Roma in Lima: Italian Renaissance Influence in Colonial Peruvian Painting

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ROMA IN LIMA:

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE INFLUENCE IN COLONIAL PERUVIAN PAINTING

By

CHRISTA IRWIN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

The City University of New York

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

ROMA IN LIMA:
ITALIAN RENAISSANCE INFLUENCE IN COLONIAL PERUVIAN PAINTING

by:

Christa Irwin

Adviser: Professor James Saslow

The full extent of the long-lasting presence of the Italian Renaissance in colonial Lima has never been explored. This dissertation asserts that the Italian impact on painting in colonial Lima was connected to the authority of Rome, the center of the Catholic Church, and the artistic prestige of Italy in the culture of the sixteenth century. The Italian influence will be made evident through a survey of the careers of three Italian painters, Bernardo Bitti (1548-1610), Mateo Pérez de Alesio (1547-1616), and Angelino Medoro (1567-1631), who traveled to Lima in the end of the sixteenth century and went on to become the city’s most successful and influential artists. Connections between the New World and Italy are to be expected owing to the reliance on Italian models in Spain itself throughout the sixteenth century. However, profound Italian influence is unique to the viceroyalty of Peru, and, it is particularly concentrated in Lima in comparison to Latin America as a whole.

Through detailed examinations of the extant paintings of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro, as well as documents of their destroyed work, a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their styles and their contributions is offered here. Their impact is further evident in the work of
students and followers. A number of South American artists of the following generation continued to draw on Italianate forms: for example, Gregorio Gamarra trained with Bitti and perpetuated that artist’s distinctive elegant Mannerism. Italian influences were continued, with artists such Francisco Bejarano, an apprentice to Alesio, and Luis de Riano, who worked with Medoro. Numerous scholars have noted the prominence of Italianate forms and styles in South America, but they generally mention it as an aside or examine only isolated aspects of that influence. This scholarship includes the beginning of a map and timeline of Italian painters working in Peru, but it is by no means comprehensive and lacks any in-depth analysis of works of art. This dissertation is an in-depth consideration of the oeuvres of these Italian transplants as well as an assessment of the meaning and consequences of their presence in colonial Peru.
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Professor Eloise Quiñones-Keber offered my first exposure to colonial Latin American art in a class I took during my very first semester at the Graduate Center. In that class, I first saw images of paintings by Bernardo Bitti and I was ecstatic to have the opportunity to think about the possibility of considering my long passionate interest in Italian Mannerist painting in a new and original context. Professor Raquel Chang-Rodríguez has been a gracious and supportive member of my committee since I approached her in 2010. She met with me to offer advice and guidance when we found ourselves in Lima at the same time for research.

The research for this dissertation was supported by several grants, from the Graduate Center, and the Francis Haskell Memorial Fund. I could not have completed this project without these critical research trips, two to Peru, and one to Seville, Spain. In Lima, I found the help of the archivists at the Archivo General de la Nación, the conservators at the University of San Marcos, and the librarians at the Museo de Arte de Lima to be invaluable.
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I dedicate this work to my daughter, Grace, who has inspired me since long before I even had the idea of her in my head.
To Grace
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INTRODUCTION

During the Spanish colonization of South America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Spain promoted an influx of Italian Renaissance art and culture into colonial Peru, in an attempt to create a new Rome in the capital of Lima. The Italian impact in colonial Peru was prominent owing to the authority of Rome, the center of the Catholic Church, and the artistic prestige of Italy in the culture of the sixteenth century. Works of art, such as prints, drawings, paintings, sculptures, and books, were imported to serve as visual tools for disseminating Counter-Reformation iconography and Italianate forms in the Americas; then, between 1575 and 1599, three Italian painters, Bernardo Bitti, Mateo Pérez de Alesio, and Angelino Medoro, arrived in Peru. The viceroyalty of Peru was established in 1542 and remained intact until 1824, when the modern country of Peru won its independence from Spain. At its height, the viceroyalty controlled all of South America, including not only modern-day Peru, but also Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia, countries that contain cities visited by the Italian artists discussed here.

Connections between the New World and Italy are to be expected due to the reliance on Italian models on the Iberian peninsula throughout the sixteenth century and the fact that half of Italy was under Spanish dominion by 1556. Distinct examples of Italian influence are evident from early in colonial Latin American history. For example, in Santo Domingo, the first city of the New World, established in 1510, the governor’s palace is starkly classical in style, reminiscent of Brunelleschi and the Florentine
Renaissance. However, profound Italian influence is unique to the viceroyalty of Peru in comparison to Latin America as a whole, and began with the dissemination of Italian ideals through the establishment of a Jesuit College library in Lima in 1568, which was stocked with Italian religious and artistic texts. The connection with Italy became even stronger with the arrival of the Italian artists in Lima between 1575 and 1599.\textsuperscript{2} South American artists of the next generation continued to draw on Italian style: for example, Gregorio Gamarra trained with Bitti and perpetuated that artist’s distinctive elegant Mannerism. Italian impact persisted well into the seventeenth century, in the work of artists such as Luis de Riaño, an apprentice to Medoro, who was still working in Cuzco in 1643. Even later, the important commission of a sculpture of Saint Rose of Lima was awarded to the Italian artist Melchiorre Caffà, whose piece was installed in Lima’s church of Santo Domingo in 1665. These artists and events have been mentioned by scholars, but have not been fully studied or related to each other, and many other Italianate Peruvian artists and works of art have been ignored.

The historiographic disregard for Italian influence in Latin America has been widespread. Spain’s control over much of the New World in the sixteenth century has made Spanish art and that of Spain’s political possession, the Southern Netherlands, the most frequently cited European sources for colonial art. However, Italy’s prestige as the homeland of the Renaissance and the center of the Catholic Church gave Italian art primacy in the New World, although the extent and quality of Italian influence has not

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{1} Gauvin Bailey, \textit{Art in Colonial Latin America} (London: Phaidon, 2005), 127-33.
been studied. In this dissertation, I offer an analysis of the careers and contributions of Bernardo Bitti (1548-1610), Mateo Pérez de Alesio (1547-1616), and Angelino Medoro (1567-1631), in an effort to better understand their contributions to the Lima art world. I will look at their prolific careers in Lima and the influence of their presence in the viceregal capital and beyond in order to better understand Italy’s impact on colonial Peruvian painting. I am concerned with identifying Italianate components of their work and considering the dissemination of Italian ideas, but also with the reception of Italian Renaissance paintings in the context of colonial Lima, whose patrons had certain goals of conversion and Counter-Reformation in mind, and whose audience was not a homogeneous group of Europeans, but instead composed of Spaniards, criollos, mestizos, Indians, and Africans.

Scholarly attention in the United States to colonial Latin American art began in the early twentieth century; the most significant early contribution was the study by George Kubler and Martin Soria in 1959, wherein the two scholars outlined major artists and monuments. Their view of colonial art, however, was that it was merely a provincial version of European art: paintings, sculpture and architecture produced by artists that lacked the proper Old World training and exposure to high art. The authors attributed the differences they observed between colonial art and that made in Europe at the time to the lesser ability and education on the part of New World artists.

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Over the last two decades, however, scholarship has become more closely tied to a careful study of indigenous as well as European cultures, and to archival and field research. Sparked by the 1992 Quincentennial, scholars have begun to investigate the Renaissance as an international rather than solely a European phenomenon, expanding the boundaries of Renaissance scholarship both chronologically and geographically.⁴ This approach has produced interest in the art and culture of previously neglected parts of the world, such as Latin America, and scholars have begun to investigate colonial art as the product of a unique collaboration between cultures, rather than simply as art that is provincial and therefore unimportant. Several major survey publications of the past decade illustrate the increasing study of the New World, highlighting some of the most important artists and themes of its art, including various European, Asian, and pre-Columbian influences.⁵ The authors and contributors to these texts have outlined some of the more important themes and considerations involved in studying colonial Latin

American art, but these sweeping texts are too broad to address the trajectory of influence from a particular source.

There is also scholarship focused specifically on the art of Andean colonial Peru, where scholars over the past few decades have begun to publish studies of the viceroyalty’s most important artists, schools, and works of art. Bolivian scholars José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert are perhaps most important in their contribution to the field of Andean painting. They have written numerous texts focused on individual artists, with particular attention to artists who worked in their native Bolivia. In their *Historia de la pintura cuzqueña*, the authors surveyed some of the best-known painters of the famous and influential Cuzco school, and provided a history of events leading up to its formation. These studies are invaluable in setting up a basic map and timeline of the careers of major artists as well as providing many of the first published photographs of Peruvian painting. However, the text tends to be largely descriptive, often lacking

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6 The scholarship published by Teresa Gisbert and José de Mesa is extensive. I list here a sample of their work, which is not complete. Teresa Gisbert and José de Mesa, *Holguín y la pintura altoperuana del Virreinato* (La Paz: Alcaldía Municipal, 1956); *La pintura boliviana del siglo XVII* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1956); *Un pintor orureño en el Cuzco: fray Francisco de Salamanca* (Oruro: Universidad Técnica de Oruro, 1961); *Gaspar de la Cueva* (La Paz: Direccion de Informaciones de la Presidencia de la Republica, 1963); *Leonardo Flores* (La Paz: Direccion de Informaciones de la Presidencia de la Republica, 1963); *Escultura virreinal en Bolivia* (La Paz: Academia Nacional de Ciencias de Bolivia, 1972); *El zodiaco del pintor indio Diego Quispe Tito* (Palma de Mallorca: Imp. SS. Corazones, 1972).

analysis and contextualization. In more recent publications, Mesa and Gisbert have taken on more specific themes such as the persistence of indigenous themes in the iconography of Andean painting as well as the medium of mural painting in the Andes, both of which have contributed a more precise understanding of the sources and influences of colonial painting.

Like Mesa and Gisbert, more recent scholars have become interested in uncovering the persistent indigenous impact on colonial Peruvian painting, and have successfully proven that local beliefs, ideas, and aesthetics did not dissipate with the Spanish arrival, but in fact remained a strong part of the culture; the results were complex works of art embedded with layers of significance and influence. Carol Damian, Sabine MacCormack, and Gauvin Bailey are important contributors to this field and new scholars, such as Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, are embarking on studies rich in archival research and nuanced visual analysis.

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Most of the more recent studies of colonial Peruvian art are focused on the second half of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when indigenous culture had powerfully reasserted itself, resulting in fascinating examples of hybrid art. Peruvian artists of this later colonial period produced painting, sculpture and architecture that are unique products of the complex and diverse atmosphere of colonial culture. Far fewer scholars have considered the earlier part of colonial Peruvian art history. Peruvian scholars Francisco Stastny and Ramón Pinilla Mujíca are important exceptions, who have produced several critical considerations of the complex situation of art in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Peru. Their work stands out because of their recognition of the viceroyalty of Peru’s, and especially Lima’s, complicated strata of cultural influences in the early colonial period. In 1981, Stastny published a lengthy article about Mannerism in Latin America, and remains to date the only scholar to not only recognize traits of Mannerism in colonial Peruvian painting, but also consider on the erudite style’s meaning and significance in Europe and the Americas. In 2006, Mujíca contributed an essay to an exhibition catalogue edited by Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt based on paintings from the Thoma Collection, where he addressed issues of visual culture in the Catholic Counter-Reformation context of late-sixteenth-century Peru with a precise understanding of how church dogma and propaganda filtered into colonial art. Both scholars


12 Ramon Mujica Pinilla, “‘Reading without a Book’---On Sermons, Figurative Art, and Visual Culture in the Viceroyalty of Peru,” in *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels: South American Paintings*
analyzed the early colonial situation with a consideration of both indigenous culture and the impact of Europe’s own complex cultural situation in this period, and each helped to inform some of the assertions and ideas laid out in this dissertation.

As for the Italian artists considered in this dissertation, the amount and type of scholarship on each varies. Mesa and Gisbert have contributed the most to this area of study, with monographic publications on each of the three Italian artists, as well as considerations of some of the most important students and followers. Nearly every text on colonial Peruvian painting mentions Bitti, since he worked in a great number of cities throughout the viceroyalty and therefore had a geographically expansive impact. Alesio has attracted much more attention, but with particular scholarly focus on his work in Europe, where he had a productive career for two decades before traveling to the New World. His Latin American oeuvre is unfortunately sparse because most of his paintings were destroyed in earthquakes that occurred in Lima. Angelino Medoro has received the least amount of scholarly attention, although he has left behind the largest body of work in Lima of all three Italians. Although individual studies dedicated to each of these artists are limited, histories of colonial Peruvian art consistently mention all three; scholars

1600-1825 from the Thoma Collection, ed. Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt (Palo Alto, CA: The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, 2006), 41-56.

clearly recognize that they had a significant impact. However, much remains to consider in the careers of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro; iconographic analysis of their paintings and accurate, unbiased considerations of style are particularly important here.

This dissertation is the first in-depth study of the careers of all three Italian painters in Lima. While many of their paintings have been published and mentioned by scholars, very few have received detailed stylistic and iconographic analysis, which I provide here. For example, in previous scholarship, all three Italians have been labeled Mannerists. Mannerism itself is a term that has been used to refer to a variety of styles that emerged in Europe in the sixteenth century, often most commonly associated with an exaggeration of forms, attenuated bodies, shallow space, elegant poses, asymmetrical compositions, and erudite iconography, but also became associated with diverse schools of artists including those from northern Europe and Fontainebleau, for example. The study of Mannerism in Europe reveals great variety of art and individual responses, but there were also some popular tropes, such as those mentioned above. While there are tendencies toward some Mannerist formal decisions in the work of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro, each cultivated his own individual style and elements of Mannerism composed only one component. Additionally, Mannerism is a loaded term, and a style that is specific to the cultures that produced it in Europe. The influence of Mannerism on Italian painters working in Lima is related to a specific set of circumstances due to the colonial climate of art; essentially, the original meaning and significance of Mannerism in Europe could not have had the same meaning in sixteenth-century Peru as it did in late Renaissance Italy, or royal France. For a more complete discussion of the historiography
of Mannerism, see chapter 1, and Bernardo Bitti, who has been most frequently linked labeled as Mannerist. Finally, although all three painters received training and began their careers in Italy, their work in Lima must be understood within the context of the New World, with consideration for the diversity of the audience as well as the unique goals of art, intending to convert the local population. The artists and their patrons made decisions based on the particular needs of the religious and cultural climate of colonial Lima, which make the products of these Italian transplants unique and not wholly connected to their Old World origins.

Additionally, I investigate the context of the Italian phenomenon and presence in Lima and consider why these three artists rose to greater prominence than other European artists working in the viceroyalty. I argue that the Italian impact in colonial Peru was prominent due to the authority of Rome, the center of the Catholic Church, and the artistic prestige of Italy in the culture of the sixteenth century. Italy was an important center of art-making throughout the Renaissance and as a result artists trained in the Italian schools enjoyed status as a result of their highly respected training and background. As a model, Italian art had a weight in the Catholic world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for being exemplary of appropriate style and iconography of sacred art.

Additionally, the case of Italian influence in Peru is unique in colonial Latin America because in other New World art centers, Spanish and Flemish painters

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14 See pages 45-6.
dominated the market.\textsuperscript{15} To date, Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro are the only Italian painters in the colonial world known to have achieved such a magnitude of success. Additionally, it is not only the individual accomplishments of each Italian that are significant. Rather, it is important to recognize that through the achievements of these three artists, a phenomenon of Italian dominance in Peruvian painting took place. Not only were all three prolific in Lima, but they also trained and influenced painters of the next generations, so that Peruvian painting from the late-sixteenth through the middle of the seventeenth century demonstrates a consistent reliance on the Italian school. It is worth noting that while there is no explicit documentary evidence of the Italians’ high regard in Lima, the fact that they were employed collectively by every one of the city’s religious orders and contributed to most of Lima’s great churches, suggests that they worked with some acclaim in their time. Additionally, while it is likely that other European artists worked in Lima in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, it is only the names and careers of the Italians that have been recorded and remembered.

**The Impact of the Old World**

Although the culture of colonial Peru was unique and certainly distinct in many ways from that of Europe, the religious and artistic climate of the Old World had a critical impact on the development of the viceroyalty, and the development of the three Italian artists who traveled to Peru to paint. All three received initial training and likely

completed at least some work as painters in Italy; for Alesio the Old World experience was particularly extensive, having worked in several cities throughout Italy, as well as in Malta and Seville, before heading to Latin America. One likely reason that the Italians might have appealed to New World patrons was that they brought with them not only skills of painting, but perhaps just as importantly, knowledge of current Italian culture.

When considering Italian Renaissance art, there are many styles and many ideas that can be associated with the period. Evident in the work of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro is a familiarity with the Renaissance interest in Classicism, but also some of the manipulations of classical art often associated with Mannerism, another style with many facets. Each of the three Italian painters had particular connections to Italian Renaissance art that will be discussed here. For example, Alesio had experience painting the widely popular grotteschi inspired by ancient wall paintings, and, for a portion of his Lima career, Medoro painted figures with robust three-dimensionality and physical presence, according to the naturalism heralded by painters in Italy for much of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There is no single Italian style in the sixteenth century and therefore there is not one way to discuss the impact of the Italians working in Lima.

At the end of the sixteenth century and into the early seventeenth, the Counter-Reformation preoccupied Italian culture. Spurred by the campaigns of the Counter-Reformation and the dictates of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), artists made necessary renovations to Catholic art in the late Renaissance. Although the Council of Trent addressed issues of sacred art only briefly--on December 3, 1563 at the twenty-fifth session of the meeting, in a discussion titled, “On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics
of Saints, and on Sacred Images” -- its decrees had a significant impact on artists and patrons. However, the Council’s decrees included only general statements that defended the use of art in a sacred context, resting most of the responsibility of reforming art in the hands of local bishops. Thus, the responses that came from critics and writers helped to formulate ideas about what was incorrect and inappropriate in the past and what reformed art should be. Gabriele Paleotti, a bishop from Bologna, penned his own assessment of the situation in religious art. He stressed that art had a serious purpose; he called painting God’s instrument, and addressed art’s responsibility to spread the ideas of the faith, not to celebrate the fame and skills of the artist. Giovanni Andrea Gilio and Pietro Aretino joined the conversation by singling out Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment* as the most characteristic example of a painting impacted by the errors of Renaissance painters. They lambasted the artist for his inclusion of nudity in a sacred context, contorted poses, and straying from iconographic standards. In response, artists attempted to create art that fit the new qualifications asserted by theorists.

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17 Gabriele Paleotti, Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane (1582) (Vatican City: Libreria editrice vaticana, 2002); A.W.A. Boschloo, Annibale Carracci in Bologna: Visible Reality in Art after the Council of Trent (The Hague: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Recreation and Social Welfare Office, 1974), 121-144, offers the most in-depth interpretation of Paleotti’s ideas.


19 The inclusion of a beardless Christ was of particular offense to both writers.
In a scholarly context, this late-sixteenth-century art has largely eluded many scholars. Most have focused on either the earlier sixteenth century with the High Renaissance and Mannerism, or the early seventeenth century when the Baroque began to flourish in Italy. In the last few decades of the sixteenth century, artists and patrons cultivated styles and iconographies that suited the call for reform, but also catered to the tastes of the time. Responses varied, but all focused to a certain degree on the need for art to be *arte sacra*, art that was made for and promoted sacred devotions. Rome served as the center of the Catholic Church and so represented the standards and expectations of the pope and the Catholic world. The extensive Jesuit archives contain evidence the ways that Rome communicated with missions around the world about art.

Artists and patrons of this period intentionally drew connections between art of the late sixteenth century and that of the early Christian period, in order to underscore the legitimacy of art throughout Christian history. The renovation and decoration of the

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20 Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565-1610* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003), offers an overview of the challenges this period of art has presented to scholars and the typical ways that scholars have dealt with it in the past; Marcia B. Hall, *After Raphael: Painting in Central Italy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 173-214, offers a sensitive and careful examination of late-sixteenth-century art in Italy.


22 Ibid., 263. Here Burke cites ideas written by Giovanni Botero, *Relations, of the most famous kingdoms and commonwealths thorough the world : Discoursing of their situations, manners, customs, strengths, greatness, and policies* (London: Adam Islip, 1610).
Lateran Basilica, which Constantine established as Rome’s Cathedral and the seat of the popes, was one of the most important projects to represent this campaign to tie together early Christian and the Counter-Reformation.\textsuperscript{23} As the central focus of papal patronage throughout the Counter-Reformation, the Lateran also became an opportunity for several successive popes to demonstrate their attitudes towards art. The paintings made to decorate the Lateran were consequently clear, legible, and meant to inspire devotion and piety above all else; painters at the Lateran complied with the need for \textit{arte sacra}.\textsuperscript{24} However, the painters maintained many of the formal traditions of Mannerism, with graceful poses, elongated figures, and exuberance in color and composition, as late Renaissance patrons continued to prefer the elegance of earlier sixteenth-century painting, but complied with the need for art to be didactic and moving, rather than erudite and distant.\textsuperscript{25} The art at the Lateran must have served as an example that followed a set of guidelines for the decorum necessary in the Counter-Reformation period. Significantly, all three artists who traveled to Peru spent some of their formative years in Rome during this period of reform, where they would have encountered the artists responsible for formulating a new reform style. Thus, the Roman connections of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro made them well-informed about the current state of religious art in the tumultuous period of the Counter-Reformation, which certainly contributed to their reception in Lima.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 133.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 134-5.
While the Italians brought with them knowledge of and experience with Italian Renaissance ideas and norms, they did travel to the Iberian peninsula. Their backgrounds were well suited for the Spanish, due to Spain’s reliance on Italian art throughout much of the Renaissance. As Jonathan Brown has asserted, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Spain was among the most powerful kingdoms in Europe, but was on the margins of the art world.26 Throughout the Renaissance, Spanish painters absorbed ideas of Classicism and then Mannerism from Italian prototypes; Alonso Berruguete (1488-1561) and Pedro Machuca (1490-1550) are important examples.27 The Spanish reliance on Italian prototypes is clear and significant throughout the Renaissance, and often took on greater meaning than simply that of borrowed forms, serving to tie the Spanish to the status of Italian culture. For example, the architecture of Charles V’s palace at Granada, a block-like structure with an interior courtyard, was inspired by the austere classicism of Italian Renaissance architecture.28 Here, the classically inspired, Renaissance style of Charles V’s palace symbolized a connection between the leader and the great Roman past; Charles used the iconography of Italian classicism to conjure connections between his own empire and that of the ancient world. As Earl Rosenthal asserted, the palace was

27 Ibid.
“symbolic of rulership.”

Thus, the architecture at Granada is an example of how the Spanish applied Renaissance prototypes to project their own imperial power and status.

Italian impact was also disseminated with the commissioning of Italians to work for the Spanish crown. When Phillip II ascended to the throne in 1556, he made his preference for Italian artists well known by consistently hiring Titian as his principal painter. Additionally, Spanish artists working for Phillip were encouraged to paint directly from Italian prints, rather than invent compositions and style of their own; imitation was far prized over invention in Spain.

The decoration of the Escorial in Madrid further solidified Italian art’s profound presence in Spanish culture. The Escorial was an important project for Phillip II; it was intended as a lasting monument to the family and thus was significant to the king, but also was constructed during Spain’s battles with the Reformation and the struggle to maintain control of the Netherlands, so the Escorial also came to symbolize Spain’s power. For the building itself, Phillip hired an architect who had worked with Michelangelo on St. Peter’s in Rome, Juan Bautista de Toledo, the result being a highly classical, Italianate structure with a central dome and austere ornamentation. Italian connections continued in the decoration of the interior with paintings and sculptures, some by Italian artists, including Luca Cambiaso, Pellegrino Tibaldi, and Federico

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29 Ibid., 245. Rosenthal makes the point that Charles V was the first Holy Roman Emperor in recent history to be more than just a figurehead, and in that capacity, it was thought that he might have the power to reunite the extensive territories of the Roman empire.

30 Ibid., 245-6.
Zuccaro, and others by Spaniards often working in Italian Renaissance styles, such as Alonso Sánchez Coello and Luis de Carvajal.31

The Spaniard Juan Fernández Navarrete became Phillip II’s preferred local artist; he had worked with Titian and traveled throughout Italy, returning to Spain to cultivate a style akin to that of the great Italian, but with more sharply defined contours.32 Navarrete also filtered into his painting an understanding of the needs of the Counter-Reformation and produced the piety and decorum that Phillip II sought.33 Clearly, the Spanish maintained a preference for Italian models throughout the sixteenth century. It is then not surprising that Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro were awarded so many commissions in Spanish-occupied Peru. What remains significant is the fact that these three artists were the only Italians known to experience such acclaim in the Spanish colonies, so the situation in Lima was unique to the whole of Latin America.

**Lima: A Unique Colonial Capital**

The positive reception of the Italians in Lima may relate to the city’s unique cultural identity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As a viceregal capital, after Mexico City, Lima was the most important city in the New World. However, Lima was

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31 Rosemarie Mulcahy, *The Decoration of the Royal Basilica of El Escorial* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), is the best recent source on the painters who worked at the Escorial. She assesses the characteristic style of each and reviews contributions to the decoration of the basilica.

32 Ibid., 18-22.

not like other capitals and its unique origins made for a different kind of atmosphere; unlike Mexico City, for example, which was founded at the Aztec site of Tenochtitlan, Lima was a new city founded by the Spanish in Peru and designated capital and seat of the viceroy. The site had been just a small village before the Spanish arrival. The choice to establish capitals at sites like Tenochtitlan was common and allowed the Spanish to proclaim European dominion over the indigenous populations in many symbolic and propagandistic ways. For example, the Spanish built the Cathedral in Mexico City near the ruins of the Aztecs’ Templo Mayor and the Viceregal Palace on foundations of the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II’s residence. Using the indigenous capital as the seat of the viceroy allowed the Spanish to present their propaganda that the Old World invasion was merely a transition from ancient to modern and that their Christian churches and European palaces simply took the place of the past structures dedicated to indigenous beliefs and traditions. Lima was a coastal city that had little indigenous history; much farther inland and nestled high in the Andes, Cuzco had been the capital of the Inca empire and was the city that represented indigenous culture and strength. Cuzco would seem the obvious choice as capital for the Spanish because of the concentration of the local population that lived there as well as the symbolism of invading and conquering this local hotspot. However, Charles V chose Lima. Cuzco, despite its rich connections to the local past, was inconvenient and challenging to reach; Lima’s coastal location must have seemed far more reasonable in terms of trade and travel. Additionally, the Spanish perceived the cacique, the local leader, of the village of Lima as easy-going and so they
anticipated that the invasion and conversion would be straightforward.\textsuperscript{34} Additionally, the fear of unrest and resistance among the powerful indigenous population of Cuzco likely motivated the selection of Lima as seat of the viceroy.\textsuperscript{35} The result was that as a newly established city, Lima had no identity, no history, and no ancestral claims to power, and therefore was disconnected from the local foundations of Cuzco. The tension between Cuzco’s ancient past and Lima’s modern foundations became particularly evident in the early seventeenth century, in 1621, when Cuzco petitioned the Royal Council of the Indies to be designated the true capital of Peru. In her recent study of early modern Lima, Alejandra Osorio documented this case in careful detail.\textsuperscript{36} The people of Cuzco argued that their city was more accurately representative of the viceroyalty because of its large percentage of indigenous citizens and Lima countered with the rationale that a capital should not be composed largely of subjugated people. Ultimately, Lima’s builders and planners had no local history to build upon or symbolically evolve out of; instead, the Spanish made Lima a European city in the New World. Rather than focusing on architecture and design of conquest, the Spanish modeled Lima on the great cities of Italy and Spain.

On January 18, 1535, Francisco Pizarro founded the city of Lima and called it the City of Kings, after which the capital grew rapidly, becoming home to many Spanish


\textsuperscript{35} Alejandra B. Osorio, \textit{Inventing Lima: Baroque Modernity in Peru’s South Sea Metropolis} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 54.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 35-56. The first chapter of Osorio’s book is a rich retelling of the rivalry between Lima and Cuzco, supported by extensive archival documentation.
émigrés. The site itself, nestled on the Pacific coast and bordered by the Rimac river, fulfilled the qualifications of an ideal city as discussed by Leon Battista Alberti in his *De re aedificatoria* of 1450. Alberti’s inspirations as well as those of other important Renaissance architects and theorists such as Filarete, Sebastiano Serlio, and Andrea Palladio, came from the authoritative Roman author Vitruvius. In addition to this consideration of the city’s natural surroundings, however, was the idea that a city’s nobility was intimately linked to its architecture and the plan of its streets and squares.

Accordingly, Alejandra Osorio connected Lima’s creation to the classical concept of *civitas.* Early modern writers conceived of *civitas* as a government that sought to civilize and specifically to Christianize. Similarly, the ancient Romans saw *civitas* as an effort to distinguish between the civilized and the barbaric. As Osorio explains, “the early modern Christian idea of *civitas* implicated the notion of a civilized political animal uplifted by God, and the city became the privileged site for that uplifting.”

Accordingly, building urban centers in global territories became of prime importance to the Spanish. Planners imposed a western sense of order onto Lima by designing the city according to a grid-like plan. The Spanish were experienced with the project of

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41 Alfonso Ortiz Crespo, "The Spanish American Colonial City: Its Origins, Development, and
transforming sites according to European standards as they had partaken in similar ventures in regions taken from the Muslims in Spain.\textsuperscript{42} The project took on grand proportions in the New World; in three centuries of Spanish history in Latin America, they would establish almost one thousand cities. The process of founding cities, however, involved much more than simply invading and assuming power; it included a transformation of the location to represent the European presence. According to mandates put forth by Charles V as well as the Aristotelian principles about urban centers that informed his views, Lima needed to display certain characteristics, including a layout that made political activities easily accessible and a location near natural resources such as water. Most importantly for this discussion, it was necessary that the city also be beautiful, that its external appearance mirror the virtuous and civilized nature of its people and its government.\textsuperscript{43}

By 1615, Lima’s population had reached 25,000, composed of about half Indians, mestizos, and blacks, with the rest European.\textsuperscript{44} The city’s ceremonial center was the Plaza Mayor, a space designed with the symmetry of western cities in mind. Despite the great efforts to fashion Lima as a grand European capital, Old World visitors were largely unimpressed, citing the city’s low, wide architecture, which was built to withstand the

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Osorio, \textit{Inventing Lima}, 12-3.
\textsuperscript{44} Kagan, \textit{Urban Images}, 169.
frequent earthquakes, as unattractive.\textsuperscript{45} Limeños, however, were proud of their city and very much interested in its image on the global stage and in the seventeenth century Lima’s European population celebrated its city in order to bolster its reputation. Bernabe Cobo, a Jesuit who had been born in Spain but spent much of his adult life traveling throughout Latin America, compared Lima to some of the most noble cities of Europe.\textsuperscript{46} Fray Buenaventura de Salinas de Cordova, a native limeño, and avid supporter of the city, included a celebration of “The merits and excellences of the city of Lima” in his 1630 History of Peru, wherein he praised Lima’s regularly planned streets, beautiful architecture, and noble criollo population.\textsuperscript{47} His younger brother, Fray Diego de Cordova Salinas, similarly wrote about Lima as a city with the attributes of all the great metropolises of Europe:

Lima has no need to be jealous of the glories of the ancient cities [of Europe], because it has the churches and divine cult of Rome, the Holy City; the style and elegance of the men and women of Genoa, the magnificent; the gentle climate of Florence, the beautiful; the busy crowds of Milan, the populous; the music and aromas of Lisbon's convents; the generous exports… of Venice, the rich; the plentiful food of Bologna, the abundant; and Salamanca, with its religious houses, colleges, and university.\textsuperscript{48}

Others took on similar campaigns in writing; in 1681, Fray Juan Meléndez penned his Tesoros verdaderos de las Indias, and in 1688, Francisco de Echave y Assu published his

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 170. \\
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
The prolific efforts to celebrate Lima in writing speak to the interest of the Spaniards and of limeños to bolster the capital’s reputation locally, but also on the global stage. The references to Lima as a European capital in the New World legitimized its status and the work of Italian-born and -trained painters such as Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro, must have fit perfectly into this scheme.

Lima was not only an administrative and religious center, but also a stage for the meeting of diverse segments of the population and the origins of culture and education according to Christian standards. In this regard, Lima’s growth was rapid. Already by 1551, Lima received permission from the pope to open the University of San Marcos, where clergy would be trained for missionary assignments. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Lima’s elite most extravagantly asserted its power and status through festival associated with the entrance of a new viceroy. In Lima, the arrival of a new viceroy and his ceremonial procession through the city reminded the citizens of the power of the Spanish crown; the viceroy represented the king and his physical movement

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49 Juan Meléndez, _Tesoros verdaderos de las Indias_ (Rome: Nicolas Angel Tinassio, 1681); Francisco de Echave y Assu, _La estrella de Lima convertida en sol sobre svs tres coronas el B. Toribio Alfonso Mogrobexo, sv segvndo arzobispo: celebrado con epitalamios sacros, y solemnes cultos_ (Antwerp: J. B. Verdussen, 1688).

50 Ibid.

51 Roy Strong, _Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Strong discusses festivals as they were used to express political power. His chapter on Charles V is of particular interest in the context of the Spanish New World. Festivals associated with the entrance of a monarch were not new or unique to Peru, however; Renaissance Europe’s history includes many symbolic processions of powerful rulers.
through the region reinforced Spanish dominion.\textsuperscript{52} Again, the citizens of Lima used visual propaganda to assert the city’s direct link to the Old World.

Religion in colonial Lima, as in all New World cities, was intimately tied to the campaign of the Counter-Reformation and the values of the Council of Trent. On July 12, 1564, King Phillip II ordered that the decrees of the Council of Trent be adopted as law in all lands under Spanish control; one copy of the Spanish publication of Trent’s proceedings remains in the library of the monastery of Santo Domingo in Lima.\textsuperscript{53} Additionally, in 1565 and 1566, the decrees of the Council of Trent were recited in churches throughout Peru; a Catholic notary was even present at these recitations to make the events official.\textsuperscript{54} The Spanish openly expressed their responsibility as purveyors of the word of the pope and many Europeans perceived the single goal of global travel to be the spread of Christianity and the only justification for Spanish expansion into non-European territories to be the mission of bringing the light of Catholicism to those in darkness.\textsuperscript{55} Evangelization, then, was not just an added bonus to the Spanish expansion, but a primary objective. As a result, Christianity was a critical part of colonial culture from the very beginning, and since language barriers made communication challenging early on and illiteracy remained high throughout the colonial period, art was an

\textsuperscript{52} Osorio, \textit{Inventing Lima}, 57-80. Osorio’s chapter on the viceroy is rich in details about the festivals and rituals surrounding his presence and entrance into the colony.

\textsuperscript{53} Pinilla, “Reading without a Book,” 41.

\textsuperscript{54} Rubén Vargas Ugarte, \textit{Historia general del Peru} (Lima: C. Milla Batres, 1954), 25-6; Pinilla, “Reading without a Book,” 41. Pinilla also cites this mention in Ugarte.

\textsuperscript{55} Kenneth Mills, “Religious Imagination in the Viceroyalty of Peru,” 28.
invaluable tool to missionaries and so developed alongside tactics of conversion.\textsuperscript{56} Missionaries in Latin America used imagery to help the indigenous audience learn about and remember the Christian narratives and ideals. A Mexican friar, Diego Valadés, illustrated the intimate connection between imagery and Christian instruction in an engraving that was part of his \textit{Rhetórica Christiana}, published in 1579. In the engraving, a Franciscan friar points at images with scenes from Christ’s Passion, as he preaches from a pulpit; the audience is shown enraptured by the experience of both words and images.\textsuperscript{57} The role of sacred images, then, was critical.

In Lima, it was Italian artists who fulfilled many of the city’s needs for sacred paintings. In so doing, Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro answered Lima’s call to be a European, Catholic city, powerfully connected to Rome for its religious significance and ancient, imperial history. The art of all three Italians represented the informed point of view of artists connected directly to the center of the Catholic Church, but also because of the cultural prestige of Renaissance art. For example, Alesio’s fresco in the Sistine Chapel, painted next to the work of the great Michelangelo, became a marker of his status. In some Spanish texts, authors even mistakenly asserted that Alesio had been a student of the High Renaissance giant. Apparently acutely aware of the significance of his Italian origins, Medoro signed many of his paintings, \textit{Angelino Medoro, pintor romano}. Archival documents from Lima consistently reference the Roman origins of all three artists.

\textsuperscript{56} Crespo, “Colonial City,” 36.
\textsuperscript{57} Pinilla, “Reading without a Book,” 42-3.
The need for artists throughout the Spanish viceroyalties was great as missionaries came to believe more and more that religious imagery would help to bridge the language gap while the friars learned to communicate in the local tongue. In New Spain, missionaries exploited indigenous practices of making images and employed local artists. In the viceroyalty of Peru, no such relevant tradition of image-making was recognized in the early years, as the only visual art the Spanish encountered was highly abstracted. Thus, there was an immediate need for European artists to make pictorial art. Bernardo Bitti was among the first European painters called to this task, by the Jesuit Provincial in Peru, Diego de Bracamonte. Bitti began in Lima, the viceregal capital. In other cities of the viceroyalty, monastic schools trained students in fine arts. In Quito, Fray Pedro Gossael, a Flemish artist, taught painting. It is likely that other Flemish, as well as Spanish, painters were in Lima during Bitti’s early years as well. Although, they have not been documented. Therefore, it is only the impact of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro that is most evident in a consideration of European influence in early colonial Lima.

Bernardo Bitti arrived in Lima in 1575, as a Jesuit painter; Mateo Perez de Alesio in 1590, seeking greater fame and fortune after an already illustrious career in Europe; and Angelino Medoro in 1599, having already worked in several South American cities. Over the following four decades, these artists worked in nearly all of Lima’s churches and monasteries and Alesio and Medoro established workshops in the city. They influenced and trained many artists of the next generation who carried on the connection

59 Ibid., 38.
to Italian Renaissance art well into the seventeenth century. In the following study, I will present evidence of their success by surveying the wide scope of their contributions to Peruvian art, through their own work as well as that of students and followers. I will consider the significance of their high regard in Lima and the reasons for their extraordinary popularity. Finally, I will consider how the paintings of these three Italians came to be ideally suited for colonial Lima’s cultural and religious climate.
CHAPTER ONE
BERNARDO BITTI

Introduction

Hanging today in the parish church of Lima’s great Jesuit temple, the Church of San Pedro, is a large oil painting of the Virgin, holding the Christ Child, surrounded by angels who illuminate the divine figures with candles (Figure 1.1). This Madonna, tall in stature, elegant in pose, bedecked in cool blues and pinks, and delicately lifting up the attenuated, yet graceful baby represents the iconic style of Bernardo Bitti, an Italian painter working in Peru in the sixteenth century.

In 1575, Bernardo Bitti was the first of three Italian painters to travel to Peru. He was a Jesuit, whose time and experience in his hometown of Camerino, followed by several years in Rome during his training, and a short time in Seville awaiting departure for the New World, made him an ideal candidate to work for the Jesuits in their efforts to convert the indigenous populations and establish a Catholic presence in the viceroyalty. Bitti began and ended his Peruvian career in Lima, but in between traveled to at least six other cities in Peru and Bolivia. The extensive time and geographical span of his career made him one of the most prolific and influential painters in Peru in the early colonial period.60

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60 Bitti was also an accomplished sculptor; he contributed to many of the retablos that contain his paintings. However, his sculptures will not be discussed here since the topic of this dissertation is painting in Lima and Bitti’s impact on sculpture in the viceroy is a separate topic. See José de
In this chapter, I will offer a portrait of Bitti by first tracing his development and formation as an artist in Europe and then following his career from his beginnings in Lima, through his travels on behalf of the Jesuits, and his conclusion back in Lima. Bitti’s widespread success and influence are remarkable and it will be critical to establish an understanding of how and why Bitti came to paint in so many churches throughout Peru and why the Jesuits consistently chose him as their artist.

Numerous scholars in the past have mentioned Bitti and nearly every colonial Latin American art survey includes at least one painting by him. In 1959, Martin Soria called Bitti one of the best painters in South America in the sixteenth century. He claimed Bitti’s influence extended across Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia through the seventeenth and even eighteenth centuries. In 1961, José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert wrote an early monograph on the artist, in which they laid out a preliminary timeline of the artist’s work and posited some ideas regarding the artist’s background and

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formation. The monograph’s introduction is brief and lacks any in-depth discussions of the artist’s oeuvre, but it does establish the prolific and far-reaching nature of Bitti’s career. Most of the works of art mentioned by the important Bolivian scholars are those that were made and remain in La Paz and Sucre, as the authors have a clear interest in the art of their native country. Their focus leaves much work to be done on the paintings in Lima and other cities around the viceroyalty. The scholars returned to Bitti for a more in-depth study in 1974, wherein they constructed a more complete narrative of his career. Mesa and Gisbert mentioned Bitti briefly in their study of painting from Cuzco, where they confidently deemed him the most influential painter in Peru in the sixteenth century. More recently, in 2002, Gauvin Bailey called Bitti the founder of the Cuzco school of painting, the most important style of art to emerge from colonial Peru. Scholars since the 1960s have recognized and documented Bitti’s influence in Lima, but the research on his paintings remains incomplete and Bitti remains somewhat enigmatic.

64 José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Bitti, un pintor manierista en sudamérica* (La Paz: Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, 1974).
in terms of a clear definition of his style and an understanding of the reasons for the positive reception of his work.

**Bitti’s Formation as an Artist**

Bitti’s story began in Italy when, as a young artist, he absorbed the two most important elements of his artistic approach, the components that contributed to his widespread appeal among Europeans and Peruvians alike: a taste for Mannerist formal elements and an understanding of the reforms dictated by the Council of Trent. Once in Lima, in his earliest paintings for the Jesuits at their Church of San Pedro, Bitti developed his signature approach, composed of an elegant aesthetic and subject matter carefully tailored to the needs of the Counter-Reformation campaign to present decorous, accurate, and inspirational imagery.

After working with Bitti for eight years in Lima, the Jesuits, evidently sensing the potential of his paintings to inspire and teach, sent him on a series of expeditions to smaller cities in Peru to paint for Jesuit churches and monasteries. These travels took Bitti to places that varied from the important and bustling city of Cuzco to the small town of Juli on Lake Titicaca, and even to La Paz and Sucre in Bolivia. It was through these journeys that Bitti’s art would gain its widespread recognition and influence. Not only does each of these cities house at least one painting by Bitti, but many paintings that show his impact on artists of the next generations.

Accordingly, a brief discussion of Bitti’s Old World experiences will help to establish an understanding of his foundations as an artist. That Bitti had a great impact on colonial painting is clear, but this impact deserves further inquiry. Why was he so
widely accepted? It seems that perhaps both Europeans and Andeans responded to his paintings. For the Spanish, his elegant Mannerism represented the prestige of the Old World, and specifically the reputation of the Roman Renaissance. Additionally, for the indigenous viewer, Bitti’s flat forms and linear style may have been reminiscent of the aesthetics of some native art forms, such as queros and woven textiles.

Bernardo Bitti was born in the city of Camerino, in the Marches region of Italy, in 1548. It was in his hometown that Bitti’s formation as an artist began. Unfortunately, nothing is known of Bitti’s early training in Camerino, but by the age of twenty he had decided to join the Jesuit order and he traveled to Rome. At the time, the Society of Jesus was still a fairly new order, but it had quickly risen to importance and had taken on the responsibility of spreading Catholic doctrine through many overseas missions associated with the constantly expanding scope of European exploration. Bitti’s interest in painting must have been one factor that brought him to the Jesuits, who from their beginnings had made art a critical part of their process. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, had instituted the use of images for the purposes of instruction and inspiration, even commissioning an illustrated book of the Gospel from the Spanish artist

67 See Mesa and Gisbert, Bitti, un pintor manierista, 13-16, for a brief overview of what is known of Bitti’s early years.
68 Joseph F. Kelly, The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: A History (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 147. In 1543, Pope Paul III approved the establishment of several new religious orders, the most important being the Jesuits, who would prove to be the most successful at carrying out reform.
Jerome Nadal. The book, *Evangelicae historiae imagines, adnotationes, et meditaciones* (Figure 1.2), was published in 1593, but had been used extensively even before its publication.\(^70\) The book would come to be used to instruct new converts, but it had an impact long before it passed before the eyes of non-Christian populations. Ignatius meant to instill in his Jesuit brothers the great potential of tying prayer and meditation to visual imagery.\(^71\) Herein lay the early promise of art’s power to communicate and inspire, which would remain a hallmark of Jesuit missionary activity. Two important qualities of the book helped to lay the foundation for Jesuit practices. First, the book’s intention was didactic; to avoid any confusion, key letters and captions were added to engravings of Gospels read at Sunday masses. And the engravings, made by esteemed Flemish printmakers the Wierix brothers, are consistently of high quality; the Jesuits believed in the educational potential of art, but never sacrificed excellence. It is not surprising, then, that a young painter like Bitti would have been drawn to the innovative order.

Bernardo Bitti joined the ranks of clergy at a critical time for the Catholic Church. By 1568, when Bitti became a Jesuit, the Catholic Church was deeply entrenched in the reforms planned in response to Martin Luther’s Reformation.\(^72\) The Council of Trent had just held its last meeting in 1563, during which the bishops had finally discussed the issue of images, although briefly. When Bitti arrived in Lima for training, he would have been immersed in the issues of the Catholic Reformation, but his exposure to these issues

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\(^70\) Ibid., 424.

\(^71\) Ibid., 425.

\(^72\) Kubler and Soria, *Art and Architecture in Spain*, 321. Soria was the first to pinpoint some of the artist’s important dates, such as the date of his entrance into the Jesuit order.
began even before his time in Rome. His hometown of Camerino also happened to be the home of Giovanni Andrea Gilio, who, in 1564, published his “Dialogue on the abuse of history by painters,” an attack on artists who Gilio felt had strayed from the decorum critical to sacred art. Gilio felt that painting had fallen into the hands of uneducated artists seeking fame and fortune, rather than allowing art to rise to its full potential as a divinely ordained tool that should be used to teach and inspire. He felt that painters, namely Michelangelo and the Mannerists, had lost the sense of responsibility that had been synonymous with creators of sacred art. Gilio sought to enforce the idea that painting a Christian image was a task of great importance and responsibility. Gilio’s publication was widely read and it influenced artists and bishops dealing with the need to reform art in the post-Tridentine era. The Council of Trent had defended the use of visual imagery by the church and laid out some general suggestions for the appropriate use of sacred images, but recognized that the church had to proceed with caution to avoid further scrutiny from the reformers in the North. They left much of the responsibility to the local bishops, who looked to Gilio and other commentators for guidelines. Gilio was the first to publish a response to the Council, only a year after its last meeting. As a young artist in Camerino, Bitti certainly would have been aware of Gilio’s text. So, although there remains no evidence of Bitti’s training in Camerino and no paintings

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survive at all from his time in Italy, it can be deduced that from early on his career, he must have been aware of the need for reforms to art and also the great responsibility afforded painters of sacred imagery by writers like Gilio. Painting was not just a creative endeavor in this period, but a critical tool in rebuilding and strengthening the Catholic Church. Moreover, this passion for the revitalization of the Church was particularly strong among the young men who signed up for missionary assignments. Although many members of missionary orders traveled because they were instructed to do so, there is evidence in letters that many young Jesuits were inspired by the adventures and triumphs of heroes such as Saint Francis Xavier in Asia, and strove for the same kind of success.74 For the young Bitti, it is easy to imagine that becoming a Jesuit artist must have been inspired by the power and agency accorded art in this period as well as the ambitions of international missions.

Bitti arrived in Rome in 1568 to begin his Jesuit training and would remain for five years. As mentioned previously, no paintings from Bitti’s time in Rome remain.75 Bitti’s Jesuit education must have occupied much of his attention, although it is likely that he must have engaged in at least some painting during this time.76 So yet again, little information exists about Bitti’s early formation as an artist. However, a brief survey of the situation of art in Rome in the early 1570s will shed light on the young painter’s

74 Sabine Hyland, “‘Conversion, Custom and Culture’: Jesuit Racial Policy in Sixteenth Century Peru” (PhD diss, Yale University, 1994), 79.
75 Chichizola Debernardi, El manierismo en Lima, 110. Debernardi mentions that a portrait of San Francisco de Borja in the Chapel of San Luigi in Rome has been tentatively attributed to Bitti, but no documents or archival sources support this attribution.
76 Mesa and Gisbert, Pintura Cuzqueña, 45.
exposure and influences.

The art of the last four decades of the sixteenth century in Rome presents a challenging undertaking for the art historian, because its diversity makes it difficult to classify. While a High Renaissance style can be described in Rome of the early sixteenth century, the artists of this late-century period did not produce paintings of any single consistent style. Instead, content and subject matter became the supreme focus of painters working in early Counter-Reformation Rome. If any continuity can be found in painting from the late century it is that artists sought to create direct, clear, and legible art that complied with the needs of the Council of Trent. The moment was one of reform, spurred by the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation, in response to Protestant attacks on the Catholic use of imagery. The Catholic Church sought to defend its use of art, but also recognized a need for revision. In addition, Mannerist aesthetics had been popular in central Italy for several decades. Artists had been making paintings of elegant, graceful figures in impossible, contorted poses. Colors had diverged from naturalism and works were laden with erudite references to art, literature and society. High-class patrons enjoyed the secrets held in the most obscure of details in the paintings they

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commissioned. These paintings hung on the walls of lavish palazzos as evidence of the patron’s intellect and worldly comportment.

In her recent book, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art*, Marcia Hall has astutely summarized the situation of religious art at this moment of crisis.\(^{79}\) She cites Parmigianino’s *Madonna of the Long Neck* as an example of Mannerist painting’s impossible erudition and asserts that this complication in art had to be eradicated in the face of the newly reinforced need for art that could speak to the masses. The intellectual “maniera” that Sydney Freedberg so accurately defined in the 1960s began to dissipate, but the usual forms of Mannerism did not.\(^{80}\) Some artists, such as Girolamo Muziano and Scipione Pulzone, did completely leave behind the distortion and elegance in favor of a sober naturalism. But some, such as Taddeo Zuccaro and Jacopo Zucchi, continued to call on the graceful forms of the past few decades. Evidence that the elegant Mannerism was still favored late in the century lies in prominent commissions of Mannerist artists in this period. Even the pope, Pius V, the most prestigious and high-profile patron in Rome, commissioned from Giorgio Vasari *The Stoning of Saint Stephen*, from the late 1560s, a painting that includes many of the formal experimentations common to Mannerism. Herein lies the diversity of painting in the late sixteenth century. There was no single solution to the problems facing religious art and the church did not seek to enforce a particular style, only the goal of art as inspirational and didactic.

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The diversity of style in the late-sixteenth century was not just the case for Rome in general, but also characterized Jesuit art of the period. Scholars in the past have made attempts to define Jesuit style, but more recently it has become clear that in fact there was no Jesuit style. Gauvin Bailey’s compelling work on the Jesuits has shown that the order was less interested in style and more consumed with content and the capabilities of a work of art to teach and motivate devotion.\footnote{Gauvin Bailey, \textit{Between Renaissance and Baroque}; see Gauvin Bailey and John W. O’Malley, eds, \textit{The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 35-56, for a chapter written by Bailey about the lack of a clear Jesuit style of art.} When it came to style, the Jesuits granted their artists a great degree of freedom. And many early Jesuit artists, including Bitti, chose to pursue elements of the Mannerist aesthetics of the early sixteenth century, most prominently the use of sinuous line, relief-like composition, and the serpentine twisting of the body.\footnote{Bailey, \textit{Between Renaissance and Baroque}, 22.} However, as Bailey astutely points out, these Jesuit artists were using Mannerist aesthetics only superficially, to create elegant paintings, not to produce the complexity and confusion that contributed to the erudition of the Mannerism of the 1530s and 40s.

All in all, as a young artist and new Jesuit in Rome in the 1570s, Bitti had the opportunity to see and take in the formal approach of Mannerism’s elegant proportions and compositions, and he learned from his order that as an artist he had the flexibility to choose and cultivate his own artistic style. Bitti’s iconic ethereal figures, draped in cool blues and pinks and standing in elegant poses must have come to him as a result of his exposure to late Roman Mannerism and the Jesuit approach to art.
In 1573, only five years after his arrival in Rome, Bitti was in Seville, where he would remain for over a year, awaiting departure for Lima on behalf of the Jesuits. At only twenty-five and still very much being formed as an independent artist, Bitti used his time spent in Seville as yet another opportunity to absorb the latest trends and ideas. Much of Seville’s art would have looked familiar to the young Bitti, as Italianate styles dominated in the city.\textsuperscript{83} Several scholars have noted that one Spanish painter in particular must have been influential to Bitti: Luis de Morales.\textsuperscript{84} Although Morales was not in Seville, his work was widely known and disseminated through Spain. Therefore, Bitti could have had exposure to the Spaniard’s distinctive paintings. Even a cursory comparison of Morales’s work with Bitti’s will reveal formal similarities. Morales, often referred to as “El Divino” because of his highly spiritual approach to painting, was one of many Spanish artists who adopted elements of Italian Mannerism. His Madonnas are sweet, sorrowful and divine in their elegance. Morales used his paintings to evoke feeling and devotion from his viewers by portraying holy figures as melancholy angels, holy in their ethereal comportment and solemn in their facial expression, creating a tone that was dramatically deepened by Morales’s choice of rich, smoky colors. A fine example is the \textit{Madonna and Child with a Spindle} (Figure 1.3) from the late 1560s, now in the Staatliche Museum in Berlin. Perhaps most characteristic of Morales’s style is his


\textsuperscript{84} Mesa and Gisbert, \textit{Bernado Bitti}, 2; Stastny, \textit{El manierismo}, 19.
use of grace and delicacy as a mark of divinity. Morales’s choice of slender, attenuated figures allowed him to mark these beings as something other than human. The antinaturalistic nature of his figure design was meant as a visual mark of otherworldliness, a stylistic choice that became a mainstay of Bitti’s painting in Peru.

Although many scholars have noted the importance of Morales’s painting style to Bitti, the Spanish painter’s spiritual philosophy is another influential factor that has never been linked to the young Italian. It seems, in fact, that Bitti’s education on all things Counter-Reformation continued in Seville as well. Morales was deeply entrenched in the spiritual revival of Spain’s church.\(^{85}\) However, although many of the Spanish painter’s patrons were in Seville, he spent his entire career working in the small town of Badajoz. Accordingly, there is no evidence that the Spanish painter spent much time physically in the city of Seville, so any consideration of his influence on Bitti must be purely speculative. Thus, while Bitti likely never met Morales himself, it seems reasonable to consider that the reputation of “Il Divino” in Seville means that the Italian could have known of his work and its significance in Counter-Reformation Spain. When Morales was working in Badajoz, the bishop was Cristobal Sandoval y Rojas, who had participated in the second session of the Council of Trent and was devoted to the Catholic restoration in Spain.\(^{86}\) Morales was greatly impacted by the bishop’s ideas and used painting to visually interpret his encouragement of spiritual renewal and mystical practices as a way for the devout to connect to God. With his ethereal figures and moody


\(^{86}\) Brown, *Painting in Spain*, 44.
atmospheres, the Spanish painter sought to tug at the inner emotions of his viewers. His paintings are evocative and consuming and were widely sought after. Thus, Morales was an artist who was successful for his refinement of Mannerism’s graceful aesthetics to the needs of the Catholic reform movement, within the dominion of Spain.  

By the time Bitti boarded the ship that would take him to his new home in Lima, he had come upon the two most important elements that made up his mature style, the graceful divinity of sacred figures and the critical need for art of this post-Tridentine era to inspire viewers according to the decorum of the Church. It is not surprising, then, that an artist so steeped in the standards of the day rose to such preeminence in the eyes of his Jesuit brothers in Peru.

**Bitti’s Early Years in Lima**

Almost immediately upon arrival in Lima, Bitti went to work on his first major projects, several paintings for the Jesuit church of San Pedro. The Church of San Pedro was connected to the Jesuit College of San Pablo, an important institution throughout the colonial city’s history. The Jesuits, of course, were known for their widespread missions overseas, but in colonial Peru, they played an even more prominent role, often

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87 Ibid., 40.

88 See Juan Günther Doering et al., *Redescubramos Lima: Iglesia de San Pedro* (Lima: Banco de Credito del Peru, 1996) for background on the subsequent churches built at the site of the current San Pedro. The first church was begun in 1566, and a second was built between 1569 and 1574. This second church was the structure Bitti worked in. A third, even larger church was built in 1654.

responding to the needs and requests of the viceroy. In this they acted not only as missionaries, but also as educators of the faith to all those in the viceroyalty. In 1568, the Jesuits founded a college in Lima, through a collaboration of the Jesuit General in Rome, Francis Borgia, and his long time acquaintance, Francisco de Toledo, who had only recently been appointed Peru’s viceroy. Borgia and Toledo had long hoped to build a Jesuit college in the Americas, having developed early on a vested interest in Spain’s religious well-being; Lima would be their opportunity to leave a permanent mark of the Catholic Church and the Jesuit order in this new exotic land.

The college became not only a place of learning and training for Jesuit brothers, but also a cultural center dedicated to the education of the viceroyalty’s elite. The Jesuits helped build up the European presence in Lima. The College brought many European brothers as well as artifacts to the young capital. From its inception, the college was stocked with literary, artistic, and religious texts from Europe. Luis Martin, who wrote the most definitive book on the College of San Pablo, tells of the Jesuit Provincial, Father Gerónimo Ruiz de Portillo, using his time in Seville while awaiting departure for the New World to visit every bookstore in the city, beginning to build what would come to

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91 Martin, *The Intellectual Conquest of Peru*, 8. The two were apparently brought together while caring for the ill Emperor Charles V of Spain, and both were present for his last moments of life.

92 Ibid. See Martin for a concise history of the Jesuit college in Lima.
be South America’s most extensive college library. Although the first team of Jesuits was led by a Spaniard, connections to the home base in Rome remained strong. The Jesuit General in Rome was in constant contact with the fledgling college. The authority of Rome, then, was ever present in Lima and the College of San Pablo became much more than an educational institution; it was a symbol of the Old World in the New. The presence of the Jesuits was one reason Rome would be so influential in Lima.

In addition to education and the spread of Catholicism, the Jesuits had a much more direct goal in Peru: the conversion of native populations, for which they relied heavily on art. Although much has been written in recent years about the use of art on the Jesuit missions, it is worth summarizing the unique perception of art by this order because of Bitti’s connection to it.\(^{93}\) Gauvin Bailey’s literature is quite comprehensive on this topic, so a brief overview of the situation is adequate.\(^{94}\) The Jesuit approach to


conversion was, in comparison to some others, gentle.\textsuperscript{95} The order’s founder, Ignatius of Loyola, had instilled a need to teach Christianity, rather than force its tenets on people. The Jesuits took an intellectual approach to conversion; brothers were expected to be cultured, educated, and knowledgeable about art and literature. They studied European culture as well as the cultures of their missions, seeking to bring the most informed approach to preaching possible, but also a knowledge of the lives and traditions of their parishioners. At first, the limeños were shocked by the activities of the Jesuits throughout the city, having experienced in the past only the more traditional orders, such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans.\textsuperscript{96} Jesuit brothers strove to communicate, rather than impose, the ideas and beliefs of Christianity to native populations. Formed by the ideas of Saint Ignatius, they recognized the universal nature of visual imagery and its potential to break down language barriers. Unlike many other European groups, the Jesuits, so invested in the use of art, were even willing to adapt paintings, sculpture, and architecture to the needs and tastes of the local population. Eventually, in Peru, this meant that painting became infused with indigenous aesthetics and iconography. In the early colonial period, during which Bitti was working, the adaptations were mild, more subtle. While there is no obvious Andean symbolism in Bitti’s work, his style did strike a chord with local audiences, which is why the Jesuits were so willing to send him all over the colony.

In order to ascertain what Bitti’s style actually was, what follows is a survey and


\textsuperscript{96} Hyland, “Jesuit Racial Policy,” 77-87.
analysis of his extant works in Lima. Numerous scholars have discussed Bitti in the past, but their analysis of his paintings has usually been left at a designation of Mannerist. In his important and groundbreaking study of art in Spain and its colonies, Martin Soria was the first to assign this title of Mannerist to Bitti. Others, including Teresa Gisbert and José de Mesa, have continued to refer to the artist as Mannerist. The most sophisticated discussion of Bitti’s so-called Mannerism was written by the Peruvian scholar Francisco Stastny in his 1981 article, “El Manierismo en la pintura colonial latinomericana,” in which he argued that Bitti’s painting was somewhat revised from the Mannerism of Italy. Stastny was correct in his assertion that Bitti’s paintings were not made in Italy and therefore cannot be seen simply as imitations of Italian Mannerism, but instead were particular to the context of painting in colonial Latin America.

The question of how to define and discuss works of art labeled “Mannerist” has plagued scholars since the 1950s, when Walter Friedländer wrote his iconic Mannerism and Anti-mannerism in Italian Painting (1957) and ignited a debate that occupied some of the most influential scholars of late Italian Renaissance art for the next two decades. Sydney Freedberg and John Shearman responded in the 1960s, offering their own interpretations of Mannerism as erudite, refined, and intellectual. Craig Hugh Smyth made his own contribution by differentiating between the Tuscan Mannerism of the

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97 Kubler and Soria, Art and Architecture in Spain, 321.
98 Mesa and Gisbert, Bernardo Bitti, 61.
1520s and the Roman Mannerism that began in the 1530s. While each scholar’s definition of Mannerism was slightly different, they all agreed on the consistent formal characteristics of painting made in Italy at this time. Friedländer described stretched limbs, the elimination of three-dimensional space, and a striving for beauty rather than naturalism. Freedberg noted the presence of conscious artifice, grace, and refinement. Shearman famously labeled Mannerism “the stylish style,” arguing that these paintings consistently included self-conscious stylization. Smyth described the flatness of figures and the turning and twisting of bodies in space. Each author cultivated his own interpretation of Mannerism, but all saw similar formal conventions in art deemed Mannerist. The goals of Mannerist artists of the 1520s and 1530s are unclear, but all three scholars also agreed that intellectualism and erudition were important parts of this art intended for high-class patrons. It is the formal conventions of Mannerism that are evident in the work of Bernardo Bitti. Whatever the goal of Mannerism was in the 1520s and 1530s, by the time Bitti was painting, he was merely adopting common stylistic manipulations of figures and compositions that had by then been popular for nearly five decades in central Italy. Throughout this chapter, I will discuss the Mannerist qualities of Bitti’s paintings, always referring to the formal characteristics of this much debated and quite complicated period or style of art in Italy.

Thus, the taste for Mannerist styling in formal choices became a hallmark of Bitti’s oeuvre, but his work lacked the confusion, erudition, and sometimes erotic sway that were important elements of art made in Florence and Rome in the middle of the

sixteenth century. Instead, even in his earliest paintings Bitti glorified and exalted some of the most important causes of the Catholic Reformation.

Bitti was first occupied in Lima with making paintings for the main retablo of the Church of San Pedro, which was the second, larger structure to be the Jesuits’ church, which was built between 1569 and 1574. The sculptural framework was designed and built by the Spanish artist Pedro de Vargas, and Bitti completed the paintings that would fill the large altar. The high altar was forty feet high and decorated with paintings, statues, and relief sculpture. Unfortunately, the retablo did not survive the violent earthquakes that rocked Lima in the seventeenth century.

After working on the retablo, over the next five years Bitti completed his next three paintings, all for the sacristy of the church of San Pedro. In these three paintings, Bitti cultivated the style that would bring him widespread success in Peru. His development as an artist is clear when these paintings are studied chronologically. The preoccupation of Bitti and his patrons with Counter-Reformation issues is also obvious in the consistent theme of all three paintings: the glorification of the Virgin Mary, a critical mission of post-Tridentine Catholics.

In 1575, Bitti painted the largest and most complex canvas of his career, The

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103 Doering, Redescubramos Lima: Iglesia de San Pedro, 14. A third, and final, church would be built in 1624, by the architect Martin de Aizpitarte, following plans from Rome by Father Nicolas Duran Mastrilli. This is the church that still stands in Lima today. Bitti’s paintings have since been moved to the parish church, next to the main building.

104 Mesa and Gisbert, Bernardo Bitti, 7. The authors mention Pedro da Vargas as an apprentice to Bitti, but no documentation to support this exists.

105 Kubler and Soria, Art and Architecture in Spain, 321.
Coronation of the Virgin (Figure 1.4). The painting is symmetrically composed with the Virgin Mary occupying the central space. Christ and God the Father, both supported by angels, flank the Virgin on the left and right. Each delicately reaches out a hand to hold a gold crown over her head. The Virgin’s eyes shift dramatically up to the crown, signaling her body’s upward movement, propelled by angels and seraphs who support her on a bed of clouds. Above the gold crown, at the pinnacle of the painting, is a white dove representing the Holy Spirit. Around this quartet of divine figures presiding over the heavens, celebration ensues. Angels of varying sizes and ages float through the sky surrounding the coronation, some playing musical instruments, some regarding the event as it unfolds, and some in poses that seem to simulate dance or merriment.

Stylistically, Bitti made formal choices throughout this painting that were consistent in his work for much of the remainder of his career. For example, Bitti’s taste for Mannerism’s elegant aesthetics is evident. The overall color of the painting is cool, composed largely of soft blues, pinks, and a variety of earth tones including muddy yellows, browns, and greens and the value of color changes with the movement of the drapery. For example, the soft, pale pink of the Virgin’s tunic becomes a deep rose in the shadows and the drapery folds of her deep blue cloak become bright white. Bitti’s cool color palette and his manipulation of value are consistent with the Mannerist penchant to modulate color in order to achieve heightened elegance and visual interest. The artist

perhaps most famous for this practice is Michelangelo, who used *cangiainismo*, a style of modeling with shifts in color, to activate the flowing draperies of his prophets and sibyls on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.\(^{107}\)

The poses of Bitti’s figures also recall the Mannerist approach. Bitti’s figures do not stand still and they do not position themselves along straight lines, but instead twist and turn to create sinuous contours throughout the composition. There is great variety in the poses and stances of the many figures that occupy this painting; the angels are perhaps the best examples as each takes on its own pose and gaze in its own direction. Additionally, the drapery of each figure adds to this lively array of movements. For example, the Virgin’s blue cloak billows around her body as if activated by some inner force. The pale pink cloth that wraps around Christ creates a wave that surrounds his small body. Rarely does this drapery respond to the volumes of the body underneath, although there are exceptions; Bitti was careful to use light and shadow to create volume around the area of the Virgin’s abdomen, a sure reference to her sacred womb.

Among his adoption of Mannerism’s most common formal characteristics, Bitti also made choices that reflect the period’s call for reform. Despite the elegant comportment of Bitti’s figures and their unrealistic poses and drapery, the composition is symmetrical and focused. Bitti positioned the Virgin in the center of the painting, drawing the viewer’s attention directly to her. The Virgin, Christ and God the Father come together in this painting not only through their central placement, but through their

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gazes, all of which are directed at the crown that hovers above them. There is no doubt in the viewer’s mind that this moment of reunion of Mother and Son, sanctioned by God the Father and the Holy Spirit, is the focus and the story of this painting, and that it deserves attention. In Bitti’s work are echoes of the reform of sacred painting to a clear, didactic art form that was then widely popular in Rome.

Counter-Reformation values are evident in Bitti’s treatment of the subject matter as well. In addition to a celebration of the Virgin’s ascension into heaven, the painting prominently features the Trinity: Christ, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. The concept of the Trinity was central to the Catholic belief system, but was criticized by some Protestant reformers. Although many, like Martin Luther, supported the concept of the Trinity, the complexities of this fundamental belief of Christianity were debated by some and at the Third Session of the Council of Trent, the Trinity became yet another cause of the Counter-Reformation when the council officially re-affirmed the Nicene Creed’s commitment to the idea of the Christian Trinity and condemned all those who dissented.108 Therefore, references to the Trinity became important as propaganda.

Bitti’s inclusion of the Trinity as part of the Coronation of the Virgin was exactly consistent with current iconographic trends. Prior to the sixteenth century, Italian, Northern European, and Spanish artists alike preferred to show Christ alone crowning the

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Virgin in heaven; this tradition originated in French Gothic sculpture. Bitti’s use of the Trinity for the moment of coronation is an iconographic trend that was popularized by Albrecht Dürer, in his engraving of the subject, which he added to his widely known and internationally circulated series, *The Life of the Virgin*, in 1510 (Figure 1.5). Dürer’s engraving was inspired by his painting of the Coronation in the *Heller Altarpiece* of 1508-9, which was radical in its unusual use of the Trinity for this moment of the Christian narrative. By the time of the Counter-Reformation, painters of the Coronation of the Virgin from Italy, Spain, and northern Europe were consistently including the Trinity, not the singular Christ, as the entity bestowing the Virgin with the

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crown and designating her Queen of Heaven.\textsuperscript{112} Erwin Panofsky noted that Dürer opted for the Trinity as a way to more emphatically demonstrate the dignity and importance of the Virgin.\textsuperscript{113} In the case of images of the Coronation, the Catholic Church sought to not only exalt the Virgin Mary, but also to remind viewers that she would act as an intermediary between humanity and Christ, asking for the forgiveness of mortal sins.\textsuperscript{114} Bitti and other Counter-Reformation artists made this choice for the same reason: the new scheme allowed for greater exaltation of the Virgin Mary.

Bitti’s painting does differ from Dürer’s engraving, however, in that the lower realm of mortal onlookers has been completely removed, in favor of a scene that takes place among angels in heaven. This too reflects the demands of the day. In the fifteenth-century Italian tradition, artists normally represented the crowning of the Virgin occurring above a group of earthly figures, most often the apostles, who look on in wonderment, as exemplified in a work by Giulio Romano from the 1520s (Figure 1.6), now in the Vatican.\textsuperscript{115} However, to avoid confusion, post-Tridentine artists began depicting the coronation as a heavenly vision, removed from the mortal setting, in order

\textsuperscript{112} Examples include, in Italy, Veronese’s fresco of 1555 in the Church of San Sebastiano in Venice, and in Spain, El Greco’s painting of 1591 and Velázquez’s version of 1645, both now in the Prado in Madrid.

\textsuperscript{113} Panofsky, \textit{Albrecht Dürer}, 121-5.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115} Franco Ambrosio, \textit{Giulio Romano} (Milano: Mondadori Arte, 1991), 32-33; Mesa and Gisbert, \textit{Bitti, un pintor manierista}, 29-30, show a drawing by Giorgio Vasari that shows some similarities to Bitti’s version, although there is no finished painting.
to clearly distinguish heaven from earth.\textsuperscript{116} Bitti’s painting clearly sets the scene in the clouds of heaven, with no earthly reminder in sight.

For Bitti, painting for a mixed audience of Europeans and newly converted Indians and others, there were other considerations in addition to those facing Italian artists concerned with the needs of the Counter-Reformation. Representations of the Trinity were potentially problematic in the Andes, where the indigenous populations had for centuries followed polytheistic religions. Christian missionaries sought to stamp out any residue of such pagan beliefs and traditions. One can imagine that a painting presented by Christian clergy of three beings, representative of the triune God, could be confusing for some sectors of the local audience. These very same missionaries were vehemently prohibiting the worship of multiple gods. Additionally, some Andean religions represented their gods in threes.\textsuperscript{117} For example, three statues of Inti, the sun deity, stood in Cuzco: Apointi, Churinti, Intiquaoqui were the father Sun, the son Sun, and the brother Sun.\textsuperscript{118} Upon learning of this predisposition for a conception of a trinity in the local indigenous religions, the clergy attempted to use this potential complication to their advantage. They preached the idea that the pre-Christian existence of a trinity was merely a precursor for the true Trinity that the Indians were now learning about. The

\textsuperscript{116} Rosemary Muir Wright, \textit{Sacred Distance: Representing the Virgin} (Manchester, UK and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 17.


\textsuperscript{118} Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, \textit{The Virgin, Saints, and Angels: South American Paintings 1600-1825 from the Thoma Collection} (Stanford, CA: The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, 2006), 124.
Christian missionaries were presenting the truth that had been lying in wait, but obscured for centuries.

Accordingly, images of the Trinity are common in colonial art. They were used as tools to engage the indigenous peoples with an image that conjured up some familiarity. But these images, as conveyers of the new, correct doctrine, needed to be appropriately presented. To this end, priests and friars acting as patrons turned to the artistic and religious commentary of the day. One important source was Jacobus Molanus’ *De picturis et imaginibus sacris liber*, a manual for artists to use in representing Catholic themes and subjects. Similar guides and manuals were not uncommon in the post-Tridentine period when artists and patrons were sensitive to the need for decorum in sacred art. Molanus’ treatise was widely used throughout Europe and evidence of its dissemination in the Spanish art world is clear in Francisco Pacheco’s heavy reliance on the book for sections of his *Arte de la Pintura*. Both Molanus and Pacheco were careful to outline the appropriate depiction of the Trinity; an artist should never paint a man with three faces or an image of the Trinity in the Virgin’s womb. Instead, the preference was for the Father and Son to appear as distinctly different individuals, of different ages, and for a dove to represent the Holy Spirit. It was this respected iconography that Bitti used for his *Coronation of the Virgin*. His usage is in contrast to the more problematic imagery that would prevail in the seventeenth century,

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119 Jacobus Molanus, *De picturis et imaginibus sacris liber* (Louvain: Apud Hieronymum Wellaeum, 1570).
120 Francisco Pacheco, *Arte de la pintura*, introduction and notes by Bonaventura Bassegoda i Hugas (Madrid: Catedra, 1990), 562-64.
as exemplified by an oil on copper painting by an unknown Lima artist (Figure 1.7).

In his earliest extant Peruvian painting, Bitti began to develop his signature approach, steeped in the aesthetics of Italian Mannerist form, but tailored to the atmosphere of Catholic reform in both style and subject matter. In this an early work, however, the ambitions of the young artist seem to have gotten the best of him. Unlike every other painting from Bitti’s oeuvre, this painting has a figural confusion and crowding that results in a somewhat awkward composition. The angels are perhaps the most confusing to the focus of the composition; their contorted poses and odd gestures create confusion. The symmetrical focus of the overall painting is challenged by the many directions of their gazes and gesticulations, which force the viewer’s eye to jump around the painting, the mark of a young artist just beginning to hone in on his skills and talents. Bitti’s later compositions were more simple, concentrated, and centralized, often featuring only one or two figures (Figure 1.16).¹²¹

Shortly after completing the early Coronation, in 1576, Bitti began work on the first version of what would be his most common subject, the Virgin and Child. His first large-scale exploration of the subject, known as the Virgin of the Candles (Figure 1.1) and made for the same Church of San Pedro in Lima, introduces the composition and format that he adhered to for much of his career. As in so many other paintings by Bitti, the Virgin stands tall in the center of a vertical composition. He used her stature to illustrate her importance; she consumes much of the space of the painting. Her elongated, oval face, plump rosy cheeks, and impossibly long, bent neck became

¹²¹ This painting will be discussed below.
hallmarks of the painter’s portrayal of the Holy Mother. Here, she holds the Christ Child effortlessly, balancing his long body on the tips of her fingers. At each of the four corners of the painting, angels raise lit candles in the Virgin’s honor. She gazes up, and to her right, as if to signal the future reign of her young son at the right hand of God, in heaven.

Bitti’s painting of the Virgin Mary here is characteristic of nearly all of his future paintings. Aside from consistent formal decisions about color and pose, Bitti also maintained a singular goal throughout his depictions of the Virgin: to present her as holy and divine. He draped her in a pink gown and a blue cloak, the same pale pastels that he chose for the Coronation. More important than color choice here, however, is the distinctive modeling of the drapery. The fabric falls in crisp, angular folds with a rhythm and movement that does not always correspond to the volume of the body underneath. Instead, the gown flows out around the Virgin’s body and then delicately gathers at her feet. The bend of the Virgin’s knee is reflected by a sharp horizontal line, indicating the most subtle of contrapposto poses. The movement of the drapery also reveals that this woman does not have the proportions of an ordinary human body. Instead, her legs are long and attenuated and her pose is somewhat anti-naturalistic and contorted. The slight contrapposto and the turn of the neck and head harken back to a subdued figura serpentinata, a favorite formula of many Mannerist painters.\(^{122}\) Finally, here, and in most of Bitti’s paintings, the artist denied any illusion of three-dimensional space. There is no recognizable setting. This too was a hallmark of Mannerist paintings in Italy, where

\(^{122}\) Shearman, *Mannerism*, 81-3.
artists opted for what Sydney Freedberg deemed “the relief-like style,” in which figures do not move freely in three-dimensional space, but twist and turn in a shallow space, close to the picture plane. In the case of some Mannerist painters, and certainly in Bitti’s paintings, this denial of space further removes the figures from the earthly, mortal realm, placing them in some other sphere.

In The Virgin of the Candles, Bitti applied some of his experiences of Mannerist aesthetics in Rome and Seville to his own work. The elegant but unrealistic proportions of the Virgin, coupled with her graceful pose and demeanor, are reminiscent of Giorgio Vasari in Rome and Luis de Morales in Seville. The former may have chosen grace and elegance merely as a way to present a stylish, fashionable painting. Luis de Morales adapted these popular formal choices to the needs of the spiritual renewal of the Counter-Reformation and here Bitti adopted the same technique. The grace and elegance of Mannerism, which informed Bitti’s painting, designate the Virgin as holy, divine, and otherworldly. In addition, he surrounded the Virgin with a mandorla, a traditional symbol used to designate her supreme holiness. The mandorla had been used by Christian artists for centuries, most often to surround Christ, but also sometimes to emphasize the importance of the Virgin or another holy figure. Never used to surround a living figure, the mandorla is reserved solely to glorify the heavenly soul. Therefore, Bitti used the mandorla to further remove the Virgin from the mortal, earthly realm and present her as divine.

Bitti rendered the divinity of the Virgin clear and obvious because he was aware that her status was of the utmost importance in this period. Over the last century, the exalted status of the Virgin Mary had come under attack by Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers. One advocate of the Reformation, Constantine Copronymus, famously wrote, "When she bore Christ within her womb, she was like a purse filled with gold. But after giving birth she was no more than an empty purse."\textsuperscript{125} Luther also asserted that the Virgin was only as holy as any other believer in Christ, but the Catholic Church vehemently contested this doctrine and defended the Virgin’s divinity. Paintings and sculptures devoted to the Virgin from the Counter-Reformation period comprised part of a campaign to showcase her holiness.\textsuperscript{126} Accordingly, in its celebration of the grandeur of the Madonna, Bitti’s painting was very much of its time.

By the time Bitti painted his \textit{Virgin of the Expectation} (Figure 1.8), the last of his triad of paintings for San Pedro’s sacristy, completed sometime between 1577 and 1582, he had solidified his goals as an artist. Bitti’s Virgin is yet again tall and elegant, gracefully posed in a subtle contrapposto, and draped in cool colors. Her cloak again billows around her body and her now familiar long neck extends her gaze into the heavens. The surrounding angels pose in sometimes contorted, but always graceful positions. In the \textit{Virgin of the Expectation}, however, Bitti has refined his style. The figures’ bodies are more refined, with careful modeling and fluid poses, and the

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composition is more focused; the figures and they rays of divine light emphasize the importance of the central focus, which the Virgin occupies. Bitti’s handling of the drapery is more sophisticated here so that its movement around the Virgin allows her to float elegantly in this space. There is something distant in her effortless demeanor that signals her holiness. The use of grace to suggest divinity, which had been a hallmark of Bitti’s paintings since his first, is more subtle and delicate here. In these earliest extant paintings, Bitti matured as an artist and cultivated the style that ensured his success in Peru over the next thirty years.

In terms of subject matter, Bitti yet again created a painting in celebration of the Virgin with learned, specific references to her holiness. The painting references the Catholic Feast of the Blessed Virgin of the Expectation, a holiday that was particularly popular in Spain and was celebrated on December 18. The feast day, and this painting, are sometimes also referred to as the *Virgin of the O*, a reference to the long chants of “O” made by clerics after evening prayers on December 18, in eager longing of the birth of Christ.\(^{127}\) Herein lies the painting’s real subject. Again a celebration of the Virgin Mary, this painting takes her importance even further, making her the supreme focus, without visual mention of Christ, as the painting is about the anticipation of Christ’s birth. In it, Bitti incorporated clues of the baby’s future arrival and gave the viewer a sense of the significance of this approaching moment. The Virgin stands in awe, her hand to her heart, light illuminating her slightly distended abdomen. The surrounding angels here do not yet play their instruments as they did in the *Coronation* and they do

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not yet extend candles as they did the *Virgin of the Candles*. Here angels begin to wave
banners that will serve as swaddling clothes for the Child.\(^ {128} \) They only just prepare to
play music in glorification of His birth; at the bottom left, an angel is uncovering his
cello. The painting carries an emphatic message of the Virgin’s importance, and her love
of and devotion to Christ is clear in her reverent pose and focus on heaven. This moment
anticipates the event of Christ’s birth that will demonstrate the communion of heaven and
earth that occurred through Mary. The subject of Bitti’s painting has further importance
in this particular moment and setting because, although the day had been celebrated by
the Spanish for centuries, Pope Gregory XIII had only just approved the feast day in
1573.

In studying Bitti’s earliest extant paintings, it becomes clear why the Jesuits might
have been so attracted to him. The elegance and grace of his paintings were signals of
the artist’s prestige as a product of the Italian culture that was so widely admired
throughout Europe. These qualities also allowed Bitti to suggest the otherworldly
holiness of his figures that placed them on a pedestal to be worshipped by viewers.
Despite this elegant styling, however, Bitti’s paintings remained legible, focused, and
didactic, qualities that the Counter-Reformation Church demanded. In subject matter as
well, Bitti addressed some of the most important issues of the post-Tridentine world. All
three paintings celebrate the Virgin, each presenting a specific manifestation of the
Catholic defense of the Mother of Christ. The paintings must represent the careful
collaboration of the learned Jesuits brothers who acted as patrons and advisors with a

\(^ {128} \) Ibid.
trusted painter, who as a Jesuit and artist himself also understood the issues at hand.

**Portraits at the University of San Marcos**

Although religious paintings make up nearly all of Bitti’s oeuvre, there is one portrait in Lima that he painted early in his time in the city. In 1575, the year of the young artist’s arrival, he may have painted a portrait of Gerónimo López Guarnido (Figure 1.9) for the University of San Marcos, where Guarnido was a professor. The portrait does not have a signature and has only been attributed to Bitti. The city’s two other Italian transplants also contributed to the large collection still housed in the museum at San Marcos; Mateo Pérez de Alesio painted Luis López de Solís, and signed the painting, (Figure 1.10) and there is a portrait of Fray Juan de Lorenzana (Figure 1.11) attributed to Medoro. In this section, I will discuss the portraits of all three artists because they are so closely related. In addition, as some of the earliest portrait painters in Lima, the three Italians collectively influenced the genre of portraiture in Lima well into the seventeenth century.

The University of San Marcos was the first university in Peru and it is still active today. In the colonial period, the faculty was composed of many of the most important and influential members of Lima society. Professors were drawn from the noble classes, and often from the government. For example, Bitti’s sitter, Gerónimo López Guarnido, was a successful lawyer and teacher from Seville who originally came to the New World to aid the Spanish in dealing with a rebellion in Panama. He came to Peru following

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his time in Panama and worked as a lawyer for the city of Lima and a fiscal advisor to the government. The viceroy Francisco de Toledo, impressed with his abilities and with his loyalty, deemed Guarnido “defender of the Indies.” Later, he started the law school of the University of San Marcos and would eventually become the school’s rector. The University, then, was a prestigious center of learning from its beginning, employing only the most elite of Lima society; officially, the school admitted only descendants of Europeans as students and graduates were considered of the highest class in colonial Lima. Lavish ceremonies were thrown to introduce new graduates to the city, with celebrations in the streets and students parading through the city, as bystanders cheered. These young men were, after all, not just new college graduates, but representatives of the new generation of European presence in Peru. Quite early in its history, then, the University of San Marcos became a symbol of the Old World in the New and a vehicle for bringing European knowledge and ideas to colonial Peru. European history and culture were taught to students by the noble, learned, and experienced of European society, and all three Italian painters working in Lima were hired to commemorate powerful participants in the university.

A recent catalogue of the holdings of the university’s museum showcases the school’s tradition, which began in Bitti’s time and still prevails, of commissioning painted portraits of important and influential professors. The catalogue illustrates fifty portraits of past members of the faculty, with the function of commemorating the men

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130 Ibid., 20.

who helped to establish and build the university’s curriculum.\footnote{García Hurtado, et. al., Retratos: Siglos XVI-XX, 54.} While the portraits had a specific, local significance in Lima, the practice of collecting portraits of great men is one that relates to more universal customs of the European Renaissance.

Portraiture enjoyed prominence throughout the Renaissance in many parts of Europe and while the first goal of portraiture was certainly commemoration and often propaganda, there developed a belief that portraits could do more than just establish a memory. As the status of portraiture rose in the Renaissance, portrait collections became common in Europe and came to include not only images of ancestors and friends, but also of great people of the past. Andrea del Castagno’s fifteenth-century series of frescoes of famous men and women, made for the Villa Carducci, exemplifies this tradition; it includes portraits of Filippo Scolari and Farinata degli Uberti who, as military leaders, were representative of the virtues of an active life, as well as portraits of Giovanni Bocaccio and Francesco Petrarca, both writers, whose images were meant as a celebration of the contemplative life.\footnote{Joséphine Marie Dunn, “Andrea del Castagno’s ‘Famous Men and Women’” (PhD diss, University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 18.} Many in the Renaissance believed that images of great men had the power not only to commemorate achievement, but also to inspire greatness in viewers.\footnote{Lorne Campbell, Miguel Falomir, Jennifer Fletcher, and Luke Syson, Renaissance Faces: Van Eyck to Titian (London: National Gallery Company, 2008), 51.} A well-known patron of the portraiture genre was Paolo Giovio, who collected portraits because he believed, in his own words, “that through emulation of
their example good mortals might be inflamed to seek glory.” Accordingly, the collection of portraits at the University of San Marcos can be understood in the same context; lining the walls of the university were images of the individuals responsible for teaching European ideas in the viceregal capital. The series of portraits serves as a visual representation of the importation of European culture and intellect into Lima. Perhaps the sitters served as inspiration to students to embrace the ideals of the Old World.

The sitters captured by Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro are representative of the high rank and reputation of the university’s faculty. As mentioned, Guarnido was influential in Lima’s government and the university; having arrived in the city already with much acclaim and experience, he quickly rose to local prominence. Alesio’s sitter, Luis López de Solís, was an Augustinian who came to Lima from Salamanca, Spain and became the university’s first professor of sacred theology. After his time in Lima, he went on to become the bishop of Quito and Popayán and then the archbishop of Charcas. Medoro’s portrait captures the likeness of perhaps the most famous of the three, Fray Juan de Lorenzana. A Dominican, he was educated by the order in Salamanca, and invited to Lima to work at the court of the Inquisition, but he would also come to serve as a professor of theology at the University. However, Juan de Lorenzana is best known for his relationship with the New World’s first saint, Saint Rose of Lima, for whom he

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137 Ibid.
served as confessor.\textsuperscript{138} Juan de Lorenzana knew Saint Rose well, heard many of her confessions throughout her short and difficult life, and played an important role in the campaign for her canonization.

The three men captured by Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro represented the elite of Lima society and their portraits, commissioned for the university, could have acted as vehicles for presenting exemplary citizens that should be followed. As capital and seat of the viceroy, Lima was built up as a new European city in the New World and these men represented the prestigious European presence in Lima, and in the viceroyalty. That all three Italian artists were called to complete a portrait for this collection is the introduction to a revealing trend. Time and time again, the Italians received the most prestigious commissions in Lima.

The collection of portraits at the University of San Marcos should also be understood within the larger context of portraiture in Europe.\textsuperscript{139} Portraiture enjoyed a resurgence during the Renaissance, after a lapse in the Middle Ages. Humanism inspired a celebration of the individual, a phenomenon that is nowhere more apparent than in the widespread practice of commissioning portraits. It became common to have portraits painted of nearly every member of a royal court, often many versions done in different combinations of sitters. Portraits of individuals were common, but family portraits and

\textsuperscript{138} Medoro and Lorenzana will be discussed further, in relation to Rose, in chapter 3.

portraits of couples were also popular. Traditions of portraiture were established and at a
certain point, both sitter and artist began to recognize that portraits could be manipulated
to convey a desired message or present an approved persona of an individual. Costume,
setting, company, gaze, and facial expression contributed to the creation of portraits that
did so much more than simply present a visual likeness of a man or woman. For
example, profile portraits of fifteenth-century Italian men recalled the images of Roman
emperors that adorned coins of the ancient period, young ladies bedecked in lavish
fabrics and expensive jewels announced wealth and status, and sprawling landscape
backgrounds alluded to territory owned and controlled. When artists turned their sitters
towards the viewer, facial expressions and gazes helped to suggest personality.

The portraits by Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro came after these transitions in
portraiture towards more complete images of both physical likeness and personality, and
fit into a moment of the late-sixteenth century in Italian portraiture, a period consumed by
Mannerist approaches to painting. Status and persona were always important parts of
Renaissance portraiture, but never so much as in the second half of the sixteenth century
when people became more interested in adopting high-class demeanor as dictated by the
elite and learned in society. Baldassare Castiglione’s Book of the Courtier taught
etiquette to those who wished to be perceived as noble and educated.\footnote{Baldassare
Dutton & Co. Inc., 1974), 17-52.} In portraiture, the Italian Mannerist painters found new ways to suggest status and prestige by
distancing their sitters from the audience, both physically and psychologically. This
slight remove from the viewer, suggested by cold glances and stiff poses, was common, and popularized by painters such as Agnolo Bronzino.\textsuperscript{141} Fashionable among the courtly classes of Italy and Spain in the sixteenth century, the Mannerist approach was adopted by these three Italian transplants. In all three Lima portraits, the sitters convey a cool distance from the viewer’s world in order to suggest status and importance. For example, in Bitti’s portrait, Guarnido stands in a three-quarters position, turns his body and head slightly away from the audience, but gazes deliberately and confidently back out at the viewer. His gaze, however, is certainly not engaging or inviting, but cool and distant. Alesio and Medoro used similar compositions to convey the psychological distance of their sitters.

The lack of emotion and expression in these three portraits is also consistent with the goals of many examples of colonial Latin American portraiture. Portraiture was a popular medium in the New World, but it has been largely overlooked by scholars, likely because colonial portraits generally lack the personality that was increasingly attributed to sitters in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.\textsuperscript{142} However, colonial patrons and artists did not seek to portray the inner experiences and feelings of sitters; instead, portraits were about conveying status and heritage. In this regard, the portraits in San

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} Elizabeth Cropper, \textit{Portrait of a Halberdier} (Los Angeles: Getty Museum Studies on Art, 1997). In her analysis of Jacopo da Pontormo’s portrait, Cropper astutely connects the sitter’s enigmatic expression to the traditions of Mannerist portraiture.
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Marcos by Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro were successful.

Unfortunately, these three portraits are today in poor condition. All have been heavily damaged and then restored, resulting in paintings that retain little of the original brushwork of the artists. Therefore, any attempt at stylistic analysis is difficult. In Bitti’s Guarnido, however, are reminders of the painter’s tendency for sharp lines to indicate facial features.

Still easily perceived, however, are the nearly identical compositions of the portraits. In each, the painter has captured a full-length image of the sitter. Each stands next to a table, on top of which are books and other objects that contribute to the presentation of a biography and persona of the man. In each, also, the painter has included a cartouche with an inscription detailing the sitter’s name, title, and position, and any other details that might have seemed pertinent. In the earliest of the three, Bitti has included a headpiece on the table that must indicate rank or profession, although the murkiness of the painting’s current state makes any identification of the attribute impossible. Additionally, Alesio and Medoro chose to include headpieces as well. In Alesio’s painting, the three identical caps signify López’s three occasions of serving as

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143 In January of 2011, I spoke to the conservator at the university’s museum who showed me that the paintings’ original appearances have been dramatically altered by several layers of overpainting and retouching.

144 In Bitti’s portrait, the cartouche reads “El Dr. Dn. Geronimo Lopes Guarnido Rector y primer Cath. de prima de Leyes Ano 1575.” In Alesio’s portrait, the cartouche reads, “El Dr. Dn. F. Luis Lopes de Solis Call de Visperasdes. Theo Obispo de Popayan y Quito ano de 1577.” In Medoro’s portrait, the cartouche reads, “D. Fray Juan de Lorenzana Cath de Prima de Theologia Confessor de S. Rosa a 1611.”
bishop in various cities throughout Peru. In each of the three paintings, too, the artist has included the heraldic shield of the sitter’s family, as European heritage was of course imperative for anyone hoping to rise to prominence and power in the viceroyalty. In addition, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the university only accepted those of purely European ethnicity; the university’s regulations were symbolic of the stratification of society in colonial Lima, within which those of Indian blood were placed on the lowest rank. The shields reinforce here the importance of Old World lineage. The visual similarities among all three portraits discussed here are related to conventions of Renaissance portraiture, but may be indicative of the artists having viewed each other’s work, since all of the portraits were displayed at the University of San Marcos. It seems likely that one must have influenced the next. Certainly, also, the patrons likely wanted some continuity among the paintings since they were intended as a sort of group.

The influence of the Italian portraits in the San Marco collection is clear upon examining examples from later years. As early as 1619, an unknown painter completed a portrait of *Feliciano de Vega y Padilla* (Figure 1.12), and followed the same compositional format as the Italians. The identity and standing of this sitter are similarly conveyed through costume and accompanying attributes. But perhaps most akin to Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro, this artist too has carefully crafted a slight remove in the stance and facial expression of Feliciano in order to suggest his elevated status. As late as 1646, another unknown artist painted a portrait of *Diego de Vergara* (Figure 1.13), and
followed the same guidelines.\textsuperscript{145}

In addition to composition, there is one final quality shared by all three portraits by the Italians that influenced future artists working on the San Marco collection. Artists who made portraits from the series before those by Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro rendered their sitters in a style that is somewhat flat, without much three-dimensional modeling in the faces and bodies of the sitters. An example is the earliest in the catalogue, a portrait by an unknown artist of Fray Tomás de San Martín (Figure 1.14), from 1554.\textsuperscript{146} In comparison to Medoro’s Juan de Lorenzana, Fray Tomás lacks refined volume, especially in the face. Once the Italians introduced this more naturalistic approach in their portraits, subsequent artists followed. Later portraits from the San Marcos collection, such as that of Feliciano de Vega y Padilla, mentioned earlier, show three-dimensionality and naturalism in the use of light and shadow well into the middle of the seventeenth century, when tastes began to change and artists reverted back to a flat, more abstract style of construction.\textsuperscript{147} The impact of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro at San Marcos is evident in the consistent use of their styles and compositions for subsequent commissions. The collection at San Marcos is a microcosm of the kind of influence the Italians went on to have throughout Lima and Peru. Patrons saw them as the highest and best in their craft, so they were hired for important projects and their paintings stood as examples for younger artists to follow.

\textsuperscript{145} See García Hurtado, et. al., Retratos: Siglos XVI-XX, 58-9 and 62-63 for images and further background information about these two portraits.

\textsuperscript{146} See ibid., 50-1 for an image and information about this portrait.

\textsuperscript{147} See chapter 4 for a more complete discussion of the shift in Peruvian painting.
Bitti and the *Doctrina Christiana*

In his first years in Peru, Bitti solidified his appeal with the Jesuits and beyond, and by the early 1580s, the order began to send him to cities throughout the viceroyalty to make paintings for other churches and monasteries. Bitti’s became the style that the Jesuits hoped to use and spread. Before leaving Lima for the first time, however, Bitti may have been involved in another important project. In 1583, the first printer arrived in Lima and set up shop. Antonio Ricardo was a native of the Piedmont region of Italy, but he had spent the previous ten years in Mexico City, printing books, and came to Lima seeking more opportunity, which he found.\(^{148}\) Although many books had been imported from Europe into Lima, books were not printed in the city itself before Ricardo’s arrival.\(^{149}\) The need grew for books specific to the workings of the viceroyalty and it seems that Antonio Ricardo was the best candidate for the job of printer.

Early American printers used the books housed by monastic libraries as inspiration and models.\(^{150}\) It took only a year in Lima for Ricardo to be granted permission by the viceroy and the king to open a print shop, which is another instance of


an Italian who was quickly welcomed into the city’s culture, much like Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro. According to the city’s records, by 1583, a large population of Italians, of many different trades, were living in Lima so it is possible that Ricardo had connections to some of the city’s residents.  

In addition, Ricardo had spent much of his time in Mexico printing books for the Jesuits and it was the Jesuits who housed his print shop in Lima and gave him his first assignment. This first task was to print the *Doctrina Christiana*, also sometimes referred to as the Major Catechism, which was completed in 1584. Jose de Acosta, a well-known and influential Jesuit, coordinated the writing and printing of the book, which reflected his own and the Jesuits’ efforts to communicate with the indigenous populations in the most successful ways possible by printing the text in Spanish, and the native languages, Quechua, and Aymara.

This early book also provided the first opportunities for images to be printed in Peru, including four woodcuts: *The Trinity, The Coronation of the Virgin*, a profile *Portrait of Christ*, and *The Last Supper*. The style of all four images is distinctly Mannerist and thus points to Bitti’s likely involvement. Teresa Gisbert has asserted that a skilled European master must have designed the drawings for these images and has suggested the Bitti was the probable artist of the *Trinity* and the *Coronation of the Virgin*.

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151 Primeglio, *Antonio Ricardo*.
153 Fernandez, *Grabadores en el Peru*, 20. The only other printmaking activity to predate the images in the *Doctrina Christiana* was a copper plate engraved by Mateo Pérez de Alesio of the Holy Family, which will be discussed in chapter 2.
Unfortunately, there remains no documentary evidence for this proposal, and while the attribution is possible since Bitti was also in residence with the Jesuits in Lima when Ricardo was working on the *Doctrina*, it seems more likely that it is his influence that is clear in these prints. More specifically, his *Coronation of the Virgin* (Figure 1.4) from the Sacristy of San Pedro is related to both prints. The arrangements of figures in both of the woodcuts are visually close to the composition of Bitti’s painted figures. There are, however, some key differences that may indicate the hand of a less experienced and less knowledgeable artist. In the printed *Trinity*, Christ is shown on the right and God the Father is on the left, while the standard iconographic tradition, which Bitti adhered to in his painting of the *Coronation*, is the reverse. This practice served to reserve the right, and holier, side for God the Father. The reversal could have resulted from an artist copying Bitti’s painted composition without making the necessary reversal of the image for the printing process. In the printed *Coronation of the Virgin*, the older man, presumably God the Father, is represented on the right, but he holds the cross normally given to Christ, another confusion of traditional iconography that is unlikely to have been done by Bitti himself. Ultimately, no secure evidence can link the prints in the *Doctrina Christiana* to the hand of Bitti and in the end, it is unlikely that he himself designed the prints, as there is no documentation of any involvement with printmaking in any stage of his career. In addition, an artist, and Jesuit brother, who consistently adopted the most up-to-date and accurate sacred iconography in his work, likely would

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not have made the errors and confusions pointed out here. However, his influence, in both composition and formal style, is clear.

**Travels through Peru**

By 1584, Bitti was in Cuzco, the first city outside of Lima that he visited and a very important city in the viceroyalty. As the former capital of the Inca empire, Cuzco had a rich native history, unlike Lima, so the need for European and Catholic presence was great. The Jesuits had built a large church, The Church of the Compañía, in Cuzco in the late-sixteenth century and when Bitti arrived in 1584, they immediately put him to work making paintings for the main retablo. Initially, Bitti was called to Cuzco for this very commission, by Padre Jose Teruel, the head of the Jesuit church in the city.\(^{155}\) Bitti worked side-by-side with Pedro de Vargas, the sculptor who contributed to the altarpiece for the Church of San Pedro in Lima.\(^{156}\) The largest panel of the Cuzco retablo was an image of the Transfiguration and other panels told of the life and miracles of Christ and several of stories from the life of the Virgin.\(^{157}\) Many of the paintings for the retablo, including the *Transfiguration*, as well as the framework and sculpture, were lost in the massive earthquake of 1650. However, one painting, *The Coronation of the Virgin* (Figure 1.16), is extant and in good condition, although it now hangs in the Monastery of the Merced, a block from its original location.

This was Bitti’s second painting of the subject and in comparison to his Lima version, some consistency of style is clear, but also evident is the greater maturity of the


\(^{156}\) Ibid.

\(^{157}\) Ibid., 48.
now slightly older Bitti, in the more refined understanding of composition. The earlier Coronation (Figure 1.4) is busy and crowded and many of the angels are scattered in their poses and gazes. For the later painting, Bitti streamlined his presentation of the narrative, by condensing it into fewer figures and arranging the composition in a more orderly and focused manner. By shifting from the horizontal composition of the Lima painting to this vertical form, Bitti intensified the focus on the Virgin Mary. She stands tall along the central axis of the painting and the other figures react to her presence. The angels in this painting, although still in the midst of various kinds of celebration through pose, gesture, and music-making, now converse with each other or regard the Virgin; those that appear behind the Virgin and the Trinity are lined up in neat rows.

Notwithstanding the compositional changes, Bitti’s style and approach remained consistent with his work in Lima. His figures are characteristically sweet, graceful and elegant, with elongated proportions, stylized drapery, and twisted poses, all to indicate holiness and divinity. The heavenly setting of this scene, with clouds, sacred and angelic figures, removed from the mortal realm, is evident in the flatness of the space and the lack of reference to anything earthly. Bitti was clearly maintaining the style that brought him success and acclaim in Lima.

After several years in Cuzco, in 1586 Bitti traveled next to Juli, a city that took him farther into the hinterlands, to work again for the Jesuits. Juli is a small town on Lake Titicaca, in southern Peru. The city occupied part of the former Lupaqa kingdom, Mesa and Gisbert, Pintura Cuzqueña, 48; idem, Bitti, un pintor manierista, 46-50, 53-71, and 104-6. Bitti returned to Juli two additional times after this first trip. Many of the paintings he produced in Juli were made during the second trip.
which predated the Inca and had maintained much of its power in the region throughout the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{159} The religion of the Lupaqa was similar to that of the Inca and other Andean belief systems and remained a powerful part of the occupants’ lives when the Jesuits arrived.\textsuperscript{160} A past attempt at conversion to Christianity had failed as the people of Juli were resistant to a small group of Dominicans who had traveled there before the Jesuits, who consequently gave up and abandoned the monastery they built in the city. The Jesuits arrived in 1576 and were also tempted to flee, but stayed due to political pressure from the viceroy, Toledo.\textsuperscript{161}

Father Diego de Bracamonte, the superior of the Jesuits in Juli, had recently suffered a failure on his last mission in the town of Huarochiri, so his success here was critical. It seems that the Jesuit learned from his experience in Huarochiri and made some changes to his approach.\textsuperscript{162} In Huarochiri, Bracamonte and his fellow Jesuits had been pleasantly surprised by the natives’ willingness to participate in the Church’s rituals and allowed them to maintain some local traditions, including the performance of Indian dances during the Feast of Corpus Christi. Although the missionaries were sure that this ancient religion should not be supported, they believed that the strong religious base of the natives would help in their efforts to build up a connection to Christianity. As it turned out, however, much to the dismay of the Jesuits, the Indians were not merely

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\textsuperscript{159} Hyland, “Jesuit Racial Policy,” 148-59.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid. See Hyland for a succinct discussion of the similarities between Inca and Lupaqa religion.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid. The following summary of Bracamonte’s experiences in Juli comes from from Hyland’s study.
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performing some of their own rituals, but were holding strongly onto the beliefs of their own religion, while essentially playing along with the requests of the missionaries.

Upon arrival in Juli, the Jesuits recognized, perhaps more than ever, the need to assert European presence and dominance. Therefore, all indigenous religious activities were banned. Under these circumstances, the need for a European artist, such as Bitti, to create appropriate religious images would have been significant.

Bitti delivered the Mannerist-inspired paintings that followed the dictates of the Council of Trent and had already garnered him success. Five paintings by his hand can be identified today in Juli: *The Holy Family, The Baptism of Christ, Saint John the Baptist in the Desert, and St. Catherine and Saint Margaret* (Figures 1.17, 1.18, 1.19, and 1.20). Although the sharp modeling of the facial features and the cool coloring of the drapery are clearly characteristic of Bitti, some elements in these paintings are new. In all but the painting of Saint Catherine, Bitti set his figures, for the first time, in landscapes. They do, however, remain close to the picture plane; he clearly was not interested in or not able to place these figures convincingly into an illusionistic space. Instead, the landscape is merely a backdrop to the theatrical performance of these actors who are close to the audience. It would have been a common Mannerist trope to place the figures in the foreground, positioned close to the picture plane, in the “relief-like style” discussed earlier. In the past Bitti had consistently denied any sense of deep space or perspective, but usually he achieved this shallow field of vision by using a dark gray or

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163 A photograph of Bitti’s *Saint Margaret* has not been published. See Mesa and Gisbert, *Bitti, un pintor manierista*, 53-70 for a discussion of Bitti’s projects in Juli.
brown backdrop behind his figures. In these paintings in Juli, the backdrop is landscape, signaling that these figures occupy an earthly setting.

Several scholars have asserted that this sudden change in Bitti’s style to include landscape and consider depth might have been a result of meeting another Italian artist, Mateo Pérez de Alesio, who was in Europe longer than Bitti, until 1589, and therefore was exposed to the interest in naturalism that began to creep into Italian and Spanish art in the end of the sixteenth century and flourished in the seventeenth century. Alesio was in Rome with artists such as Scipione Pulzone, who popularized a highly naturalistic, although somewhat static style of painting to satisfy Catholic patrons during the Counter-Reformation. Alesio never left Lima once he arrived, but Bitti did make several trips back to the capital throughout his travels, and must have known Alesio and his work. This experiment with landscape and perspectival space, however, did not last in Bitti’s work, and so does not mark a definitive shift or change in his style. In subsequent paintings, although he implemented a landscape setting in a painting or two from later years, Bitti, for the most part, returned to his use of dark, dim, flat backgrounds.

After six years of traveling between Juli, several cities in Bolivia, and Lima, Bitti returned to Cuzco and stayed until 1598. During this stay in Cuzco he completed a number of small paintings, including The Virgin and Child with the Parrot (Figure 1.21), for the Cathedral, and Christ Carrying the Cross (Figure 1.22), which is now in a private

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collection.\textsuperscript{165} His biggest project was a commission to paint eight canvases depicting the Passion of Christ and the Virgin Mary, for the current rector of the Jesuit church in Cuzco, Father Manuel Vázquez.\textsuperscript{166} This group included the 	extit{Agony in the Garden} (Figure 1.23), which is now housed in Lima’s Museum of Art. Like his recent paintings in Juli, in this image, Bitti included a landscape backdrop and experimented with foreshortened figures.\textsuperscript{167} Also in this group from the Compañía was the 	extit{Immaculate Conception} (Figure 1.24), a commission that gave Bitti the opportunity to paint one of the most popular subjects in colonial Latin American art. This subject that was common in Europe at this time as well; the Catholic Reformers took as one of their most important causes the defense of the immaculate conception of the Virgin, a doctrine that the Protestants had wholeheartedly rejected. In Latin America, where the Virgin Mary became protectress, and where this image had appeared to the Indian Juan Diego in Mexico, causing widespread devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, paintings of the Immaculate Virgin were widespread. Bitti’s Immaculate Conception would have been one of the earliest in Peru and so probably helped to establish iconographic traditions and standards for the image.

Bitti’s painting typifies images of the Immaculate Conception, in which the

\textsuperscript{165} Mesa and Gisbert, 	extit{Bitti, un pintor manierista}. Mesa and Gisbert’s 1974 book is the best source for information on Bitti’s travels.

\textsuperscript{166} Mesa and Gisbert, 	extit{Pintura cuzqueña}, 48.

\textsuperscript{167} Bailey, “Creating a Global Artistic Language,” 235. Bailey has traced the origins of Bitti’s iconography and composition to northern Italian traditions.
Virgin Mary, radiating golden light, stands on a crescent moon.\textsuperscript{168} Surrounding her, tucked into bunches of white clouds, are emblems that represent her story and her purity. The use of emblems of the Virgin in the border of the painting was common in Spanish and Latin American versions of the Immaculate Virgin. Bitti’s painting of this subject was but one of many to spread this composition and this iconography to the many artists who would take up this theme in the coming centuries. However, there is evidence of his direct influence in the Monastery of the Merced, where the painting hangs today. An anonymous work from the mid-seventeenth century (Figure 1.25) is almost an exact copy of Bitti’s painting and serves as evidence that Peruvian painters occasionally worked directly from the Italian master’s pieces.

Bitti’s most direct impact on art in Cuzco is perhaps evident in the work of Gregorio Gamarra, his most famous follower, who spent much of his career in Cuzco. Bitti’s influence in Cuzco was much more widespread than a few paintings that are copies of his work, as it was here that Bitti’s most famous follower spent much of his career.\textsuperscript{169} Gregorio Gamarra (active 1601-1630s) first encountered the Jesuit in Potosí, and later moved to Cuzco, where he had the opportunity to see many more of Bitti’s paintings. A \textit{Virgin of the Immaculate Conception} (Figure 1.26) in the Church of the Recoleta in Cuzco has been attributed to Gamarra. The artist’s style, here, is closely

\textsuperscript{168} See Mirella Levi D’Ancona, \textit{The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance} (New York: College Art Association, 1957); Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, \textit{The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) for detailed studies of how the theme developed in art.

\textsuperscript{169} Mesa and Gisbert, 48. Gamarra’s work is treated more extensively in chapter 4.
linked to Bitti’s Mannerism, in its reliance on linear, abstract figures and flat space, and in the delicacy of the Virgin’s features. As Mesa and Gisbert have pointed out, it is likely that Gamarra’s painting was directly influenced by Bitti’s version of the subject in the Monastery of the Merced.

The Italian’s influence continued to flourish in Cuzco, as evidenced in the painting of an artist who could not possibly have met Bitti, Lázaro Pardo Lagos, who first appears in archival documents in 1630. Bitti was back in Lima by the early seventeenth century and died in 1610, but his legacy lived on in Cuzco not only through his paintings, but through his many followers. Mesa and Gisbert have suggested that Lagos knew Gregorio Gamarra and absorbed Italian Mannerist style through him. His Assumption of the Virgin (Figure 1.27), made for Cuzco’s Church of Saint Christopher, is a copy of an engraving by Cornelis Galle I, after a painting by Peter Paul Rubens. Both Galle and Rubens were influential in Peru, but the musical angels surrounding the hovering Virgin are closely indebted to Bitti. Those angels first appeared in Bitti’s Lima Coronation of the Virgin and reappeared in his later version of the subject, made for the Church of the Compañía in Cuzco. In Pardo Lagos’s Calvary (Figure 1.28), in the Church of Saint Catherine in Cuzco, the delicate, linear modeling of his figures’ features is also reminiscent of Bitti.

170 Ibid., 51.
171 Ibid.
172 Mesa and Gisbert, Pintura Cuzqueña, 52-3. The following research on Lázaro Lagos Pardo comes from the work of Mesa and Gisbert, who were responsible for documenting the work of many of these early Peruvian painters.
Through artists like Gamarra and Pardo Lagos, Bitti’s Italian Mannerist legacy lived on in Cuzco, but it did not end there. Chapter 4 will discuss Bitti’s influence on painting in Cuzco and beyond more extensively; here, it suffices to note that Bitti’s mark on painting in Cuzco was profound and long-lasting.

After Bitti’s time in Juli and his two stays in Cuzco, he continued to travel as the Jesuits’ principal artist. The assignments took him to Puno, on Lake Titicaca and even to La Paz and Sucre, in Bolivia, which was part of the viceroyalty of Peru in the colonial period. In Sucre, Bitti completed numerous paintings, including *Saint John the Evangelist*, *Child Jesus*, and *Christ at the Column* (Figure 1.29, 1.30, and 1.31), all for the Church of San Miguel.\(^\text{173}\) Bitti’s influence in Bolivia was great, as noted by Gisbert and de Mesa in many of their publications. A recent catalogue illustrates numerous Bolivian paintings that are evidence of Bitti’s influence there.\(^\text{174}\) A painting of the Virgin and Child (Figure 1.32) now in the Museo Nacional de Arte in La Paz, made by an unknown artist sometime between 1610 and 1620, belongs to the school of painters formed around Bitti’s style. The distinctively linear modeling of the figures, the tight space of the composition, and the attenuated physical features are reminiscent of Bitti.

**Bitti’s Popularity**

Bitti’s familiar style is consistent through all of the paintings just discussed and

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\(^{173}\) Mesa and Gisbert, *Bernardo Bitti*. Mesa and Gisbert have contributed tremendously to knowledge on Bitti’s activity in Bolivia. In this publication they list the paintings discussed here as well as the following: *Saint Ildefonso, Adoration of the Shepherds*, and *Saint James the Apostle*.

\(^{174}\) Teresa Gisbert and José de Mesa, *El retorno de los angeles* (La Paz: Unión Latina, 1997), 156.
the geographical spread of his activities is illustrative of his popularity. Unlike the other Italian painters, Alesio and Medoro, who remained in Lima for their entire Peruvian careers, Bitti traveled throughout the viceroyalty and so was afforded the opportunity to widely disseminate his style of painting. Unfortunately, the precise dates for all of Bitti’s travel are not known and his exact path cannot be retraced, but, the extant paintings scattered around colonial Peru make it possible to reconstruct a rough outline of his career. For example, Bitti was in Arequipa early in the seventeenth century, for one of his last trips. At the Church of the Compañía in Arequipa, Bitti completed numerous paintings, including *The Risen Christ* (Figure 1.33) and *The Virgin and Child* (Figure 1.34).

In the Arequipa *Virgin and Child*, the elements that are consistently recognizable in Bitti’s paintings are familiar and the flirtations with naturalism have been eliminated. The cool color palette of the drapery of both Mother and Child along with their attenuated bodies and sharp features convey their divinity. Here the Christ Child is particularly large for a baby, and must fold his body to fit into his mother’s arms. Bitti emphatically demonstrated the extraordinary nature of this child through his otherworldly, anti-naturalistic proportions.

A consistent element of Bitti’s style since his beginnings in Lima, the overall flatness of the figures and the space that they occupy, is particularly evident in the

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175 It is important to note that although Bitti clearly made some changes to his paintings in the 1590s, there was never a definitive shift or consistent set of adjustments to his style. Instead, it seems that he painted according to the needs of the commission or perhaps the interests of the patron.
Arequipa *Madonna and Child*. His elegant Mannerist styling was reminiscent of the prestige of Italian Renaissance culture and served to represent the presence of the Old World in the Spanish colony. His understanding of the reforms dictated by the Council of Trent and ability to adapt his paintings to those iconographic and stylistic needs certainly also contributed to his acclaim. However, it is crucial to consider that the majority of the audience for his paintings was not European, but indigenous. There must have been qualities in his paintings that appealed to the native viewers as well, or the Jesuits would have found him less useful.

To summarize, Bitti’s figures are often flat, lacking in three-dimensionality and volume. Rather than detailed modeling of light and shadow that would suggest robust bodies underneath drapery, Bitti tended to rely much more heavily on line to define his forms. His figures are linear, often surrounded by outlines to define their bodies. Bitti used linearity and flatness to demonstrate that these beings were not human, but divine, to give to them an ethereal quality that removed them from the earthly, mortal world. By removing humanity from his figures, these qualities also made them more symbolic than real. The paintings are not meant to be human embodiments of the saints they depict, but merely symbols of them.

Linear, abstract design was also a hallmark of some indigenous Andean aesthetics. Although much ancient art from Peru was lost or destroyed during the conquest and many traditions of art-making died out or were intentionally extinguished by the Spanish as part of the spread of Christianity and the extirpation of idolatry, plenty of local art forms continued to flourish throughout the colonial period. Andean artists
continued to make textiles, ceramics, gold and silverwork, and the queros. In its characteristic decoration, the quero cup can serve, here, as one example of indigenous aesthetics. A wooden vessel used in Andean rituals, quero cups provide a unique opportunity to study pre- and post-conquest indigenous art because, first of all, a number of examples from the pre-Columbian period remain. However, the decorations on the queros did undergo a change in the colonial period. Pre-conquest quero imagery was mostly composed of abstract, geometric designs incised into the wooden vessel (Figure 4.29). In the colonial period, the makers of queros incorporated painted figural designs, a change that, as Thomas Cummins argues, was most likely spurred by Andean exposure to European image-making (Figure 4.32).\footnote{Tom Cummins, \textit{Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Kero Vessels} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 120.} Although the imagery changed dramatically, one formal characteristic of quero designs remained the same; the decoration was always stylized and linear in nature. The artists typically depicted the figures frontally or in profile, along a flat ground line, rarely with the inclusion of a background or setting.\footnote{Ibid., 174.}

These figures are emblematic: they are not part of any explicit pictorial narrative, much like the lack of narrative in Bitti’s paintings. Bitti’s paintings are iconic; he does not seek to tell a story in his compositions, but to present a holy figure to be revered. His figures tend to stand alone or with minimal additional figures, in front of either a blank or simple landscape background, much like the figures painted on a quero.

There may be a relationship between Bitti’s consistently flat, linear style and the aesthetics of some indigenous art; perhaps Bitti chose this style, at least in part, to allude
to indigenous art he had seen in colonial Peru. A famous example of flat linear style associated with an indigenous artist of the colonial period is the work of Guaman Poma de Ayala in his *Nueva Corónica y buen gobierno*, completed in 1615, and intended for the King of Spain, Phillip II. Guaman Poma wrote this book to express his dissatisfaction with the situation in colonial Peru. As it was intended for the king, he used a format that would have been familiar to a European viewer, even hoping for the book to be printed, recognizing the status of printed books in Europe. In it, Guaman Poma told the history of the Andean people from creation to the conquest through a combination of text and line drawings. Some of the drawings illustrate his assertion that the Andeans were devout, believing Christians, who contributed to the spread of the religion in the viceroyalty. Guaman Poma’s use of text and illustration to tell his story is representative of the adoption of European pictorial and literary narrative traditions by many colonial Andean artists. However, Guaman Poma did incorporate some Andean conventions in his images.  

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The manuscript is a hybrid of Christian European beliefs and local Andean conventions. Christian narratives consistently inform the subject matter and in many instances, it is clear that Guaman Poma understands European Christian iconographic traditions, either from having read texts such as *The Golden Legend*, or from seeing

works of art by European artists in Peru.\textsuperscript{179} However, the style of the images is steeped in indigenous traditions. Valerie Fraser has suggested that the artist maintained traditional Christian iconography but consistently “Andeanized” the images.\textsuperscript{180} By this she reflects on the way that he flattened the figures and denied any illusion of three-dimensional space, relying heavily on line, rather than mass to define form (Figure 4.27).

As an advocate for the indigenous Andeans, Guaman Poma needed his book to assertively broadcast his Indian blood and allegiance, and creating according to the flat indigenous aesthetic was one of the artist’s tools. Teresa Gisbert has also commented that the significance of Guaman Poma’s linear style of draughtsmanship additionally references what he saw as the prestige of Peru’s ancient past.\textsuperscript{181} In other words, perhaps to Guaman Poma, maintaining the conventions of his native past somehow paid homage to the greatness of that history.

In the case of colonial New Spain, Eileen Baird studied the work of Bernardino da Sahagún, a Spanish monk in Mexico. Sahagún spent sixty years on an evangelical mission in Mexico, seeking to convert the indigenous populations, but during that time he also collected information about the life and customs of the people he encountered. He recorded his findings and enlisted local artisans to illustrate his manuscripts. Sahagún

\textsuperscript{179} Gisbert, “The Artistic World of Felipe Guaman Poma,” 97. Gisbert cites his image of the Sacrifice of Abraham as an example of his understanding of iconographic traditions and mentions that this composition was very common in prints and could have been widely available for Guaman Poma to see in Peru.


used this understanding of Indian aesthetics to direct the creation of work that would appeal to native audiences. In an article about two of the Spanish Franciscan friar’s manuscripts, *Primeros Memoriales*, from 1561, and the *Florentine Codex*, written and illustrated between 1575 and 1580, Baird argues that for the earlier manuscript, which was informed by many interviews and interactions with local indigenous people, the monk formulated the text in the European format, but ordered that the images be fashioned according to pre-conquest styles, which Baird defines as conceptual, with two-dimensional figures who do not relate to each other or to the space around them. Accordingly, the images lack the illusionistic naturalism of most European art. Baird’s thesis is that Sahagún made this decision because the information in the book came from interviews with natives and therefore the images are meant to reflect the source of his information. Hence, Sahagún relied on the assumption that native aesthetics would have been familiar and relatable to a viewing audience with an indigenous past.

Much like the aesthetics of Peruvian quero cups and Guaman Poma’s imagery, which share a linear, flat aesthetic, Bitti’s figures are similarly two-dimensional in their

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183 Marie Timberlake, “The Painted Image and the Fabrication of Colonial Andean History: Jesuit and Andean Visions in Conflict in ‘Matrimonio de Garcia de Loyola con Nusta Beatriz’” (PhD diss, University of California, Los Angeles, 2001). Although Timberlake’s study focused on a painting from later in the seventeenth century, she similarly recognized the symbolism of native pictorial styles.
style. As Guaman Poma knew that his linear style would symbolize indigenous aesthetics, and Sahagún commissioned native artists to make images that suited the native viewer, it seems possible that Bitti’s work may have similarly been appropriate for an audience accustomed to the flat, symbolic style of some indigenous art forms. Of course, there was great diversity in Andean cultures and languages and art forms in the pre- and post-hispanic periods, and quero cups represent only one well-known example of indigenous art that persisted after the arrival of the Spanish. Quero cups were widely known by Europeans living in colonial Peru and therefore could have likely been seen by Bitti and his patrons. In 1959, Martin Soria hinted at the possibility of a link between what he called the “earnest visual simplicity” of Bitti’s style and the response of his largely Indian audiences, but he never fully explored this fascinating proposition. It is impossible to know if Bitti consciously exaggerated the linearity of his paintings to this end, but it is reasonable to consider that it must have factored into his popularity among Europeans and Andeans alike.

The possibility that Bitti’s non-narrative, flat, linear style was somehow intentionally aimed at imitating local aesthetics as observed by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans in Peru is fitting in the context of Jesuit art and missions. The Jesuits had a unique approach to communicating with and converting the Indians and a particular interest in understanding the language and customs of the people they encountered. While this Jesuit philosophy was part of their missions throughout the world, its practice was particularly emphatic in Peru because of the influence of then

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Provincial Superior of all Jesuits in Peru, José de Acosta. Acosta posited that the Indians should be seen as human beings, and should be treated as such, and urged the Jesuits to see the Indians as no different from Europeans.\textsuperscript{185} In his book, \textit{Historia natural y moral de las Indias} (1590), Acosta argued that these indigenous people had descended from Adam and Eve, just as the Europeans had.\textsuperscript{186} As a result of Acosta’s beliefs, the Jesuits in Peru were expected to interact with the local populations in a civilized and respectful manner. Back in Italy, the Jesuit General, Claudio Aquaviva, even ordered that no Jesuit could be ordained a priest until he had attained a good knowledge of the native languages. Thus, in Peru, the Jesuits said mass in the vernacular language of the area and were able to communicate one-on-one with the Indians they hoped to convert. Just as the Jesuit priests recognized the value in using local languages to reach out, perhaps these same Jesuits saw the agency of Bitti’s paintings in the Andean context, and in addition to their appreciation of Bitti as a painter of great Italian style, their recognition of the success of his painted images contributed to his widespread popularity.


\textsuperscript{186} MacCormack, \textit{Religion in the Andes}, 252-69, provides the information for the following summary of Acosta’s ideas and their impact in Peru.
Conclusion

Bernardo Bitti spent the last few years of his career back in Lima, where he continued to paint until his death in 1610. The *Madonna of the Rose* (Figure 1.36) in the Monastery of the Descalzos is probably one of his last paintings. Elements of the painting are consistent with the style Bitti clung to from the beginning; the Virgin floats ethereally in a dim, shallow space, bedecked in cool colors, and modeled with sharp lines. This painting of the Virgin, much like the earliest he painted in Lima in 1575, praises and celebrates the unique character of the Virgin through traditional Christian iconography. This Virgin holds in her right hand a pink rose, a flower that was often associated with the Virgin as a reference to the belief that she was like a rose without thorns, or a mortal without sin.

During his time in Peru, Bitti developed a style that catered to the needs of the unique and diverse audience of colonial Peru. As the choice of the Jesuits throughout Peru from his arrival until his death in 1610, Bitti gained opportunities for wide exposure and his mark on colonial Peruvian painting did not end when he died, but continued for several generations in the art of students, followers, and sometimes even entire schools of painters who adopted elements of his elegant style and used his compositions and iconography as templates.

The Jesuits were an important force in the formation of colonial Lima, so their consistent reliance on Bitti set a precedent in the city for a respect and prestige accorded to Italian art and culture, which will be reflected in the later success of the two other
Italians, Mateo Pérez de Alesio and Angelino Medoro, citywide, and outside the circle of the Jesuits.
CHAPTER 2

MATEO PÉREZ DE ALESIO

Introduction

Mateo Pérez de Alesio spent two decades painting in Europe, with excursions to various cities in Italy, Malta, and Spain, before arriving in Lima in 1590. Of all three Italians discussed in this study, Alesio came to Lima with the most experience and acclaim. He had worked on several major commissions in Rome and had also completed projects in Malta and Seville. His New World expedition was motivated by a desire for fame and fortune, which he found in Lima. He was prolific, making paintings throughout the city for churches and monasteries. Moreover, Alesio’s mark on Lima extended beyond paintings by his own hand, as he trained as many as six or seven students, who went on to have their own careers.

As a young artist in Rome, Alesio had gained the experience and connections he would need to develop a reputation as a respected artist. Among a handful of high-profile projects, he is most famous for a painting in the Sistine Chapel, where he developed an ability to mimic the grand, muscular figures of the great Michelangelo. Always interested, it seems, in the opportunity for adventure and to further his career, Alesio went from Rome to Valletta, where he painted a series celebrating the defeat of Muslim invaders to the city. His career would next take him to Seville, where yet again he embarked on several ambitious projects, such as a large painting for the city’s cathedral. His work in Spain afforded Alesio the chance to move then to Lima and due to his
reputation in Seville he traveled as part of Viceroy Don García Hurtado de Mendoza’s entourage.

After the devastation of two major earthquakes in the seventeenth century, there remain only a few paintings in Lima that can be securely attributed to Alesio. However, archival material and contemporary publications reveal that Alesio worked in nearly every important church and monastery in the city. A survey of his European and South American paintings reveals his propensity to change his style to suit the project at hand. In some of the larger works, the dramatic style of gargantuan, Michelangelesque figures remains, while in other, smaller, more intimate paintings the figures are more naturalistic and the style more subtle.

Alesio’s influence on painting in Lima is evident in even the few objects that remain in the viceroyalty, paired with archival references to his activities in the New World.

**Alesio’s Early Years in Italy**

Since there are so few paintings by Alesio that remain in Peru, discussing his importance in South America is based primarily on his reputation, which can be established through his background, influences, and known paintings in Europe. Mateo Pérez de Alesio was born in the Tuscan town of Leccia, in 1540, to the prominent Godi family; his father’s name was Pierantonio Godi.\(^{187}\) His father and grandfather had been

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\(^{187}\) Antonio Palesati and Nicoletta Lepri, *Matteo da Leccia: Manierista toscana dall'Europa al Peru* (Pomarance, Italy: Associazione Turistica "Pro Pomarance,” 1999), 20-1. Palesati and Lepri have provided a good amount of foundational information about Alesio’s background, including this detail about Alesio’s family. The authors came across evidence of Alesio’s family
part of the Savonarolan republic in Florence and much of Alesio’s success, especially early in his career, was due to the connections his family had made with elite members of society, so it is worth noting the status of his lineage. For example, it seems that in 1555, during the Spanish occupation of Florence and Siena, Alesio’s father came into contact with the future viceroy of Peru, Andrés Hurtado de Mendoza. This connection may have later influenced Alesio’s decision to travel to Lima. His 1598 marriage contract from Lima should shed some light on his origins, but the document identifies Alesio as “ser natural de Roma.”

No other document provides evidence of Alesio’s birth in Rome, and in fact, when Alesio signed his paintings, as well as contracts, he signed his name, followed by the suffix “italicus,” not “romano,” as Angelino Medoro frequently did. Instead, it seems likely that the connection to Rome stemmed from his work in the city and the prestige that must have been attributed, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to any person linked to the center of the Catholic Church. As will be shown, the most important accomplishment of Alesio’s past, in the minds of contemporary chroniclers, was his participation in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel and the proximity to the famed Michelangelo. Advertising a connection to Rome certainly must have boosted Alesio’s reputation and reception in Lima. Similarly, Alesio changed his name upon leaving Spain for Lima. In most sixteenth-century European documents, authors identify the artist as either Matteo da Leccio or Matteo da Lecce. And, while it is not unusual for an artist’s name to be translated into the local language,

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the addition of “Pérez,” part of his father’s lineage, must have been intended to add a
certain familiarity to his Spanish-speaking patrons.

Alesio’s exact path from Lecce to Rome is not known, but scholars have
speculated that the young artist may have spent some time in Naples, and perhaps even in
Venice, although no documentation exists to provide solid evidence of Alesio’s
whereabouts. 189 During his time in Rome, Alesio met and worked with a number of
artists whose influence is evident in much of his work. Many were part of the reform
movement of the later sixteenth century, including Palma Giovane (1548-1628) who
recorded the only known portrait of Alesio (Figure 2.1) in a drawing now in the Morgan
Library in New York. 190 An inscription affectionately names Alesio as a close friend and
notes that he died in Peru, suggesting that they remained in contact even later in Alesio’s
life.

However he got there, by 1568, Alesio was in Rome, and in that same year, began
working on frescoes at the Villa d’Este in Tivoli, which is his earliest documented
project. 191 Since Alesio’s training is not known, it is important to consider the artists he
collaborated with at the Villa d’Este, who would have offered the young painter early
exposure to the styles and trends that were fashionable in and around Rome at the time of
his arrival. The decorations at the Villa began in 1568, so it seems that Alesio was part of

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189 Ibid., 14.
190 See Francisco Stastny, Pérez de Alesio y la pintura del siglo XVI (Buenos Aires: Universidad
de Buenos Aires, 1969), for further discussion of Alesio’s career in Rome.
191 Palesati and Lepri, Matteo da Leccia, 35; Mesa and Gisbert, El Manierismo en los Andes, 15.
the team from inception.\textsuperscript{192} Others who were present in 1568 included Girolamo Muziano, Livio Agresti, Cesare Nebbia, Federico Zuccaro, and Lelio Orsi, but Alesio worked in the Tiburtine quarters (Figure 2.2), as part of a team led by Nebbia.\textsuperscript{193} The subject matter of the frescoes in the Tiburtine rooms was mythology related to Tivoli.\textsuperscript{194} More important than the subject matter, however, is the style, rich in illusionistic devices, Mannerist playfulness, and distortions of form. Thus, at the Villa d’Este, Alesio must have encountered the then-fashionable manipulations of Mannerist aesthetics. It is likely that the young painter had previously come across similar styles, but it is significant to note that in his first documented project, he painted alongside successful artists working in the Mannerist mode and therefore learned of the style’s popularity. Although the artists working with Alesio at Tivoli are more widely recognized for their contributions to the reform movement in art, at the Villa d’Este, in a private setting, the illusionism, distortions, and eruditions of Mannerism were desirable to the patrons.

In addition to prominent Roman painters, the patrons at Tivoli also hired a handful of artists from the Marches region, a part of Italy known for artists adept at producing painted grotteschi.\textsuperscript{195} The Tiburtine rooms as well as most of the other interiors of the Villa include elaborate grotteschi decoration, which was quite popular in

\textsuperscript{192} David R. Coffin, \textit{The Villa d’Este at Tivoli} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 47, cites documents from the Villa that name Alesio as Mattheo Martus da Lechio, Matteo da Lacco or Lago.

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 41.

\textsuperscript{194} See ibid., 47-62, for detailed descriptions of the decorations.

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 63. According to accounts, three artists came from Pesaro, one from Fermo, and one from Macerata.
the late Renaissance. Once in Peru, Alesio likely relied on the exposure he had to grotteschi in some of his most important commissions.196

Perhaps just as important as Alesio’s interaction with artists at Tivoli was the contact he made with two dignitaries, Cardinal Rambouillet and Monsignor Fantino Petrignani, who oversaw some of the decorations. These two men were also in the circle of Pope Pius V, and may have provided the link between the young Alesio and his next, most prestigious project.197

In 1573, Alesio began working on his fresco *The Defense of the Body of Moses* (Figure 2.3), opposite Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, in the Sistine Chapel, a project that would help promote his reputation for the remainder of his career. Mentions of Alesio in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts nearly always include a reference to Michelangelo. For example, when Francisco Pacheco wrote about Alesio in his *Arte de la pintura*, he recalled seeing Alesio’s drawing for the Sistine fresco when he met him in Seville at a young age and noted that it was the best of all of his drawings “because it was painted in front of the Judgment of Michelangelo and assumed his grand manner.”198 In some cases, the information is erroneous, stating that the young artist had been trained by Michelangelo, even though the High Renaissance master had been dead for nearly a decade by the time Alesio was in the Sistine Chapel. It is likely, also, that the Sistine

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196 The Capilla Villegas in the Monastery of the Merced includes grotteschi decoration. It will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.


198 Ibid., 779, cites Pacheco’s comment on Alesio’s drawing, in Francisco Pacheco, *Arte de la pintura, su antiguedad y grandeza*, vol. 2 (Seville, 1649), 10-1.
fresco qualified Alesio for acceptance into the Academy of Saint Luke in Rome, in 1573. He had just reached the age of twenty-five, which was the recommended age for painters seeking admission, and this would have been his first major public commission, which was the other critical requirement.199

Alesio, along with a little-known Flemish painter, Henri van den Broeck, were hired in the 1570s to paint frescoes to replace two that had been destroyed in the Sistine Chapel.200 The frescoes replaced scenes of the same subjects by the fifteenth-century painters Domenico Ghirlandio and Luca Signorelli, which had been badly damaged when the nearby doorway was rebuilt. Since no documentary evidence exists to support the attribution of the fresco of Moses to Alesio, debate has arisen and other suggestions of artists have been made. However, two contemporary sources linked Alesio to the commission; Carel van Mander, who was in Rome between 1574 and 1576, discussed Alesio’s involvement in his Schilderboeck and, as mentioned previously, Francisco Pacheco referenced the project in the seventeenth century, having seen firsthand a preparatory drawing made by Alesio.201 As for dating, while there are no documents to confirm, it seems likely that Alesio painted the fresco of Moses between 1573 and 1575, during the pontificate of Pope Gregory XIII.202 In an article about the two late-sixteenth-century Sistine frescoes, Francisco Stastny astutely pointed out that Alesio included a tailless, winged dragon, the emblem of the pope, on a cartouche in the foreground.

199 Stastny, “A Note on Two Frescoes,” 781.
200 Ibid., 778.
201 Ibid., 779.
202 Ibid., 780.
Stastny also posed a question that others have considered: why were two nearly unknown artists given commissions in the most prestigious chapel in all of Rome? Stastny convincingly argued that by the first few years of the 1570s, largely under the influence of Pope Pius V, an artist’s reputation and status were no longer deciding factors in religious commissions; the celebrity of the artist did not influence patrons the way that it had in previous decades. Pius V saw art only as a vehicle for proper Catholic dogma, and so the reputation of artists hired to restore the Sistine Chapel had become unimportant. Stastny concluded that the commission for Alesio and van den Broeck must have originated during Pius V’s time and was completed early in the time of Gregory XIII, which explains the inclusion of his Buoncompagni emblem.

The atmosphere of reform in religious art is evident not only in the choice of two unknown artists, but also in the style of the paintings. Adjacent to the Sistine Chapel, nearly thirty years before Alesio’s arrival, and shortly after the completion of the Last Judgment on the chapel’s altar wall, Michelangelo painted his last two frescoes, The Conversion of Paul (Figure 2.4) and The Crucifixion of Peter (Figure 2.5), in the Pauline Chapel, a project often heralded as one of the first to take into account the Church’s reform movement. In Alesio’s Moses fresco, it is clear that that young artist incorporated elements of the younger Michelangelo’s style of the Sistine Chapel ceiling as well as some of the alterations he came to develop on the altar wall and in the Pauline Chapel. First, Alesio’s figures are unmistakably akin to the gargantuan, muscular bodies that, by

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203 Ibid., 781-83. Stastny’s argument will only be summarized here. See his article for more details about his rationale for dating and attribution.
the last quarter of the sixteenth century, had become iconic examples of Michelangelo’s paintings. Alesio’s bright color palette is also closely related to the Sistine ceiling, in the predominance of high values in blues and oranges, for example. Evident also are echoes of the adjustments Michelangelo made to his style in an effort to respond to the need for reform in the later sixteenth century. Michelangelo had developed, much earlier in his career, a tendency to give figures blessed with divine grace elegant, energized poses and idealized bodies. For individuals lacking such grace, Michelangelo painted figures that take on awkward positions, often stand in murky shadow, and lack the same kind of perfected beauty. Marcia Hall has comprehensively discussed this important part of Michelangelo’s painting style, noting that it is evident as early as his painting of the Temptation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (1508-1512), where Alesio would have seen it.\footnote{Marcia Hall, \textit{After Raphael: Painting in Central Italy in the Sixteenth Century} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 178-9.} By the time of the Pauline frescoes, Michelangelo had adopted this new idea, painting many of the figures with grotesque facial features, in hunched, uncomfortable poses. Alesio used a similar tool to distinguish good from evil in his Sistine fresco. The Archangel Michael and his divine companions soar onto the scene with grace and elegance, their muscles tensing as they wage violence on their demonic opponents, who stumble and fall awkwardly. The modeling of the demons’ musculature, too, has become gray and murky, particularly in contrast to the gleaming physiques of those on God’s side.
It is important to note, however, that Alesio did not wholeheartedly adopt Michelangelo’s little-appreciated and little-copied style of the Pauline frescoes, which also lack ornament and in which the figures are stripped of the familiar graceful, serpentine poses of the High Renaissance master. Where Michelangelo stripped most of the figures in his Pauline frescoes of any beauty and ornament, Alesio maintained the lighter touch of the younger style, with fanciful decoration of Moses’ sarcophagus and an airy sense of movement in the arrangement of the figures in the composition.

Much as in the case of Bitti, who has been largely classified by scholars as a “Mannerist,” Alesio’s style too has been consistently labeled in the same way, its nuances and specifics ignored. This brief survey of his early formation as an artist makes it evident that in fact Alesio was engaged in a style of painting from early in his career that incorporated some iconic formal elements of Italian Mannerist painters, but also integrated alterations made according to the need for reform in sacred art. Ultimately, there is no need to thoroughly analyze Alesio’s Italian work because several scholars have already engaged in surveys of the Italian work, but this brief discussion has served to highlight the most important components of the young artist’s early influences.

Alesio in Malta

Although the precise date is not known, by the late 1570s, Alesio had arrived at his first foreign destination: Valletta in Malta. The decade prior, in 1565, the country had

been attacked by the Ottoman Empire, an invasion that had been long threatened and thus anticipated by Malta. Therefore, the local knights and their armies were able to successfully defeat the Ottoman invaders and expel them from Malta. The victory had obvious political significance to the small country, but its importance went beyond merely defending territory and came to symbolize the triumph of Catholicism over Islam.

As part of the celebrations, the Grand Master Jean Levesque de la Cassière commissioned Alesio to paint scenes from the Great Siege in the reception room, known as the Room of the Ambassadors, of the city’s great palace. An Italian scholar, Lucio Maiorano, illustrated Alesio’s extensive, fifteen-fresco series in a publication from 2000. The information in Maiorano’s book is somewhat scant, but he did provide a basic framework for the history of the frescoes’ creation, as well as the best images published to date. The frescoes function as a single narrative, moving the audience through the major events chronologically and spatially, creating a sweeping, dramatic viewing experience. In the first three frescoes (Figures 2.6-2.8), Alesio illustrated Malta from a distance, with the encroaching Turkish invaders visible. In scenes four through ten (Figures 2.9-2.17), Alesio took the viewer into the battle, with closer images of the armies fighting.

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Maiorano observed a Baroque tendency in the composition of the series, in particular in the choice to paint a series of images that connect to one larger battle. The engaging, experiential nature of the series seems in line with Baroque ideals; Alesio was attempting to create a moving, dramatic visual journey for his audience.

In his construction of space and perspective, however, it is clear that Alesio was still relying on the vernacular of Mannerist artists. In most of the battle scenes the figures crowd into a shallow foreground and the artist provided little suggestion of the three-dimensional recession of deep space. For example, in the scene representing the defeat of the Turks and their retreat to Antioch, led by the Grand Master, Bertran de Compes (Figure 2.13), Alesio has tightly stacked the soldiers. He painted a handful in the foreground with detailed uniforms and facial expressions, but the crowd behind dissipates into a mass of heads and swords. In composition, then, the painting is similar to the relief-like style made popular by Raphael and his workshop in the Sala di Costantino (Figure 2.18) in the Vatican, a series of paintings that Alesio certainly could have seen while working in the adjacent Sistine Chapel, as well as the late antique sarcophagi that likely inspired Raphael.

There are echoes, also, of some of Alesio’s other influences, most evident in the allegorical figures painted to flank some of the scenes from the battles, which recall the robust musculature and serpentine poses of Michelangelo. For example, in the eighth fresco of the series, Alesio painted a figure representing nobility (Figure 2.19); the figure

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watches over the scene labeled as the assault of the sea and land. His legs are powerfully muscular and he extends his right arm across his body elegantly to point to the moment of battle.

Alesio’s experience in Malta must have had a great impact on his future career and the decisions he would make. First, on this first foreign expedition, Alesio learned of the potential for the success of a trained Italian artist abroad. As were the Spanish in Seville and in Lima, the patrons in Valletta were likely impressed by his résumé, given the status of the Roman art scene in the end of the sixteenth century. Additionally, since much of the impetus for art-making in Lima would be about establishing a Catholic presence in a pagan land, it is important to note that in Malta, Alesio was exposed to his first passionate celebration of Christianity over a non-Christian entity.

Alesio completed one additional painting in Malta, an altarpiece for the Church of San Giovanni in Valletta, *The Baptism of Christ* (Figure 2.20). Most important here is an analysis of the painting’s style, which is different from other works discussed thus far. Most obviously different are the figures, whose bodies are not robust and muscular, but slim and elegant. Alesio’s oeuvre is no longer complete and there are questions of attribution that will be discussed in the section on his work in Lima, but in a brief survey of his work in Europe it seems that he absorbed the influences of the artists that surrounded him and experimented with various styles.

After completing the fresco series in Malta, Alesio returned to Rome, where he worked on several projects in the first few years of the 1580s.\textsuperscript{211} Even this brief survey of Alesio’s time in Italy and Malta is illustrative of the artist’s youthful success and early influence from some of the most important Roman painters of the still developing Catholic reform movement.

**Alesio in Seville**

By 1583, Alesio was in Seville, Spain, where the prestige of his Roman training and background would be part of his positive reception. A handful of Spanish texts celebrate Alesio and highlight what must have been considered his most important experience, working in the Sistine Chapel. In his *Diálogo de la pintura*, written in 1633, Vicente Carducho mistakenly cited the young Italian as a disciple of Michelangelo Buonarroti, who worked beside his famed Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel.\textsuperscript{212} As late as 1800, Cean Bermúdez and Juan Agustín introduced Alesio as having studied in the circle of Michelangelo, in their *Diccionario histórico de los más ilustres profesores de las bellas artes en España*.\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{211} Mesa and Gisbert, *Manierismo en los Andes*, 20. Alesio worked on several paintings in the Church of San Eligio degli Orefici, where he worked with Taddeo Zuccaro. Subsequently, Alesio worked in the Church of Santa Catalina de la Rota, with Girolamo Muziano and Federico Zuccaro.

\textsuperscript{212} Vicente Carducho, *Diálogo de la pintura: su defensa, origen, essencia, definición, modos y diferencias*, Lib. III (Madrid: Frco. Martinez, 1633), 7.

\textsuperscript{213} Cean Bermudez and Juan Agustín, *Diccionario histórico de los más ilustres profesores de las bellas artes en Madrid*, vol. 4 (Madrid: La Viuda de Ibarra, 1800), 75; Mesa and Gisbert, *Mateo Pérez de Alesio*, 51, cite these sources for the reception of Alesio in Spanish culture.
Some of the earliest evaluations of Alesio’s work in Spain seem to have come not from the paintings he produced there but from the drawings he brought with him from Italy. It was fairly common for Italian artists to carry drawings on foreign visits as a way to demonstrate the creativity and working process of the Italian school and to serve as models and sources for their work. Pacheco mentioned Alesio’s drawings in his biography of the artist, noting his skills as a draftsman, especially when he was in the shadow of his greatest influence, Michelangelo. Pacheco paid special attention to a drawing of the Death of Moses, which he found particularly skilled, explaining that “the reason the drawing excelled over the others was that he had executed it at the foot of Michelangelo’s Judgment, and had clothed it in his grand manner, but it was ascertained to be his for that very reason, on the information of some who had been to Rome and seen the same painting.”

It is not surprising that the first appraisal of Alesio would be through his drawings, since artists routinely brought drawings with them on travels since they were far more portable than paintings. Additionally, the drawing medium had come to be more and more greatly appreciated by collectors and theorists, as well as other artists, over the course of the Renaissance. The function of drawing prior to the fifteenth century, in the Middle Ages, had been almost entirely practical, as a means for an artist to prepare for a project, and the process had been largely formulaic, based on patterns and templates. In the Renaissance, the functions of drawings multiplied, to accommodate the

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214 Pacheco, Arte de la pintura, 439.
new expectation that artists should have the ability to replicate the natural world, with particular attention to the movements and emotions of human figures. The function of drawing was also transformed in the Renaissance into a practice that was deemed essential in training the hand and the eye of a young artist to observe carefully and closely, but also throughout the career of an artist, as a medium through which a painter or sculptor could experiment with ideas. Such shifts in the conception and status of drawing resulted in a greater appreciation for the drawings of masters and the beginnings of drawing collections. Julius Held, in his exploration of this very topic, discusses the elevation of drawings to objects worth collecting among artists, connoisseurs, as well as individuals he deemed “amateurs.” He goes on to cite Leonardo da Vinci as the originator of some of the ideas that would motivate such appreciation of drawings, noting that Leonardo discussed his belief that the inspiration and first thoughts of the artist were held in a drawing. Likewise, Giorgio Vasari argued for the supremacy of drawings over finished paintings because of a drawing’s proximity to the thoughts of the artist. Thus,


216 Ibid.


218 Ibid., 73.
Alesio’s drawing made in the Sistine Chapel must have represented an artifact of his experience and education to his Spanish viewers.

One drawing by Alesio’s hand is still extant: a sketch in ink of Jupiter (Figure 2.21). Atop Mount Olympus, the God is just about to release his lightning bolt. It is unknown whether the drawing corresponds to a completed painting, as no related works exist.\(^{219}\) In a recent catalogue of the collection of drawings that holds this example, the authors assert that there is evidence of the influence of Federico Zuccaro in the pen strokes and the use of lead white for highlighting. The style of the drawing also reflects contemporary Italian interests, with a particular nod to Michelangelo. Alesio sketched Jupiter in a pose that is full of vigor and dynamism: the musculature is tensed from the fingers to the toes and the body is strong and robust.

The positive reception of Alesio’s drawings must have contributed to his getting the commission to paint a large fresco depicting Saint Christopher (Figure 2.22) in the city’s cathedral. The painting is in the cathedral’s right (or south) transept, in a prominent location. The project came shortly after Alesio’s arrival; in October of 1583, the same year he came to Seville, Alesio received payment towards the project.\(^{220}\) Pacheco described Alesio’s working process, noting that the Italian had made several preparatory drawings (bozzetti), including a cartoon of the same size as the fresco, which

\(^{219}\) Benito Navarrete Prieto and Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, Álbum Alcubierre: dibujos de la Sevilla ilustrada del conde de Águila a la colección Juan Abelló (Seville: Fundacion Arte Hispanico, 2009), 306. The authors interpret the lightly sketched bird as a reference to the Ganymede story.

\(^{220}\) Mesa and Gisbert, Manierismo en los Andes, 22.
was fully realized. This seems another opportunity for the Spaniard to celebrate Alesio’s Italian training.

The fresco of Saint Christopher is an important project to discuss in documenting Alesio’s reception and reputation in Seville, but it is also significant because he was commissioned to paint a replica in Lima’s Cathedral, likely due to the acclaim of the Spanish painting.\(^{221}\) Unfortunately, the Lima fresco was destroyed in an earthquake in the seventeenth century, so the original is the only source available to recreate Alesio’s involvement in the important Lima church.

The choice of Saint Christopher for Seville’s Cathedral was appropriate due in part to the popularity of the saint’s cult from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries, but perhaps even more importantly because of Christopher’s designation as patron saint of travelers. As a port city and the departure location for all ships headed to the New World, Seville was a city of travel, and so it makes sense that its people would want Christopher to look on from this most important building, and today, in a nice coincidence, he looks down on the tomb of an important mortal namesake, Christopher Columbus.

The popular story of Christopher recalls that he was a Canaanite of great size who devoted himself to Christ by carrying the unfortunate across a river, with the guidance of a hermit. On one occasion, he carried a young boy who seemed to become heavier with

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each movement. Only after crossing did the boy reveal himself to be Christ, who told Christopher that he had just carried the weight of the world on his shoulders.222

In his fresco, Alesio followed many of the descriptive notes common to the saint’s story as told in Jacobus da Voragine’s *Golden Legend* and as established by Flemish painters and engravers of the fifteenth century.223 Christopher is a large, robust man with powerful musculature. He carries on his shoulder the Christ Child, who holds a blue orb in his lap. In the left background the guiding hermit stands at the edge of the river. The inclusion of the hermit is noteworthy because it was not a common convention in Italian depictions of the saint, but rather was made popular by northern European artists.224 German artists made numerous prints depicting Christopher in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and all include the aged hermit; Martin Schongauer’s engraving (Figure 2.23) from the late fifteenth century is an example, but Albrecht Dürer also took on the subject five times, three in woodcut, and two in engraving. Working out of what seems to have been common convention in northern European Renaissance art, Dürer also included the hermit in all five. He made the woodcuts early in his career, in 1496, 1501, and 1511. Each is unique in the pose and composition of the saint, as well as the details of the body


and costume. The earliest (Figure 2.24), from 1496, is most closely related to Alesio’s painting in the similar use of a strong, muscular body for Christopher.

A link between Alesio and Dürer is not surprising considering that there is evidence that while at Seville’s Cathedral, the young Italian bought a book that included prints by Dürer and that at least some of these prints were with Alesio in Lima as well.\(^{225}\) Additionally, the engravings of Saint Christopher are closely related to a series of drawings that Dürer made for Joachim Patinir, who then used them in preparation for a painting housed in the Escorial, outside Madrid.\(^{226}\) Therefore, Dürer’s images of Saint Christopher must have been well known in Spain.\(^{227}\)

In addition to the connection to Dürer, the Saint Christopher fresco is also representative of Michelangelo’s influence. Saint Christopher is large and robust, with the overblown musculature that is an iconic element of Michelangelo’s figures. The vast stature of Christopher is common in depictions of the saint, and is part of several of Dürer’s versions, but it cannot be ignored that the body type is also reminiscent of the prophets on the Sistine ceiling and the saved figures in the Last Judgment on the altar wall, which Alesio saw and studied. Alesio gave the saint strength and stature, but he has also exaggerated the musculature. Evident in the knees and elbows, in particular, this


\(^{227}\) Bartrum, *Dürer and his Legacy*, 213. Bartrum cited Heller’s information from the following publication: Joséph Heller, *Das leben und die werke Albrecht Dürers* (Bamberg: Kunz, 1827), 36-37, noted the popularity of the engraved images of Saint Christopher, citing six copies of each of Dürer’s works from the sixteenth century.
saint has more ripples of muscle than the real human body. Finally, Alesio also posed Christopher in the *figura serpentinata* made popular by Michelangelo and the other Italian Mannerists of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{228}

Above the scene of Saint Christopher, Alesio also included two angels (Figure 2.25) flanking a coat of arms. The angel on the left holds a heavy gold crown and gazes downward, as if to designate the young child in the fresco as the Son of God. The angel on the right holds a large palm, the conventional symbol for martyrdom, and looks heavenward, referencing Christ’s ultimate sacrifice. In the center is a stylized coat of arms containing a vase with seven lilies. As lilies had long been a symbol of the Virgin and her purity, it seems likely that these flowers have the same significance. The choice to depict seven is noteworthy, as the number seven has several symbolic references in Christian art. In this case, it seems possible that Alesio was referring to the seven sorrows of the Virgin, since he has paired the number seven with lilies, in order to correspond to the moments from Christ’s life referred to by the angels and their emblems.\textsuperscript{229}

In the same year that Alesio left Italy for Seville, he hired a young Italian artist, Pedro Pablo Moron, to work as his apprentice. Moron joined Alesio in 1583 when he was only fifteen years old, immediately traveled to Spain with his master, and eventually

\textsuperscript{228} See John Shearman, *Mannerism* (New York: Penguin, 1976), 81-3, for further discussion of the *figura serpentinata*.

\textsuperscript{229} Alesio also completed a painting of Saint James in the Battle of Clavijo for the Church of Saint James in Seville. Unfortunately, the painting was badly damaged. For more information on the painting, see Mesa and Gisbert, *Manierismo en los Andes*, 23.
joined him on the journey to Lima.\textsuperscript{230} Therefore, along with bringing his own experience and knowledge of European art to the New World, Alesio also brought another Italian artist, who worked with him for the remainder of his career. Moron’s name appears in many documents associated with Alesio’s projects in Lima. The earliest known document dates from November 14, 1592, when Moron signed a contract stating that the two artists would maintain their professional relationship until one of them died.\textsuperscript{231}

Unfortunately, at this time, it has not been possible to attribute any paintings to Moron. As mentioned, his name appears in contracts associated with Alesio’s work and several will be discussed here, but there are no extant paintings that can be securely connected to him, so his style remains completely unknown.

\textbf{Alesio in Lima}

Alesio differed from the other two Italians because of the level of his experience upon reaching the New World. Bitti and Medoro were young and virtually unknown and were, it seems, accepted largely because of their Italian heritage. By the time of his arrival in the New World, however, Alesio had already developed a reputation as an accomplished artist, celebrated for his skills as a trained Italian painter.

Unfortunately, of all three Italian painters, it is Alesio whose oeuvre has suffered the most loss from Lima’s earthquakes; nearly all of his paintings were destroyed in the seventeenth century. Therefore, it is impossible to establish a firm understanding of his style and contribution to Lima’s art world. However, documentation exists that allows

\textsuperscript{230} Debernadi Chichizola, \textit{Manierismo en Lima}, 135.

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 121 and 205-7, published the contract signed by Alesio and Moron.
for the reconstruction of Alesio’s career. While documents stating when and where Alesio worked cannot substitute for the actual objects, they can be part of a demonstration of the artist’s widespread success in Lima, as archival documents reveal that Alesio worked in many of the city’s most important churches and monasteries.

One of the greatest losses was at the Church of Santo Domingo, where Alesio and his workshop made numerous paintings to decorate the choir stalls as well as several side chapels with fictive architectural decoration, as well as images of virgin saints, prophets, and sibyls. After extensive study of the church and its records that coincided with a restoration that took place in the late 1990s, Peruvian scholar Francisco Stastny has also concluded that Alesio painted a series of murals in the nave around 1600.

Several years earlier, between 1593 and 1594, Alesio was commissioned to complete a series of paintings for a retablo in the same church, this time for the family chapel of Juana de Aliaga, the niece of Jerónimo de Aliaga, the conquistador. It is significant that Alesio’s earliest commissions in Lima connected him to the elite of the city. Only one painting, Saint Jerome (Figure 2.26), remains from the retablo and its attribution to Alesio has been debated.

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232 Palesati and Lepri, *Matteo da Leccia*, 199, offer a brief discussion of the lost work, although it is not comprehensive, so I will draw from various additional sources to attempt a more complete presentation of Alesio’s original oeuvre.


In the painting, Saint Jerome prays to a sculpture of the crucified Christ in the wilderness. He wears only a simple red drape that wraps around his legs. Compositionally, the painting is close to a work of the same subject by the Italian artist Girolamo Muziano (Figure 2.27), completed between 1585 and 1592, now in the Vatican Museums. Muziano’s painting was originally commissioned for the Chapel of Saint Jerome in the church of Santa Marta in the Vatican and so the date for the painting is based on the time during which the chapel was built. The paintings are so close in coloring and composition that they must be somehow linked. However, Alesio was in Seville by 1582, three years before Muziano may have begun the painting. It is possible that the dating for the Muziano painting is incorrect and Alesio saw it before leaving Rome for Spain. Alternatively, Alesio could have seen a sketch for the painting, as he was acquainted with Muziano, having worked with him at the Villa Tivoli, or both artists could have been working from the same print source. In any case, there is a link between the Lima painting and that by Muziano, even if Alesio is not the artist.

Stylistically, the painting does not resemble others by Alesio. The figure is much more slim and the composition lacks the energy seen in much of Alesio’s European oeuvre, including the Moses painting in the Sistine Chapel, the Saint Christopher in Seville’s Cathedral, and the drawing of Jupiter, all discussed earlier. However, judging from what remains of Alesio’s work, he seems to have been somewhat of a chameleon, altering his painting style numerous times and catering to the needs of the particular

235 Mesa and Gisbert, Mateo Pérez de Alesio, 89.
commission. His later extant work in Lima, for example, lacks the robust Michelangelesque bodies of his younger years. Instead, his figures became more graceful and delicate, which will become clear in the upcoming discussions. Unfortunately, in the case of Alesio, because of the sparse nature of what remains from his oeuvre, it is challenging to establish attributions based on style.

Despite the close connections to Muziano’s painting, there are several significant additions. In the right foreground of the painting, the artist included a parrot, a figure that also appeared in Alesio’s Saint Christopher fresco from Seville’s cathedral. The inclusion of the parrot is one clue that Alesio might have been the artist. In the Saint Jerome painting, the parrot holds in its talons a scroll that reads, “speculum penitentia.” In the lower left is a portrait of Jeronimo de Aliaga, the conquistador to whom the painting is dedicated.237 Finally, a praying monk kneels on the cliffside in the background.

Primary sources and modern scholars have noted a number of paintings that have since been lost or destroyed. These paintings will be mentioned in order to demonstrate the breadth of Alesio’s work in Lima. Unfortunately, the documents for these paintings are not always helpful in establishing firm information about dating and patronage.

Alesio made substantial contributions to Lima’s Cathedral, but all of the paintings were destroyed in seventeenth-century earthquakes. In addition to the painting of Saint Christopher, purported to have been a replica of his Seville fresco, Alesio worked on a handful of additional projects. In 1606, he painted the doors of the cathedral’s organ and

237 Mesa and Gisbert, Mateo Pérez de Alesio, 89.
soon after he contributed paintings to the Chapel of Saint Bartholomew, including portraits of Saints Peter and Paul and scenes from the life of Christ. 238

Alesio also made a painting of the ten doctors of the church for the Church of San Agustin in Lima. 239 On at least one documented occasion, in 1606, Alesio’s reputation took him outside of Lima, to several small churches in Huanaco, where he completed seven paintings depicting scenes from Christ’s Passion. 240 Finally, an inventory of works left in Alesio’s workshop after his death counts eighty-four paintings, varying in subject matter from portraits, to religious narratives, to mythological scenes. 241

Scholars have attributed a series of paintings in a chapel in the Church of the Merced in Lima to Alesio, but others have debated the validity of the attribution. The project includes a series of frescoes that decorate a small chapel that adjoins the sacristy. It is covered with a dome, which the artist has decorated with eight angels holding instruments of the Passion (Figure 2.28). The chapel was dedicated in 1628 to a benefactor of the Mercedarians, Captain Bernardo Villegas, as his funerary chapel and the dedication states that Villegas would have the opportunity to commission a painter of his choosing to complete the altarpiece, but it does not mention the decoration of the

The dedication has led some scholars, including Francisco Stastny, to believe that the entire chapel was painted in 1628, by which date Alesio would have been eighty-one years old and likely not the artist. In contrast, Mesa and Gisbert have argued that the frescoes are closer to Alesio’s style than to the style of any other artist working in Lima in the early seventeenth century and suggest that the frescoes must have been painted in the decades prior to 1628. Another Peruvian scholar, Ricardo Estabridis Cardenas, has used the painting of Saint Michael (Figure 2.29) at the Capilla Villegas as the strongest evidence of Alesio’s involvement, pointing out that it is reminiscent of the artist’s work in the Sistine Chapel. The pose of the Saint Michael in Lima is close to that of the same figure in the fresco in Rome, and thus provides a convincing link. The body of the archangel lacks the robust musculature of Alesio’s Roman work, but is in line with the change in style recognized in the Saint Jerome, from the Church of Santo Domingo. The slimming of the figure is also reminiscent of Alesio’s Baptism of Christ (fig. 21) in Valletta.

In addition to the archangel Michael, the angels in several sections of the chapel (Figure 2.30) are related to others painted by Alesio, this time in the Seville Saint Christopher fresco. In one of the lunettes of the chapel are two seated angels holding

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243 Stastny, Pérez de Alesio, 11.
244 Mesa and Gisbert, Mateo Pérez de Alesio, 121-122; Martin Soria, La pintura del siglo XVI en Sudamerica (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Arte Americano y Investigaciones Estéticas, 1956), 119-120, agreed with this statement.
skulls, flanking an elaborate set of grotteschi. Their attenuated bodies and graceful poses recall those of the Seville fresco and Alesio’s familiarity with grotteschi design was established early in his career in Tivoli.

The Virgin Lactans

In 1604, Alesio painted a small image in oil on copper of the Virgin nursing the Christ Child.\textsuperscript{246} The painting is widely identified as the Virgin of Belén (Figure 2.31) (or the Virgin of Bethlehem) and is part of the tradition of representations of the type known as the Virgin lactans. Alesio composed the painting with a tight focus on the two holy figures; he included only their torsos and pushed both figures close to the picture plane, illusionistically in great proximity to the viewer. He did not include any background or setting, opting instead to omit extraneous details and focus all of the viewer’s attention on the figures themselves. The Virgin holds her breast in her right hand and uses the left to support the young child, who places both hands on his mother’s bosom and turns deliberately in the direction of the audience as if to emphasize the demonstration of his feeding. The Virgin gazes down poignantly towards the Child, a slight hint of melancholy evident in her wilting eyelids. The tradition of depicting sadness on the visage of the Virgin is quite common in the history of art, a device used to remind the viewer of the Virgin’s knowledge of her Son’s inevitable sacrifice.

There is a poignant intimacy to Alesio’s painting that would have made it an ideal object for private devotion. In this way, Alesio’s treatment of the subject is in line with Counter-Reformation sentiments that reinforced the need for sacred art to be moving.

\textsuperscript{246} The painting measures 19 x 15 7/16 inches.
Alesio’s *Virgin of Belén* also relates to the sober poignancy of Italian reform artists, such as Girolamo Muziano and Scipione Pulzone, with whom Alesio worked in Rome. One example by Pulzone (Figure 2.32) is very close to Alesio’s composition.  

The medium of oil on copper gained popularity in Europe through the end of the sixteenth century; its origins are thought to be Italian, among some of the late Mannerists such as Giorgio Vasari, Agnolo Bronzino, and Alessandro Allori, who exaggerated the artifice and technical virtuosity that come along with the medium.  

247 The medium offers vivid, detailed, rich imagery and was typically used for small-scale works. In a recent exhibition catalogue about oil-on-copper paintings, Clara Bargellini argued that it was the Italians who brought the medium to the New World. Its most prominent manifestation was in Peru, where at least three Italian painters worked, in contrast to New Spain, where the medium was rarely practiced.  

249 Most oil-on-copper paintings made in Peru were small and intended for private devotion. Two examples from private collections in Lima date from the early-seventeenth century and both represent the Coronation of the Virgin (Figures 2.33 and 2.34). Both paintings are small and richly detailed and colored. Since it is known that Alesio made at least this one oil on copper painting in Lima, it is evident that some of the medium’s influence came directly from transplanted artists, but Bargellini has also suggested that oil on copper paintings might have been imported to be used for training purposes, as prints most certainly were. The full extent of Alesio’s

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248 Ibid., 10.

249 Ibid., 33.
influence in this field is not known, but there is one very close copy (Figure 2.35) of his *Virgin of Belén* in the Sanctuary of Saint Rose in Lima, dating from the early seventeenth century, also painted on copper, so it is possible that Alesio’s painting was part of the dissemination of the medium.

The composition of the early copy on copper is nearly an exact duplication of Alesio’s painting. The artist has placed the Virgin and Child in the same position, and even the proportions of the figures in relation to one another are strikingly similar, suggesting that the anonymous painter must have seen Alesio’s original. The copy even includes the soft brush of hair that caresses the shoulder of the Virgin in Alesio’s painting. Alesio had many students in his workshop and a handful of close followers as well, so it seems likely that an artist in close proximity to the Italian made the painting, but unfortunately no documentation has been found to attribute the painting to a particular hand. Alesio’s students and followers will be discussed at more length later in this chapter, but it is worth noting here that very few have enough, if any, paintings securely attributed to them at this point in time to determine their authorship on stylistic qualities.

There are some distinct differences between the two paintings, indicating that Alesio himself was likely not the artist. Alesio painted his figures with sharper facial features, the line of the nose as well as the lids of the eyes particularly linear in quality. The copy is softer in its modeling of the facial features. The unknown artist has also made some changes to the color of the Virgin’s hair as well as her costume. This painter has altered the proportions of the Christ Child’s face, elongating the forehead. Alesio’s
painting is akin to Bernardo Bitti’s Mannerist paintings of the Virgin that include flat figures and the dominance of linear modeling. The unknown painter of this copper painting worked in a more naturalistically toned mode. The faces of both Virgin and Child have been more subtly modeled, with less linear flatness and more volume.

This close copy is not the only painting seemingly inspired by Alesio’s original. In fact, many related paintings were made in Lima in the seventeenth century. As mentioned previously, Alesio’s painting seems to be directly related to a work (Figure 2.32) by the Italian reform painter Scipione Pulzone, with the important distinction that Alesio transformed Pulzone’s images of the Virgin and Child into a representation of the Virgo lactans. The great significance of this choice lies in the fact that many paintings of the nursing Virgin were made as small devotional objects in Lima over the next couple of decades. A survey of some of these paintings will demonstrate the scope of the subject’s popularity.

The Convento de los Descalzos, a monastery in Lima with an extensive collection of religious paintings from the colonial period, holds one such example (Figure 2.36). The museum dates the painting to the seventeenth century, but a more precise date or attribution cannot be established. In studying the examples of paintings of the Virgin lactans based on Alesio’s work, I would suggest that the painting must date from the early seventeenth century due to its close visual connection to the original. In this case, the artist has painted with oil on wood panel, not copper, but has remained quite close to the composition of Alesio’s painting. The changes include variations on the costume of the Virgin, a fairly dramatic aging of the Christ child from a young baby to an older child.
with a full head of hair, as well as the addition of a parapet to separate the space of the figures from that of the viewer, a common trope used in European portraiture.

The monastery of Santa Rosa in Lima owns another related painting (Figure 2.37) of the Virgin lactans, again without any secure dating or attribution. In this case, the artist has made some major alterations to Alesio’s theme, suggesting most likely that this artist may not have seen Alesio’s painting, but that the composition had become so widespread that artists had begun to adapt the theme to their own styles and needs. Here, the scene of the Virgin nursing her child has become much more symbolic. The artist has adorned these figures with elaborate crowns and composed the figures as if revealed after rich curtains have opened, essentially no longer showing a humble, intimate moment. The Virgin wears additional jewelry signifying her importance and regal stature. Despite the myriad alterations, however, the composition of the mother and child is still quite close to that in Alesio’s painting, from the slight tilt of her head to the heavy eyelids and the direct turn of the child towards the viewer. Stylistically, the soft modeling and three-dimensional nature of the figures’ bodies are suggestive of the possibility of this artist’s connection to the Italian school in Lima, whether he was a student or follower of Alesio or one of the other Italians working in the city.

In another example (Figure 2.38), it is clear that the approach has shifted from one motivated by some degree of naturalism to the flat, stylized qualities of colonial painting from the mid-seventeenth century and later, when indigenous artists and aesthetics

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250 See Estabridis Cárdenas, “Influencia italiana,” 137, for a publication of the painting.
became more prominent. This painting, owned today by the Museo Pedro de Osma in Lima, is still compositionally close to Alesio’s painting and the essence of the interpretation of the theme is apparent. However, the modeling has lost its subtlety and the relationship between the figures and the space they inhabit is cramped and incoherent.

Additionally, there are examples that bear less resemblance compositionally to Alesio’s painting, but that are related in the use of the Virgin lactans as the subject. A small oil-on-wood painting (Figure 2.39) in the Cathedral in Lima is a representation of the Virgin nursing her child, but the artist has reversed the composition seen in Alesio’s original and its close copies. The reversal may be due to a print source made after Alesio’s original painting. Alesio himself was a trained printmaker, and Lima’s first printer, Antonio Ricardo, had arrived in Lima in 1583, so it is possible that prints were made after Alesio’s original painting, although no originals have been found to date. Additionally, the position of the figures is slightly different. Although there are some important differences, it seems reasonable still to trace the theme of the Virgin lactans back to Alesio, due to the multiple copies that do seem closely related, as well as the high profile of the Italian artist in Lima culture of the seventeenth century.

Similarly, there are paintings of the Cuzco school that take on the same subject, but infuse the composition with some of the common tropes of the region’s artists. The example in Lima’s art museum (Figure 2.40) includes the gold patterning, the colorful flower frame and the flat figures that are reminiscent of the Cuzco school.

251 See chapter 4 for a more thorough discussion of the shift in colonial Peruvian painting.
The Virgin lactans subject had early beginnings in European art, but had largely fallen out of favor by the end of the sixteenth century. The subject’s lack of popularity in Europe during Alesio’s time makes his choice to paint his *Virgin of Belén* and the abundance of copies in Lima important to consider. Alesio’s motivations or the ideas of his patrons, unfortunately, cannot ultimately be known. However, it is possible that the painting was related to the artist’s or the patron’s own interpretation of the needs of the Counter-Reformation. In some cases, late-sixteenth-century artists looked back to Early Christian themes and subject matter for inspiration as a way to draw attention to the legitimacy and legacy of the Catholic Church. Since the Virgin lactans had a long history, perhaps it seemed an apt subject.

The theme of the Virgin lactans was not new in the seventeenth century and not exclusive to colonial Lima, but had a long history in European art. Several scholars have dated the earliest example to the second century, in the catacomb of Saint Priscilla in Rome, where an artist has painted the seated Virgin as she nurses the child. The subject remained common through the Early Christian period and reached its height of popularity in the fourteenth century. By the end of the Cinquecento, however, and certainly in the years following the Council of Trent, the subject had largely fallen out of favor by the end of the sixteenth century. The subject’s lack of popularity in Europe during Alesio’s time makes his choice to paint his *Virgin of Belén* and the abundance of copies in Lima important to consider. Alesio’s motivations or the ideas of his patrons, unfortunately, cannot ultimately be known. However, it is possible that the painting was related to the artist’s or the patron’s own interpretation of the needs of the Counter-Reformation. In some cases, late-sixteenth-century artists looked back to Early Christian themes and subject matter for inspiration as a way to draw attention to the legitimacy and legacy of the Catholic Church. Since the Virgin lactans had a long history, perhaps it seemed an apt subject.

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favor. Naomi Yavneh has cited two reasons for the subject’s decline in the end of the sixteenth century. First of all, it reflects the concerns about nudity in a sacred context; the nude figures in Michelangelo’s Last Judgment were famously covered in this period. Additionally, the Virgin lactans is an image that celebrates the humility and humanity of the Virgin; in the post-Tridentine era, the Church and its artists focused their attention on celebrating the majesty and divinity of the Virgin, in defense against the Protestant attacks on her holiness and importance.

In studying colonial Latin American art, however, it is critical to remember that the patrons and the audience were quite different from those encountered in Europe and so must be studied with attention paid to the impact on a diverse set of viewers. Accordingly, it is possible that one reason for the popularity of the Virgin lactans image in Lima was related to Alesio’s influence. The status of the Italian artists working in colonial Lima has already been established and Alesio’s reputation was great even in Europe, so it seems plausible that copies were made by artists and requested by patrons in Lima due to Alesio’s involvement. It is not known whether other examples of the theme were sent to or made in Lima. Alesio’s painting is the only extant example and its close visual proximity to many of the others supports this case.

However, it is critical to consider that of all the paintings made by the Italians in Lima, this Virgin lactans theme became more common than any other. Accordingly,

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there must have been something about this representation of the Virgin that made it appealing. Perhaps the subject’s appeal was related to reasons why it had became popular in Europe through the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Margaret Miles has argued that images of the Virgin lactans routinely became popular during times of tumultuous social transformation. She argues that these representations of the Madonna with one bare breast, feeding her child, might reinforce the power of women to nourish and sustain life, at times when life appeared tenuous. As an example, Miles discusses the popularity of these images during the late Middle Ages, when the Black Plague took the lives of vast populations throughout Europe. Similarly, colonial Peru was certainly experiencing a time of great change that often included violence, illness, and persecution. Images that reminded viewers of the pure, natural ability of women to sustain life might here have had a similarly comforting and powerful message. Unfortunately, as Miles has noted, no documentation exists that records the reception of these images, especially by women of the time.

The images of the Virgin nursing the Christ Child must also be interpreted as theological symbols that may have seemed particularly powerful to an audience that the Church sought to convert wholeheartedly. As stated, Mary feeding Christ marked her role and ability to nurture, but the action was interpreted in a much more profound and symbolic way, as a symbol of the care of the Christian people as a whole. Marilyn Yalom has noted that “the example of the baby Jesus suckling at his mother’s breast

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256 Ibid.
became a metaphor for the spiritual nurturance of all Christian souls.”

In the midst of the colonial era’s tumult that accompanied the establishment of the viceroy and the spread of Christianity, images of such nourishment, both physically and spiritually, may have had particular currency.

Additionally, scholars have connected images of the Virgin lactans to campaigns seeking to encourage women to breastfeed their children. Early modern medicine made laypeople aware that it was dangerous to feed young babies the milk of animals. For example, it was thought that milk from a goat might make the child look “stupid and vacant and not right in the head.”

It was also thought that breast milk was a whitened form of the blood that the child fed on while in the mother’s womb. Thus, the woman from whom the breast milk flowed had some influence on the development of the child both physically and mentally, as people believed that milk from a woman of low moral fortitude might negatively impact the baby.

One important Italian preacher of the fifteenth century weighed in on this matter, instructing, “If the one who cares for him has evil customs or is of base condition, he will receive the impress of these customs because of having suckled her polluted blood.” However, a conflict arose between popular social behavior and the instruction of preachers and childrearing manuals. It was

258 Ibid., 67.
260 Yavneh, “To Bare or Not Too Bare,” 67.
customary for a woman of an upper class to employ a wet nurse, as a mark of status. Accordingly, scholars have suggested that preachers went so far as to commission paintings of the Virgin lactans in order to instill this maternal responsibility in Christian women, who were many times over encouraged to model themselves on the saintly Madonna. This occurred, however, largely in the fourteenth century in Europe. As the Spanish and their missionaries sought to teach the indigenous populations not only the Christian religion, but also the proper way of life and family, these images may have once again served an instructive purpose.

A recent publication surveying images of Saint Joseph in the Spanish empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries serves as a useful parallel to my argument here. In an exhaustive and astute study, Charlene Villaseñor Black has documented the extraordinary popularity of Saint Joseph in art of the Spanish empire. Most importantly to this context, Black makes the point that this subject, although lacking in prominence in other European territories, enjoyed great popularity in Spain and colonial Mexico and she argues that images of Christ’s foster father, either alone, or with the Holy Family, helped to promote appropriate familial structures, an issue that the Spanish were particularly tied to in their European territories, and which, it seems, was imported to Mexico as well. In this example, a subject that was not a significant part of sacred art elsewhere gained significance within Spanish-controlled regions due to the social context. Similarly, it seems possible that images of the Virgin nursing the Christ

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262 Ibid., 39.
Child, while out of fashion in Europe, became common in Peru due to the unique circumstances of painting in the New World.

Images of nursing mothers did emerge in other contexts through colonial Latin America, most commonly in allegorical representations of the New World. In an essay on an eighteenth-century Peruvian depiction of America, represented by a bare-breasted woman, suckling allegorical representations of Spain, Carolyn Dean addressed some of the issues of paintings of the Virgin lactans in Europe and in Peru. She too has noted the prominence of these images in colonial Peru, despite the lack of support from the Counter-Reformation Catholic church. Her focus, however, was largely on paintings of the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, made by indigenous artists, that took on a type akin to the example discussed here in figure 2.40. To be added to this discussion are the earlier examples from the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries that might have been inspired by Alesio’s original oil-on-copper painting. Accordingly, there seems to be an unbroken tradition of paintings of the Virgin lactans in Peru from the late-sixteenth century through the eighteenth.

The prominence of this theme deserves one final avenue of consideration. Scholars of colonial Peruvian art have come to recognize that throughout the viceroyalty, paintings of the Virgin Mary often took on meaning beyond visual representations of the

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mother of Christ.\textsuperscript{265} Instead, the indigenous populations often saw these representations as references to female Andean deities. Interest in Marian devotion, in fact, grew with great fervor in colonial Peru, due at least partially to this link made by local viewers between the Virgin and their own deities.\textsuperscript{266} Carol Damian has explained that the Inca were quick to understand and embrace the concept of Mary’s virginity, which is complex, but was reminiscent of a class of Inca women, known as the Chosen Women, who were also celebrated for their virginity, and who, like the Virgin Mary, were associated with certain symbols and attributes. Additionally, the Christian missionaries taught the Inca that the Virgin had great status and sat at the right hand of God.\textsuperscript{267} These Inca virgins too were given special privilege and were the only individuals who had access to the emperor’s sacred quarters. Andean chronicler Guaman Poma de Ayala offered further insight into the status of these women in Inca society: “the people greatly respected these women. They looked up to them as saints who had intimate dealings and communication with their gods.”\textsuperscript{268} Damian also details ways in which the Inca ensured that indigenous traditions would not be lost, but sent down through younger generations; Dean and

\textsuperscript{265}Carol Damian, \textit{The Virgin of the Andes: Art and Ritual in Colonial Cuzco} (Miami Beach: Grassfield Press, 1996); Barbara Duncan, \textit{Gloria in excelsis: the Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia} (New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1986). Damian and Duncan have written two important studies regarding the multivalent meaning of images of the Virgin Mary in colonial South America.

\textsuperscript{266}Damian, \textit{Virgin of the Andes}, 9.

\textsuperscript{267}Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{268}Ibid. Damian quoted Guaman Poma in her text.
numerous other recent scholars have made it clear that the Spanish were not successful in their campaigns to eliminate all pagan beliefs and rituals.\textsuperscript{269}

Andean celebrations of and devotion to female figures did not end with the Chosen Women, but were far more widespread, evidenced by the veneration of specific female deities, such as Mama Quila, the moon goddess and perhaps most importantly, Pachamama.\textsuperscript{270} Pachamama was the Earth Mother of the Andean peoples. The Inca saw the earth as a source for food, but also a sacred entity and so formed a close attachment to the land, which in its regenerative abilities was linked to a female deity, an earth mother, known as Pachamama.\textsuperscript{271} Damian explains that the Catholic priests destroyed idols and burned sacred locations in order to remove the power of pagan beliefs. However, the destruction of idols and huacas, which are sacred locations or monuments from Andean religions, did not eliminate the power of the spirits. Instead, the indigenous populations often transferred that power to other entities, and often the receptors of these powers were Christian saints and images, the foremost being the Virgin Mary. Some scholars have posited that the most obvious manifestations of the conflation of the Virgin Mary with Pachamama are paintings of the Virgin that take on the shape of a mountain, thus linking the Christian deity with the sacred nature of the Andean landscape.\textsuperscript{272} However, recent scholars have uncovered a tradition of statue paintings in Spain that predates those in Peru and may have been the source for the colonial paintings referenced here. Thus, the

\textsuperscript{269} Ibid., 23-25. See Damian for further explication.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{272} Damian, \textit{Virgin of the Andes} and Duncan, \textit{Gloria in excelsis}, 32-57.
paintings of the Virgin with a bell-shaped dress that have in the past been linked to the mountains of Peru, may instead be ideas imported from Europe. Most recently, Maya Stanfield-Mazzi surveyed Spanish statue paintings and discussed this issue.\textsuperscript{273} She asserts that these Peruvian statue paintings of the Virgin Mary may have at times references Pachamama to the colonial audience, but that the imagery likely was not meant always as a direct link and in fact may have often had more explicit references to the moon goddess Mama Quilla.\textsuperscript{274} Accordingly, the colonial statue paintings may have held some layered meaning in reference to indigenous beliefs, but the objects were steeped in European tradition as well and therefore must be studied as such. Additionally, the idea of images of the Virgin as references to pre-Hispanic female deities must remain only a hypothesis since there is no absolute proof that these paintings served that distinct function for the colonial audience. That being said, there were connections made between Andean deities and the Virgin Mary that established a link.

Paintings that may have represented a conflated image of Christian and pre-Christian female deities were most common in the more remote areas of the viceroyalty, with particular prominence in Cuzco, and became most abundant in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, once indigenous artists had a stronger hold on the art scene.\textsuperscript{275} The paintings of the Virgin lactans that I have discussed here represent a tradition that

\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., 140.
\textsuperscript{275} Duncan, \textit{Gloria in excelsis}, 53-5.
flourished in Lima much earlier, in the first half of the seventeenth century. However, it is worth considering that there may have been a similar situation arising in Lima, or at least an early manifestation of some of the ideas that would take hold later.

In addition to gender, the Virgin Mary came to be associated with the Andean Earth Mother because of their similar abilities to reproduce and nurture. An image of the Virgin nursing her Child seems potentially like an evocative representation of these regenerative female powers, and perhaps could further explain the popularity of the image in Lima at the end of the seventeenth century. Certainly, there are no implicit references to a pre-Christian entity in the paintings discussed here, as European influence was most dominant. However, the audience for these paintings was not uniformly European, but also composed of indigenous viewers, who may have responded to paintings of the Virgin lactans as reminiscent of the powerful, nurturing qualities of the earth, which the Andeans happened to picture in female form. It has been noted, here and in the work of other scholars, that consideration of the diverse audience was a factor from early in the colonial period.276

Alesio’s Students

Alesio’s impact in Lima went beyond his own production due to the large workshop he built and the numerous students and apprentices he took on. There is a list of names of artists who worked with the Italian, but no individual paintings can be securely attributed to most of these men. There are, throughout the city, in churches and monasteries, paintings that show clear Italian influence and that have been dated to the

276 Ibid., 38.
first and second quarters of the seventeenth century. Some, if not many, of these paintings may likely have been completed by students of Alesio, but at this point in time, the documentation to support any attribution has not come to light. Further research into the period following the death of Alesio and the other Italians is required to connect many unattributed paintings to names of artists that appear in documents.

The following artists have been associated with Alesio’s workshop: Cosme Ferrero Figueroa, Domingo Gil, Francisco García, Francisco Sanchez, Francisco Bejarano, and Pedro Pablo Moron, the Italian who is known to have traveled to Lima with Alesio.\textsuperscript{277} Scholars have published fragments of information about some of these artists. For example, a document from 1600-1602 relates that Domingo Gil left Alesio’s workshop to pursue an independent career at age thirty-four, but the information is not precise and does not include the date of this departure.\textsuperscript{278} Since Alesio only arrived in Lima in 1590, however, it is safe to assume that Gil must have worked with Alesio during the early part of his South American career. Francisco Bejarano was an Augustinian monk who also worked with Alesio, for whom several works are documented. Bejarano worked with Alesio for four years, during which time he learned the art of intaglio printing, which he practiced on at least several occasions later in his career.\textsuperscript{279} He designed the engraving for the frontispiece (Figure 4.8) for a book entitled \textit{Sanctuario de}

\textsuperscript{277} Harthe-Terre, “Las bellas artes,” 130, wrote a summary of known archival documents and listed the artists associated with Alesio’s workshop. Stastny, \textit{Pérez de Alesio}, 25, confirmed this list. Chichizola, \textit{Manierismo en Lima}, 38, added “Francisco Sanchez” to the list of Alesio’s students.

\textsuperscript{278} Harthe-Terré, “Las bellas artes,” 130.

\textsuperscript{279} Stastny, \textit{Pérez de Alesio}, 25.
Nuestra Señora de Copacabana en el Peru, which was printed in 1641. Bejarano’s known works will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4, as part of a discussion of the role played by students of the Italians in the transformation of colonial Peruvian art from styles impacted greatly by Europe to approaches influenced much more heavily by indigenous aesthetics.

Alesio also trained his son, Adrian, to be a painter, although as with all of his other students, no single painting has been attributed to the younger Pérez de Alesio. Adrian entered the Dominican order and so likely painted for the church and monastery of that brotherhood.

Conclusion

An assessment of Mateo Pérez de Alesio’s career is challenging due to the vast loss of paintings in Lima by his hand. Archival documents and seventeenth-century sources reference his prolific career and are essential tools in the reconstruction of his production, but cannot replace the works of art themselves. Fortunately, Alesio worked as an artist for more than two decades in Europe before venturing to the New World, so it is possible to assess his background and style. Even among the very few paintings by Alesio that are extant in Lima and the documentation that references his other work, however, it is clear that he had an impact. In his workshop he trained a number of artists whose bodies of work have not been catalogued or studied. However, the Italian-influenced paintings that still hang in Lima’s churches and monasteries are evidence of

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the presence of Alesio and the other two Italians in the city and it is likely that many of those paintings might be connected to his students, although that research remains to be done.
CHAPTER 3
ANGELINO MEDORO

Introduction

The third of the three Italian painters to arrive in Lima was Angelino Medoro, in 1599, after working in Rome, Seville and Tunja, Colombia, where contemporary writers celebrated his paintings. By the time he got to Lima, his reputation as a great artist was already somewhat established, and he received many high-profile commissions. Medoro was prolific in Lima, and many of his canvases are signed, often with the subheading *pintor romano*, and remain in good condition. His popularity and success are evident in the great number of commissions he received, the followers that studied with him or were influenced by his work, and contemporary texts that celebrated his accomplishments. However, Medoro has received little scholarly attention, despite his productive career and the numerous students he trained who went on to have their own illustrious careers as painters.  

A survey of Medoro’s signed paintings in Lima, as well as archival evidence of several that were destroyed in earthquakes of the seventeenth century, will serve as the

first in-depth analysis of his oeuvre.\textsuperscript{284} The vast number of paintings by his hand that remain throughout the city is illustrative of the mark he left on colonial Lima.

Medoro’s oeuvre is challenging to analyze as a whole because his style of painting underwent changes in the early seventeenth century, likely owing to changing fashions and the needs of commissions. However, with an analysis of several consistent formal and aesthetic choices throughout his paintings a more complete understanding of the artist’s style will be evident.

Evidence of Medoro’s influence extends beyond his own paintings, as his students were numerous and many of their paintings survive. For example, the works of Leonardo Jaramillo and Antonio Mermejo offer clear evidence of the adoption of their master’s Italianate style. Medoro also trained the young artist Luis de Riaño, who entered the Italian’s workshop at only fifteen and became an important link between the Italians and later styles of painting in Peru. In Riaño’s early paintings is evidence of the long-lasting presence of the Italian Renaissance in Peruvian painting; in his later work is the beginning of the colonial migration towards a style less closely tied to European Renaissance standards and ideals.

Despite the apparent mark Medoro made on Lima’s artistic culture, there is a lack of substantial scholarly literature on him, due in part to the negative reputation that several scholars have established. In 1959, Martin Soria called even Medoro’s most celebrated paintings “weak in drawing” and “poorer in quality than his predecessor,

\textsuperscript{284} Kubler and Soria, \textit{Art and Architecture}, 322. Kubler and Soria mention several paintings by Medoro.
Bernardo Bitti. Teresa Gisbert and José de Mesa perpetuated this evaluation of Medoro, especially in their criticism of his paintings in Peru, noting that his work began a great decline once he was in Lima, due to his abandonment of Mannerism and inability to adjust to the changing tastes of the seventeenth century. Judging Medoro’s work in terms of quality seems an anachronistic endeavor, since despite modern scholarly opinions of his oeuvre, his work was esteemed and influential in the seventeenth century. It is true that Medoro had strengths and weaknesses as a painter; for example, he had a clear preference for and ease with compositions containing a single figure, painted monumentally, while he struggled with the unity of more complex compositions that involved the interaction of numerous characters. Over the course of his time in Lima from 1599 until 1620, it is also true that Medoro changed his style and approach at a certain point, from one dominated by the linear, attenuated aesthetics of Mannerism to a more robust, classical approach, and finally to a sober, naturalistic style akin to the development of the reform movements of painting that were spreading through Europe and Latin America by the first decade of the seventeenth century. Medoro tended to adjust his style as he interpreted the needs of the subject matter and commissions, which is a demonstration of his versatility as an artist. He remained up-to-date throughout his career; after he left Lima in 1620 to return to Seville, he became trained in the seventeenth-century style of Spain. Documents remain that show that he worked with Alonso Cano in Seville and completed the examinations to enter the city’s painting

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Medoro was well received by the city’s patrons, and received commissions throughout his time in the city. In fact, his importance has been downplayed; he was one of the first artists working in Lima to experiment with the new trends of seventeenth-century Europe, which he must have learned about much as everyone else in the New World did, through imported works of art. Therefore, even these later works have importance in the study of art’s history in colonial Lima and should not be dismissed as weak.

In addition, the focus on style and painterly skill has resulted in a dearth of analysis of the subject matter and context of Medoro’s paintings. Unlike Alesio, Medoro is still well represented by numerous paintings hanging in their original locations in Lima. These paintings, however, have never been interpreted and their meaning and function have thus been obscured. The goal of this chapter is to analyze and interpret Medoro’s complete oeuvre from Lima and consider not merely its quality, but its contribution to his career as well as its meaning and its influence in the city, which was substantial.

Medoro before Lima

Angelino Medoro was born in Rome in 1567 and likely received his training there, although no documents exist that provide any insight into his early years. He

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288 Mesa and Gisbert, “Angelino Medoro,” 23. The authors mention that there is a painter with the last name Medoro documented in Florence in 1565, but there is no concrete evidence that the two had any relation.
traveled to Spain in 1586 and was on his way to the New World by the next year. His formative years as an artist must therefore have been in Rome, where he encountered many of the same trends and artists that Bitti and Alesio came into contact with during their early years.\textsuperscript{289} By 1580, art in Rome was consumed by the movement of the Counter-Reformation and the reforms of the Council of Trent. Thus Medoro, much like Bitti and Alesio, was steeped in the contemporary valuation of the responsibility of sacred art to communicate and inspire.

Also much like Bitti and Alesio, Medoro adopted many of the elegant formal characteristics of Mannerism that were widely popular in both Italy and Spain at the end of the sixteenth century. And, like his fellow Italian transplants, he subscribed to the reformed Mannerism that satisfied the needs of the Counter-Reformation, but retained “stylish” formal aesthetics.

Medoro arrived in Seville in 1586 with the intention of traveling to the New World. He did so by 1587, when he left for Colombia. Unfortunately, the only works that have been identified from his early years in Europe are a painting of the Flagellation (Figure 3.1) and a drawing (Figure 3.2) in a private collection in Seville.\textsuperscript{290} The extant drawing comes from his short Spanish sojourn; it is a preparatory drawing of the Adoration of the Kings for a painting that is now lost. The drawing has evidence of Medoro’s influences as a young artist, which harken back to his Italian Mannerist roots;

\textsuperscript{289} See chapter 1 for a more complete discussion of the situation of art in Rome in the last quarter of the century.

\textsuperscript{290} Martin Soria, \textit{La pintura del siglo XVI en Sudamerica} (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Arte Americano y Investigaciones Estéticas, 1956), 75.
more specifically, the drawing is reminiscent of the designs of Taddeo Zuccaro, who was working in Rome while Medoro was there. In a recent catalogue of the private collection that currently holds the drawing, the authors noted that the use of short, vibrant hatching in Medoro’s drawing was a technique common to the Roman tradition. This demonstrates that Medoro brought Italian techniques with him to Spain, techniques that would have been openly accepted in Seville where Italianate style was widely popular.  

In fact, in Seville, Medoro must have encountered many artists working in the elegant Mannerist style of late-sixteenth-century Rome, so his penchant for this style must have been encouraged. However, since he was there for such a short time, it is safe to deduce that much of his artistic formation must have occurred in Rome. Further evidence of Medoro’s Italian roots came to light after a study of a number of his Lima paintings by a group of art conservators between 2004 and 2007. Rocío Bruquetas embarked on an investigation of the materials and processes that Medoro used in works of art he completed in the first decade of the seventeenth century and found that in most cases, he relied on the basic techniques common to Roman painting of the sixteenth century and

291 Benito Navarrete Prieto and Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, Album Alcubierre: dibujos de la Sevilla ilustrada del conde de aguila a la colección Juan Abello (Seville: Fundacion Arte Hispanico, 2009), 307.
293 Luis de Vargas is one Spanish artist working in a Mannerist style who was in Seville during Medoro’s stay; see Enrique Valdivieso, Catalógo de las pinturas de la catedral de Sevilla (Seville: Sever-Cuesto, 1977), 40-3.
espoused in Italian treatises of the Renaissance. Thus, even without documentation of Medoro’s early years in Rome, it seems likely that his training must have happened in the city of his birth and that he relied on that education throughout his career.

When Medoro left Seville in 1587, his destination was Colombia, which was part of the viceroyalty of Peru in the sixteenth century and remained tied to Lima until the formation of the Spanish Viceroyalty of New Granada in the eighteenth century. It was here, in the city of Tunja, where Medoro made his earliest Latin American paintings and where his career began to flourish. Founded by the Spanish just four decades earlier, Tunja was in the midst of a boom in building activity when Medoro arrived and he encountered many opportunities for commissions. His first known work was the Virgin de la Antigua (Figure 3.3), made for a chapel in the Church of Santo Domingo. With this project, the young Italian started his New World career on a high note; his patrons were among the most elite in the city. Diego Hernández Caraballo was the caballero of Tunja and his wife, Polonia de Roa, was the daughter of one of the conquistadors who had discovered New Granada.

Medoro’s most reproduced paintings from his time in Tunja, however, are two that he made for the Chapel de la Mancipe in the Iglesia Mayor. The patrons for the chapel were the conquistador Pedro Ruiz García and, after he died, his son, Antonio Ruiz Mancipe. Yet again Medoro worked for the most elite patrons in the city. The 1598

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296 Ibid.
commission was for three paintings, one of the Virgin and two paintings from the Passion of Christ, *Agony in the Garden* (fig. 4) and *Descent from the Cross* (fig. 5); the Passion scenes are the only two that remain.\(^{297}\) Shortly after Medoro completed the paintings in the chapel, a Spanish chronicler named Juan de Castellanos celebrated the chapel’s decorations in his seventeenth-century book *Elegias de varones de Indias*, dedicated to the valuation of achievements of artists and writers working in Spanish America.\(^{298}\) In his description of the Mancipe chapel, Castellanos related its paintings to the greatness of the work of the ancient Greeks, Phidias and Polykleitos. The comparison has significance here, as Castellanos linked the classically trained Italian artist, Medoro, to the classical tradition of Renaissance art. The prestige of the Italian artist in the New World has been cited previously here; in Castellano’s book is a specific example of the agency of an arbiter of Old World tradition. Thus, from the earliest moment in his New World career, Medoro created works of art that satisfied the needs and tastes of his patrons and audience, who celebrated classical training. In the two extant works from the Mancipe chapel, elements of Medoro’s youthful style are clear, including the creation of shallow space with figures whose bodies lack robust three-dimensionality, positioned close to the picture plane, with little attention paid to the setting. The body of Christ in the *Descent from the Cross*, and those of many other figures, are angular and broken in their poses. Also in these two paintings are the first appearances of a formal decision that

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\(^{297}\) Ibid., 29. Documents from the contract still exist.

Medoro made in many paintings; in both works, Medoro showed Christ in profile and created a dramatic side view of the features of his angular face and pointed beard. The profile is quite common in Medoro’s paintings and serves as an aid in attribution.

The Descent from the Cross is an appropriate example of Medoro’s early concerns. In addition to the cramped space, angular bodies, and profile poses that were part of Medoro’s style in his early period in South America, stylistic and iconographic choices reflect his sensitivity to the reforms of the post-Tridentine period. Medoro may have taken as his source a painting of the same subject by Giorgio Vasari (Figure 3.6), now in the Casa Vasari in Arezzo, but originally made for Cardinal Ippolito de’ Medici in Rome and so conceivably seen by Medoro in Italy. The compositions are quite similar; alike is the placement of Christ’s body in the center, surrounded by mourners and those carrying his body to the tomb. However, Medoro made several significant adjustments to Vasari’s concept. This painting serves as an example of how Medoro catered to the needs of the reforms dictated by the Council of Trent. As discussed below, in comparison to Vasari’s painting, Medoro’s is more serious and decorous in its presentation of sacred imagery and more directly moving and inspirational to the viewer.

Commentators of the Counter-Reformation criticized a number of Italian Mannerist painters, including Giorgio Vasari, for losing sight of the sacred function of art in favor of style and creative experimentation. In Vasari’s Descent from the Cross, he fell victim to many of the criticisms launched by prominent theorists, such as Gilio and

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Gabriele Paleotti; some of the differences between the painting by Vasari and that by Medoro reflect these critiques, especially those of Paleotti, whose ideas seem to have been particularly influential in this painting by Medoro.

Gabriele Paleotti was a bishop in Bologna, Italy who, at the end of the sixteenth century, wrote one of the most influential treatises on art in the post-Tridentine period: *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane*, published in 1582. In it, Paleotti detailed his instructions to painters set with the task to make sacred imagery. First and foremost, he focused on the need for religious art to powerfully communicate and inspire and his belief that the legibility of the work of art should be at the forefront of the artist’s mind at all times, ahead of concerns for fame, style or invention. In these instructions, Paleotti countered many of the most common tropes of then popular Mannerist painting, asserting, “address yourself to all men and inspire them to new and intense devotion by means of instruction, edification, revelation, the arousing of emotion or terror.”

Paleotti instructed painters in a fashion nearly the opposite of how Renaissance commentators had; all other treatises had taught artists how to elevate their art through

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301 Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento*, 470.
erudition and style, always taking into consideration only the most elite and intellectual of viewers, but Paleotti encouraged artists to paint for the common man and woman.\footnote{Boschloo, \textit{Annibale Carracci}, 123.}

By the end of the sixteenth century, Paleotti’s treatise had become a canonical text and the bishop’s influence was widespread in Europe and likely could have had an impact in Latin America as well. The Council of Trent discussed the issue of sacred art only briefly, leaving the administration of post-Tridentine regulations to the local clergy. Paleotti was among the only commentators to directly interpret artistic reforms, and thus his writing had great agency in the late-sixteenth century. Although copies of Paleotti’s text have not yet been found in Latin American libraries, it is certainly possible, and highly probable, that the text made its way to the viceroyalties.\footnote{Several scholars have studied the import of books to Lima and the collections of books in the city’s libraries and have established that there was an active book trade between Lima and Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, see Teodoro Hampe-Martínez, “The Diffusion of Books and Ideas in Colonial Peru: A Study of Private Libraries in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” \textit{The Hispanic American Historical Review} 73 (May 1993): 211-33; Irving A. Leonard, “Best Sellers of the Lima Book Trade, 1583,” \textit{The Hispanic American Historical Review} 22 (Feb. 1942): 5-33; Irving A. Leonard, “On the Lima Book Trade, 1591,” \textit{The Hispanic American Historical Review} 33 (Nov. 1953): 511-25.} In addition, if physical copies of the treatise cannot be traced to Colombia or Peru, Catholic clergy in the colonies, as well as European artists such as Medoro, would have known the ideology of the text. Art historian Pamela Jones has suggested that Paleotti’s treatise, or at least the
ideas of it, must have had an impact on colonial Latin American art. Thus, it is illuminating to consider Paleotti’s advice in the context of the differences between the two paintings of the *Descent* executed by Vasari and Medoro.

Careful analysis of Medoro’s *Descent from the Cross* makes clear several instances in which the artist seems to have followed Paleotti’s instructions, especially when compared to Vasari’s version of the same subject. For example, Medoro focused his composition on the most important characters in the narrative, Christ and the Virgin Mary, who are both centrally located, with Christ’s body occupying much of the width of the painting and the Virgin standing slightly taller than all other figures. This composition leaves no question in the viewer’s mind about the identification of the most holy characters. Paleotti instructed artists to avoid disjointed compositions that tended to obscure the critical protagonists; this kind of confusion in the composition is certainly present in Vasari’s painting. Vasari pushed the body of Christ to the middle-ground, behind one of the figures who carries his body, and the Virgin Mary is almost completely obscured in the dark background setting. Medoro’s painting makes clear the importance of his protagonists through a more focused layout.

In addition, Vasari’s choice to highlight some of the less significant figures seems to be related to his interest in experimenting with their twisted, contorted, unrealistic poses. While Medoro was still interested in the elegant proportions of his figures, their poses are far more naturalistic, another quality that Paleotti championed. Paleotti

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instructed that figures should be accurate and based on the human body, not on classical sculpture, which was the inspiration of so many Mannerist painters. If exaggeration was to be part of the painting, it had to have a purpose. And, yet again, Medoro followed this guideline: the Virgin dramatically tilts her head back and directs her eyes to the sky. However, this exaggeration of pose serves to focus on her sorrow as she desperately looks to the heavens for solace.

Finally, Paleotti instructed painters to include only figures who would have been present at the scene depicted, to follow the Bible carefully, and to dress these figures in costumes appropriate to the period of the narrative. Again, this seems an attack on artists such as Vasari who committed these very errors in Figure 3.6, by including several figures dressed in sixteenth-century costume, who most likely are portraits of contemporaries. The man in the red hat to the far right, who looks out directly at the viewer, is particularly conspicuous, with individualized features and a portrait-like appearance. Beginning in the fifteenth century, a number of Italian artists took to including portraits of patrons or society elites in their religious paintings in order to pay tribute and solicit acclaim, while Medoro refrained from any such inclusions.

Medoro also made specific choices in his painting in order to enhance its somber tone and to better inspire his audience. The overall color of the painting, which is dim and murky (although this may be exaggerated because of it age and lack of cleaning) and the focus on Christ’s bent and broken body, emaciated and bleeding from the wound to his chest, intensify the emotional qualities of the narrative. The melancholy of the painting reflects the requirement, espoused by Paleotti, to make evocative art that would
reach viewers. In this case, the somber tone was also directly related to the context, as
the painting was intended for a funerary chapel.\(^{305}\)

The paintings in the Mancipe chapel, celebrated by contemporaries, earned
Medoro early acclaim that helped propel him into important commissions. Medoro’s
success in Colombia took him to other cities in South America, including Bogota, Quito,
and Lima. Archival documents date his work in the Chapel de la Mancipe in Tunja to
1598, but there is evidence that he was in Quito in 1592, so it seems that he may have left
Colombia for a brief sojourn in Quito and then returned, all before setting foot in Lima in
1599.\(^{306}\) His work in Quito is not well documented, but scholars agree on the attribution
of two paintings: a painted shield, which Medoro signed and dated 1592, and a large
painting of the Virgin and Child with four saints.\(^{307}\)

\textbf{Medoro’s Work at the Monastery of the Descalzos}

By 1599, Medoro was in Lima, most likely drawn to the city because it was the
center of the viceroyalty and a site of lucrative commissions but also perhaps because of
the precedent of success by Italians already set by Bernardo Bitti and Mateo Pérez de
Alesio. By 1600 he was working on his first Lima project. Although the painting is no
longer extant, documents and contemporary chronicles describe a painting of the Holy

\(^{305}\) Rishel and Stratton-Pruitt, \textit{The Arts in Latin America}, 417.
\(^{307}\) Soria, \textit{Pintura en Sudamérica}, 75.
Trinity that Medoro made for the refectory of the monastery of the Merced. Archival documents record that Medoro was paid 6,000 pesos for this painting; as he had made only 400 pesos for both Passion scene paintings in the Chapel of the Mancipe in Tunja, clearly his reputation had grown and the economic situation made for much more lucrative projects.

By 1601, Medoro was working in the Monastery of the Descalzos, a Franciscan monastery with one of the most extensive collections of colonial art from Lima that is still in existence. Medoro alone painted at least seven paintings for various sections of the monastery, all of which are in good condition. Therefore, analysis of Medoro’s paintings in the Descalzos affords an excellent opportunity to study his style and approach to painting once in Lima. In order to fully understand the intent and purpose of these paintings, however, it is also critical to consider the setting. The Monastery of the Descalzos was unique in its time in Lima and its founders and directors sought art with a particular purpose, especially in its earliest years. Therefore, a brief history of the beginnings of the monastery is essential.

The Descalzos is one of several Franciscan monasteries in Lima. The order had a presence in Latin American from quite early in the formation of the colonies. The Franciscans were established in Mexico and Central America in 1493, and expanding missions into Peru by 1532. On January 18, 1535, the same year as the foundation of

310 P. Julian Heras, O.F.M, _El Convento de los Descalzos: Un oasis de espiritualidad y de acción_
Lima, Fray Francisco de la Cruz asked Francisco Pizarro for permission to found a Franciscan monastery, which was granted eleven years later, in 1546. In that year, the Franciscans began construction of their first monastery in Lima, on the spot where it remains today, close to the Plaza Mayor, in the center of the city. Founded several decades later, the Descalzos is not in the center of the city; instead it is located on the north side of the Rimac river, the body of water on which the city was founded. The local indigenous people who inhabited the area before the arrival of the Spanish considered the river a sort of oracle, naming it Rimac, which in Quechua means “the river that talks.”

The Spanish built much of Lima on the south side of the river, and reserved the north side for the sick and destitute, including those suffering from leprosy. Thus, one of the first structures built on the north side of the city was the Church and Hospital of San Lorenzo, which catered to lepers. When an earthquake destroyed the hospital in 1586, the organization and its claim to this land changed; much of the territory was divided up among wealthy, elite citizens of the city and construction in this area rose. One wealthy limeña, Doña Maria Valera, donated her large parcel of land in this northern sector to the construction of the Descalzos.

From its formation, the Descalzos had some particular objectives in mind that were related to recent reforms of the Franciscan order and particularly prevalent in Spain. This movement encouraged Franciscan monks to return to the most basic and essential ideas

\[ \text{apostolica} \text{ (Lima: Convento de los Descalzos, 1995), 3-5. Heras includes a concise history of the Franciscans in Lima.} \]

311 Ibid., 7.
of their founder, Saint Francis of Assisi, and by the end of the sixteenth century, Franciscans all around the world had gained a powerful reputation in the Church and had cultivated the tradition of building three different monasteries in a city, each with a separate purpose. The first was the main, central monastery, which in Lima was the structure built close to the center; the second was a place of study; and the third was reserved for monks dedicated to prayer, meditation, and penance and was often in the outskirts of the city. The Descalzos took on this third designation and was the first of its kind, a monastery dedicated solely to devout prayer, in Peru.

Medoro’s relationship with the Descalzos began early in the monastery’s history, when he painted the first major work of art commissioned there. The founder and first guardian of the Descalzos was Fray Andreas Corso, an Italian, hailing from Corsica, which was then controlled by the Genoese. The choice of an Italian painter for this first commission might be related to the heritage of the monastery’s founder. It is impossible to determine precisely what the first monastery looked like, but the first chapel built was devoted to the Virgin of the Angels and Medoro painted the altarpiece (Figure 3.7), which is still extant today. In it, angels crown the Virgin, who stands on a crescent moon, a reference to her immaculate conception. Stylistically, the body of the Virgin is robust in its three-dimensionality and naturalistic in its modeling.

\footnote{Ibid., 15.}

\footnote{Ibid., 7.}

\footnote{Mercedes M. Cañares Robles, María en la historia y en el arte y Compendio Cultural Museo Convento de los Descalzos (Lima: Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, 2007), 278.}
The tradition of art-making at the Descalzos began early, with the commission of Medoro’s altarpiece. Shortly after, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, a series of portraits of the most important friars who had resided there were commissioned. These images served as inspiring exemplars for current inhabitants, an objective of much of the art at this locale. As a monastery that offered a space for the prayer and meditation of Franciscan monks, it required art somewhat different from those for monasteries intended for study, administration, or missions, as the audience here was penitent monks, not laymen and women. Medoro’s subsequent work at the Descalzos catered to the specific needs of the monastery’s inhabitants.

In 1601, Medoro completed two paintings of Biblical narratives, *The Baptism of Christ* (Figure 3.8) and *The Crucifixion of Christ with Saints Dominic and Francis* (Figure 3.9), as well as four paintings of saints, which responded to the monastery’s objective of using art to inspire the monks living within. Medoro signed and dated *Saint Anthony of Padua* (Figure 3.10), *Saint Bonaventure* (Figure 3.11), *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (Figure 3.12), and *Saint Diego of Alcalá* (Figure 3.13). Paintings of saints were common in the Counter-Reformation period as the Catholic Church celebrated and defended the cult of saints, a devotion that had been heavily criticized and rejected by the Protestant reformers. Therefore, this series of images of saints should be seen in the context of the larger Catholic world, where similar objects were becoming more popular than ever before. However, it is also critical to consider the context of colonial Latin

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America and the context of the Monastery of the Descalzos in attempting to understand the purpose and function of Medoro’s paintings. Images of European saints were common in colonial Latin American art and often served the purpose of aggrandizing the European past and reaffirming its presence in the New World. Carolyn Dean has astutely pointed out that the trajectory of European saints in New World art changed and developed through the colonial period as indigenous artists and audiences began to interpret these saints and their stories in uniquely local ways. It is also important to consider that even before indigenous contributions became evident in colonial art, the situation of any painting of a European saint in colonial Latin America, even if painted by a European artist for a largely European audience, as was likely the case at the Descalzos, was specific to its setting.

First and foremost, the inclusion of European saints connected the Franciscan monastery in Lima to all those in the Old World, but the choice of these particular saints was also significant. Most obviously, all but one were connected to the Franciscan order, but more importantly, all had stories that could relate to the plight of Franciscans working in colonial Lima. Themes of Christian triumph over paganism and the uniting of different faiths characterize the narratives of Anthony, Bonaventure, Diego, and Catherine.

The choice of Saint Anthony of Padua is perhaps the most obvious for the context.

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of the Descalzos. A Franciscan monk born in Portugal in the twelfth century, Anthony devoted himself to missionary work, journeying first to Morocco and later, after contact with Saint Francis himself, teaching divinity at colleges in several cities, including Padua. His success as a missionary came from what has been described as his ability to be both persuasive and eloquent in his preaching, as well as the numerous miracles he performed. Among all the various narratives of Anthony of Padua, it seems that Medoro’s painting depicts one of Anthony’s less commonly depicted miracles, but one that appears in his biographies. The story began with the murder of a young man in Anthony’s native city of Lisbon, where his family remained after Anthony had left. The young man in the narrative was the son of parents who were enemies of another prominent family in the city, and having entered into the territory of his family’s enemies, the young boy was killed and his body was buried behind the home of Saint Anthony’s family. When the body was found, Saint Anthony’s father was arrested for the murder. According to the legend, although Anthony was in Padua at the time, he learned of the event through divine inspiration and miraculously traveled to Lisbon where he resurrected the murdered boy in order to exonerate his father. The protagonists of this story are easily identifiable in Medoro’s painting; Saint Anthony stands on the left of the composition, his hand raised as he resuscitates the young boy and relates his story.

Anthony’s father stands next to the saint, his hands still bound, and presumably a city official, dressed in lavish costume, stands to the right in the composition, witnessing the miraculous event. The miraculous abilities of this Franciscan saint as well as Anthony’s lifelong devotion to missionary activities must have made him an apt choice to inspire the monks of the Descalzos, as a role model. Stylistically, the painting is similar to the Tunja *Descent from the Cross*, in its cramped space, angular bodies, and attenuated proportions. The color, on the other hand, is much brighter, denoting the joyful tone of the miraculous scene Medoro portrayed.

Medoro also painted *Saint Bonaventure* (Figure 3.11) in 1601, in a composition dedicated solely to the saint. Bonaventure stands in the iconic red garb and galero, the wide-brimmed hat of a cardinal, a position he took in 1273 in the city of Albano. Medoro has also included, to the side, a bishop’s miter, as a reference to the offer Bonaventure received but declined, to be archbishop of York. Born in Tuscany, Bonaventure entered the Franciscan order at twenty-two and became known for his humility, but his most famous contributions had to do with his defense of the Franciscan order. He became general of the order, and participated in the second Council of Lyons, where the pope, with great help from Bonaventure, successfully (if temporarily) united the Greek Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church.\footnote{Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 14. The pope and the saint were able to have the Greek Church agree to accept the doctrine of purgatory and the seven sacraments. See also: José de Vinck, trans., *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure* (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964), 3-12.} Thus, Bonaventure was not only a remarkable Franciscan, but also a man who had successfully brought a large population
of people into the Roman Catholic Church, a feat that must have resonated with the Franciscans at the Descalzos. In addition, like Saint Anthony, Bonaventure had direct contact with Saint Francis of Assisi in his life; his name came from the exclamation of Saint Francis upon witnessing the young saint’s recovery from a grave illness, and he became Francis’s official biographer. Finally, Bonaventure’s story includes Saint Anthony as well; Bonaventure oversaw the translation of his relics to the church dedicated in his name in Padua. Legend relays that when Bonaventure opened the sarcophagus where Anthony’s body had been interred he found that the entire body had become ashes, except for his tongue, which Bonaventure kissed.321

Medoro’s *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* was similarly related to the mission of the Franciscans at the Descalzos, as Catherine was known to have been a brilliant speaker with the ability to convert even the least willing. Catherine, like the Franciscans in Lima, made it her life’s goal to convert those following pagan beliefs to the true Christian faith, and thus would have been a powerful role model. Her presence here, though, reflects her widespread popularity in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It seems that Catherine experienced a kind of resurgence in the end of the sixteenth century because of the inspirational impact of her story. In a recent study of early modern Italian chapbooks, inexpensive printed texts with narratives and prayers, from the Counter-Reformation period, Pamela Jones found that among all of the lives of saints depicted, Saint

Catherine’s story was one of the most common. Jones makes the conclusion that images of Catherine in the post-Tridentine period tended to focus on her martyrdom rather than her debates with high-minded thinkers of the time because her sacrifice was more important than her wisdom in the role she came to play as exemplar for pious women. The resurgence of Catherine in the post-Tridentine period is related to a widespread renewal of interest in stories and figures from the early Christian period, plotted as an attempt to establish links between the Catholic Church and its respected origins. The Catholic Church sought to present itself as the one, true Christian faith, in contrast to the new, divergent Protestant sects. Works of art devoted to early Christian content became popular in this period as a response. Thus, Medoro’s painting is both relatable in its local context and connected to larger trends in Catholic art. Medoro’s treatment of Catherine as heroic and monumental is also characteristic of representations of the saint’s story in the post-Tridentine period.

Medoro’s painting includes the traditional iconography of Saint Catherine, such as the wheel and the martyr’s palm. Less common is his inclusion of the sword, the instrument used to behead the young saint, and extremely rare is the head of the emperor Maxentius, who ordered her martyrdom and was later replaced by Constantine. Here the sword is surely intended as a reference to the fall of the pagan past and the ascension of

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323 Ibid.
Christianity, through the brave devotion of people such as Catherine. This theme must have had resonance in Lima where great brutality, violence, and killing had been one result of the Spanish invasion.

In the last of the four paintings of saints, Medoro depicted the most famous Spanish saint of the previous century. Diego de Alcalá, like the other male saints included, was a Franciscan friar, but his presence in the Spanish viceroyalty of Peru had a more pointed significance. Born in the town of Alcalá, Spain in the fifteenth century, he worked on overseas missions to the Canary Islands, and therefore would have been a relevant role model for the Franciscans at the Descalzos. Diego’s significance, however, extends beyond the deeds and experiences of his life. In fact, Diego de Alcalá’s life was much like the lives of many other Franciscans, until after his death, when he became celebrated as the savior of a young Spanish prince. It is this part of Diego’s story that warranted his inclusion at the Descalzos. The narrative recounts the life of Carlos, son of King Phillip II, who had a troubled story from the beginning, having lost his mother in childbirth and then apparently experiencing irrational, psychologically unstable episodes as a young boy. Later, the legend around Don Carlos would come to include the elaboration that he had fallen in love with his stepmother and subsequently was killed by his own father in his early twenties.

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Prior to death, however, there is another critical moment in his story that involves a fall and a serious illness that nearly resulted in death, at age eighteen. The king sent him to the University of Alcalá, where some of the best physicians attended to him. However, their dramatic efforts seemed unsuccessful as the infection he suffered spread through much of his body. After all of the medical attempts appeared to have failed, the Franciscans in Alcalá resurrected the body of Diego, who they believed had been a miraculous figure and who they hoped would one day be canonized as a saint, and carried it to the sickbed of the young prince. Don Carlos, who could not see the body of the deceased monk because his eyes were forced shut by the infection, reached out and touched it, and miraculously, the next morning, began his road to recovery. The people of Alcalá, and then people from villages throughout Spain began to spread the word of the miraculous healing powers of San Diego, and Don Carlos too came to believe that he recovered due to the aid of the Franciscan, claiming to have had a vision of Diego the night before his recovery. He said that a man dressed in a Franciscan habit and carrying a small wooden cross had visited him and told him that he would safely recover. Medoro has included this vision of the sick prince in the background of his painting; Diego floats over the bed of Carlos, surrounded by a halo of light.\textsuperscript{325} Even before he had fully recovered, Don Carlos made it his mission to ensure that Diego would be canonized, and included the stipulation in his will that his father should carry out the cause if he were to die.

The canonization of Diego de Alcalá, then, became one of the most important

\textsuperscript{325} Cañares Robles, \textit{Convento de los Descalzos}, 428.
missions of King Phillip II, who successfully convinced Pope Sixtus V to approve the canonization, after attempts to persuade two preceding popes. When Sixtus canonized Diego, he became the first saint of the Counter-Reformation, a fact that is representative of the power of the Spanish monarch in the Catholic landscape of the sixteenth century. Part of Phillip’s campaign for Diego’s canonization was built on the idea of saints as inspirational figures. He argued that making Diego a saint could powerfully support the Catholic Church’s promotion of the cult of saints and more specifically could prove the existence of miraculous saintly figures in the contemporary landscape. The inclusion, then, of San Diego of Alcalá in the Monastery of the Descalzos in Lima was tied jointly to Diego’s place as role model and as a nationalistic artifact of the great strength of Spanish dominion at this time. The king’s victorious campaign to make Diego a saint was a demonstration of the strong ties Spain had built to Rome and the Vatican.

Thus, all four saint paintings by Medoro share a single function: to inspire the local Franciscan monks through the legends of Old World saints faced with similar obstacles. Stylistically, the strongest of these paintings are the three that concentrate on isolated portraits of the saints: Saint Bonaventure, Saint Diego of Alcalá, and Saint Catherine. It is in this type of focused, simple composition that Medoro really thrived as a painter. Moreover, all three have similarities that are worth noting to begin to develop a sense of connoisseurship for Medoro’s work. In each case, the saint is the largest component of the composition, standing in a shallow space, with little suggestion of setting. These characteristics are also evident in his paintings in Tunja. His figure style, however, is somewhat different in the Descalzos paintings. Only the painting of San Diego retains
the broken body and attenuated proportions of the Mannerist aesthetic that Medoro relied on in Tunja. In the other three, Medoro naturalistically modeled the bodies of the saints with convincing three-dimensionality, giving their bodies robust presence. The naturalistic modeling of three-dimensional figures was one component of his style that proved particularly influential on his students and followers.

**Medoro’s Work at the Monastery of San Francisco**

Medoro’s relationship with the Franciscans in Lima continued and brought him next to the central Franciscan monastery, located in the heart of the city, just several blocks from Plaza de Armas. There he completed a second painting of Saint Bonaventure (Figure 3.14) in 1603 and a retablo (Figure 3.15) with scenes from the Passion, some time after 1610.

Medoro depicted Bonaventure, the scholar saint, in the midst of divinely inspired writing; seated at a desk, the saint dips his pen into a pot of ink and with the other hand holds open a large tome, in which he is writing. However, his attention is not on the book or the pen, but instead on the figure of a small crucifix, at which he stares intently. To further bring attention to the crucifix, the saint points a finger of his left hand directly at the sculpture. The prominence of the crucifix, which Medoro has painted with a high degree of realism and detail, is most likely related to the saint’s strong belief in the tradition of *Imitatio Christi* and his fascination with the importance of relating to the life of Christ, which he discussed in his *Quaestiones disputatae de perfectione evangelica*.326

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Although he is seated, the saint’s pose is active, as if he is not quite settled in his chair, but invigorated by the action of writing, a portrait of a man receiving divine inspiration and translating it into the written word. Medoro included the slightest of halos to indicate his holiness and the saint’s most common attributes, the *galero*, casually hung on the back of the chair, and the bishop’s miter, in the bottom left foreground.

The painting hung in the monastery of San Francisco in Lima, which was the administrative center of the Franciscan missions throughout Peru. The Franciscans had been in Peru since 1531, and by the first decade of the seventeenth century, had established missions, commonly called *reducciónes* in Spanish South America, through much of the viceroyalty, with all of the friars of those distant locales reporting back to the provincials in Lima.\textsuperscript{327} As learning was a central component of the Franciscan way of life, it seems appropriate that Lima’s monastery would include a painting of this famous Franciscan who was known for his intellect and scholarly activities. All new friars working in Peru underwent a series of intensive examinations before gaining permission to work with the indigenous populations, including tests on the sacraments, sacred sciences, as well as the language of the local people.\textsuperscript{328} Many of the friars recruited for missionary work in Peru were young because their youth meant that much time would be available for them to learn a new and difficult language. In addition, schools were set up for the Indians at every Franciscan *reducción*, again because learning was central to the Franciscan mission. Accordingly, Medoro pictured Bonaventure in the rapture of divine


\textsuperscript{328} Ibid., 72.
inspiration and in the midst of intensive study, books stacked on top of each other on the saint’s crowded desk, an exemplar of the Franciscan way of life.

Here again, as with the paintings of single saints from the Descalzos, Medoro set up a composition that shows some shallow depth of field and depicts Bonaventure with robust three-dimensionality. Medoro has also added drama to the depiction through the posing of Bonaventure with a strong profile, an attribute of many of his paintings.

In addition to the painting of Bonaventure, a painted retablo for the same Franciscan monastery has been attributed to Medoro, but the attribution of all of the panles is highly problematic. The interior includes a depiction of the Crucifixion of Christ, flanked by the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Evangelist (Figure 3.15), and the exterior doors of the retablo (Figure 3.16) include the scene of Christ’s journey

Flanking the Crucifixion scene on the interior of the retablo are ten painted scenes of the Passion, including The Agony in the Garden (Figure 3.17), The Mocking of Christ (Figure 3.18), The Flagellation (Figure 3.19), Christ Blindfolded (Figure 3.20), The Torture of Christ (Figure 3.21), The Crowning with Thorns (Figure 3.22), Christ Before Pilate (Figure 3.23), On the Way to Calvary (Figure 3.24), The Nailing to the Cross (Figure 3.25), and The Raising of the Cross (Figure 3.26).

Teresa Gisbert and Jose de Mesa date the retablo to the same year that Medoro completed the painting of Saint Bonaventure, 1603, but close analysis suggests that the date must be later, at least for one or more of the panels, as the scene of the Raising of the Cross.

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Cross is clearly a copy of the famous painting of the same subject by the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens (Figure 3.27), which was completed in 1610 for the Church of Saint Walpurga in Antwerp. Therefore, at least some of the panels from the retablo must date after 1610 and the Lima Raising must have been based on a print made after Rubens’s altarpiece. However, the relationship between Rubens’s painting and the Lima version is complex; there is a series of problems with the dating, sources, and attribution. They will be considered in order here; first is the short time frame between Rubens’s painting and the altarpiece, and second is the issue of the transmission of Rubens’s composition from Antwerp to Lima and how prints might have played a role.

Because Rubens completed the altarpiece with the Raising of the Cross in 1610 and Medoro left Lima in 1620, if Medoro painted this scene from the Passion retablo, he would have had to see an engraving after the painting some time in the second decade of the seventeenth century. However, the first authorized print after Rubens’s painting was not made until 1638, by Hans Witdoeck (Figure 3.28), after an oil sketch (Figure 3.29) provided by Rubens himself. The oil sketch dates to 1619. Therefore, it is potentially possible, although unlikely, that Medoro could have seen an unofficial print after the Rubens painting some time before his departure from Lima in 1620. However,


331 Ibid., 240.
the Lima painting shares some compositional details with the oil sketch (Figure 3.29) that did not appear in the original painting. When Rubens made his oil sketch, he made several small changes from the altarpiece; for example, the Roman soldier on his horse in the right foreground directs his scepter directly at the face of Christ, while in the altarpiece, this same soldier angles the scepter down, as if directing the men who are in the midst of elevating the cross. The Lima painting mimics this alteration. Thus, it seems impossible that Medoro painted the Raising, as he would have had to see the 1619 print after the oil sketch before he left Lima the following year. There is not enough time in this scenario for a print to be sent from Antwerp to Seville and then to Lima, and for Medoro to complete the painting.

It is illuminating, however, to consider the case of this painting’s known printed source in order to better understand the practice of European prints serving as guides for colonial painters in Peru. While it seems highly unlikely that Medoro painted the Raising, it is clear that the artist who did complete it used a print after Rubens’s original. From early in the history of colonial Latin American art, prints were sent to the New World to serve as examples of Catholic style and iconography and in many instances, woodcuts or engravings served as tools for training indigenous artists to paint. A prestigious European source, such as the altarpiece by Rubens, carried cultural significance in colonial Lima. Carolyn Dean has noted, in her investigation of the famous Corpus Christi paintings in Cuzco, that it was common for contracts for colonial
paintings to specify a printed prototype for a commissioned painting. Dean succinctly argued that the use of Spanish prints as inspiration for the Corpus Christi paintings allowed Cuzco’s bishop to link his city to the Spanish city of Valencia, where the prints had been made. The use of Rubens’s Antwerp prototype in the San Francisco retablo similarly could have linked the altarpiece to a masterpiece of one of the Spanish empire’s most prestigious cities. Additionally, the production of this Lima *Raising of the Cross* demonstrates that prints imported to colonial Latin America were of the highest class, as Rubens was successful and already quite popular by the early seventeenth century. The choice of Rubens’s *Raising of the Cross*, specifically, as an engraving sent to Lima is perhaps not surprising considering that it was an important and influential example of paintings made in the Spanish Netherlands that took on post-Tridentine concerns. The painting was one of many made in Spain’s European territories that included the iconographic adjustments necessary in the Counter-Reformation period. Thus, Rubens’s print must have been sent to Lima not merely as a guide to standard iconographic practice, but as an example of high art in Catholic Europe, a tradition to which colonial painters sought to be linked.

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332 Dean also cites the following source for further research on contracts that specify the use of printed prototypes: Carolyn S. Dean, “Copied Carts: Spanish Prints and Colonial Peruvian Painting,” *Art Bulletin* 78 (March 1996): 98-110; for published contracts cited by Dean, see: J. Cornejo Bouroncle, *Derroteros de arte cuzqueño: Datos para una historia del arte en el Perú* (Cuzco: Ediciones Inca, 1960), 266, 298.

333 Lawrence, "Before The Raising of the Cross," 267-96. Lawrence argues that the importance of Rubens’s altarpiece in early seventeenth-century Antwerp was related to its Counter-Reformatory interpretation of the subject.
Given the preceding discussion, it seems likely that the work was wrongly attributed to Medoro at some point after its creation and has been repeated since by numerous scholars.\(^{334}\) As early as 1674, the chronicler Juan de Benavides described an altarpiece in the monastery of San Francisco, painted by Medoro, with the Crucifixion of Christ on the exterior wings and scenes from the Passion on the interior panels, including the *Raising of the Cross*.\(^{335}\) The altarpiece does have a signature, but it is not necessarily original; if Medoro did not paint the panel, the original misattribution must have been codified at an unknown date. As will be discussed later, Medoro established a fairly large workshop in Lima and took on many students. It is possible that when he left Lima a student or follower completed the retablo with the *Raising of the Cross* and the project was either mistakenly or intentionally misattributed to Medoro, given the prestige and fame the Italian had in Lima. It is also possible that Medoro painted some or all of the other panels in the retablo.

The misattribution of the panel seems even more likely given that the Lima painting closely resembles the first authorized engraving after Rubens’s altarpiece, not published until 1638. The only difference is that the Lima painting is reversed from the print, suggesting either that the painter intentionally reversed the printed image, or that he saw a print made after Witdoeck’s engraving that was doubly reversed. In any case, the Lima painting is in fact closer to the Witdoeck engraving than to Rubens’s original painting.


When Witdoeck made the engraving, he added well-defined architecture in the background that was not part of the original painting or Rubens’s oil sketch. The architecture is somewhat classical in its form, including two centrally planned domed buildings, and the Lima painting includes nearly identical architecture. Since it was impossible for Medoro to have seen the 1638 engraving or a copy after it, it seems necessary to conclude that a student or follower of Medoro painted the scene of the *Raising of the Cross* at least some twenty years after the Italian left Lima.

As for the other panels, it is possible, and in fact likely, that Medoro participated to some degree in their creation, as the style of these paintings is consistent with other multi-figure compositions made by Medoro in Lima, including *Saint Anthony of Padua* (Figure 3.10) from the Monastery of the Descalzos, a painting signed by the artist. In this work as in Medoro’s most complex compositions tend to be a bit incongruous in the integration of space and figures; the space is often compressed and the figures lack any real grounding in the painting, instead floating ambiguously. His multi-figure compositions also tend to be set up with figures aligned in a somewhat shallow space and a simple architectural or landscape setting. The figures are not integrated with the space, but instead act on a sort of stage, close to the picture plane. Additionally, Medoro struggled with foreshortening in some of these panels, as is also evident in the *St. Anthony* at the Descalzos. In *Christ Before Pilate* (Figure 3.23), the figures that stand below Christ lack realistic three-dimensional perspective as they wave and gesture. In addition, at moments, Medoro adopted elements of Mannerist formal aesthetics, the most frequent being the twisting of bodies in unrealistic ways. Examples include the man
draped in red in *Christ Blindfolded* (Figure 3.20), with his serpentine body, as well as the torturers in *The Flagellation* (Figure 3.19), who gracefully twist towards Christ in the center of the composition, and the body of Christ himself.

Medoro frequently used the profile pose for significant male characters in his compositions. Mesa and Gisbert pointed out this feature of Medoro’s paintings, noting that the nose of the figure is often most prominent. The earliest example is Medoro’s profile of Christ in his *Descent from the Cross* in Tunja, but many examples are evident throughout his oeuvre, including the profile of Saint Anthony in the Descalzos painting (Figure 3.10) as well as the pose of Bonaventure at San Francisco (Figure 3.14). The strong male profile makes an appearance in nearly every scene from the Passion series. These include Christ in the *Agony in the Garden* (Figure 3.17); Judas, with a dramatically prominent nose, in the *Mocking of Christ* (Figure 3.18); and several figures in the *Flagellation* (Figure 3.1) and *Christ Blindfolded* (Figure 3.20), to name only a few. In all of these instances, the profile pose draws attention to a particular figure in the painting and in many cases, the figure is an enemy of Christ, the dramatic profile pose seemingly used to exaggerate an almost monstrous nature of the face.

Although many elements of the style of the Passion series are consistent with Medoro’s earlier work, there is also here a change in the artist’s style that is more akin to seventeenth-century European aesthetics, most notable in the lessened exaggeration of figural poses and proportions and a more dramatic use of color and light. It seems that at this moment in his career, Medoro’s style changed from an approach imbued with

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Mannerist stylings, yet reformed to be more legible and clear, to one more heavily influenced by naturalism. Scholars in the past have noted this change in Medoro’s later style; the Passion series marks the first examples in which it is discernible. These compositions, in comparison to his earlier paintings, include much more detail in the description of figures and settings. The costumes are richer and the settings no longer simple black backdrops, but three-dimensional places with architectural and landscape backgrounds, and often figures, suggesting a more complete world. For example, in the *Flagellation* (Figure 3.19), Medoro painted detailed portraits of each figure involved in the narrative, and included details of costume, facial features, and expression that individualize each figure. Behind the foreground action, Medoro created a well-developed setting with details of architecture and the marginal scene of Christ being led by his torturers. Additionally, emotions are high throughout the series, as expressed in facial expressions and gestures, as well as in the dark color palette of the entire sequence of scenes. On first glance, the tenebristic approach to light and shadow is one of the aspects that distinguish these paintings from his early works. The paintings are dark and gloomy, with sharp highlights illuminating the most significant figures, communicating the somber tone of the narratives depicted. In the *Mocking of Christ*, for example, everything is dark except for the crowd of figures, the most light given to the face of Christ as Judas initiates the telling kiss.

Many previous scholars and have designated this change in style as a decline, a

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Ibid.
moment when Medoro misguidedly strayed from the Mannerist aesthetics that had made him successful. Instead, it is likely that Medoro made changes to his style due to the demands of the time. The first two decades of the seventeenth century correspond to a period of reform in painting throughout Europe and this need for reform was also felt in Latin America. In Spain, from where much stylistic influence would have come to Lima, the Florentine reform movement had taken hold and quickly became the dominant approach to painting in Spanish centers well into the third decade of the seventeenth century. Because scholars of Spanish art tend to focus on the “Golden Age of Painting” in the later seventeenth century, with superstars such as Diego Velázquez and Francisco de Zurbarán, the trends of the first two decades have often been overlooked. Inspired by the Counter-Reformation and the advice of the Council of Trent, the Spanish court, led by the Duke of Lerma from 1574 through 1617, appointed the Italian painter Bartolomé Carducho (originally Carducci), a former assistant of Federico Zuccaro at the Escorial, to the position of royal painter. Carducho, like Zuccaro, was a practitioner of the sober reform style popular in Florence, and he contributed to the establishment of naturalistic Counter-Reformation painting as the dominant force in Spanish painting for at least two decades. Carducho’s style is exemplified by his Death of Saint Francis (Figure 3.30), illustrated and eloquently analyzed by Jonathan Brown in his volume on Spanish

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This painting, from 1593, exhibits some of the naturalistic tendencies and the use of light and shadow for effect that can be observed in Medoro’s Passion series. The reform style marked a break with the Italo-Flemish Mannerism that had been so prominent in Spain in earlier decades, and the new style spread rapidly not only through the work of Carducho, but also through the import of paintings by other Florentine reformers, through such avenues as the Duke of Lerma’s collecting habits, gifts from the newly crowned Grand Duke of Tuscany, and the import business that Carducho established himself.\textsuperscript{340}

Thus, the transition of Medoro’s style seems to relate to changes in taste in Spain that must have spread to Lima. It is necessary to consider the possibility of Medoro’s exposure to this newly popular style of reform painting. The Cathedral of Lima holds in its vast collection of art a series of paintings of \textit{The Last Judgment} (Figures 3.31, 3.32, 3.33, 3.34), painted by Vicente Carducho, the brother of Bartolomé, who learned from his brother and practiced a similar style of reform painting in Madrid.\textsuperscript{341} In his \textit{Last Judgment}, Vicente mimicked many of the standard qualities of his brother’s style, including naturalistic figures and settings, as well as dramatic light and shadow to

\textsuperscript{339} Brown, \textit{Painting in Spain}, 80.

\textsuperscript{340} Ibid., 79-81. For an in-depth discussion of the relationship between Philip II of Spain and the Florentine Grand Duke, who sent the Spanish king numerous diplomatic gifts in the form of religious art in the latter part of the seventeenth century, see Rosemarie Mulcahy, \textit{Philip II of Spain, Patron of the Arts} (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 53-70.

\textsuperscript{341} Guillermo Lohmann Villena, Antonio San Cristóbal Sebastián, et al., \textit{La basílica catedral de Lima} (Lima: Banco de Crédito, 2004), 247. For information on Bartolomé and Vicente Carducho, see Angulo Iñiguez and Pérez Sánchez, \textit{Historia de la pintura Española}, 86-189.
enhance the emotion of the paintings. Scholars have paid little attention to these paintings, only mentioning the works in a survey of the cathedral’s collection, where the author has dated the series to 1620-1630, the decade after Medoro’s departure.\footnote{Villena, Sebastián, et al., \textit{Catedral de Lima}, 248.}

However, both Bartolomé and Vicente were engaged in the commercial trading of painting with Lima and various other New World cities from the last few years of the sixteenth century. For example, in 1630 Vicente sent sixteen paintings to Gaspar Astete, a Spanish man living in Lima.\footnote{Juan José Martín González, \textit{El artista en la sociedad española del siglo XVII} (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1984), 45; Villena, Sebastián, et al., \textit{Catedral de Lima}, 247.} Thus, Vicente’s \textit{Last Judgment} paintings were not the only ones of their type imported to Lima in the early seventeenth century. Medoro’s exposure in Lima to the popular Florentine reform style seems likely. However, yet again, the loss of many seventeenth-century artifacts to the city’s earthquakes prevents a definitive investigation of the holdings of art in colonial Lima.

As mentioned above, scholars have noted the change in Medoro’s style in his later years in Lima, which is evident in the Passion retablo, and have considered his experiments with new aesthetics as largely unsuccessful. Whether successful or not, however, it is important to consider what these experiments reveal about the artist and his role in Lima’s artistic culture. Perhaps as a result of Spanish paintings imported to Lima, Medoro explored new modes of painting, even after decades of success.

\textbf{Medoro’s Later Work in Lima}

In 1618, Medoro signed and dated two additional paintings in Lima, \textit{The Immaculate Conception} (Figure 3.35), made for and still housed in the Monastery of San Villena, Sebastián, et al., \textit{Catedral de Lima}, 248.
Agustín, and *Christ Meditating* (Figure 3.36), now in the private collection of the Moreira family in Lima. For *The Immaculate Conception*, Medoro followed the standard iconography of the popular Latin American subject, with the Virgin standing on a crescent moon, surrounded by angels who present emblems that symbolize her purity. In this example, among the emblems are the city of God, the lily, the tower of David, the mirror, the rose, the closed door, and the church. In both *The Immaculate Conception* and *Christ Meditating*, there is a change in Medoro’s style from bulky, richly modeled figures in twisted poses to sweet, simple, thin figures, reflecting the shift to a more naturalistic aesthetic. A comparison of Medoro’s *Immaculate Conception* with his earlier *Virgin of the Angels* (Figure 3.7) from the Monastery of the Descalzos is particularly illuminating. The Virgin at the Descalzos is full and round and modeled in rich colors. Her powerful leg bends beneath the drapery to suggest a dynamic body, while the Immaculate Virgin is thin and dainty, and stands in a frontal position without any twist or bend of the body. The body of Christ in *Christ Meditating* is similar in its reduction of volume.

It is clear that this change in his style was intentional because it continued once he returned to Spain. In 1620, Medoro left Lima for Seville, where he would spend the rest of his life. A painting from his late period in Seville was recently published, offering a glimpse of the final phase of his career. *The Holy Family* (Figure 3.37), from 1622, is

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344 See chapter 1 for a discussion of this theme, in the context of Bitti’s painting of the same subject.

part of the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Seville, although its original intended location is unknown. The style of Medoro’s Seville painting is strikingly similar to that of the *Immaculate Virgin* in San Agustín and the faces and poses of the Virgins are nearly identical. Just five years after the *Holy Family* was painted, in 1627, Medoro went before a jury of artists, which included Spanish painter Alonso Cano, to be examined in order to join the painters’ guild in Seville. His return to Spain, then, seems to have been inspired by an interest in continuing to work in the most up-to-date styles, as he went to the trouble to become part of Seville’s artistic community, even after decades of success abroad.

**Medoro’s Destroyed Work**

Medoro’s oeuvre is only partially revealed in this chapter because numerous paintings were destroyed in earthquakes of the seventeenth century. Brief mention of these lost projects, all of which are supported by archival evidence, can provide a broader picture of Medoro’s career in Lima, especially the fact that he worked for many of the churches and monasteries in the city. For example, in 1600, shortly after his arrival in the capital, Medoro painted a *Holy Trinity* for the refectory of the Monastery of the Mercedarian order.\(^{346}\) A document dated March 16, 1600, details the commission and includes information about the friars who served as patrons and the payment promised to Medoro.\(^{347}\) According to the contract, the friars hired Medoro to paint two large oils, one


depicting the Holy Trinity and the second a representation of the Virgin Mary of Mercy, surrounded by saints chosen and prescribed by the order’s general.

In 1607, Medoro worked on several paintings for the Chapel of the Souls, in Lima’s Cathedral, which included The Virgin of the Sorrows, Saint John, and The Crucifixion, none of which are extant. In 1680, Peruvian chronicler Francisco de Echave y Assu wrote of The Crucifixion’s acclaim in the city, describing the great adoration it received.

Circa 1616, a few years before he painted the Immaculate Conception for the Augustinians in Lima, he painted a retablo in the Church of Saint Ildefonso that was also destroyed in the seventeenth century. Mesa and Gisbert also posit that, in 1618, Medoro made a lost Holy Family with Saint James and Saint Francis of Assisi for Santo Domingo, although no documents for the commission exist.

Medoro and Saint Rose of Lima

The project that has most solidified Medoro’s place in Lima’s colonial history is the legend of his deathbed portrait of Saint Rose of Lima in 1617. Numerous scholars spanning the last four centuries have relayed the story of Medoro’s postmortem portrait.

document and included the following citation: Los Reyes 16 de Marzo de 1600, Arch. Nac. Not. Gomez Baeza, fol. 491.

348 Villena, Sebastian, et al., Catedral de Lima, 271.

349 Francisco de Echave y Assu, La estrella de Lima convertida en sol sobre sus tres coronas el B. Toribio Alfonso Mogrobexo (Antwerp: Juan Baptista Verdussen, 1687), 73.


One of the first documents to record the story is Juan Melendez’s book about Saint Rose’s beatification, written in 1671 and published in Lima. The legend recounts that in the last moments of her life, Rose’s patron, Gonzalo de la Maza, a wealthy member of Lima’s elite class, summoned Medoro to her deathbed, where he painted her likeness quickly and crudely in oil on a small wood panel. A work that is purported to be that portrait (Figure 3.38), although in poor condition, remains today in the Sanctuary of Saint Rose in Lima. However, as will be shown below, it is unlikely that Medoro painted this portrait at Rose’s deathbed, and unknown if he painted the portrait at all.

The portrait of Rose came to be the source for many future images of the New World’s first saint. The basic physiognomy of the portrait and its iconography of Saint Rose have been repeated many times over in paintings, prints, and sculptures, in Peru and beyond. Examples span the continents; a seventeenth-century painting by the Italian painter, Carlo Maratta (Figure 3.39), in a private collection in Lima, is one example of


Juan Meléndez, *Festiva pompa, culto religioso, veneracion reverente, fiesta, aclamacion, y aplauso: A la feliz beatificacion de la bienaventurada virgen Rosa de S. Maria* (Lima; n.p., 1671).
the portrait’s influence abroad. Maratta’s depiction of Rose’s facial features, such as the long narrow nose and sharply arched eyebrows, as well as the portrayal of the mouth hanging slightly open, are consistent with the portrait allegedly painted by Medoro. Additionally, artists often depicted Rose wearing a crown of roses, as she does in the Lima original. An example is an eighteenth-century painting by a Cuzco-school artist (Figure 3.40), now in the Casa Lorca in Lima. Numerous scholars have mentioned the original portrait and several have devoted studies to its influence on later portrayals. However, recent insight requires further consideration of its history.

Within a year of Rose’s passing, Lima’s authorities collected testimonies from people regarding her miraculous life. Over seventy-five people testified, beginning only eight days after Rose’s death and ending in April of 1618, immediately after which all were sent to Rome as part of the campaign for her canonization. For example, Angelino Medoro’s wife, who had known Saint Rose, testified about her experience at the funeral, claiming that the body of the deceased saint had remained warm as if it were still somehow alive. In a recent article, Peruvian scholar Teodoro Hampe-Martínez published sections of several testimonies, including that of Angelino Medoro himself, who testified on March 5, 1618. Medoro identified himself as a forty-five year old

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357 Ibid.
native of Rome, and confirmed that he knew Rose and had been to her home on several occasions. He also described a visit Rose made to his house to see his sick wife, whom Rose miraculously cured, as well as his experience of her funeral and the city-wide reaction to her death, claiming that the Church of Santo Domingo was so packed that day that he was not able to get inside. Additionally, Medoro told a story of a student of his, Juan Rodríguez Samames, who had been suffering from a disease but miraculously recovered when a relic of the saint’s body was placed on him. Surprisingly, in detailing this series of encounters with Rose, Medoro did not mention his presence at her deathbed and said nothing of a portrait. It seems likely that if Medoro had been witness to Rose’s death, he would have included it in his testimony. This evidence suggests that perhaps the story of the postmortem portrait is in fact merely a legend.\textsuperscript{358} There are two other possible scenarios: Medoro painted the portrait in question after Rose’s passing, and it was presented as a deathbed portrait, or Medoro did not paint a portrait of Rose, and the legend is a complete fabrication.

If Medoro was not at Rose’s deathbed, but did make the painting in question, he could have found information about her appearance at the time of her death in written descriptions or oral tradition. Like so many events from her life, the death of Rose had its own miraculous tale. Rose’s hagiographers relayed that, upon her death, after days of immense physical torture, at the end of a life filled with daily mortifications, a vitality and beauty returned to her face: “Death appeared so lovely on the countenance of Saint

\textsuperscript{358} Ibid. Hampe-Martínez supports the theory that Medoro likely did not make the portrait from life, as Rose lay on her deathbed.
Rose, that those who remarked the freshness of her complexion and the redness of her lips, which were separated so as to form a pleasing smile, doubted for a long time whether her soul had quitted her body.\footnote{F. W. Faber, ed., \textit{The Life of Saint Rose of Lima}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Philadelphia: Peter F. Cunningham & Son, 1855), 204.} The portrait purportedly painted by Medoro is faithful to this mythic description. In this work, her eyes appear slightly open and her pink lips part, the left corner of the mouth turning up ever so slightly in a smile. Surely, if Medoro had been witness to the miraculous moment, he would have included it in his testimony. Since he did not tell this story, it seems likely that he was not there and did not paint this portrait moments after she died, if he painted it at all.

Accordingly, the portrait does not appear to be an image made from life. It is painted with only scant detail and lacks any individualized description of facial features. The perspective is also confusing, as the painter presents her in a frontal position as well as a three-quarter turn at the same time.\footnote{Elphik, “Peruvian Portraits,” 156-7. Elphik made a similar observation about the portrait.} Her right eye and mouth are seen from the front, but her nose, chin, and cheeks are seen from an angle. In addition, the fall of her habit is painted in a way that indicates an upright, not a supine position. Instead of painting her deathbed image, the artist of this work likely created it according to the stories he heard about her death.

It is important to consider the reason why this story might have been fabricated and why it was told so many times in the literature. It is not surprising that Lima would have desired a portrait of Saint Rose on her deathbed, but more significant was the choice to associate Medoro with this painting. The connection of Medoro to the portrait of Saint
Rose likely was one part of an elaborate subsequent campaign cultivated to ensure the beatification and canonization of Saint Rose.

Rose’s canonization was in fact a campaign, composed of the efforts of many diverse and powerful parties. Saint Rose of Lima was born in 1586 and died at the young age of thirty-three in 1617, having spent her life in complete devotion to Christ. She claimed to have had experienced numerous visions and miracles, the first of which occurred when she was a young child, and was witnessed by a maid and Rose’s mother.\(^{361}\) Both claimed that her face miraculously became an image of a rose, which resulted in the change of her name from Isabel. Rose modeled her life on that of Saint Catherine of Siena, even staging a marriage to Christ. On several occasions that led to her widespread devotion in Lima, Rose’s miracles contributed to the development of her reputation as a protector of the city. In 1615, when Dutch pirates threatened invasion, Rose offered herself up in sacrifice and successfully defended the city.\(^{362}\)

Rose’s official international recognition came in 1671, when Pope Clement IX canonized her and designated her the patron saint of the Americas. Rose’s first hagiographer described her as “the first spiritual flower which Divine Providence planted and cultivated in the richest part of the New World.”\(^{363}\) Following her death, devotion to Saint Rose became widespread throughout North and South America. Rose’s notoriety,

\(^{361}\) Mujica Pinilla, *Rosa limensis*, 52.


\(^{363}\) Faber, *The Life of Saint Rose of Lima*, 21. The first hagiography of Saint Rose was written in 1664 by Leonhard Hansen and titled *Vita mirabilis & mors pretiosa*. In 1671, Jean Baptiste Feuillet translated it into French and finally in 1847, F. W. Faber translated it into English.
however, began during her lifetime and crescendoed in the years following her death as the viceroyalty of Peru and the Spanish monarchy campaigned to make her the first saint of the New World. Additionally, even in the ethnically and socially divided city of Lima, the population united in dedication to Saint Rose.

That Rose’s rise to sainthood was significant to various sectors of the Spanish colonial world is evident in the crusade launched to canonize the young girl that began within months of her passing and involved the citizens of Lima, the viceroy of Peru, and eventually the king and queen of Spain. To the Spanish, Rose was a symbol of their success; they had ventured to the New World as crusaders of the Catholic Reformation, militant in their mission to spread Christianity. Throughout the colonial period, missionaries consistently sought ways to connect the local population to the tenets and beliefs of Christianity. The widespread devotion to Rose was evidence that they had reached the indigenous people. In 1631, to honor the birth of the Spanish prince Baltazar Carlos, the viceroys even hung a portrait of Rose on the façade of the viceregal palace. In addition, the Spanish must have recognized that the conversion of this local woman, who was already adored and venerated, into a Catholic saint, could serve as another tool in efforts to direct the religious beliefs and practices of the Peruvian people.


To the local creole and Indian populations, Rose’s canonization had different significance. Many saw her as one of their own, since her father was from Puerto Rico and her mother was a criolla from Peru; she had been born and raised in Lima, but had the diverse background of much of the colonial population; and had been chosen by this Christian God and thus had become a holy figure with whom they could identify. A similar phenomenon occurred in colonial Mexico with Juan Diego’s miraculous vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe; the appearance of the Virgin to the Mexican peasant inspired widespread connections to Christianity among the locals. Additionally, devotion to Rose broke through segregations in society because she herself was known to ignore skin color and ethnicity; as a nurse she helped anyone in need, regardless of social standing. In a painting from the eighteenth century (Figure 3.41), an anonymous artist from Lima captured the saint’s widespread and diverse appeal by representing Rose surrounded by the various ethnic classes of the city, including mestizos, Indians, and Africans.

The portrait allegedly painted by Medoro is famous not only for its direct connection to the mythical life and death of Saint Rose, the New World’s first Catholic saint, but for purportedly being the only portrait made from life of the young girl, as no living portraits of Rose exist because she would not allow any to be made. Contemporaries described her as a great beauty, but Rose found her physical identity

366 Teodoro Hampe-Martinez, Santidad y identidad: Estudio del proceso de canonización de Santa Rosa (Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos, 1998). Hampe-Martinez has astutely analyzed the significance of Saint Rose to Lima’s criollo population.

367 Faber, The Life of Saint Rose of Lima, 117.

368 Pinilla, Rosa limensis, 52.
shameful and began deforming her own body at a young age in order to deflect any attention from men. She rubbed pepper in her eyes and starved herself until she was, as one biographer describes her, “a bag of skin and bones.” Rose was known for her consistent mortifications throughout life, which brought her close to death on a number of occasions. This, too, however, proved worrisome to Rose, who upon receiving pity and praise for the tortures she forced upon herself, requested that God restore her beauty. The fact that Rose forbade any portraits to be made of herself and that as a result the only portrait that exists was done after she had passed served as a kind of memorial to her great humility in life, making the portrait mistakenly attributed to Medoro that much more precious.

The legendary deathbed portrait of Saint Rose was important to Lima’s culture because the girl had been chosen by the city to be the first saint of the New World. She was among many women in Lima in this period who had dedicated themselves to a life of devotion to Christ and complete humility, but Rose was Lima’s choice. Seventeenth-century Lima was a city consumed by Christianity and its inhabitants were distinctly aware of their connection to their religion. In a 2004 book about Saint Rose of Lima, Frank Graziano compared Lima to a religious monastery, explaining that the city was accepting of emerging saintly figures. As a result, fourteen candidates for sainthood were produced in Lima between 1580 and 1680. The atmosphere of Lima as well as a general increase in female mystics in the Counter-Reformation period meant that by the

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early seventeenth century, Lima had ten candidates for beatification and the city was forced to choose one. In other words, the viceroyalty of Peru was ready to elect the first saint of the New World, and Rose was their choice.

From its beginning, the memory of Rose was cultivated as a symbol of the power and success of the Spanish in conquering paganism and spreading Christianity. For example, at the procession of Rose’s body to the church where it would be interred, members of each of the separate and independent religious orders active in Lima took turns carrying the body through the streets, as a demonstration of the unity of the city’s religious enclaves.\(^{371}\) An engraving by Cornelis Galle (Figure 3.42) from the first half of the seventeenth century illustrates the procession. Then, after receiving a letter from the viceroy about Rose’s popularity in Lima, the King of Spain, Philip IV and his Queen, Mariana of Austria, crusaded for Rose’s canonization. When Philip died, Mariana took on Rose’s campaign as her cause and even discoursed directly with the Vatican. The efforts of the monarchy played an important role in the eventual ascension of Rose to sainthood; the bull of beatification read “we are persuaded by the pious desires of the Catholic monarchs.”\(^{372}\)

The written story of Rose’s life was also begun soon after she died and was first published in 1664. In it, the hagiographer manipulated Rose’s narrative in order to present the most convincing representation of her life. For example, he exaggerated Rose’s connection to Saint Catherine of Siena, saying, “all the characteristics of St.


Catherine were to be seen; the same manner of living, the same inclinations, the same favors from God, and so great a similarity in figure and countenance that one might easily have been taken for the other.”\textsuperscript{373} Rose had always modeled her life after that of the famous Italian saint, and it is true that there were some coincidental similarities, including age at death; both died at thirty-three. In some cases, however, the author tweaked the facts to a certain degree. For example, he noted Rose’s birth date as April 30, the feast day of Saint Catherine, despite the fact that numerous documents designate April 20. In discussing Rose’s childhood, early on, it is said that her mother, who was a teacher, taught her how to read and write, but later on the story is augmented to suggest that Rose had become literate without any instruction, just as Catherine had learned only by divine inspiration. Such a strong link to a well-known saint was one powerful aspect of Rose’s campaign, and this first biographer was careful to accent it. The goal was to make Rose’s story mirror Catherine’s and make the Vatican see Rose as the new Catherine of Siena, to link the New World story of miracles and sanctity to one from the Old World in order to ground it in the prestige of the past.

The story of Medoro’s documentation of Rose on her deathbed can be seen, then, as yet another tool in the campaign for her canonization. As has been discussed throughout this dissertation, in Lima, from the end of the sixteenth century through nearly the first quarter of the seventeenth, the three artists who were more successful than any others, who received all of the most important commissions from churches and monasteries throughout the city, were the Italians, Bernardo Bitti, Mateo Pérez de Alesio, Faber, \textit{Saint Rose of Lima}, 34.
and of course, Angelino Medoro. The work of these Italian artists in Lima had a certain prestige because it was made by the hands of men who had worked in Rome and therefore were well acquainted with the most up-to-date styles and approaches in sacred art. Angelino Medoro had been in Rome to learn from some of the most influential Italian painters of the reform movement; as we have seen, he must have been aware of the respect for his Roman heritage, as he signed many of his paintings *Angelino Medoro, Romano*. Then, in his testimony about Saint Rose, Medoro again referenced his Roman past, comparing the exuberance of Rose’s followers during her funeral to the kind of Catholic pageantry that normally one can only experience in Rome. Medoro’s Roman origins must have made him an attractive candidate to provide a portrait of Saint Rose.

A copy of the portrait was sent to Rome. This portrait of the saint, purported to record the miraculous death of Rose and from the records of a Roman artist, certainly could have seemed a powerful tool in the efforts to convince the Vatican of her worthiness. Upon Rose’s beatification, the pope commissioned a marble sculpture of the saint (Figure 3.43) and sent it to Lima. For this sculpture, which would represent the Church’s approval of the first saint of the New World, the pope hired Melchiorre Cafà, an Italian sculptor. In the sculpture Cafà depicted an angel comforting Rose, as she took her last breath. Yet again, this actual last moment of life is significant to her story. While visual analysis of the alleged Medoro portrait in comparison to the face of Cafà’s sculpture yields only scant similarities, it seems feasible that a death portrait could have been chosen due to the legendary story of Medoro’s painting. Additionally, as a copy of

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*Hampe-Martinez, La imagen de la muerte*, 82.
the original portrait was in Rome at this time, it seems feasible that there may have been a relationship between the two. Perhaps more importantly, when Cafà’s sculpture arrived in Lima, the people insisted on carrying it by foot on the ten-mile journey to the city and inaugurated its placement in the Church of Santo Domingo with an immense ephemeral altar that imitated marble and lapis lazuli and was paraded through the streets. Yet again, the Peruvian people paid respect to a Roman object commemorating their saint, its origins in the home of the Catholic Church carrying weight in colonial Lima, just as Medoro’s Roman heritage must have.

Ultimately, the story of Angelino Medoro’s posthumous portrait of Saint Rose was most likely just a legend, created to serve as a tool in the campaign for her canonization, an effort that was supported by elite and powerful members of Lima and Madrid society. The prestige accorded Italian art and artists in Lima in the seventeenth century must have inspired the legend and thus is a famous example of the agency of Old World culture in early colonial Latin America.

Tangentially, this original portrait of Saint Rose was influential well beyond the confines of the seventeenth century, as it became standard practice for Peruvian nuns to be depicted in deathbed portraits. In a recent dissertation on Peruvian portraiture, Nenita Ponce de Leon Elphik suggested that the example of the portrait allegedly painted by Medoro might have helped to form the tradition of representations of Peruvian nuns for several centuries.\footnote{Elphik, “Peruvian Portraits”, 167.} She pointed out that colonial Mexican conventions of images of nuns lavishly adorned in habits and jewelry, surrounded by flowers and religious
statuettes, did not influence art practice in Peru, even though the lives and experiences of nuns were similar in both viceroyalties. Instead, Elphik illustrates many examples of postmortem portraits of Peruvian nuns that mimic the simplicity of the composition, arguing that the early image of Saint Rose may have served as the example for future portrayals. Considering the popularity of Saint Rose in colonial Peru as well as the prestige of Angelino Medoro, the possibility of this portrait’s long-lasting impact seems likely. Just as European artists created works of art that became templates for Christian style and iconography in colonial Latin America, Medoro’s alleged portrait of the New World’s first saint may have become the example of how to properly capture the likeness of a contemporary holy figure.

**Medoro’s Students and Followers**

In addition to decorating churches and monasteries throughout Lima himself, Medoro also established a large workshop where he trained numerous artists who went on to have illustrious careers of their own. Mateo Pérez de Alesio also ran a workshop and trained students, but Medoro was unique in admitting some of the first Indian students. Several names are listed in the documents, including Pedro de Loayza, an Indian native of Cuzco; Leonardo Jaramillo; Antonio Mermejo; and perhaps the most well-known, Luis de Riaño. Pedro de Loayza entered the workshop in 1604, but there remain no attributed extant works by him in Lima.

Leonardo Jaramillo, on the other hand, for whom secure dates and biographical information do not remain, has been connected to two paintings in Lima; the first is a

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376 Ibid., chapters 5-6.
dilapidated fresco in the Monastery of San Francisco, but the second is an extremely well-preserved painting in the Monastery of the Descalzos. The badly damaged fresco depicts Porciuncula, a scene representing the spot in Italy where the Franciscan movement began (Figure 3.44), while The Defense of Saint Ildefonso (Figure 3.45) hangs today in the same room of the Descalzos that holds many of Medoro’s own paintings. The style of both clearly echoes that of Medoro, most evidently in the Ildefonso painting, and most notably in some of the Mannerist formal choices that Jaramillo has made. Numerous figures in the painting twist in the familiar figura serpentinata of Italian Mannerism, and as seen in several of Medoro’s paintings, such as those from the Passion series in the Monastery of San Francisco. Additionally, the figures possess robust bodies, their drapery modeled in rich variations of color. Italian Renaissance aesthetics are clearly at play here also in the creation of three-dimensional space through an attempt at linear perspective as well as the stacking of figures to create a sense of depth. It was this kind of painting, made by a Medoro student, that contributed to the extended lifespan of Italianate painting in Lima, even after the death and departure of the Italians themselves.

The name Antonio Mermejo also appears in documents linking the artist to Medoro’s workshop, but there is a dearth of biographical information on this individual. There is, however, one painting attributed to Mermejo, The Penitent Magdalen (Figure 3.46), hanging in the Church of San Francisco in Lima. Yet again, the Italian taste for volume in figures and drapery is apparent. Here, Medoro’s later experimentations with a more tenebristic palette may have influenced the artist’s approach.
There are also unattributed paintings in locations in Lima where Medoro worked that are stylistically similar to his paintings, and thus scholars have repeatedly given these objects to “follower of Angelino Medoro.” Archives in Lima may hold information about the creators of such paintings, but much research remains to be done in this area.

Research on the seventeenth century in Lima can be challenging due to the loss of many documents in the century’s two earthquakes. For example, at the Archivo de la Nación, the bulk of the collection dates from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even without attributions, however, these paintings are evidence of the impact of Medoro’s painting in the city over the next century.

For example, the Sanctuary of Saint Rose of Lima houses two paintings that depict moments from the girl’s life: The Origin of the Name of Saint Rose (Figure 3.47) and The Death of Saint Rose (Figure 3.48). In the first, the painter represented the legend of Rose’s first instance of facial transfiguration when, at three months old, several people, including her mother, witnessed the transformation of her face into a rose, after which her cheeks remained rosy, and her mother changed her name from Isabel to Rose.377 In the second painting, her parents and patrons witness her legendary death. Several scholars have attributed both to Medoro, although neither is signed and no mention of his name in connection to the paintings exists from the seventeenth century. Instead, it is likely that a follower or student made the paintings who had absorbed some of Medoro’s style,

377 Elphik, “Peruvian Portraits,” 146.
including the Italianate interest in volume and three-dimensionality as well as naturalistic color and space.\textsuperscript{378}

Finally, Medoro’s most studied and most documented student was Luis de Riaño, who entered the Italian’s workshop in 1611, when he was only fifteen.\textsuperscript{379} It is not clear how long Riaño remained in Lima with Medoro, as much of his mature career was spent in Cuzco, where he died in 1643. Riaño’s earliest documented work, as exemplified by his \textit{Immaculate Virgin} (Figure 3.49) in the Church of the Recoleta in Cuzco, is evidence of his adoption of Medoro’s figures and forms. The composition is reminiscent of Medoro’s painting of the same subject in the Monastery of San Agustín in Lima (Figure 3.35). Riaño later altered his style to one more akin to the aesthetics of seventeenth-century Cuzco painting.\textsuperscript{380}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Of all three Italian painters working in Lima in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Medoro left behind the most abundant oeuvre, allowing an opportunity to trace the artist’s career from start to finish and observe the multivalent impact he had on the city. Like Bitti and Alesio, Medoro began as an inheritor of the forms of Italian Mannerism, but tweaked the popular aesthetic to cater to the needs of the Counter-Reformatory atmosphere. More importantly, perhaps, later in his career Medoro was one of the first artists in Lima to experiment with the new naturalistic fashions of seventeenth-century art. Baroque aesthetics would not begin to impact Peru until the

\textsuperscript{378} Additional anonymous paintings in Italianate style are mentioned in chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{379} Mesa and Gisbert, “Angelino Medoro,” 45.
\textsuperscript{380} Riaño is discussed in much greater detail in chapter 4.
1640s with the import of paintings by artists such as Francisco de Zurbarán, who represented the latest taste in Spain. After the death and departure of the Italians in Lima, many of the city’s artists would perpetuate the classical Italian painting style before the introduction of Baroque aesthetics in the 1640s and of more prominent indigenous influence in the second half of the century. Therefore, Medoro’s influence can be felt not only in his prolific contribution to the city’s major monuments, or in the work of his abundant collection of students and followers, but in the work of those who came after his departure, but were inspired by the mark he left on the city.

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381 For information on the influx of paintings by Zurbarán into Lima, and their influence, see: Villena, Sebastian, et al., *Catedral de Lima*, 273-77.
CHAPTER 4

THE TRANSFORMATION OF COLONIAL PAINTING IN PERU

The Death and Departure of the Italians

The Italian presence in Lima began to diminish with Bernardo Bitti’s death in 1610, followed by Angelino Medoro’s return to Seville in 1620 and finally Mateo Pérez de Alesio’s death after nearly forty years in Lima, in 1628. However, the taste for Italianate style lived on until mid-century and is evident in paintings by students and followers of the Italians, both named and anonymous. Then, around 1650, the climate of art-making began to transform in Peru. The change started in Cuzco but quickly spread to Lima and other cities around the viceroyalty. The changes marked a resurgence of local traditions that would influence painting throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Paintings based on Catholic European iconography and compositions became infused with indigenous aesthetics and the style became flat, patterned, and often abstract. The most influential of painters working in this new hybrid style were part of the now-famous Cuzco school, which formed after a massive earthquake in the city resulted in the destruction of many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century churches and paintings, and perhaps even more importantly, due to the split of the painter’s guild into two competing workshops run by Spanish artists and those run by Indian artists. Indigenous and mestizo artists took control of Cuzco’s art scene and developed a new Peruvian school of painting. The art of the Cuzco school is most commonly discussed as a revival of local ideals and aesthetics, but the works of art produced by these artists also
retain at times a residue of the Italian art that had dominated for nearly seventy-five years.

A brief note on the impact of the Italians is important here. After a thirty-five year career in South America, Bernardo Bitti died in Lima in 1610, shortly after his final return to the city following travels throughout the viceroyalty. His last surviving painting, *The Madonna of the Rose* (Figure 1.36), hangs in the Monastery of the Descalzos and is representative of his later work.\(^{382}\) By the time of his death, Bitti had worked for many years in Lima, and had contributed paintings to churches and monasteries in a number of other Peruvian cities. Of all three Italian artists, Bitti had the most expansive impact because of his travels. His influence in Cuzco and specifically on that city’s famous school of artists that formed in the middle of the seventeenth century was particularly profound.

Mateo Pérez de Alesio, of all three Italians, spent the most time in Lima, landing in 1590 and remaining in the capital for the remainder of his life, until 1628. He arrived in Lima already an accomplished and well-known painter and, according to archival documents and contemporary commentary, enjoyed a prolific career in the city. Alesio also assembled a large workshop, training as many as six known artists.

Among the three, Angelino Medoro left behind the largest body of extant work in Lima, making his impact on the city even more evident. He arrived in 1599 and returned to Seville in 1620, having spent his time making paintings for many different churches and monasteries. Like Alesio, Medoro trained quite a few students, including the well-

\(^{382}\) See chapter 1 for a more in-depth discussion of the painting.
documented Luis de Riaño. Medoro also left a geographical spread of paintings in Tunja, Bogota, and Quito.

Three named students of the Italians are illuminating case studies of painters in the generation following the initial European presence. Each began with a strong reliance on Italian style, but later strayed from that model and incorporated something of his own individuality as well as the impact of the changing art climate. Their work, as well as that of some other influential painters, marked the early infusion of local creativity into painting that prefigured the original qualities of the Cuzco school later in the seventeenth century. Bernardo Bitti’s best known disciple, Gregorio Gamarra, may have been one important link between the Italian style of early colonial Peruvian art and the hybrid style of the Cuzco school. He worked for Bitti as a young painter and also became an important artist in Cuzco early in the seventeenth century. Mateo Pérez de Alesio trained the Augustinian monk Francisco Bejarano, who worked for his own order in Lima and later in his career contributed engravings to at least two important publications, having been taught the medium by Alesio. Angelino Medoro trained the young artist Luis de Riaño, who entered the Italian’s workshop at only fifteen. In his earliest paintings, the Italianate aesthetic Riaño learned is evident. However, by the time he reached maturity as an artist, he had moved to Cuzco, where he was one of many artists who started to diverge from the European school. Ultimately, the Italian painters trained and influenced artists who would go on to participate in the development of later colonial painting in Peru. At least ten names of students or followers of the Italians appear in archival documents. Three will be discussed here, Gregorio Gamarra, Francisco Bejarano, and
Luis de Riaño, because each has extant work that is representative of the Italians’ impact. Thus, among these Italians and their students is the story of colonial painting’s beginnings and its most important transformation in Peru.

The Students

The most direct Italian impact can be traced in the careers of students who worked with Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro. Gregorio Gamarra (c. 1575-c. 1630) likely first encountered Bitti when the Italian was working on the Villa Imperial de Potosí in 1601. Unfortunately, precise information about Gamarra’s origins, as well as the details of his career, are unknown. There are, however, several dates associated with projects, from which scholars have been able to establish a basic timeline of his life. The earliest date recorded for Gamarra is 1601, when he was in Potosí. His activity in Cuzco occurred between 1607 and 1612, as evidenced by a series of signed and dated paintings in collections there. Gamarra died in Potosí in the third or fourth decade of the seventeenth century. Of all the artists considered as followers of Bitti, Gamarra’s style is the closest to the Italian’s. Mesa and Gisbert, who have written the only monograph on Gamarra, argue that in his early work, his style was close to Bitti’s, but that a much more tenebristic and creative, unique style emerged later. A brief survey of paintings spanning Gamarra’s career shows that this analysis is oversimplified, as Gamarra waxed and

383 José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, Gregorio Gamarra (La Paz: Dirección nacional de informaciones de la Presidencia de la Republica, 1962). The dates and timeline discussed here are taken from this monograph, which is the only source on Gamarra; the text is limited and some of the attributions may be incorrect, and likely by followers of Gamarra rather than the artist himself, but he is so understudied that without further archival research, it is impossible to say with certainty.
waned in his reliance on Bitti throughout his career, rather than making decisive changes to his work at particular points in time. Additionally, documentation for Gamarra is so sparse that it is impossible to establish a clear timeline for his career. In 1607, Gamarra painted and signed the *Immaculate Conception with Saint Bonaventure and Saint Diego de Alcalá* (Figure 1.26) for the monastery of the Recoleta in Cuzco. There are reminders of Bitti in this painting, most notably the Virgin’s delicate and gentle features, as exemplified by Bitti’s own *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* (Figure 1.24), in the monastery of the Merced in Cuzco. The facial features of Gamarra’s Virgin also recall those of Bitti’s figures, particularly in the linear handling of the bridge of the nose and the eyes. The Virgin’s neck is elongated, allowing Gamarra to create a sinuous curve to exaggerate the poignant bowing of her head. The space is shallow and the figures are close to the picture plane, creating, as in many of Bitti’s paintings, an intimate interaction with the viewer. Although there are some significant links to Bitti, Gamarra’s painting differs from the Italian’s style in some ways. For example, the figure of the Virgin has less volume than those of Bitti normally do; while Bitti did not use modeling to a great degree and his figures tended to be somewhat flat, there is always a sense for the s-curve of the body and its serpentine movement under the drapery. In contrast, there is no suggestion of physical movement in Gamarra’s figures.

In addition to Bitti, another source for Gamarra and other colonial Latin American artists painting the popular image of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception was engravings of the subject by Raphael Sadeler and other European printmakers (Figure
4.1), of which many were sent to the New World. The Sadeler engravings were sources not only for basic composition, but also for the symbols of the Virgin’s purity that traditionally flank the figure in this iconic image. While Gamarra did replicate many such symbols in his painting, he paired the objects, while European artists such as Sadeler included single, stand-alone symbols. Thus, even early in his career, despite his close ties to Bitti, Gamarra explored unique iconographic compositions.

Gamarra also painted The Vision of the Cross (Figure 4.2), for the Franciscan Recoleta in Cuzco in 1607. The face of the Virgin here is quite similar to that in the Recoleta Immaculate; the Virgin’s facial features are delicate and linear and her eyes are downcast, a decision that Gamarra made in nearly every known painting. It seems that the half-closed eyes, gazing down, is how the artist consistently handled the face in his paintings. Accordingly, through stylistic analysis of Gamarra’s oeuvre Mesa and Gisbert have made the observation that he repeats the same figures in various paintings, simply copying the model from one painting and adding it to another, a practice that seems evident in this example.

In 1609, Gamarra painted The Epiphany (Figure 4.3), which is now in the collection of the Museo de Arte in La Paz. While some of the qualities of Bitti’s style are still present here, namely the facial features of the Virgin and the delicacy of the figures,

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384 Barbara Duncan and Teresa Gisbert, eds., Gloria in excelsis: The Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia (New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1985), 34.
385 Ibid.
386 Mesa and Gisbert, Gregorio Gamarra.
Gamarra’s figures have become far more stylized. They lack volume and are generalized; the eyes are large and out of proportion with the composition of the face, while the nose and mouth in contrast are small and simplified. He has almost completely avoided modeling the face, so that it is flat and lacking any physical presence. Additionally, the painting is dark and Gamarra chose to work with rich, deep colors, reminiscent of the tenebrism gaining popularity in the European Baroque.

The painting with the most striking connection to Bitti is a late painting of *The Virgin Adoring the Child* (Figure 4.4), signed and dated 1612, the latest date attributed to a painting by Gamarra. The Virgin’s facial features are closely based on Bitti’s paintings and the contorted body of the Christ Child is reminiscent of the Mannerist tendency to manipulate the pose of the body, perhaps most famously accomplished by Bitti in his Arequipa *Madonna and Child* (Figure 1.34). It seems that while Gamarra experimented with various sources and styles, he remained tied to Bitti’s Mannerism throughout his career.

Mesa and Gisbert have argued that Gamarra was responsible for spreading Bitti’s Mannerism in parts of the viceroyalty, such as Potosí and other cities in the Charcas region of the Andes. A painting of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception in the Barbosa Stern collection in Lima (Figure 4.5) has been attributed to the circle of Gamarra and is one example of Gamarra’s version of Bitti’s style living on in followers. It is characteristic of both artists’ styles, in the linear quality of the figures and the delicate features of the Virgin. Like Gamarra, this artist has not formed the Virgin’s body with

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387 Ibid., 1.
the volume and movement that is typical of Bitti’s work. Unlike both Bitti and Gamarra, however, the artist painted the facial features more tightly arranged within the face and with less of a bow of the head and neck. Ultimately, this painting is one of many that make it clear that Bitti’s style of Mannerism became widespread in Peru in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gamarra is one example of an artist who adopted the Italian’s approach, contributed his own creative choices, and exposed other painters to Mannerism.

Mateo Pérez de Alesio assembled a large workshop, from which records of many of his students are extant. The names on that list include: Domingo Gil, Francisco García, Pedro Pablo Morón, and Francisco Bejarano, among others. Unfortunately, very few attributed paintings by Alesio’s students have survived. The few that scholars have connected to his followers retain strong links to the Italian school. Below, I will review several unattributed paintings in Lima that are reminiscent of Alesio and the other Italians, which may have been made by his students. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that Alesio contributed to the dissemination of Italian style in Lima, in part, through his large workshop.

Of all of Alesio’s students, Francisco Bejarano is the only artist to whom a work of art can securely be attributed. Bejarano was a friar in the Augustinian order and worked in the order’s monastery in Lima after leaving Alesio’s workshop. Students in Alesio’s workshop learned the techniques of intaglio printmaking. Alesio was one of the

See chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of Bitti’s influence with examples.
See chapter 2 for additional information about the members of Alesio’s workshop and their known paintings.
few European artists who made prints in Peru. He painted *The Virgin of Belén* (Figure 2.31) on a piece of copper with an engraving of the Holy Family on the back (Figure 4.6). One speculation is that he made the engraving plate in Lima, but did not have the materials to print it, and thus used the copper to make the painting. In any case, Alesio was a trained printmaker and he taught Bejarano the techniques of engraving. 390 Many years after working with Alesio, Bejarano designed an engraving for the frontispiece of a book titled *Sanctuario de Nuestra Señora de Copacabana del Peru* (Figure 4.7), which was published in Lima in 1641. The print was one of many depicting the Virgin Mary that were popular in the Americas, many of which were imported from Europe. Bejarano’s print does not include a narrative around the life of the Virgin; instead it is a characteristically Andean manifestation of the iconic figure of the Virgin. The print illustrates the Andean statue, the Virgin of the Candlestick, at her pilgrimage center in Copacabana on Lake Titicaca. The tradition of statue paintings of the Virgin as well as the iconography included here are connected to Cuzco painting in the seventeenth century. Statue paintings were common in Spain in the seventeenth century and it is likely that Spanish prototypes were among the many prints sent to Peru. 391 The Virgin Mary became a popular devotional figure in Peru due somewhat to connections with female Andean deities, most commonly Pachamama, but also the Inca moon, Mama

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Quilla, and the Inca queen.\textsuperscript{392} By the middle of the seventeenth century, painters in Peru had begun to incorporate this connection to indigenous belief into images of the Virgin. The tradition of dressing statues of the Virgin was prevalent in Spain and became common in Peru as well with the commissions of local \textit{cofradías}, groups of Catholic laymen who were charged with the care of religious images, pilgrimages, and other church-related activities for a town or village. Bejarano’s engraved image is consistent with the tradition of Andean artists painting statues of the Virgin throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, this example places him firmly within the customs of local art-making. Although the print is reflective of Andean traditions and beliefs in the mid-seventeenth century, there is still a connection to Europe. The flanking saints to the right and left of the orb of the world are versions of the Virgin Martyrs painted by Francisco de Zurbarán, many of which were sent to the New World.\textsuperscript{393} One example is \textit{Saint Apollonia} (Figure 4.8), originally made for the Monastery of the Merced Descalza in Seville, but now in the Musée du Louvre in Paris.\textsuperscript{394}

\textsuperscript{392} Carol Damian, \textit{The Virgin of the Andes: Art and Ritual in Colonial Cuzco} (Miami Beach: Grassfield Press, 1995), 50-89. Damian’s chapter on Andean paintings of the Virgin is the most complete discussion of the topic; Barbara Duncan, \textit{Gloria in Excelsis}, 32-57.

\textsuperscript{393} Duncan and Gisbert, \textit{Gloria in Excelsis}, 39. See Duncan Kinkead, “Juan de Luzón and the Sevillan Painting Trade with the New World in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century,” \textit{Art Bulletin} no. 2 (June 1984): 303-310, for more information on the quantity and subject matter of paintings by Zurbarán that were sent to the Americas.

\textsuperscript{394} See Jeannine Baticle, ed., \textit{Zurbarán} (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987), 152-54, for a more in-depth discussion of the artist’s painting of Saint Apollonia. The authors discuss the post-Tridentine issues that must have informed Zurbarán’s paintings of martyrs, and particularly the attention paid by the artist to the ideas of Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti in his discourse.
Finally, among all the known students of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro, Luis de Riaño is perhaps the most famous today. Riaño entered Medoro’s workshop when he was only fifteen, in 1611, and remained for six years. The precise date of Riaño’s departure from Lima is not known, but he was in Cuzco by 1626, a city so rich in culture and art in the seventeenth century that it is not surprising to find a young artist like Riaño making it his home. In Cuzco, Riaño worked for many of the city’s monasteries and parish churches. Even a brief study of several of Riaño’s paintings is illustrative of the artist’s early ties to Medoro and his later freedom and creativity. For example, he signed and painted The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception with San Francisco and San Antonio (Figure 4.9) for the monastery of Santa Catalina in Cuzco. The Virgin herself, as well as the male saints on the bottom left and right, are reminiscent of Medoro’s style in the naturalistic modeling of the bodies and the flow of drapery around the figures’ limbs. Riaño painted the Virgin with fullness and volume, carefully modeling the folds of drapery over her bulging abdomen and strong arms. Additionally, the faces of San Francisco and San Antonio are detailed and precise, their facial bone structure carefully designed to reveal prominent cheekbones and frown lines to the left and right of their mouths, naturalistic details that are evident in many of Medoro’s paintings, such as his San Diego de Alcalá (Figure 3.13) in the Monastery of the Descalzos in Lima.

397 Ibid., 146.
Riaño’s first documented painting in Cuzco is another version of this same subject, *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* (Figure 3.49), for the monastery of the Recoleta in Cuzco. It is nearly identical in composition to Medoro’s painting in San Agustín in Lima (Figure 3.35). The figure of the Virgin stands in the same pose in both, her hands pulled up to her chest in prayer, as she gazes down at angels beneath her feet, her eyes all but closed in a serious and stoic attitude. The Virgin’s pose, however, is conventional for the subject, and certainly not unique to Medoro. The more convincing link between the two is the placement of the symbols of her purity in the same order and location in both paintings, which may suggest that Riaño used Medoro’s painting as a model or learned of Medoro’s iconographic program in his workshop. Riaño’s individual style, however, is evident in this example. Mesa and Gisbert recognized an ease in Medoro’s painting that is not present in Riaño’s version, perhaps evident in the position and movement of the angels that hold the attributes of purity, but also the somewhat stiff quality of the Virgin’s pose, most notably in the bowing of her head.\(^{398}\) In comparison, Medoro painted his Virgin with an easy elegance; her body is naturalistically depicted, and illusionistically physically present, but also light and ethereal. There is a heavy weight to Riaño’s Virgin that contributes to her static pose.\(^{399}\)

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\(^{399}\) Mesa and Gisbert, “Luis de Riaño,” 147. It was at this early moment in his career that Riaño’s impact on Cuzco painting began. Mesa and Gisbert have heralded this painting as a milestone in Cuzco art because it replaced Bitti’s paintings as the example that the next generation would use.
Riaño’s most acclaimed project in the modern literature came in the early 1620s, when he painted murals in the Church of San Pedro, in Andahuaylillas. The church has intrigued modern scholars because it is one of few structures to withstand extensive damage in the 1650 earthquake, but more importantly because the program of the mural designs for the church’s interior was so carefully calculated to address the indigenous Andean audience. The murals are an evocative example of how Christians used art to convert the Andean population. The murals’ designer was a priest named Fray Juan Pérez de Bocanegra, who created a program that addressed Christian dogma, but arranged the imagery in ways that were familiar and relatable to the Andean audience he intended to convert. The murals that decorate the walls above the entrance to the church include an allegory of good and bad behavior in life and the consequences of those choices in either heaven or hell, titled The Way to Heaven and Hell (Figure 4.10). The artist depicted the roads that an individual might face in life and their consequences after death, one lush and easy to navigate, but leading to the punishments of Hell, and the other, thorny and precarious, yet ending in the splendors of Heaven. The source for the painting was a print by the Flemish engraver, Hieronymus Wierix (Figure 4.11), but Riaño, guided by Bocanegra, has departed from some of the decisions made by Wierix to better suit the

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mural’s Andean context. Bocanegra also added certain elements in order to address his particular audience. For example, King David appears in the lower left of the painting, a notable figure who condemned the Israelites for worshipping false idols; the destruction of idols was one of the most pressing matters for the Spanish in Peru in the seventeenth century. Ultimately, the murals at Andahuaylillas are remarkable for their complex and carefully planned program that was designed for the indigenous population who might attend the church. The murals speak to the growing interaction of European and Andean traditions in the seventeenth century; Luis de Riaño’s involvement in the church made him an essential part of rapidly evolving colonial culture.

While working at the church in Andahuaylillas, Riaño also painted The Baptism of Christ (Figure 4.12), an oil painting on canvas, which the artist signed and dated 1626. By this time, Riaño’s style had become more distinctive and recognizable. Mesa and Gisbert have identified several characteristics of his style, including angular, flattened figures, pointed features, and oval faces, all of which are present here. In Lima, Medoro painted a Baptism of Christ (Figure 3.8) for the Monastery of the Descalzos. In a comparison of the paintings by master and student, it is clear that Riaño moved decisively away from Medoro’s full, modeled figures, towards much more delicately linear bodies and features. Riaño painted the anatomy of Christ and Saint John the Baptist by delineating a multitude of individual muscles, giving the bodies segmented, patterned

402 Ibid.
surfaces and thus flattening them. They lack the subtly modeled, robust bodies of Medoro’s figures. In fact, the figures are reminiscent not so much of Riaño’s Italian teacher, but of Bernardo Bitti, who also painted a *Baptism of Christ* (Figure 1.18), for the Church of San Juan, in Juli, in the late 1580s, whose figures are similarly light and ethereal. Compositionally, Riaño’s painting also relates to Bitti’s, in the placement of the protagonists and the space between and around them. Medoro’s painting does seem to have been at least part of Riaño’s inspiration here, however, as he adopted some of Medoro’s decisions from the Descalzos painting: cherubim appear in both, rather than the full-bodied angels of Bitti’s version, and Christ delicately leans forward with arms across his chest in each painting. In comparison to both Italian depictions of the Baptism, however, Riaño’s is decisively less grounded, lighter, and more ethereal; the effect is most evident in the feet of Christ and John the Baptist, which do not touch the ground, leaving their bodies not planted firmly in this space, but floating ambiguously. Clearly, by 1626, Riaño was extracting ideas from sources other than Medoro, and began to paint with elements of the patterned flatness that would become iconic parts of Cuzco painting later in the century. Riaño, then, is an important and uniquely well-documented example of an artist in Peru diverging from the Italianate style that had dominated Peruvian painting for decades. Riaño’s evolving style is still more evident in another painting from Andahuaylillas, *The Archangel Michael* (Figure 4.13). In this example, the figure is planiform, and covered in patterns and brocades. The effect has become far more

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405 Ibid., 147. Mesa and Gisbert have suggested that Bitti’s painting was the most important source for Riaño, although there is no documentation of a trip to Juli in Riaño’s biography.
ethereal than naturalistic, as the gold ornament has so flattened the body that the archangel does not possess the physical presence of a robust, weighty human figure.406

The Italian School in Lima

The impact of the Italians’ students is clear, although further research is necessary to construct a more complete history of their careers and relationships with other colonial artists. Additionally, there is evidence of the Italian impact in paintings that unfortunately cannot at this time be attributed to a particular artist. Hanging in churches throughout Lima are paintings by artists clearly influenced by Italian style and iconography. Unfortunately, as is the case with much colonial Latin American art, attributions have been lost with time. It is possible that students or followers of Bitti, Alesio, or Medoro made many of these paintings, but it is impossible to know with any certainty at this time. Nevertheless, these paintings are evidence of one aspect of the Italian influence. I will mention just a few here.

A painting of the Virgin and Child (Figure 4.14) in the Monastery of the Descalzos in Lima is one example. The Virgin Mary glances down at a slumbering Christ Child, as she pulls a blanket over the baby. The proportions of both figures are attenuated, in the style of Mannerism practiced by Bitti and Medoro. Like Bitti’s Madonnas, this Mary’s delicate fingers are long and elegant. The bodies of both figures are full and carefully modeled to give them a real physical presence in the painting.

At the Sanctuary of Saint Rose of Lima, scholars have attributed a *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* (Figure 4.15) to a follower of Medoro.\(^\text{407}\) In the pose of the Virgin, the painting is reminiscent of Medoro’s work of the same subject (Figure 3.35) in the Monastery of San Agustín. Also at the Sanctuary of Saint Rose are two paintings (Figures 3.47 and 3.48) that relay parts of the narrative of the young saint, both of which have been attributed to a follower of Medoro, and do possess the fully formed bodies and complex figural compositions of some of Medoro’s later work, such as the scenes from the Passion of Christ from the retablo at the Monastery of San Francisco.\(^\text{408}\) (Figures 3.17-3.26)

Finally, there is a painting at the Monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria in Lima, *The Holy Family and Child of the Apple* (Figure 4.16), that is reminiscent of Alesio’s *Saint Christopher* (Figure 2.22). The painting more specifically recalls Michelangelo’s work, in its bright coloring and sculptural modeling, which further argues for Alesio’s influence, since he was the single most important carrier of the Italian master’s style to Lima.

Ultimately, the study of seventeenth-century painting in Lima remains very much incomplete, as many works of art that hang in churches do not have attributions and have

\(^\text{407}\) Ricardo Estabridis Cárdenas, "Influencia italiana en la pintura virreinal," in *Pintura en el virreinato del Peru* (Lima: Banco de Credito, 1989), 154, attributes the *Immaculate Conception* to a follower of Medoro.

\(^\text{408}\) Ramon Mujica Pinilla, *Rosa limensis: Mística, política e iconografía en torno a la patrona de America* (Lima: Instituto Frances de Estudios Andinos, 2005), 250-1, attributes both paintings about the life of Saint Rose to a follower of Medoro.
not received any kind of in-depth analysis. It is clear, however, that Italian art had an impact on Lima’s artists in this period.

The Cuzco School

The dominance of Italianate tastes in Peru is evident in painting well into the seventeenth century, but those close ties to Italy began to dissipate by mid-century as new artists emerged and introduced revolutionary ideas. The emergence of a group of painters known as the Cuzco school marked the most significant transformation of painting in colonial Peru. In general, colonial Peruvian painting of the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries related to European models, with particularly strong connections to the Italian Renaissance and Mannerism, due to the presence of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro. Painters of the Cuzco school introduced a style that was more closely related and appealing to the local audience. One of the most commonly cited characteristics of the Cuzco school, also sometimes called the mestizo baroque, is the denial of European forms and standards and the adoption of indigenous aesthetics. It is true that mestizo baroque paintings often lack naturalistic three-dimensional modeling of figures and the space tends to be truncated. However, this is not to say that there was any rigid separation between an indigenous style of painting and a Spanish style of painting in Cuzco in the seventeenth century. Additionally, not all painters working in the Cuzco

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school style were of indigenous ancestry. Instead, in the late-seventeenth century, criollo, mestizo, and Indian artists in Cuzco, responding to a growing interest in the revival of local culture, relinquished direct connections to European models, abandoned the dry replication of Spanish, Italian, and Flemish works of art, and began making paintings that combined various sources, among them the Inca past.

An example of the Cuzco school style is an oil painting of the Virgin and Child (Figure 2.40), painted near the beginning of the eighteenth century, and now housed in Lima’s Museo de Arte. Characteristic of the mestizo Baroque, the figures occupy a shallow space close to the picture plane, and their faces and bodies lack extensive modeling so that they appear flat. Additionally, the figures are highly idealized and generalized, with ivory skin and rosy cheeks. The artist embellished the figures and the painting with gold leaf through patterns on the costumes of the Virgin and Child, as well as their halos. A delicate border of colorful flowers serves as an ornamental frame. Paintings such as this example are immediately recognizable as typical of the Cuzco school style.

The focus of this study has thus far been art in the city of Lima, due to the extended stays there by the Italian painters. In order to consider the transformation of painting in colonial Peru, however, it is imperative to look at art in Cuzco. By the seventeenth century, Cuzco had become a great center of art. As the original capital of the Inca empire, Cuzco had something that Lima lacked. Unlike Cuzco, Lima was not an

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410 Donahue-Wallace, *Viceregal Latin America*, 133, offers this painting as an example of typical Cuzco school painting.
important part of the pre-Columbian cultures that dominated Peru and therefore did not have strong ties to the indigenous past, in the way that Cuzco did. Accordingly, it is in Cuzco, not Lima, that the indigenous past most strongly reasserted itself in colonial art. Additionally, Cuzco is worthy of discussion within a study of Lima’s art history because the style cultivated by the so-called Cuzco school spread through the Andes and became a widespread part of Peruvian culture.

Cuzco’s artistic significance, however, began before the advent of the city’s now-famous school; there was great diversity and talent among the city’s artists from early in the seventeenth century. Although their sources remained closely tied to Europe, in the first half of the seventeenth century criollo, mestizo, and Indian artists together composed the city’s guild. Francisco Serrano, for example, was of Spanish descent, worked in Lima before arriving in Cuzco, and specialized in a Mannerist style. Marco Ribera, on the other hand, was born in Cuzco, and worked in a style closely related to Spanish Baroque models, especially in his adherence to Zurbarán’s tenebristic compositions. Despite the communal structure, official decrees granted rights to Spanish artists over those of indigenous heritage and technically only those of pure Spanish blood were legally allowed to study drawing, perspective, and classical modes required for advancement. More personally, Spanish members were accused of insults and violence towards indigenous artists and their tastes and skills. As a result, in 1688 the guild split and

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413 Ibid.
414 Ibid., 26-7.
with that split came the foundation of Indian and mestizo workshops.\textsuperscript{415} The tension continued to be a part of Cuzco’s artistic climate, however. Even as late as 1704, Spanish painters in Cuzco asked authorities to require that all painters pass examinations on perspective and figure drawing, according to the European standards; clearly artists with indigenous connections had begun more and more to stray from European models and European masters felt the need to reinforce Old World norms. These attempts were unsuccessful and the eighteenth century brought with it more freedom for the city’s painters. Out of this new independence, Cuzco artists cultivated a mode of painting that was cut off from new European developments in art, and instead based on a combination of older styles as well as their own local tastes and traditions.\textsuperscript{416}

Revived indigenous creativity, however, began before the official split of the painter’s guild, as is evident in the work of the artist Diego Quispe Tito (1611-1681), whom scholars often point to as the source for the local resurgence.\textsuperscript{417} Quispe Tito was active in Cuzco in the middle of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{418} His paintings have clear connections to European art, namely Flemish engravings, especially those of landscapes, and Mannerism in its formal elements, especially color. In his early work, it is clear that he, like many other colonial artists, copied, dryly, European models. His 1634 \textit{Ascension}

\textsuperscript{415} Damian, \textit{The Virgin of the Andes}, 48 and 97, cites and prints a petition of Spanish painters responding to complaints from Indian artists about abuse and unfairness.
\textsuperscript{416} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{418} See Mesa and Gisbert, \textit{Pintura Cuzqueña}, 63-95, for a summary overview of the artist’s career.
of Christ (Figure 4.17), from the Church of San Sebastian in Cuzco, is an example.\textsuperscript{419} However, there are some dramatic changes that occurred in Quispe Tito’s more mature work that anticipate some of the creativity of later-seventeenth-century artists. In fact, Barbara Duncan sees Quispe Tito’s oeuvre as an illustration of painting’s transformation in Cuzco: “Quispe Tito's work was the fountainhead from which sprang the exuberant spirit typical of the Andean Baroque style in Cuzco painting.”\textsuperscript{420} A painting of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception (Figure 4.18) from 1650 is an example; the curving, linear form of the Virgin’s body, accentuated by the elegant lines of her drapery, has antecedents in Bitti’s Mannerism. The symbols of her purity are common in European iconography and likely taught to Andean artists through engravings of the subject such as those by Raphael Sadeler, whose prints were sent to the New World in great quantities, as mentioned previously.\textsuperscript{421} However, Quispe Tito added joyful angels who hold those symbols, as well as floral ornament that is distinct from European types. It would become commonplace for Cuzco school artists, in an effort to aggrandize the Virgin and visually demonstrate her royalty, to bedeck her in flowers and surround her with an entourage of angels.\textsuperscript{422}

By the later seventeenth century, Quispe Tito had broken even farther away from European models, although he never stopped using prints for inspiration. For example, in

\textsuperscript{419} Wuffarden, “Famous Brushes,” 257. This example comes from Wuffarden’s survey of Quispe Tito’s oeuvre.

\textsuperscript{420} Duncan and Gisbert, \textit{Gloria in excelsis}, 39-42.

\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., 42.

\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 32-57; Carol Damian, “Virgin of the Andes,” 50-89. Barbara Duncan and Carol Damian discuss the emergence of the Andean Virgin Mary.
his famous series of paintings of the zodiac signs (Figure 4.19), the artist’s landscapes are
certainly indebted to details from Flemish engravings, many of which have been
identified precisely. However, the paintings are unique and distinct from any found in
Europe; they mark the moment when Quispé Tito began inventing his own compositions,
and incorporating traditional iconography in new and inventive ways, in fact more
creatively than the work of most Cuzco school artists. As Gauvin Bailey makes clear in
his survey of colonial Latin American art, Quispé Tito cannot and should not be
recognized as the father of the Cuzco school.\(^{423}\) He was not alive during the ascendance
of the important Cuzco workshops, but also his work was much more original than that
made by the artists of the Cuzco school, who largely followed a style template. However,
he can be seen as an early example in Cuzco of indigenous artists claiming creativity and
individuality that set them apart from Europeans. Quispé Tito is important to a
consideration of the emergence of the Cuzco school because he is one early marker of the
growing independence from European standards in Peruvian art.

The other most important and successful indigenous artist working in Cuzco
during Quispé Tito’s time was Basilio de Santa Cruz Pumacallao (1635-1710). A
generation younger, Santa Cruz was active in Cuzco, where he remained for his entire
life, between 1661 and 1699.\(^{424}\) His style, in contrast to Quispé Tito’s, is highly
classicizing, indebted to European art throughout. In 1690, he received the extensive and


prestigious commission to paint a series for Cuzco’s Cathedral. In these paintings, for example *The Imposition of the Chasuble on Saint Ildefonso* (Figure 4.20), Santa Cruz’s connections to the High Baroque in Europe, and more specifically the work of Peter Paul Rubens, are evident. His space is well-defined, his figures carefully modeled, and the settings are grand and idealized. Santa Cruz was a highly skilled artist who learned how to paint like a European master. His success, then, is significant not because he introduced a revolutionary way to paint, but because he rose above any other indigenous Andean artist of his time in the degree of success he achieved. It is not surprising to find that the Cathedral in Cuzco was home to paintings of a highly Europeanized style, since it was the administrative center of the Church in Cuzco, whereas paintings with more evident indigenous influence were often found in the neighborhood parish churches. While he cannot be recognized as a member of or contributor to the Cuzco school, Basilio de Santa Cruz’s career, like that of Diego Quispe Tito, exemplifies the changes that were taking place in Cuzco’s artistic climate in the late-seventeenth century. Additionally, he lived and worked through the beginnings of the Cuzco school and even in the work of this highly classicizing painter, the influx of indigenous culture is evident later in his career. *The Virgin of Bethlehem with the Bishop Gaspar de Mollinedo as Donor* (Figure 4.21), from 1699, is an example. The style is still classical, but the subject is a characteristically Cuzco statue painting. Basilio de Santa Cruz was adept

425 See Mesa and Gisbert, *Pintura Cuzquena*, 118-23, for a discussion of the program for the murals at the Cathedral.
426 Wuffarden, “Famous Brushes,” 263.
427 Ibid.
at painting according to classical, European standards, but also influenced by the contemporary interests in the Andean native past.

Accordingly, the cultural climate in Cuzco was evolving as Andean traditions became increasingly pronounced. The independence and creativity of Diego Quispe Tito and Basilio de Santa Cruz, as well as that of some of their students, coincided with the beginnings of what scholars call the Inca Renaissance, a moment when Inca curacas, members of the Inca nobility that took on administrative duties for local communities, attempted to reassert their nobility and power; the uprising eventually culminated in 1780 in the rebellion of Tupac Amaru, an uprising of natives and mestizos against some of the reforms of the Spanish in the viceroyalty. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the rebellion illuminated local unrest as well as the power and pride of indigenous culture that lived on so many years after the initial conquest. Therefore, the beginnings of the Cuzco school coincided not only with the new opportunities available to indigenous artists as they formed their own guild, but also with artists responding to a change in the cultural climate.

Although Quispe Tito and Santa Cruz are antecedents of the Cuzco school, that group’s iconic style did not emerge in painting until later in the seventeenth century. Paintings by artists of the Cuzco school have some consistent formal characteristics, as mentioned previously, such as gold patterning, flat figures and forms, and the inclusion of colorful floral ornament. Cuzco school painting has excited scholars of colonial Latin

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American art because it marked one important moment when indigenous artists asserted their background and heritage. However, it can also be seen as a result of the encounter of European and indigenous styles and iconographies.

The layered influence in Cuzco school painting is evident in an example of Saint Joseph and the Christ Child (Figure 4.22), dated to the late-seventeenth or eighteenth century, now in the Brooklyn Museum. The artist covered the garments of both figures with elaborately patterned gold tooling, in addition to large gilded halos. The profusion of gold in Andean Baroque paintings may have been a reference to the rich resources of gold in Peru and the use of gold for pre-Columbian art and objects. It seems more likely, however, in the context of Christian art, and in accordance with other examples of colonial art, that the gold served instead to suggest a heavenly ethereal setting and to aggrandize the holy figures depicted. Here too, a colorful floral border frames the scene, which was another consistent characteristic of Cuzco school painting; the flowers were likely references to local vegetation. Thus, a consideration of indigenous impact as well as ties to Old World traditions is essential in understanding the Cuzco school.

Indigenous Art Forms and Aesthetics

The consistently flat figures, idealized features, and truncated space in Cuzco school art seem to have been a result of the influence of indigenous aesthetics. The Europeans of the Renaissance and Baroque tradition generally celebrated a naturalistic aesthetic, with carefully modeled figures and precise linear perspective. Cuzco school artists largely rejected these ideals, as part of their departure from the canons of the Old

429 Wuffarden, “Famous Brushes,” 266.
World. Since this shift in painting occurred nearly two centuries after the initial infusion of European techniques and styles, it is important to consider what could have been the source for indigenous aesthetics. What local art forms were still made and available for viewing by the seventeenth-century audience? As many scholars have recently discussed, indigenous culture did not disappear with the arrival of the Spanish and the spread of Christianity and European culture. In the first chapter of her book about Andean paintings of the Virgin, Carol Damian summarized some elements of the Andean contribution to colonial art. She made the important point that many of the ancient Andean cultures, such as the Chavin and the Wari, powerfully influenced Inca culture and cultivated artistic traditions and iconography that persisted for centuries. Two indigenous art forms that had great significance to Peruvian cultures were tapestries, most significantly in the form of woven tunics, and quero cups.

Textiles are perhaps one of the most ancient and more consistent art forms of the Andean people. As early as the Pre-Ceramic period, dating 3000-1800 BCE, Peruvian people made textiles in great quantities. At Huaca Prieta, a site from this period, archaeologists excavated over 9000 cotton scraps. The artists of these textiles made images by twisting thread, a non-loom medium that is simple in its technique, but that artists used to create complex images. By the Early Intermediate Period of c. 200 BCE-50 CE, the Paracas people of the south coast had developed their own style and

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430 Damian, _The Virgin of the Andes_, 12-9.
techniques for textiles. The Paracas made embroidered textiles, lavished a great amount of meticulous labor on each piece, and preferred intense color areas. Between 500 and 800, the Wari began making tunics, an art form that would persist through various cultures in Peru. Wari textile traditions would come to feature prominently in Inca culture, for example. Like Inca tunics, the Wari made these costumes for the elite, as markers of status; the style was predominantly abstract and brightly colored, and the artisans themselves were highly praised and celebrated for their efforts and creativity. An example of a Wari tunic has been nicknamed the “Lima Tapestry” (Figure 4.23). The Chimu of the Late Intermediate Period, between 900 and 1400, also made woven textiles, and were among the first Andean artisans to depict humans and animals, although always with the same bright color and abstraction that had been part of Andean tapestries from the ancient period, as discussed here. An example is a Chimu cotton textile depicting two large figures (Figure 4.24). By the time of the rise of the Inca in the fifteenth century, then, the Andes already had a rich history of woven textiles. To the Inca, textiles became the most highly valued art form. The Inca often used textiles as gifts to solidify political relationships; their portability made them ideal for such a function. All people in the Inca state learned the art of weaving, either in simply spinning fiber into thread or in much more complex and skilled forms. The most highly valued textiles were tunics woven by Inca women known as “Chosen Women” (Figure 4.25); the Peruvian author Guaman Poma de Ayala represented these women in his iconic manuscript. The most important

432 Ibid., 58-60.
433 Ibid., 144-9.
element of Inca tunic design is the *topacu*, a square geometric design, often repeated in small bands to decorate the textile. One of the most famous extant Inca tunics is known as the Inca Royal Tunic (Figure 4.26) and is now housed in the Dumbarton Oaks collection in Washington, DC. This example, made for the Inca king, is covered in tocapus of a great variety unusual in typical tunics, but here used to signify the status of the tunic’s wearer.\(^{434}\) The style, like that of many other Andean textiles, is characteristically colorful and abstract, dominated by linear ornament and geometric shapes.

Queros were decorated wooden cups used in Inca rituals, and also exchanged as diplomatic gifts. The style of decoration was largely abstract, and geometric in design (Figure 4.27). Artists generally painted the designs onto the surface of the cup and outlined shapes with incised lines. Queros were generally made in pairs and used to exchange chicha, the corn beer popular in Andean rituals.\(^{435}\)

Most importantly for this study, both woven tunics and quero cups continued to be made throughout the colonial period, and were among the most important examples of pre-Hispanic artistry in Peru. Tunics and quero cups, in fact, continued to carry status and importance in Peruvian culture even in the colonial period. Despite the fact that many indigenous art forms were eliminated and replaced following the Spanish invasion, Andean people continued to wear tunics well into the eighteenth century.\(^{436}\) According to

\(^{434}\) Ibid., 210.


\(^{436}\) Joanne Pillsbury, “Inca-Colonial Tunics: A Case Study of the Bandelier Set,” in Margaret
Joanne Pillsbury, who has written several studies on post-conquest tunics in Peru, by the seventeenth century the elite no longer wore tunics on a daily basis; instead, these garments were used in festivals and as symbols of local power. For example, in a seventeenth-century painting of the descendants of the last Inca king (Figure 4.28), Tupa Yupanqui, the artist and patrons used a traditional Inca tunic to symbolize the status and nobility of the king. The famous series of late-seventeenth-century paintings recording the Corpus Christi procession in Cuzco (Figure 4.29) includes figures wearing tunics, with a similar purpose. By the early-seventeenth century, Andeans were also fashioning miniature tunics to dress wooden statues of Christ. As late as 1781, the bishop of Cuzco, Juan Manuel, complained that indigenous traditions were persisting in the form of sculptures of Christ wearing Inca tunics.

The presence of the Old World in the New did have some impact on indigenous artistry. For example, tunics underwent some changes in the colonial period; craftsmen added European materials and some European design elements. They worked in more creative compositions, as the laws and regulations of the Inca were no longer in place for

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438 Kelly Donahue-Wallace, “Viceregal Latin America,” 62-3. The two heirs of the Inca royal dynasty were granted a coat of arms by the Spanish king, which served as recognition of their nobility.

the construction of textiles.\(^\text{440}\) However, the basic structure and design remained the same as that used in the pre-Hispanic period. Therefore, woven tunics could have served as faithful representations of indigenous aesthetics throughout the colonial period and could certainly have been one source of inspiration for indigenous painters of the late seventeenth century. Pillsbury explained quite eloquently, “Contrary to George Kubler's belief that the elite arts of a vanquished culture are usually quick to disappear, these colonial Inca tunics are an eloquent statement of the tenacity and complexity of indigenous textile traditions in the colonial period. The basic Inca garment type was retained (with certain modifications) for use on key occasions. The fundamental design structure of the pre-Hispanic garment continued, and new imagery was added according to Andean values.”\(^\text{441}\)

Quero cups also retained status in the colonial period and thus were consistently produced. Just as queros often served as gifts from one leader to another in the pre-Hispanic period, the Spanish continued to recognize this function. In his important study of quero cups, Tom Cummins relayed the story of the Inca king Manco Capac II giving Francisco Pizarro a quero at a ceremony during which the Spanish informed the local population of Cuzco that they were now under the leadership of the Pope and the Spanish king.\(^\text{442}\) Cummins explains, “There was outward continuity in the act of exchange, an act through which the vessel gained significance despite the disjunction caused by Spanish

\(^{440}\) Ibid., 139.

\(^{441}\) Ibid., 161.

\(^{442}\) Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca*, 119-20.
He goes even further and argues that not only were queros produced and used in the colonial period, but they came to symbolize an artistic resistance to the imposition of European culture.

Like Inca tunics, queros were also transformed by the influence of Old World aesthetics. Specifically, while pre-Hispanic queros were decorated with incised linear ornament in geometric patterns, colonial queros often included painted imagery that included figures and animals. However, queros retained an aesthetic of flat abstraction. An example (Figure 4.30) is in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum and dates to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The cup includes full-length figures of warriors and is characteristic of examples made after the Spanish invasion. Thus, queros also were available as examples of indigenous artistry and could, like tunics, have served as inspiration for artists painting in the second half of the seventeenth century when the new school of painting arose and a clear break with European styles took place.

Some scholars have recognized the impact of pre-Columbian art forms on colonial art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In his recent publication, The Andean Hybrid Baroque, Gauvin Bailey meticulously identified Indian iconography and symbolism in colonial architecture and its sculpture throughout the viceroyalty. On many occasions, Bailey suggests that textiles and quero cups must have been significant sources of inspiration. Additionally, the study of Andean art forms, like queros and

443 Ibid.
444 See Gauvin A. Bailey, Andean Hybrid Baroque: Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), with particular attention to his mention of Guaman Poma de Ayala and Adorno’s ideas, 331-3.
tunics, illuminates elements of the local aesthetic. For example, scholars such as Rolena Adorno have identified the impact of the Andean moiety system in colonial art. According to this pictorial device, Andean artists divided the composition along a diagonal line moving from the upper right to the lower left. Those two spaces created by that diagonal, the upper left and the lower right, reference the Hanan and the Hurin.  

Adorno identified this compositional device in many of Guaman Poma de Ayala’s drawings, where he consistently used this diagonal arrangement of figures in order to suggest hierarchy. A study like Adorno’s makes clear that it was not only pre-Hispanic artistic objects, such as queros and textiles, that persisted well into the colonial period, but that aesthetic preferences and visual communication devices were still known by local artists more than a century after the Spanish arrival. Thus, indigenous art was available, still practiced, and well known by the Andean people of colonial Peru.

The Continued Influence of Europe

In addition to the rich resources available from pre-Hispanic traditions in Peru, Cuzco school artists also drew from their training in and exposure to European art. And, as I have discussed throughout this study, the most prominent European presence in Peru was Italian. Although the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a time during which indigenous artists invoked not only their own aesthetic tastes, but also elements of pre-Hispanic belief and tradition, such as in depictions of the Virgin Mary that call to mind the figure of Pachamama or other Andean goddesses, artists did remain indebted to

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European examples for the depiction of standard Christian iconographies. The sources were most often engravings, in addition to the training and encounters that indigenous artists had with European masters. An example is a late-seventeenth-century painting of the marriage of Mary and Joseph (Figure 4.31) by an unknown Cuzco school artist, now in the Brooklyn Museum. The painting is immediately recognizable as a product of the Cuzco school due to the elaborate gold tooling, which gives ethereal status to the scene but also formally holds the composition together. Most interesting here is the meticulous attention the artist has paid to the costumes of all three figures. As the Council of Trent dictated, each wears his or her accurate and appropriate garments. For example, the artist dressed the Virgin Mary in her three garments, the robe, mantle and veil, and the priest wears the costume described in the Bible.\footnote{Pal Kelemen, \textit{Peruvian Colonial Painting}, plate 3.}

Additionally, the flat, linear figures and truncated space of many examples by Cuzco school artists are also characteristics of much of the Mannerist-inspired painting by Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro.\footnote{As outlined in chapter 2, Alesio’s Peruvian oeuvre is so incomplete that it is impossible to assess his contribution to Mannerism in Peru.} Even in Bitti’s earliest works in Lima, such as the \textit{Coronation of the Virgin} (Figure 1.4) and the \textit{Virgin of the Candles} (Figure 1.1), from the late 1570s, the artist painted figures composed with elegant lines and sharp modeling. Although he experimented with naturalistic aspects of painting, such as landscape backgrounds and foreshortened figures, Bitti ultimately retained the ethereal, anti-naturalistic qualities of his figures.\footnote{See chapter 1 for a more extensive discussion of Bitti.}
permanent changes in the early-seventeenth century towards the sober naturalism of the European Baroque, his earlier works have some of the Mannerist tendencies to flatten figures and rely on line over volume. An example is his *San Diego de Alcalá* (Figure 3.13), in the Monastery of the Descalzos. As for Mateo Pérez de Alesio, his style of painting is more challenging to discuss in a concrete way, due to the great loss of many of his works, in addition to what seem to have been fluctuations that he went through in his career, due to catering to the needs and tastes of the widely varying patrons that he worked for in Rome, Malta, Seville, and finally Lima. However, one painting from his time in Lima that is in excellent condition, *The Virgin of Belén* (Figure 2.31), is characteristic of some of the formal tendencies to create flat, elegant, ethereal figures that are evident in the paintings of Bitti and Medoro as well. Thus it seems probable that the Mannerist tendencies of the Italians may have had some impact on the artists of the later-seventeenth century. This is not to say that the paintings of the Italian artists resident in Peru were the only influence on the ideals of these artists, but there are strong visual connections between the work of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro and the paintings of the Cuzco school.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, painting in Peru was transformed in the middle of the seventeenth century; artists grew more independent, and indigenous interests and aesthetics became significant influences on composition, figures, and iconography. Research over the past few decades has shown that the arrival of the Spanish and their colonization of Peru did
not obliterate Andean beliefs and artistic traditions. Instead, local rituals remained a consistent part of life for many people. Accordingly, when the indigenous past reasserted itself in the seventeenth century, artists had plenty of native Andean sources that could inspire them. Additionally, however, the art of the local schools that emerged in this period continued to have some ties to the style of the Italians studied here. Thus, while the Italian presence dramatically diminished with the death and departure of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro, which happened to coincide with the resurgence of native aesthetics, it seems that the Italian and the indigenous met somewhere in the middle, with some similar approaches to form and figure. Therefore, even after this transformation that art underwent, there remained traces of the powerful and long-lasting impact of the Italian Renaissance.
CONCLUSION

The goal of this study has been to illuminate the importance and the impact of Italian Renaissance art on painting in colonial Lima. By tracing the successful careers of Bernardo Bitti, Mateo Pérez de Alesio, and Angelino Medoro in Lima this dissertation provides a clear vision of the prominent presence the three Italians had in Peru from the end of the sixteenth century through the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The predominance of Italian painters over Spanish and Flemish artists in Peru was unique in colonial Latin America, and thus represents a significant branch of the far-reaching effects of the Italian Renaissance as well as a critical part of understanding the complex cultures that came to be from the meeting of the Old World and the New. The successes of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro were related at least in part to the prestige of Italian Renaissance artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Artists trained in Italy throughout the Renaissance were considered to be of high pedigree; additionally, artists with experience in Rome, the center of the Catholic Church, had opportunities to learn of the latest and most appropriate styles and iconographies of sacred art.

Although many scholars have mentioned and studied Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro in the past, this study provides the first opportunity to study their careers side by side, and to consider their relationships with each other, as well as their comprehensive impact on colonial painting in Lima. As individuals, each enjoyed immense success in Lima, and in the case of Bitti, far beyond the viceregal capital. As a group, the Italians contributed paintings to nearly every important church and monastery in Lima, as well as significant secular institutions, including the University of San Marcos, where each Italian painter
completed a portrait of a professor from the prestigious center of learning. Although a number of paintings, most extensively from Alesio’s oeuvre, were destroyed in earthquakes, the extensive work of the three Italians is evident in the paintings that remain as well as archival documents that reference work that is no longer extant. Additionally, Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro trained and influenced young artists in Lima, as well as Cuzco and other Peruvian cities, who went on to enjoy illustrious careers of their own and carry on the styles and compositions of the Italians. Thus, although Bitti died in 1610 and Alesio in 1628, and Medoro returned in Spain in 1620, the Italian impact is clear in colonial painting well into the seventeenth century and at least a residue of Italian style remained a part of even later paintings made by artists of the illustrious Cuzco school.

Perhaps just as important to this study as the goal of reinforcing the impact of Bitti, Alesio, and Medoro in colonial Peru has been the opportunity to offer in-depth analysis of the extensive oeuvres of all three painters. Most known paintings by the three Italians have received detailed considerations of formal issues here, aimed at a more subtle and attentive understanding of their styles. A more nuanced assessment of their styles was critical due to the consistent trend of past scholars to simply deem all three Mannerist and fail to expand upon the meaning and complexities of that term. Additionally, each painting has been considered within its context, taking into account iconographic choices that speak to both Old World concerns of post-Tridentine and Counter-Reformation issues, as well as the concerns of artists painting for a diverse audience of Europeans, criollos, mestizos, and Indians.
Ultimately, this dissertation includes considerations of influential and understudied painters and paintings, and provides insight into the layered culture of colonial Latin American art. Additionally, the study of three Italian artists working in Peru further reinforces the growing understanding that the Italian Renaissance was not a geographically isolated event, but instead a global phenomenon with impact reaching far beyond the confines of the Italian peninsula or even Europe. In the past, the modern conception of the world has been based on the idea that the global nature of society is a recent aspect in the course of history, that diversity within a single city or country is a modern idea. Recent scholarship, over the past two decades, has increasingly widened its scope, accounting for the embryonic connections between Europe and the other continents that began in the early modern period. This study contributes further to that widening view of the world’s history, as colonial Latin America was a place where distant cultures met, and lived, and worked together.


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