

Caylus



JUAN DE ESPINAL
(Seville, 1714–1783)

The Immaculate Conception

Circa 1740-1760

Oil on canvas

70.5 x 54.5 cm

PROCVENANCE:

Roselli Del Turco Collection, Florence (label on the reverse)

Pandolfini Casa d'Aste, Florence, sale 4 October 2018, lot 269 (as "Scuola spagnola sec. XVII")

RELATED LITERATURE:

PERALES, R. M. *Juan de Espinal*. Seville: Diputación de Sevilla, 1981.

VALDIVIESO, E. *Pintura barroca sevillana*. Seville: Ediciones Guadalquivir, 2003, p. 553-570.

Juan de Espinal was probably the most important painter in Seville in the second half of the 18th century. Born there in 1714, he trained with his father, Gregorio de Espinal, then completed his artistic education with Domingo Martínez. He married the latter's daughter and inherited his father-in-law's studio on his death in 1749. There are references to his presence in Madrid in 1777, which may be the date of his canvas *The Arrival of Painting in Seville*, now in the Academia de San Fernando (fig. 1). Ceán Bermúdez, who met the artist, was overtly critical of his work, although he acknowledged his leading position in Andalusian art of the day. This low opinion on the part of Ceán was probably due to the fact that Espinal was the first Sevillian painter to move away from the influence of Murillo, embracing a slightly extravagant Rococo spirit that he retained until his death in 1783.

The earliest known and dated work by the artist is the painting of *Saints Justa and Rufina* commissioned by the cathedral chapter. Probably close to it in date are the canvases of *The Carmelite Virgin* (now with the Hermandad de San Onofre, Seville) and *The Virgin of Mercy* (private collection). Shortly after that Espinal must have produced the series of thirteen episodes from the life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola that are now in the Santa Casa de Loyola in Guipuzkoa. Around 1762 Espinal produced the mural paintings that cover the presbytery walls in the conventual church of Santa Rosalia in Sevilla. Between 1770 and 1775 he executed the series of 26 paintings for the cloister of the monastery of San Jerónimo de Buena Vista in Seville. In 1778 Espinal worked on another important cycle, this one for the decoration of the staircase of the Archiepiscopal palace in Seville, commissioned by Archbishop Francisco Javier Delgado y Venegas. For this project and working in tempera, Espinal painted a perspectival architectural design of pronounced

spatial recession on the ceiling, while for the walls he executed fifteen canvases with scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

The present *Immaculate Conception* is an unpublished work by Juan de Espinal but it can be related to two other paintings on the same subject now in private collections: a large one that was auctioned at Lafon in Paris on 20 December 2010 (lot 16) and another in Madrid, as well as the version in the Museo Lázaro Galdiano (inv. 07509) in Madrid). Given its rapidly painted nature, the present canvas may be a preliminary study for an altar painting such as the above-mentioned example that was auctioned in Paris (fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Juan de Espinal. *The Arrival of Painting in Seville*. Oil on canvas, 56 x 83 cm. Madrid, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (inv. 0131).



Fig. 2. Juan de Espinal. *The Immaculate Conception*. Circa 17401-1760. Oil on canvas, 200,5 x 155 cm. Private collection.