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JUAN CANO DE ARÉVALO

(VALDEMORO, MADRID, 1656—MADRID, 1696)

Our Lady of Mercy with Franciscan Saints

c. 1690

INK ON PAPER

200 X 154 MM

SIGNED: "JU^o CAN^o. F." AT THE LOWER LEFT

PROVENANCE: PRIVATE COLLECTION, BOSTON, USA

Juan Cano de Arévalo was born in 1656 in Valdemoro and received his first artistic training there although he soon moved to Madrid where he became a pupil of Francisco Camilo. ¹ Both Palomino and Ceán Bermúdez state that from the outset he proved outstanding as a miniaturist. This ability led Cano de Arévalo to focus on painting fans, a field in which he became particularly noted. ² The fame that he earned for the beauty and skill of his works led to his appointment as "fan painter" to Queen María Luisa de Orleans. While Cano de Arévalo primarily focused on this field he also executed oil paintings and murals, in particular collaborating with Juan Vicente Ribera on the paintings for the Chapel of the Holy Forms in the Jesuit Seminary in Alcalá de Henares. ³ He also painted the presbytery and aisles of the parish church of Santa María in the same city. Finally, and working on his own, he executed the mural paintings in tempera for the chapel of the Virgin of the Rosary in the church at Valdemoro, but these works are almost lost today.

A number of drawings by the artist have survived. The first is dated 1684 and depicts *Christ on the Route to Calvary* (London, Courtauld Institute). The composition is based on Raphael's *Spasimo di Sicilia*, at that date in the Royal Chapel of the Alcázar in Madrid. ⁴ In addition, in 1690 and to mark the death of Queen María Luisa, he produced a drawing of the queen accompanied by an acrostic of encomiums that would

be engraved as the frontispiece for the text by Juan de Vera Tassis entitled *Noticias historiales de la enfermedad, muerte y exequias de la esclarecida Reyna María Luisa de Orleans, Borbón Stuart y Austria [...] celebradas en el Convento Real de la Encarnación* (Madrid, Francisco Sanz, 1690). Cano de Arévalo's design was engraved by Gregorio Fosman y Medina. ⁵ The artist died in Madrid in 1696 at the early age of forty after taking part in a duel. ⁶

The present drawing depicts *Our Lady of Mercy with Franciscan Saints* and is signed towards the bottom "JU^o CAN^o. F." It is a notably simple work created from light, rapid strokes of black pen in zig-zag lines that create shadows, while the highlights are created from the white of the unworked paper. The Virgin is located in the upper part of the composition, seated on a throne of clouds and wearing a voluminous mantel fastened with a brooch that is a simplified version of the emblem of the Mercedarian Order. She holds the plump, chubby-cheeked Christ Child on her knee. Located in the lower area at the left and right and protected by the figure of the Virgin are the figures of Saint Francis of Assisi and a female Mercedarian saint who may be Saint Claire, Saint Catherine or Saint María de Cervelló, however the lack of any specific attribute makes it impossible to identify this figure.

Interestingly, one of the few surviving works by Cano de Arévalo is a print designed by him and engraved



Diego de Obregón after
Juan Cano de Arévalo,
Santa María de Cervelló.
Madrid, Biblioteca
Nacional

by Diego de Obregón that depicts *Santa María de Cervelló* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Sig. Invent/12856),⁷ the first Mercedarian nun, canonised by Innocent XII in 1692. The print coincides exactly with the canvas by Alonso del Arco for the Madrid convent of the Mercedarias de Don Juan de Alarcón. It is one of a series of ten painted by the artist around 1680 depicting a series of Mercedarian nuns, commissioned to decorate the upper choir of the convent's church.⁸ Given that Cano de Arévalo's print is dedicated to Teresa de Leiba y Cerda, one of the ladies-in-waiting to Queen Mariana de Neoburgo, it is likely that the preparatory drawing for it was executed in the early 1690s and was thus a copy of Alonso del Arco's painting. Taking this into account, and given that the subject of the present drawing is associated with the Mercedarian Order,

it is possible that Cano de Arévalo was engaged in the reproduction of other works painted for the Mercedarias de Don Juan de Alarcón. Possibly both *Santa María de Cervelló* and the present drawing were part of a series of preparatory drawings Cano de Arévalo intended for reproduction as engravings.

Whatever the case, the present drawing reveals the influence of Madrid Baroque art of the second half of the 17th century with regard to both models and style. For this reason the artist's simple, rapid technique in his drawings recalls that of other Madrid painters of the period such as José Jiménez Donoso (1628-1690) who also used a "striped" line similar to the one to be seen here, for example in drawings such as *The Dream of Saint Joseph* (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts) and *The Virgin of Victory* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional).⁹

1 Ceán Bermúdez (1800), vol. I, pp. 225-226.

2 Pérez Sánchez (1996), p. 335.

3 Gutiérrez Pastor (1994), pp. 221-231.

4 The drawing is signed "Cano Fat.", but it does not resemble the present one either with regard to style or technique. In addition, the artist's signature is not the one that appears on prints for which he had executed the original drawing, in which he appears as "J^o Cano" as in the present drawing.

5 Gallego (1979), p. 181.

6 The limited information on Juan Cano de Arévalo is to be found in Palomino (1715-1724/1947), pp. 1071-1073.

7 Páez (1982), vol. II, p. 307, no. 1520-10.

8 Gutiérrez Pastor (2008), pp. 118-119.

9 It was Pérez Sánchez who drew attention to this "distinctive striped [line]" in Donoso's drawings. See *Dibujo español de los siglos de oro* (1980), p. 82.

