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Pedro López Calderón
(Mexico, doc. 1681 – 1734)

*Our Lady of Guadalupe
with a Donor*

first third of the 18th century
signed (lower right):

Po Calderon fec. Mex^{co} 173

oil on canvas

41.2 x 28.2 cm.; 16.2 x 11.1 in.

Provenance

Private Collection, Spain.

Literature

J. González Moreno, *Iconografía guadalupana*, vol. 1, Mexico 1959, p. 86;

J. I. Mayorga Chamorro, *Pedro López Calderón: pintura y devoción en la órbita del tornaviaje*, Santiago de Compostela & Seville 2020, p. 487.

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Little is known of the life of Pedro López Calderón beyond the fact that he lived between the last third of the 17th century and the first third of the 18th, as evidenced by his first and last canvases, dated 1681 and 1734.¹ Having reached the rank of master painter, and settled in Mexico City, he devoted his artistic skills to a particularly extensive and varied pictorial oeuvre, as well as mother-of-pearl inlay, a little-known aspect of his despite being one of just eight known recorded artists working in the *enconchado* artform.²

The commission of the small-scale canvas we are presenting here, whose version of the portrait with donor stands as one of the most unusual expressions of devotion for Our Lady of Guadalupe. Despite being an essentially autochthonous form of devotion, which appeared early, it reached its height as an artistic representation during the 18th century, a period to which we would date the creation of this work.

The catalogue of José López Calderón of *Guadalupes* is made up of an extensive repertory of works, largely intended for exportation to Spain, with different formats and compositional features, including small-scale versions on both copper plate and canvas and which, due to their reduced size, we assume were for domestic and/or devotional use.³ Examples of these would include the work we are addressing here, and the 30 x 25cm copper belonging to the Calderón collection. These are joined by larger canvases with elaborate designs intended to be displayed in churches and cloisters, of which it is worth highlighting the *Guadalupes* from the monastery of Santa María la real in Bormujos (Seville), and the church of the former convent of Carmen de Sanlúcar la Mayor. Of exceptional quality, and recently added to the artist's catalogue, are the *Guadalupes* located by Adrián Contreras, one in a convent in Granada and the other from the personal collection of José María Pérez de Herrasti y Narváez, recently donated to the *Real Monasterio de Santa María de Guadalupe* in Cáceres.

Our small-scale Guadalupe meets the characteristics Montes González attributed to the *fattura* of López Calderón's work, as did the classical version by him in the Guadalupe from the temple of Santa Mónica in the Colonia del Valle, Mexico (fig. 1). Measuring 41 x 28 cm and having chosen canvas as the pictorial support, the Guadalupe we have before us here adopts and adheres to the iconographic and compositional tradition of the first half of the 17th

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century, where the composition, both balanced and free from ornamental elements, held sway over the narrative and floral versions of subsequent decades.

In accordance with the most purist of depictions, Our Lady of Guadalupe appears in full length, standing facing the devote spectator, her left knee bent, just visible under the folds of the robe. Identified as an indigenous Virgin, with dark skin and yet European facial features, she is gathering her hands together, adorned with a gold cross in the middle of her chest, in an act of prayer, imbuing the scene with a serene mysticism also heightened by the downward tilt of her face, depicted with ingenuous beauty.⁴

Resting on Our Lady's shoulders is a blue cloak, covered by a host of gold stars which, covering the Virgin's head and serving as a seat for the crown, falls down equally on both sides of her torso, revealing the pinkish, decorated robe covering the body of the future Mother of God. The robe, secured at the neck, the middle of which is adorned with what appears to be a jewel, is elongated through shy and yet rigid folds beyond her feet. Picking up the bottom of the fabric is a cherub who, resting on a crescent moon that also serves as a base for the Virgin, opens his tricolored wings while tilting his face towards his left shoulder in a clear gesture of withdrawal and respect.

Finally, and as one of the last essential compositional elements in a purist representation of Our Lady, we should draw attention to the splendor or halo of golden rays surrounding the figure of the Virgin which, in the intensity with which it appears to emulate the rays of the sun, both introduces and opens the way to a host of clouds that serve as a conceptual and pictorial framework for the composition.

To conclude our descriptive analysis of the work's composition, I would pause for a moment on the image of the donor, who appears in the lower left-hand corner of the canvas, dressed in the French style, giving us a clue to his wealthy economic and enviable social position within the strict society of Mexican castes. Being either a Spanish migrant or, possibly, a Mexican criollo, he had himself portrayed in accordance with courtly fashion, dressed in a powdered *in-folio* wig that perfectly matches the black dress coat he wears on top of a red waistcoat of

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which only the collar is visible, and topped off with a recent addition to fashion, a tie of white lace.

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Figure 1. Pedro López Calderón, *Virgen de Guadalupe*, 17th century, oil on canvas. Crypt of the Temple of Saint Monica in Colonia del Valle, Mexico

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Footnotes

¹ Recent studies on the painter Pedro López Calderón were published by José Ignacio Mayorga Chamorro, who has put all of his efforts and scholarly curiosity into his dissertation from the University of Malaga. The painting discussed here can be found in an investigation he conducted within the scope of his thesis: 'Pedro López Calderón: pintura y devoción en la órbita del tornaviaje', in *Tornaviaje. Tránsito artístico entre los virreinos americanos y la metrópoli*, Santiago de Compostela & Seville 2020, p. 487.

² J. I. Mayorga Chamorro, *San Ciriaco y Santa Paula, patronos de Málaga, en un lienzo inédito de Pedro López Calderón*, Malaga 2018, p. 81.

³ With regards to this, see J. I. Mayorga Chamorro: 'Catalogando la obra del pintor novohispano Pedro López Calderón. Nuevas aportaciones, reflexiones y conclusiones', in *IV Congreso Internacional de Jóvenes Investigadores 'Mundo Hispánico: cultura, arte y sociedad'*, Leon 2018.

⁴ On Guadalupe's tradition and iconography, see the articles by Gisela Von Wobeser and Beatriz Azcón: G. Von Wobeser, 'Antecedentes iconográficos de la imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe', in *Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas*, vol. 37, no. 107, 2015; P. Baeza Azcón, 'La iconografía de la Virgen de Guadalupe de México en España', in *Archivo Español de Arte*, vol. 80, no. 318, 2007.