

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Circle of Padre Carlos
(Quito (Ecuador), 2nd half of the 17th century)

Reliquary bust of Saint Genesium Martyr

polychromed wood, *estofado* and
brocateado, glass eyes
68 x 49 x 37 cm.;
26 3/4 x 19 1/4 x 14 5/8 in.

Provenance

Private Collection.

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Saint Genesium was a Roman notary during the Tetrarchy government of Diocletian (286 A.D. - 305 A.D.) who refused to support the decree of persecution against the Christians (The Diocletianic or Great Persecution). He deserted his service in the city of Arles and therefore was prosecuted by the Roman authorities: captured and beheaded. Through martyrdom he was made a saint and became the patron of notaries and secretaries. The attributes of this saint are the book of the notaries and a tree branch.

This Saint was particularly venerated in medieval Spain, thus his cult extended to all the viceroyalties during the 16th and 17th century, though the saint was called *San Ginés de la Jara*, being essentially the Iberian version of Saint Genesium of Arles.

Reliquary busts were extremely popular throughout the Spanish Empire, allowing worshippers who lived in remote locations to access the cult of Saints, as was the case in the provinces of the various viceroyalties. The relics were used to enhance the fervour of the local Christian communities.

This reliquary bust gathers all the characteristics of the Ecuadorian school of sculpture, from the treatment of the polychromies to the construction of the facial features. Through them it can be defined that the probable author of the sculpture is the friar Padre Carlos, active during the second and third quarter of the 17th century in Quito (fig. 1). He was the leading sculptor of the city, influencing important artists such as Bernardo de Legarda (Quito, 1700?–1773) and Manuel Chili Caspicara (Quito, 1720?–1796?).

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Figure 1. Padre Carlos (active 2nd and 3rd quarters of the 17th century), *Saint Luke the Evangelist* (detail), dated 1668. Capilla de Cantuña, Quito (Ecuador)