitely fine work is particularly noteworthy for the large sections of nacre in the painting and the exquisitely fine face of the Virgin.

Enconchado works are generally smaller in size and devotional in nature, and this work is no exception. The object of the painting's veneration, the Virgin of Guadalupe, was (and still is) an iconography particularly revered in the New World. The imagery refers to a miraculous appearance of the Virgin in 1531 to a man named Juan Diego (born Cuauhtlatotzin) on a hill near the village of Guadalupe, itself near Mexico City. Speaking to the man in his native tongue (Nahuatl) the Virgin instructed him to go seek the local Bishop, Juan de Zumárraga, to build a church in her honour on the site. Upon hearing this story, the Bishop did not believe him. The Virgin appeared to Juan Diego two more times in the following days, but the bishop still did not heed the request. Upon her fourth apparition, she instructed Juan Diego to gather roses growing on the hillside into his cloak, also known as a *tilma*. When he returned to the bishop, he spilled the roses before him to reveal a miraculous image of the Virgin. Zumárraga finally recognized the miracle, and a shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe was built on the Hill of Tepeyac, with a basilica to her constructed below. The original miraculous image, the basis for all depictions of the virgin of Guadalupe, hangs in the new basilica at Tepeyac in Mexico City (**Fig. 1**).

Miguel González, along with his brother Juan, are recognised as masters of *enconchado*. Tomás González de Villaverde, probably their father, was also a master lacquer-worker residing in Mexico City, where it is thought the bulk of the production of this sort of art was concentrated. The family workshop enjoyed well-deserved renown. The surviving documentary material talks of a deluge of commissions for both public and private worship, which went beyond the city itself, stretching across the Atlantic. Indeed, a label placed at the back of the work indicated that this Virgin hung in an Augustinian Monastery in the southern Spanish city of Grenada. In all, at least eighty other mother-of-pearl pieces have been identified on Iberian soil, pointing to an artistic form that was admired and sought after by the most discerning eyes on the old continent.

In stylistic terms, a close comparison with this Virgin can be made with one of the same iconography in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (**Fig. 2**). While the LACMA Virgin presents a more complicated Design, the *much* larger and more expensive nacre tiles used in the present version point to its immense value.

Examining the encrusted frame of the painting with its alternation of red berries and golden leaves, one may intuit certain debts to the Far East, specifically *nanban* (Japanese Christian) lacquerware (**Fig. 3**). The Spanish Empire's vast expanse permitted Japanese goods to reach Mexico on Galleons that travelled from Manilla, also a Spanish holding at the time. This Japanese influence, combined with the picture's Spanish provenance, make it a perfect microcosm of the cultural creolisation (forcefully) created in the Spanish Empire.

COLNAGHI



Fig. 1. Miraculous Image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, 16th century.
Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico City.

COLNAGHI



Fig. 2. Miguel Gonzales, *Virgin of Guadalupe*, 1690 circa.
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

COLNAGHI



Fig. 3. Japanese Artist, Portable Nanban Box, late 16th century.
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.