

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Unidentified artist

(Viceroyalty of Peru, 17th century)

The Angel Zadkiel

oil on canvas

inscription above his head:

BENIGNITAS ET MANSVTVDDODI

inscription on the plinth: *ETENIM*

DOMN 9 DABIT BENIGNITATEM

Y ET TERRA NOSTRA DABIT

FRVCTUM SVVM PSA. 84

[For the Lord will give goodness:

and our earth shall yield her fruit

(Psalm 84:13)]

199 x 110 cm.; 78.3 x 43.3 in.

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of the bullfighter Antonio Fuentes and Zurita (1869 – 1938), Seville.

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The Angel Zadkiel is depicted face-on, looking out at the spectator, against a background made up of mountains and trees. His right hand is pointing to a lamb, while the other is resting on his breast. Two beautiful iridescent wings unfurl from his back. The iconography of this painting links it to the Agnus Dei, which represents the sacrificed Son of God. This archangel (not one of the canonical ones) is depicted as a beautiful beardless youth with elegant facial features and sumptuous clothing made up of a long robe over which he wears a beautiful short tunic with a short skirt, painted with great skill to imitate a rich fabric decorated with a border of large circles, brocade and a varying palette of soft colours and gold. On his delicate feet he is wearing elegant sandals adorned with gemstones, and he has a generous flapping cloak over his shoulders, knotted and secured with an ornate brooch. Zadkiel is the angel who prevents Isaac being sacrificed by his father Abraham, replacing the knife with a lamb, or Agnus Dei, which is pictured joyfully at his feet. Agnus Dei, a subject Zurbarán represented in his paintings on a number of occasions, presents Jesus Christ as a symbol of peace between God and Man. The skilled artist who executed the work being studied here constructed the iconography with great creativity, to the extent that it is the only known example depicting this apocryphal angel with the noble animal. Zadkiel is the angel of Mercy, of benevolence, the patron of those who forgive, and in Latin America he is depicted with various attributes, such as an olive branch and a dagger or sword, as portrayed by Crispijn van de Passe (Arnhem, 1564 – Utrecht, 1637) (fig. 1).

Although we can identify the clear influence of Zurbarán, our painter manages to create his own style in the building up of the painting's complex and original iconography, in the richness and elegance with which the aforementioned ornamental and decorative elements are depicted, and in the flimsy fabrics making up the angel's attire. The originality of the exquisite floral borders in both works (only seen in viceregal paintings), made up of extraordinary roses and carnations, with exuberant lilies and sunflowers at the corners, added to the aspects we have already mentioned, lends these beautiful paintings a clearly Andean freshness. We could also add that the works present a religious nature that is both simple and pleasant, suited to the divine message, given angelical figures are protectors of the community's spiritual goods and possessions.

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Lima's Monasterio de la Concepción houses a marvellous series of angels executed between 1625 and 1640. This ensemble includes Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Hadraniel, Uriel, Ariel and Leriell. In this early period, the European style influenced by Zurbarán and Román was taken as a model, with depictions portraying beardless, nonsexual youths dressed in classically-inspired tunics of a feminine nature, Roman helmets and attire and landscape backgrounds. Subsequently, Lima workshops would develop a regional style, with Cuzco also being a creative hub presenting marked indigenous influences.

The series produced in the Viceroyalty depict angels bearing the attributes of varying hierarchies, such as, for instance, an angel with a flame in his hand, corresponding to a seraphim, or those crowned with roses and bearing symbols from the Passion, which would relate to virtues. Angels bearing Marian symbols constitute a Baroque innovation.

Drawing on José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert,¹ we could also add that the theoretical basis of these compositions is to be found in the work of the Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (Lima, 1565-1652). His book *Sílex del Amor Divino (Firestone of Divine Love)* evokes the divine power attained by humanity through the angels, the heavenly hierarchies and the "seven princes": Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Uriel, Sealtiel, Jegudiel and Barachiel. These types of works were intended to foster devotion for the angels, replacing the pre-Hispanic beliefs in the stars and other natural phenomena, and thereby bring about the long-desired Christianization process in a clear act of religious syncretism.²

In the New World, we also find the Spanish custom of mixing series of heavenly beings with Saints, with the oldest source we have recording a series of angels being from a contract signed by the Cuzco-born painter Basilio de Santa Cruz in 1661, in which he agreed to paint 12 angels and 12 virgins. These series include the three archangels, Michael, Raphael and Gabriel, and most of them also include the Guardian Angel, and sometimes Uriel. The other angels are individualized by their names and appearances in the Old Testament. As such, the angel who talks to Abraham and bears a flame in his hand is called Zadkiel.

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Figure 1. Crispijn van de Passe the Elder (Arnhemuiden, 1564 – Utrecht, 1637), *The Angel Zadkiel*, engraving

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Footnotes

¹ J. de Mesa and T. Gisbert, 'Ángeles y Arcángeles', in *El retorno de los Ángeles. Barroco de las Cumbres en Bolivia*, Unión Latina, 2000.

² R. Mujica Pinilla, *Ángeles Apócrifos en la América Virreinal*, Lima 1992.