

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ART & ANTIQUES



Saint Gabriel the Archangel

Unidentified artist
Viceroyalty of Peru (Peru), 17th century
Oil on canvas
199 x 110 cm
Inscription above his head “PAX ET A IVSTITIA DEI”
Inscription on the plinth “NOLO MORTE PECCATORIS
SED VI MAGIS COVERTATVR ET VIVAT, EZEC, 33.”
Provenance: Former bullfighter Antonio Fuentes Zurita
Collection, Seville (1869–1938)

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

This depiction of the Archangel Gabriel as a nonsexual, beardless, sumptuously-dressed youth draws close parallels with the work of Francisco de Zurbarán (Spain, 1598–1664), an artist who served as a source of inspiration for painters in 17th-century Cuzco. The essayists Gian Paolo Lomazzo (Italy, 1538–1600) and Francisco Pacheco (Spain, 1564–1644)¹ gave recommendations and instructions for painters regarding how to depict the angels: what colors, postures, clothing, the symbolism of the different precious stones and other symbols that could have a positive influence on God’s revelation to Man. The painting presents a decorative border of exuberant and colorful flowers of great beauty and chromatic richness.²

The depiction of angels and archangels was widespread in the painting of the Viceroyalty, due to their Biblical importance and intrinsic beauty. In his work *On the Celestial Hierarchy* (*De Coelesti Hierarchia*), the late 5th to early 6th-century Byzantine theologian and mystic known as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite³ divides the angels into three groups. The first being made up of seraphim, cherubim and thrones, the second of dominations, virtues and powers, and the third of principalities, archangels and angels. The third group, to which the Archangel Gabriel and the Angel Zadkiel belong, as depicted in the works before us here, includes the ones that establish relations with mankind. The most important among them protect the nations, and the archangels are messengers of God. The Church recognizes the three canonical archangels, Michael, Raphael and Gabriel. The angels protect all humankind. It was in the Renaissance that the angels started being painted individually and to make up series, and this practice carried on into the Baroque period. Models influencing painting in both Spain and the Americas include the Hieronymus Wierix (1533–1619) engraving *The Palermo Seven* (Fig. 1) and the

works of Gerard de Jode (1509–1591), both of whom copied from the drawings of Maerten de Vos. These works are group depictions of the seven angels, but they established an early benchmark for future series of individual angels. As individual models, artists turned to the engravings of Crispijn van de Passe (1564–1637) and Philipp Galle (1537–1602), among others.⁴ These images were subsequently the models for 17th-century Spanish painters.⁵

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



Fig. 1 Hieronymus Wierix (Antwerp, 1533–1619), *The Palermo Seven*, engraving



The Angel Zadkiel

Unidentified artist
Viceroyalty of Peru (Peru), 17th century
Oil on canvas
199 x 110 cm
Inscription above his head “BENIGNITAS ET
MANSVTVDODI”
Inscription of the plinth “ETENIM DOMN 9 DABIT
BENIGNITATEM Y ET TERRA NOSTRA DABIT
FRVCTUM SVUM PSA. 84”
Provenance: Former bullfighter Antonio Fuentes Zurita
Collection, Seville (1869–1938)

The Angel Zadkiel is depicted face-on, looking out at the spectator, against a background made up of mountains and trees. His right hand is pointing to a lamb, while the other is resting on his breast. Two beautiful iridescent wings unfurl from his back. The iconography of this painting links it to the Agnus Dei, which represents the sacrificed Son of God. This archangel (not one of the canonical ones) is depicted as a beautiful beardless youth with elegant facial features and sumptuous clothing made up of a long robe over which he wears a beautiful short tunic with a short skirt, painted with great skill to imitate a rich fabric decorated with a border of large circles, brocade and a varying palette of soft colors and gold. On his delicate feet he is wearing elegant sandals adorned with gemstones, and he has a generous flapping cloak over his shoulders, knotted and secured with an ornate brooch. Zadkiel is the angel who prevents Isaac being sacrificed by his father Abraham, replacing the knife with a lamb, or Agnus Dei, which is pictured joyfully at his feet. Agnus Dei, a subject Zurbarán represented in his paintings on a number of occasions, presents Jesus Christ as a symbol of peace between God and Man. The skilled artist who executed the work being studied here constructed the iconography with great creativity, to the extent that it is the only known example depicting this apocryphal angel with the noble animal. Zadkiel is the angel of Mercy, of benevolence, the patron of those who forgive, and in Latin America he is depicted with various attributes, such as an olive branch and a dagger or sword, as portrayed by Crispijn van de Passe (Arnhemuiden, 1564 – Utrecht, 1637) (Fig. 2).

Although we can identify the clear influence of Zurbarán, our painter manages to create his own style in the building up of the painting’s complex and original iconography, in the richness and elegance with which the aforementioned ornamental and decorative elements are depicted, and in the flimsy fabrics making up the angel’s attire. The originality of the exquisite floral borders in both works (only seen in viceregal paintings), made up of extraordinary roses and carnations, with exuberant lilies and sunflowers at the corners, added to the aspects we have already mentioned, lends these beautiful paintings a clearly Andean freshness. We could also add that the works present a religious nature that is both simple and pleasant, suited to the divine message, given angelical figures are protectors of the community’s spiritual goods and possessions.

Lima’s Monasterio de la Concepción houses a marvelous series of angels executed between 1625 and 1640. This ensemble includes Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Hadraniel, Uriel, Ariel and Leriell. In this early period, the European style influenced by Zurbarán and Román was taken as a model, with depictions portraying beardless, nonsexual youths dressed in classically-inspired tunics of a feminine nature,

Roman helmets and attire and landscape backgrounds. Subsequently, Lima workshops would develop a regional style, with Cuzco also being a creative hub presenting marked indigenous influences.

The series produced in the Viceroyalty depict angels bearing the attributes of varying hierarchies, such as, for instance, an angel with a flame in his hand, corresponding to a seraphim, or those crowned with roses and bearing symbols from the Passion, which would relate to virtues. Angels with Marian symbols constitute a Baroque innovation.

Drawing on José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert⁶, we could also add that the theoretical basis of these compositions is to be found in the work of the Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (Lima, 1565–1652). His book *Silex del Amor Divino* (*Firestone of Divine Love*) evokes the divine power attained by humanity through the angels, the heavenly hierarchies and the “seven princes”: Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Uriel, Sealtiel, Jegudiel and Barachiel. These types of works were intended to foster devotion for the angels, replacing the pre-Hispanic beliefs in the stars and other natural phenomena, and thereby bring about the long-desired Christianization process in a clear act of religious syncretism.⁷



Fig. 2 Crispijn van de Passe the Elder (Arnhemuiden, 1564 – Utrecht, 1637), *The Angel Zadkiel*, engraving

In the New World, we also find the Spanish custom of mixing series of heavenly beings with Saints, with the oldest source we have recording a series of angels being from a contract signed by the Cuzco-born painter Basilio de Santa Cruz in 1661, in which he agreed to paint 12 angels and 12 virgins. These series include the three archangels, Michael, Raphael and Gabriel, and most of them also include the Guardian Angel, and sometimes Uriel. The other angels are individualized by their names and appearances in the Old Testament. As such, Zadkiel is the name of the angel who speaks to Abraham and holds a flame in his hand.