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Pedro López Calderón

(doc. 1681 - 1734)

**OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
WITH DONOR**

P. Calderon fac Mex 1734

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Our Lady of Guadalupe with Donor

First third of the 18th century

Oil on canvas, 41.2 x 28.2 cm

Signed: Po Calderon fec. Mex^{co} 173

Provenance: Private collection, Spain.

Literature: GONZÁLEZ MORENO, J., *Iconografía guadalupana I*, Mexico D.F., Editorial JUS, 1959, p.86; MAYORGA CHAMORRO, J.I., "Pedro López Calderón: pintura y devoción en la órbita del tornaviaje" en *Tornaviaje. Tránsito artístico entre los virreinos y la metrópolis*, Universo Barroco Iberoamericano, Andavira Editora S.L., Santiago de Compostela y Sevilla, 2020, p. 487.

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Little is known of the life of Pedro López Calderón beyond the fact that he lived between the last third of the 17th century and the first third of the 18th, as evidenced by his first and last canvases, dated 1681 and 1734. Having reached the rank of master painter, and settled in Mexico City, he devoted his artistic skills to a particularly extensive and varied pictorial oeuvre, as well as mother-of-pearl inlay, a little-known aspect of his despite being one of just eight known recorded artists working in the “enconchado” artform¹. One should add to this the scarce attention or devotion historiography has paid to this Mexican artist who, to judge by his belonging to the guild of painters of Mexico, and given his position as a valuer of works of art² (a position that put him in contact with his major contemporary fellow artists) was considered gifted with a level of learning and technical-artistic abilities that the History of Art in the Viceroyalty should not have ignored. We add the brief study included in these lines to the works undertaken by Joaquín González Moreno and Francisco Montes González, and to the doctoral research that José Ignacio Mayorga Chamorro devoted to the worthy task of increasing our knowledge of a canon of works deserving of greater artistic merit than it has thus far been granted, and re-establishing its place in the annals of art.

His by no means meagre artistic output can be found scattered across numerous religious buildings in the capital of the Viceroyalty, as well as in other cities in the north of New Spain, but there are also records of his customers reaching beyond the borders of his homeland, with it being possible to speak of the international scope of his work. It is therefore worth highlighting the painting preserved in the parish of San Juan Bautista in Caracas, Venezuela, or the many examples of works decorating the walls of churches in what was then called the Spanish “metrópoli”, and which bear perfect material witness to art’s two-way movement back and forth between the two continents, evidence of a cultural exchange between the new world and the old. (Fig. 1)

¹ MAYORGA CHAMORRO, J.I., *San Ciriaco y Santa Paula, patronos de Málaga, en un lienzo inédito de Pedro López Calderón*, Universidad de Málaga, 2018, p. 81.

² *ibidem*, p. 81.



Fig. 1 Abraham Ortelius, *Maris Pacifici Quod Vulga Mar del Zur*, 1595, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, Australia

The geographic distribution of his artistic output also bears witness to the painter's varying customer relations, and draws attention to the diverse nature of those commissioning works from him among which the most prominent, in terms of quantitative importance, was the Catholic Church. The efforts made by this religious institution to promote the arts in Hispano-America are well known, a situation that is also particularly evident in the case of López Calderón, who received a number of major commissions from it. Particular mention in this regard should be given to the orders of St. Augustine and St. Francis³, which were the ones most avid to turn to the Mexican artist's brush when decorating the walls of their temples, remembering their founders or promoting the veneration of their patron saints.

In addition, and as a second body of consolidated clients, we should emphasize those individuals who, while not being linked to the Church in the *strictu sensu* in that they did not belong to its formative corps, did aspire to purchase religious imagery in order to meet the demands of the Counter-Reformation. This second category included Hispanic customers we can identify behind a large proportion of his most important commissions, as well as their location. The studies of González Moreno and Montes González have once again proved key to shedding light on this aspect, focusing on

³ MAYORGA CHAMORRO, J.I., "*Pedro López Calderón: pintura y devoción en la órbita del tornaviaje*" in *Tornaviaje. Tránsito artístico entre los virreinos americanos y la metrópoli*, Universo Barroco Americano, Andavira Editor SL, 2020, p.472.

revealing the close link that existed between López Calderón and a customer-base of Spanish origin. In supporting this assertion, both authors point to the existence of figures of worship that were of specifically Iberian origin within the Mexican painter's oeuvre, such as the canvas of *Sts. Ciriaco and Paula*, patron saints of Malaga, located in the church of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico, or the *Divina Pastora* (Divine Shepherdess), a Marian iconography originating in 18th century Seville, and housed in the church of the Divina Pastora de los Padres Capuchinos in that very city. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2 López Calderón Pedro, *Divina pastora*, óleo sobre lienzo, XVIII, Padres Capuchinos, Sevilla.

Secondly, and with the same intention of demonstrating the universe of artistic, commercial and devotional exchange between the new and old worlds, Mayorga Chamorro pays particular attention to the series of López Calderón works that were commissioned by so-called “indianos” (Spaniards who made their fortunes in the New World before returning), and which hang from the walls of both religious temples and palaces and other civil buildings across all four corners of the Spanish peninsula. These works residing on Iberian soil have been attributed epic narratives, it being particularly worth highlighting those interpretations that have them travelling across the waters of the Atlantic to bear witness to the economic prosperity attained by those who conceived of artistic donations as a symbol and recognition of power. It is also worth noting the versions thought to respond to the demands of the superstitious mysticism of those who attributed Marian advocations such as Guadalupe with the qualities of a protective amulet for sailors, or those works that were simply commissioned in remembrance of, and in order to honor, the patron saint of the lands that served them as home for a number of years.

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Although the Guadalupe iconography of Extremadura (the earliest known iconography devoted to this advocacy of the Virgin) was present during the conquest of New Spain, that is not where we should be looking for the model of the Viceroyalty's version, which has an origin all of its own. An origin we should look for in the so-called "Miracle of the Roses" that appears in the *Nican Mopohua*, which tells of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the Indian Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac. This legend from 1531 narrates how the Virgin asked the Indian to request that Friar Bishop Juan de Zumárraga build a temple in her name, leaving an imprint of her image on Juan's cloak to provide material proof and justification of her revelation.

We should therefore understand the success of Our Lady's devotion in terms of a result of the combination of the evangelizing process, channeled through the imported cult of the Immaculate Conception which was so widespread in the Spanish Baroque, with the emergence of other autochthonous Marian worships that were growing against a clear backdrop of cultural syncretism⁴.

Let the previous paragraph serve to justify or frame the reasons behind the commission of the small-scale canvas we are presenting here, and whose version of the portrait with donor stands as one of the most unusual expressions of devotion for Our Lady of Guadalupe. Despite being an essentially autochthonous form of devotion, which appeared early, it reached its height as an artistic representation during the 18th century, a period to which we would date the creation of the work belonging to this private collection, and which we should understand as the result of a series of events and historical recognitions that further strengthened Guadalupe's appeal. Firstly, her naming as patron saint of Mexico City in 1727, added to her being appointed protector of the whole of South America in 1746, the examination of the original cloak, or "tilma", by Miguel Cabrera in 1751, and her recognition as patron saint of New Spain in 1756, were

⁴ RODRÍGUEZ MOYA, I., *Devoción y nación. El retrato de donante en los virreinos americanos*, NORBA magazine of art, nº38, 2018, p. 110.

events characterizing a situation that was charged with enough symbolism to understand the scope of her past and present appeal.

This growing regard for, and worship of, the Virgin, translated into numerous pictorial and artistic expressions whose original iconographic reference may be traced back to the Flemish engravings of the Immaculate Conception by the likes of Marten de Vos or Hieronymus Wierix (**Fig. 3**). Continuing this chronological and representational track, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider 16th-century Spain, the context which provided the source for the *Tota Pulchra* iconographic model, on which the Tepeyac image undoubtedly drew, and which also provided inspiration for López Calderón when painting *Our Lady of Guadalupe*. *Tota Pulchra* from the Church of the former convent of Carmen in Sanlúcar la Mayor, Seville, (**Fig. 4**) is a referential iconographic source that underscores the relationship between the Mexican version and the advocacy of the Immaculate Conception and, as such, its origin or apocalyptic heritage. Although the



Fig. 3 Hieronymus Wierix, *Maadg Maria geflankeerd door symbolen uit de Lauretaanse Litanie*, 1563, Rijksmuseum.

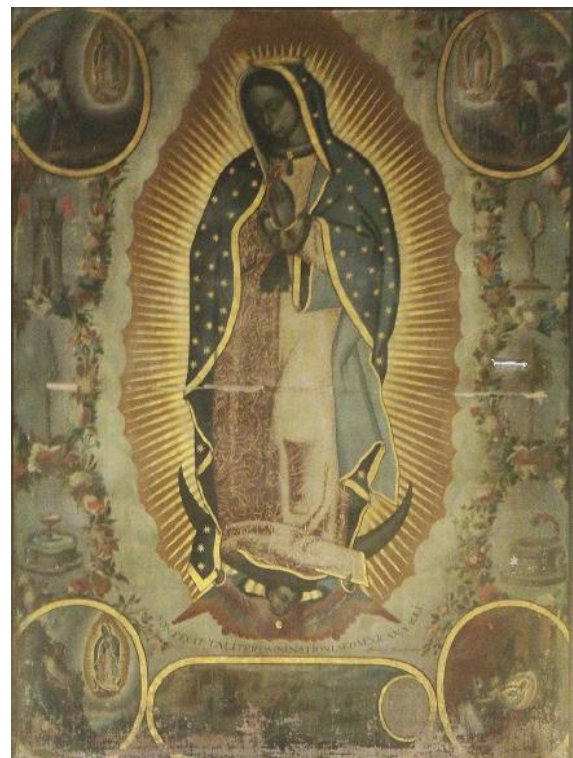


Fig. 4 Pedro López Calderón, *Virgen de Guadalupe, Tota Pulchra*, óleo sobre lienzo, XVIII, ex convento del Carmen en Sanlúcar la Mayor, Sevilla

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passing of the years and the evolution or emergence of new artistic trends added ornamentation to the basic composition, especially in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, with the addition of legends or floral garlands, the main iconographic basis remained unchanged, faithful to the genuine representation of Juan Diego's cloak from the earliest known painted version, by the Spanish artist Baltasar de Echave Orio in 1606, almost until the most recent versions. And López Calderón's depiction of Our Lady of Guadalupe reflects this faithful iconographic respect.

His catalogue of Guadalupes is made up of an extensive repertory of works, largely intended for exportation to Spain, with different formats and compositional features, including small-scale versions on both copper plate and canvas and which, due to their reduced size, we assume were for domestic and/or devotional use. Examples of these would include the work we are addressing here, and the 30cm x 25cm copper belonging to the Calderón collection⁵. These are joined by larger canvases with elaborate designs intended to be displayed in churches and cloisters, of which it is worth highlighting the Guadalupes from the monastery of Santa María la real in Bormujos (Seville), and the church of the former convent of Carmen de Sanlúcar la Mayor (**Fig. 4**). Of exceptional quality, and recently added to the artist's catalogue, are the Guadalupes located by Adrián Contreras, one in a convent in Granada and the other from the personal collection of José María Pérez de Herrasti y Narváez, recently donated to the Real Monasterio de Santa María de Guadalupe in Cáceres.

What these depictions have in common, according to Montes González⁶, is a notable precision in the drawing added to the masterly use of color and the harmony of forms which, combined with a certain elongation of the figures, distance his works from his

⁵ MAYORGA CHAMORRO, J.I., "Pedro López Calderón: pintura y devoción en la órbita del tornaviaje" in *Tornaviaje. Tránsito artístico entre los virreinos americanos y la metrópoli*, Universo Barroco Americano, Andavira Editora SL, 2020, p. 485

⁶ MONTES GONZÁLEZ, F., *Sevilla guadalupana. Arte, Historia y devoción*, Seville, Provincial Council of Seville, 2015, p. 213.

countryman Antonio Torres with whose work his was recently linked, pointing to a specific school of Guadalupe paintings headed by López Calderón⁷.

Our small-scale Guadalupe meets the characteristics Montes González attributed to the *fattura* of López Calderón's work, as did the classical version by him in the Guadalupe from the temple of Santa Mónica in the Colonia del Valle, Mexico (Fig. 5). Measuring 41 x 28 cm and having chosen canvas as the pictorial support, the Guadalupe we have before us here adopts and adheres to the iconographic and compositional tradition of the first half of the 17th century, where the composition, both balanced and free from ornamental elements, held sway over the narrative and floral versions of subsequent decades.



Fig. 5 Pedro López Calderon, *Virgen de Guadalupe*, óleo sobre lienzo, siglo XVIII, Cripta del templo de Santa Mónica en la Colonia del Valle, México.

In accordance with the most purist of depictions, Our Lady of Guadalupe appears in full length, standing facing the devote spectator, her left knee bent, just visible under the folds of the robe. Identified as an indigenous Virgin, with dark skin and yet European facial features, she is gathering her hands together, adorned with a gold cross in the middle of her chest, in an act of prayer, imbuing the scene with a serene mysticism also heightened by the downward tilt of her face, depicted with ingenuous beauty.

⁷ GONZÁLEZ MORENO, J., *Iconografía guadalupana I*, Mexico D.F., JUS Editorial, 1959, p.21.

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Resting on Our Lady's shoulders is a blue cloak, covered by a host of gold stars which, covering the Virgin's head and serving as a seat for the crown, falls down equally on both sides of her torso, revealing the pinkish, decorated robe covering the body of the future Mother of God. The robe, secured at the neck, the middle of which is adorned with what appears to be a jewel, is elongated through shy and yet rigid folds beyond her feet. Picking up the bottom of the fabric is a cherub who, resting on a crescent moon that also serves as a base for the Virgin, opens his tricolored wings while tilting his face towards his left shoulder in a clear gesture of withdrawal and respect.

Finally, and as one of the last essential compositional elements in a purist representation of Our Lady, we should draw attention to the splendor or halo of golden rays surrounding the figure of the Virgin which, in the intensity with which it appears to emulate the rays of the sun, both introduces and opens the way to a host of clouds that serve as a conceptual and pictorial framework for the composition.

To conclude our descriptive analysis of the work's composition, I would pause for a moment on the image of the donor, who appears in the lower left-hand corner of the canvas, dressed in the French style, giving us a clue to his wealthy economic and enviable social position within the strict society of Mexican castes. Being either a Spanish migrant or, possibly, a Mexican criollo, he had himself portrayed in accordance with courtly fashion, dressed in a powdered *in-folio* wig that perfectly matches the black dress coat he wears on top of a red waistcoat of which only the collar is visible, and topped off with a recent addition to fashion, a tie of white lace.

Although this device of leaving a record of one's personal and individualized devotion became common in the Modern Era, it has never been frequent in depictions of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which therefore makes ours a particularly rare case, joined by the works preserved at the collegiate church of Berlanga de Duero in Soria, by an unknown artist, and the documented but unpreserved canvas from the parish church of Nuestra Señora de la O in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cadiz.

Turning, now, to the origin and symbolism of the portrait with donor, we know that the inclusion of these figures in paintings dealing with religious subjects had been a popular custom in Europe since the 15th century, probably inherited from the Flemish school⁸, where we can identify a number of the earliest known examples, such as Van Eyck's *Madonna of Autun* or the Prado's Robert Campin panel titled *St. John the Baptist and the Franciscan Heinrich von Werl*. However, it is necessary to examine the model of the Spanish donor in order to find the origin of this 17th-century colonial model (Fig. 6)

which matches the individual depiction of the person commissioning the work, portrayed in a somewhat generic manner, that was taken up by the Mexican artistic avant-garde of the 17th and 18th centuries, led by figures such as Juan Correa, José Ibarra and, of course, López Calderón. The Viceroyalty's version of the portrait in general, and that of the donor in particular, makes no attempt to reproduce the subject in any great psychological depth but, rather, seeks to communicate certain aspects of his/her persona, especially whether they belonged to a social group or religious community and, as such, “*although a certain verisimilitude was sought after, there was no attempt to express their*



Fig. 6 Francisco Pacheco, *Inmaculada con el retrato de Mateo Vázquez de Leca*, óleo sobre lienzo, siglo XVI, Colección del Marqués de la Reunión.

characters, but rather to communicate their social, political and religious standing”⁹. A home-grown and localized tradition was thereby consolidated, which has subsequently

⁸ VARGAS LUGO, E., “El retrato de donantes y el autorretrato en la pintura novohispano” in Notes for the study of colonial portrait painting, p.25

⁹ RODRÍGUEZ MOYA, I., *Devoción y nación. El retrato de donante en los virreinos americanos*, NORBA magazine of art, nº38, 2018, p.2

come to be called *gusto criollo* (criollo taste) portraiture, and into which category the work we are addressing here undoubtedly falls.

Furthermore, in addition to the identity dimension attributed to portraits including donors, there may also be varying political and messianic meanings, with both commemorative and miracle-supporting functions, which may even concern the specific role of said figures in the defense of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception¹⁰.

It therefore becomes key to search, in the symbolic implications in which the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe has become enshrouded, for the reason behind the ongoing devotion to her, past and present, in the new world and the old. A devotion that was contributed to by Pedro López Calderón, a painter recently rescued from oblivion, and to whom we owe, beyond an artistic repertory that must unquestionably receive recognition and dissemination, the revelation of a network of artistic and social relations that will help us to understand the dynamics of the cultural exchange between two continents, highlighting the close links uniting both shores of the Atlantic, and of which we should never let go.

Sofía Fernández Lázaro

¹⁰ KATZEW, I. "El discurso del retrato" in *Pintado en México, 1700-1790: Pinxit Mexici*, Munich, London, New York, LACMA, Fomento Cultural Banamex, DelMonico Books, Prestel, 2017, p. 317..

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