

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



González Workshop  
(late 17<sup>th</sup> – early 18<sup>th</sup> century)

## *Virgin of Atocha*

oil and mother-of-pearl on panel  
28 x 18.8 cm.; 11 x 7.4 in.

(unframed)

45 x 36 cm.; 17.7 x 14.1 in.

(framed)

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## Provenance

Private Collection, Spain.

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LONDON

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This work, given the excellent quality of execution, surely comes from the workshop of Juan Gonzalez and Miguel Gonzalez.

The representation of the Virgin of Atocha was probably a private commission. It is important to point out that the original paintings' frame also boast the same mother-of-pearl inlay technique, with decorative motifs including a simple combination of flowers, petals and birds.

The motif of the Virgin and Child has been taken from the sculpture of the Virgin of Atocha in the Basilica of Our Lady of Atocha in Madrid. In primitive times, when the prevailing custom was to dress religious images, the Virgin of Atocha, dressed and covered in opulent robes with bare face and hands, looked almost life-size. Currently, stripped of her robes, the image looks like a non-polychrome wooden statuette. Sat on a throne, it is a symbol of royalty and the seat of knowledge.

This exquisite painting with mother-of-pearl inlay is true to the original iconography of the Virgin of Atocha. The mother-of-pearl inlay is arranged on the clothes of the Virgin and the Infant, thereby recreating the rich robes possessed by the Virgin. On these irregular pieces of mother-of-pearl, oil paint and gilding has been used to depict the folds and varying details making up the rich quilting of the Virgin of Atocha's opulent attire.

The crescent moon held by the angel on the base is also encrusted with mother-of-pearl. The mother-of-pearl inlay reflects the light thereby lending the work a special sort of iridescent luminosity.

The faces of the Virgin and the Infant are painted in oil, in a dark brown color. The crown and radiance are painted in the same manner. Like the painting, the frame presents mother-of-pearl inlay and oil paint, depicting delicate flowers and birds.

The frame once again presents the same mother-of-pearl inlay technique as the painting, which shows that both painting and frame were closely related, complementing each other.

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This painting was executed around the end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th century. These extraordinary works mark a fundamental milestone in viceregal art and culture in New Spain. The González were not the only artists developing this technique: we can now also point to the works of Nicolás Correa, Antonio de Santander and Agustín del Pino. However, among all of them, the González had the biggest mother-of-pearl inlay workshop in Mexico City, carrying out the largest number of commissions.

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**Figure 1.** Virgin of Atocha, Basilica of Our Lady of Atocha, Madrid