



**JAIME EGUIGUREN**

ARTS & ANTIQUES

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**Anonymous Artist**

Peru, 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Saint Martin de Porres**

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**Oil on canvas**

**40 x 32cm**

**Provenance: Private collection, Argentina**

## **Historical and Material Context**

This nineteenth-century oil-on-canvas representation of Saint Martin de Porres belongs to the popular devotional production that accompanied the growth of his cult following his beatification in 1837. Unlike the small metal sheets, this work employs canvas as support—a traditional medium in the Andean region that conveyed a more intimate and flexible character, suited both for domestic use and for small conventual oratories.

The small format of the textile support suggests that the image was intended for private devotion, probably hung in the main room of a home or in a bedroom, where the faithful could contemplate the saint during daily prayer.

Saint Martin de Porres is shown standing, frontally and serenely, wearing the white habit and black cape of the Order of Preachers. In his left hand he holds a broom—his most recognizable attribute—while in his right he raises a cross, a gesture that emphasizes his role as intercessor and preacher of the faith.

The scene incorporates several significant elements:

- At his feet, the celebrated episode of the dog, cat, and mouse eating together, symbolizing the universal peace fostered by Martin's charity.
- The bare table with a few objects, among them a glass of water and a loaf of bread, conveys conventual simplicity and austerity while evoking the saint's miracles related to the multiplication of food.
- The open window reveals a fragment of landscape, introducing a breath of naturalism that connects the conventual interior with divine creation.
- The blue drapery in the upper right recalls the Baroque tradition of sacralizing depicted spaces, marking the scene as one worthy of veneration.

The painting displays simple brushwork, with a clear devotional rather than academic intent. The saint's frontality, the reduced space, and the minimal scenography respond to a direct visual language designed to facilitate the faithful's identification with the sacred image.

The color palette is sober: the whites and blacks of the Dominican habit predominate, contrasted with the neutrality of the wall and floor, which reinforces the centrality of the figure. The blue drapery and the shaft of light entering through the window add restrained accents of solemnity.

Unlike other representations of Saint Martin de Porres that show him in mystical ecstasy or in contemplative attitude, here he appears in his everyday, pastoral dimension: a saint who combines the humility of service with the steadfastness of faith. The broom alludes to his role as a lay brother entrusted with humble tasks, while the cross recalls his life of prayer and his power of spiritual intercession.

This synthesis of the humble and the sacred made him a model of identification for both religious communities and Peru's mestizo and Afro-descendant populations, who saw in him a reflection of inclusion and Christian dignity.

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The work stands as a valuable testimony of nineteenth-century Peruvian popular religiosity. Its formal simplicity does not diminish its importance as a devotional object transmitting the essential values attributed to the saint: humility, service, prayer, and universal charity. Moreover, the choice of oil on canvas—in contrast to contemporary metal-sheet images—reveals the diversity of supports on which Martinian iconography circulated, enriching the panorama of nineteenth-century devotional arts in Peru.

