



JAIME EGUIGUREN

ART & ANTIQUES

**Portrait of the Mayor
Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas**

Lima, first quarter of the 18th century

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ART & ANTIQUES

Portrait of the Mayor Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas

Anonymous artist

Lima (Peru), first quarter of the 18th century

Oil on canvas

194.8 x 132 cm

Provenance: Private collection

Daniel Vifian

Art Historian

The unpublished painting in question, dating from the first half of the 18th century and most likely produced in Lima, depicts Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas y Sánchez Cortés de Monroy, who offers a stimulating glimpse of viceregal society. Analysing a work of art as a historical document opens up the reading of it towards multiple horizons of information, whether institutional, political, cultural, or social, etc. A portrait ends up symbolising how one presents oneself to the society in which one is inserted. Generally speaking, in the European tradition, any portrait that was considered ambitious, in the words of Keith Davis, could be said to have “a dual purpose: to convey a 'true likeness' and to suggest something of the subject's character and history. These portraits served as both an accurate record of appearance and an idealized summary of a life”.¹ In the Peruvian viceregal context, whether the portraitist painted with the model in front of him or not, or even if he painted it after the model had died, was not a determining factor for the evaluation of the work, since, in it, the scenery, the objects surrounding the character, his posture, his clothing, the psychological depth reached, all of this was shown codified, and all of this tried to tell us something.

To confront a portrait demands a certain understanding of the role that this genre played in society. If one considers that the portrait was a public presentation of one's socially active self, it was to be expected, then, that the character called Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas would be displayed in the painting in the center of the composition, sure of himself and of his ancestry, or, quoting Francisco Stastny when he referred to the eighteenth-century viceregal production: “the subject is standing with his legs wide apart, like a ship captain in his storm-tossed cockpit.”² This posture was in keeping with a tradition of how to represent authorities, since, as Alfonso Pérez Sánchez has already pointed out, the original model of the courtly portrait came from Spain itself, from the pre-Velázquez period, in which “the person portrayed was represented upright and almost rigid, leaning barely on a table or buffet, in a dark interior that was hardly given depth by the artifice of a drawn curtain that is, at the same time, a symbol and sign of authority and majesty”.³ Thus, the portrait model remained stable throughout the viceregal period, resulting in becoming “a repeated staging of the socio-political class that the individual represented”.⁴

The model had already been captured early on in the late 16th century by the Italian painter Bernardo Bitti in his portrait of Dr. Jerónimo López Guarnido (fig. 1). However, to show a not-too-distant example and to illustrate the persistence of this model and thus have elements of comparison, we can refer to one from the late 17th century, which would be the portrait of the first professor of mathematics at the University of San Marcos, Lima, Francisco Ruiz Lozano (fig. 2). Housed in the university

1 Keith Davis, *The Origins of American Photography. From Daguerreotype to Dry-Plate, 1839-1885* (Kansas: Haal Family Foundation, 2007), p. 83.

2 Francisco Stastny, *Exhibition of Painters and Professors* (Lima: National University of San Marcos, 1975), p. 8.

3 Alfonso Pérez Sánchez, “Velázquez and the Baroque Portrait,” in *The Spanish Portrait, from El Greco to Picasso* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2005), p. 166.

4 Jaime Mariazza, “Brief Considerations on the Portrait in Peruvian Viceregal Painting,” *Illapa*, no. 16 (2019), 33.

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ART & ANTIQUES



Fig. 1 Bernardo Bitti, *Portrait of Dr. Jerónimo López Guarnido*, oil on canvas, 16th century. Art Museum of the National University of San Marcos.



Fig. 2 *Portrait of Francisco Ruiz Lozano*, oil on canvas, 17th century. Art Museum of the National University of San Marcos

museum of the former Convictorio de San Carlos, it shows an arrangement of objects similar to the painting by Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas: both characters are shown upright in the centre, with a table covered with a tablecloth at their side, and, in the opposite corner, a bulging curtain gives a theatrical atmosphere to the scene. Likewise, a noble shield defines the family origin of each figure. In addition to the rich clothing in dark tones, with a cape and puffed sleeves that emerge from austerity, each character had to hold in their hands the symbols of their class and their social functions: the common element was the gloves in one hand, while the other hand, if it was not resting on the table (as in the case of Ruiz Lozano), would be holding some other attribute of power, such as the baton of command that Fernando de la Fuente carries.

All these elements must be read in parts. It is necessary to begin with the identity of the sitter: all his merits, his aristocratic origins and his function within society are duly contained in the oblong cartouche in the lower left corner. Adorned with austere baroque scrolls, it says:

D.º Fernando de la Fuente Rojas. Vera. Agurto. Cortes de Monroy y Guerra de Contreras, Cavallero del Orden de Santiago. Natural de la Villa de Pisco en este Reyno del Peru. Corregidor y Justicia Mayor de la Ciudad del Cusco. Hijo legitimo del Teniente General de toda la Costa de Varlobento: D.º Juan Lucas de la Fuente y Rojas, Cavallero del mismo Orden y de D.ª Andrea Sanches Cortes de Monroy. Murió en ... [the text remains unfinished]. (Don Fernando de la Fuente Rojas, Vera, Agurto, Cortés de Monroy y Guerra de Contreras, Knight of the Order of Santiago. A native of the town of Pisco in this Kingdom of Peru. Corregidor and Chief Justice of the City of Cusco. Legitimate son of the

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ART & ANTIQUES

Lieutenant General of the entire Barlovento Coast, Don Juan Lucas de la Fuente y Rojas, also a Knight of the same Order, and Doña Andrea Sánchez Cortés de Monroy. He died in...)

Following the clues that appear on the label, and in accordance with the detailed genealogical studies of Vicente de Cadenas y Vicent, titled *Knights of the Order of Calatrava* who carried out their entrance tests and *Knights of the Order of Santiago*. 18th century, Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas was born in San Clemente de Mancera, Pisco, and was baptized on January 2, 1672.⁵ He was the son of Juan Lucas de la Fuente Rojas y Vera y Agurto, baptized in Lima on November 19, 1644, and Andrea Sánchez Cortés de Monroy y López de Herrera, who married in San Clemente, Pisco, on December 24, 1670. This couple explains the presence of the surnames "Vera. Agurto. Cortes de Monroy" that appear on the label, and it is that, from the paternal line, one can go back to the grandfather of the same name Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas, born in Panama, baptized on June 14, 1679, and married to the Lima native Petronila de Vera y Agurto. But to explain the presence of the surname "Guerra de Contreras" one must resort to the maternal line, given that the direct uncle, called Juan Sánchez Cortés Monroy, had married the Spanish María Guerra de Contreras, thus linking both families. To delve into the biographical-family aspect, it is known that Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas married in Lima in 1701 Juana Margarita de Hajar y Mendoza, sixth Marchioness of the Dragón de San Miguel de Hajar. The latter can be corroborated in the marriage books kept in the Archbishop's Archive of Lima.

Having outlined his family tree, it is possible to move on to an analysis of the symbols with which his figure is adorned. First: his brother Pedro Antonio de la Fuente y Rojas had joined the Order of Calatrava in 1728,⁶ while Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas had received, decades earlier, the Order of Santiago in 1702 (the same year that his father also received it).⁷ In the portrait in question, the protagonist displays the proud and superb cross of Santiago in a rich medallion that hangs over his abdomen. He would also be displaying the same cross on his cape, on his left arm, as was the custom. To take into account the importance of belonging to this order, to be admitted into it, one had to be pure of blood on both the maternal and paternal lines, and, after that:

The candidate then had to serve in the galleys for three months and reside for a month in the monastery to learn the rules. The tests were not only of nobility but also of legitimacy and purity of blood and religiousness, since 1655, among other things, the vow to defend the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin was made.⁸

Second symbol of the painting: it is known that Fernando de la Fuente had been promoted to the rank of general, which is why he was able to apply for the said military order, and it is the reason why the handle of a sword is seen worn at his waist. Third: in his right hand he holds a baton of command, surely alluding to the high position he obtained in Cusco. The same year of 1702 that he was invested with the military order, De la Fuente y Rojas was named corregidor and chief justice of Cusco, being received in its council on Thursday, February 16, 1702. Except for an altercation he had with José de Aumento, corregidor of Abancay, in 1704, little is known about his management, but, as soon as he assumed the

⁵ Vicente de Cadenas and Vicent, *Knights of the Order of Calatrava* who took their entrance exams. Volume II (Spain: Ediciones Hidalguía, 1986), p. 74.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Vicente de Cadenas and Vicent, *Knights of the Order of Santiago*, 18th century. Volume I (Spain: Hidalguía Editions, 1977), p. 90.

⁸ José Segundo Miguel y Sánchez, "The Order of Santiago," *Bulletin of the Valencian Academy of Genealogy and Heraldry*, vol. VII (January-June 2005), 28.

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ART & ANTIQUES

position, on Sunday, February 19, 1702, "a white comet in the shape of a plume, of horrible length and straight in a straight line was seen towards the western part of this city; continuing his appearance for five days, until the 23rd of said month." ⁹De la Fuente held that position until 1707, being replaced by Diego de Esquivel y Xarava el Mozo, who was received by the council on February 17.¹⁰

The information provided by the painting ends here, but Fernando de la Fuente having been part of a very important family, whose members held various public posts (his brother, Pedro, for example, was the 1st Count of Fuente Roja in 1722 and ordinary mayor of Lima in 1724), ¹¹we are left with a historical figure who should be the subject of further research, even more so with the emergence of his portrait.

A document dated September 27, 1721, may shed some light on how the portrait was conceived and perhaps help date it. On that day, Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas, who was about 49 years old and had fallen "sick in bed with the illness that God has given us,"¹² decided to make a will before the notary José de Torres Campo. At the end of the document his signature appears, still sure of itself (fig. 3).¹³ In this testimony of life, he no longer identified himself as a member of the army, but as a member of the clergy, as a "priest, a native of the town of Pisco, legitimate son of General Don Juan Lucas de la Fuente

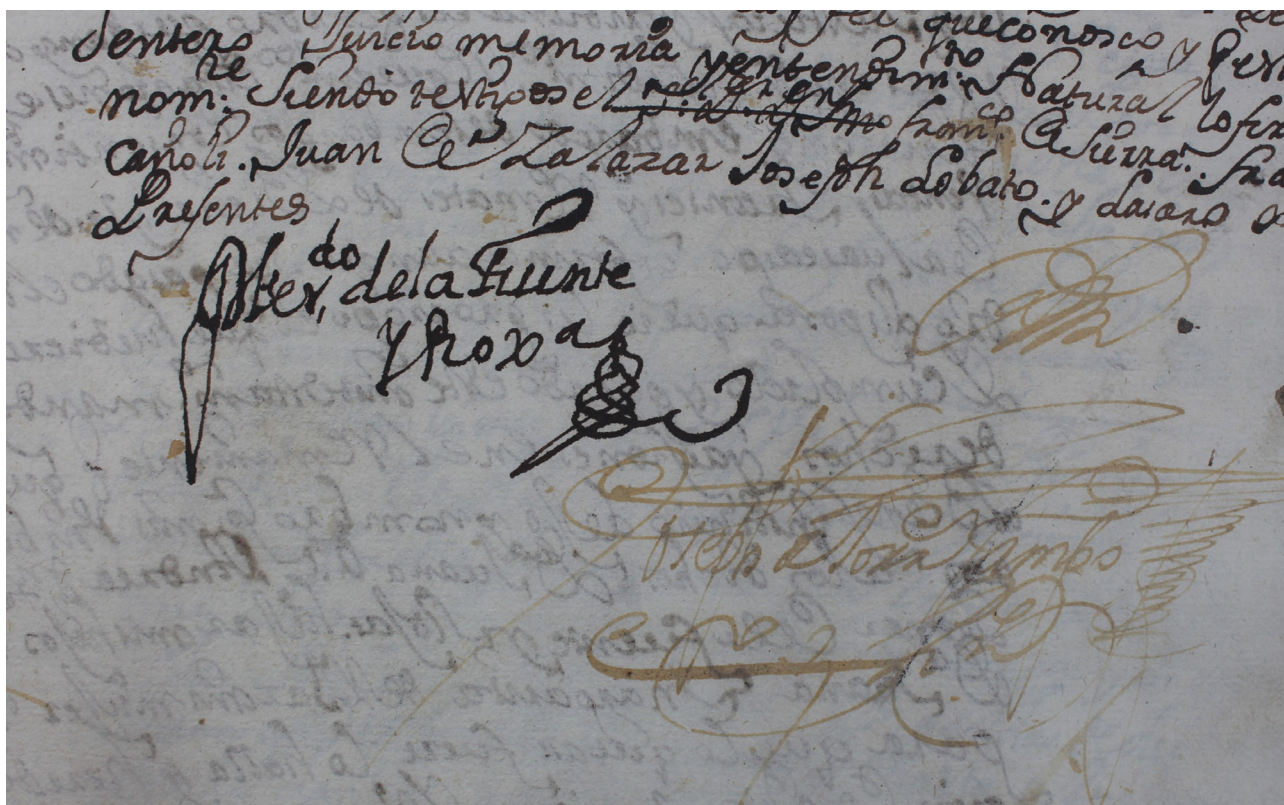


Fig. 3 Signature of the will of Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas

9 Diego de Esquivel y Navia, *Chronological News of the Great City of Cuzco*. Volume II (Lima: Augusto N. Wiese Foundation, 1980), p. 186.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

11 Alberto Tauro del Pino, *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Peru*. Volume 9 (Lima: Peisa, 2001), p. 1371.

12 Will of Fernando de la Fuente y Rojas, General Archive of the Nation, Notarial Protocols of the 18th century, notary José de Torres Campo (September 27, 1721), f. 420r.

13 *Ibid.*, f. 422v.

y Rojas, a knight who was of the Order of Santiago, of which order I am the said grantor.”¹⁴ After this declaration, and after a usual and very common formula of divine invocation and protest of his faith, he went on to assert that he was a “brother of Concord.”¹⁵ He also stated that before taking holy orders he was married to Juana Margarita de Híjar y Mendoza, with whom he had five children, Juana, Andrea, Fernando, Leonor and Francisca de la Fuente e Híjar, to whom he would inherit everything after the auction of his assets. Therefore, he proceeded to enumerate his creditors and debtors, to finally give an account of his assets: two estates in Pisco, one called Floresta and the other Vilchis, as well as a house in the same town.

Although it is not certain whether the painting was painted during the life of the subject or whether it was done posthumously as a memory of him, the information given in the will would suggest the first option. In the portrait, Fernando de la Fuente appears with the attributes of his military career, and as a member of an order of the same character, without any sign of belonging, or having belonged, to any religious brotherhood that could identify him within the career of priest. The problem would lie in the fact that there is no information about when he entered religious life, so as to be able to postulate a deadline for the dating. On the other hand, it is true that the cartouche has been inexplicably left unfinished, and that this reinforces a little more, although not conclusively, the first option stated above, that the work was painted during the life of the subject. Provisionally, the painting should be dated from 1702, the year in which he was awarded the Order of Santiago, and within the first two decades of the century. This is, in short, a painting that, as a historical document, is rich in how Fernando de la Fuente presented himself to society as a public and political figure, a military man adorned and duly awarded with an order of lineage that was difficult and exclusive to obtain.

Bibliography

Cadenas y Vicent, Vicente de. *Caballeros de la Orden de Santiago, siglo XVIII*. Tomo I. España: Ediciones Hidalguía, 1977.

———. *Caballeros de la Orden de Calatrava que efectuaron sus pruebas de ingreso*. Tomo II. España: Ediciones Hidalguía, 1986.

Davis, Keith. *The Origins of American Photography: From Daguerreotype to Dry-Plate, 1839-1885*. Kansas: Haal Family Foundation, 2007.

Esquivel y Navia, Diego de. *Noticias cronológicas de la gran ciudad del Cuzco*. Tomo II. Lima: Fundación Augusto N. Wiese, 1980.

Miguel y Sánchez, José Segundo. “La orden de Santiago.” *Boletín de la Academia Valenciana de Genealogía y Heráldica* 7 (enero-junio de 2005): 25–30.

Pérez Sánchez, Alfonso. “Velásquez y el retrato barroco.” In *El retrato español, del Greco a Picasso*. Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2005.

Stastny, Francisco. *Exposición pintores y catedráticos*. Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 1975.

Tauro del Pino, Alberto. *Enciclopedia ilustrada del Perú*. Tomo 9. Lima: Peisa, 2001.

¹⁴ Ibid., f. 420v.

¹⁵ Ibid., f. 420v.

