

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Unidentified artist

(Viceroyalty of Peru, 17th century)

Saint Gabriel the Archangel

oil on canvas

inscription above his head: *PAX ET AIVSTITIA DEI*

inscription on the plinth: *NOLO MORTĒ PECCATORIS SED VT MAGIS CŌVERTATVR ET VIVAT, EZEC, 33.*

[I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from ways and live (Ezekiel 33:10)]

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.

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



LONDON

NEW YORK

MADRID

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

The Archangel Gabriel is one of the three canonical angels, whose name means “God is my strength”. He is the heavenly messenger *par excellence*, the teacher of the Patriarch Joseph, and he appears to Mary in the Annunciation, foretelling her Grace. Here he is depicted in all his majesty, standing up with his wings unfurled behind his back. His delicate face is tilted slightly towards the right, while his right hand is holding the dove that represents the Holy Spirit and his left holds the madonna lily, symbol of Mary’s pure and virginal motherhood. He is depicted full length against a background of mountainous outlines, profuse vegetation and a river channel. His rich clothing is made up of loose breeches tied with a silky ribbon that appears to float in the air, a short tunic with a little skirt made of strips, in the fashion of a Roman soldier’s *pteruges*, adorned with gold buttons that look like precious gemstones, elegant leather boots with gold buttons and brooches decorated with lavish jewels.

This depiction of the Archangel Gabriel as a nonsexual, beardless, sumptuously-dressed youth draws close parallels with the work of Francisco de Zurbarán, an artist who served as a source of inspiration for painters in 17th-century Cuzco. The essayists Gian Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1600) and Francisco Pacheco (1564-1644) gave recommendations and instructions for painters regarding how to depict the angels: what colours, postures, clothing, the symbolism of the different precious stones and other symbols that could have a positive influence on God’s revelation to Man.¹ The painting presents a decorative border of exuberant and colourful flowers of great beauty and chromatic richness.²

The depiction of angels and archangels was widespread in the painting of the Viceroyalty, due to their Biblical importance and intrinsic beauty. In his work *On the Celestial Hierarchy* (*De Coelesti Hierarchia*), the late 5th to early 6th-century Byzantine theologian and mystic known as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite³ divides the angels into three groups. The first being made up of seraphim, cherubim and thrones, the second of dominations, virtues and powers, and the third of principalities, archangels and angels. The third group, to which the Archangel Gabriel and the Angel Zadkiel belong, as depicted in the works before us here, includes the ones that establish relations with mankind. The most important among them protect the nations, and the archangels are messengers of God. The Church recognizes the

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

three canonical archangels, Michael, Raphael and Gabriel. The angels protect all humankind. It was in the Renaissance that the angels started being painted individually and to make up series, and this practice carried on into the Baroque period. Models influencing painting in both Spain and the Americas include the Hieronymus Wierix (1533-1619) engraving *The Palermo Seven* (fig. 1) and the works of Gerard de Jode (1509-1591), both of whom copied from the drawings of Maerten de Vos. These works are group depictions of the seven angels, but they established an early benchmark for future series of individual angels. As individual models, artists turned to the engravings of Crispijn van de Passe (1564-1637) and Philipp Galle (1537-1602), among others.⁴ These images were subsequently the models for 17th-century Spanish painters.⁵

Spanish series depicting angels preceded those of their Latin American counterparts. The Spanish master Bartolomé Román executed a series drawing inspiration from the engravings of Wierix for Madrid's Encarnación monastery, and there is a copy from the same artist in the church of San Pedro in Lima and another in Cuzco. The Seville painting school represented by Zurbarán and his disciples Bernabé de Ayala and the Polanco brothers also contributed to this angelic iconography.

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Figure 1. Hieronymus Wierix (Antwerp, 1533 -1619), *The Palermo Seven*, engraving

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

Footnotes

¹ For further information on the recommendations, instructions and advice on how to represent angels by theorists Lomazzo and Pacheco, see F. Pacheco, *El arte de la Pintura*, published in 1649, Madrid 2001. See also G. L. Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, vol. 2, Florence 1974.

² E. Pommier, 'La Jerarquía de los Ángeles: El Ángel desde el Génesis hasta Bossuet', in *El retorno de los Ángeles. Barroco de las Cumbres en Bolivia*, Unión Latina 2000, pp. 35-50.

³ On heavenly hierarchy and the philosophy of Dionisio Aeropagita, see R. Roques, *L' univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys l' Aéropagite*, Paris 1983.

⁴ On the influence of European prints on colonial art, see A. Ojeda, *El grabado como fuente del arte colonial: Estado de la cuestión*, Davis 2017.

⁵ J. de Mesa and T. Gisbert, 'La Jerarquía de los Ángeles: Ángeles y Arcángeles', in *El Retorno de los Ángeles. Barroco de las Cumbres en Bolivia*, Unión Latina 2000, p. 25.