

Portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez
by José Nicolás de la Escalera



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Gloria Martínez Leiva

DELA MANO

JOSÉ NICOLÁS DE LA ESCALERA

(Havana, Cuba, 8 September 1734 – 3 July 1804)

Portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez

1781

Oil on canvas
125 x 82 cm

PROVENANCE

Madrid, Torcuato Díaz-Merry Zafra Kelly collection (until 1932)

Madrid, Joaquín Díaz-Merry Cejuela (until 1954)

Madrid, Manuel Díaz-Merry Cejuela (until 1963)

by inheritance until the current owners

SIGNED AND DATED

“Jos. Nicol. Escalera, pinci, / Abana, A.D. 1781.”, on the reverse of the canvas

Description

The painting is a three-quarter length portrait of the Spanish military officer and politician Bernardo de Gálvez (Macharaviaya, Malaga, 23 July 1746 - Tacubaya, 30 November 1786). He is depicted standing in a space dominated by the presence in the background of a column base and two large curtains, one red and one green. Next to the sitter and on the right of the scene is a side table covered in green velvet on which rests his splendid, black felt uniform hat with gold trim and a red cockade, and a baton of command with a gold handle.

Bernardo de Gálvez looks directly at the viewer with a decided expression and penetrating gaze. He wears a white wig with a curl at either side. He is shown almost frontally, although slightly to one side due to the forward position of his left leg and the prominence of the gesture of his arm resting on his hip. Gálvez wears the uniform of a lieutenant-general, with a dark

blue coat and breeches and a red waistcoat. Both garments have oak-leaf embroidery embellishing the cuffs, the edges of the coat and waistcoat and the border of the stand-up collar. The sleeves have two horizontal strips of gold braid corresponding to the rank of lieutenant-general,¹ to which Gálvez was promoted in 1781 after the victory at Pensacola. His white shirt is tied at the neck with a delicate lace cravat while fine lace cuffs emerge from his uniform coat at the wrists. Worn on the coat at the left breast over the buttons and the embroidered trim is the emblem of the Royal Order of Charles III which the sitter was awarded in 1777.² In his left hand Gálvez holds a letter on which is written “Guatemala, 30 de julio de 1780 / Querido hijo Bernardo: la felicidad de tus conquistas se la debes a Dios y tus adelantamientos al Rey; se pues agradecido a ambas Majestades para contar con la bendición de tu amante padre / Matías de Gálvez” [Guatemala, 30 July 1780 / My dear



¹ Cid González 2016, pp. 103-104.

² Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Estado, Orden de Carlos III, Exp. no. 49. Frontela 1992, p. 44 and O'Donnell 2015, p. 33. He was made a Knight of the Order of Charles III with a corresponding pension on 31 October 1777.



Fig. 1 Signature on the reverse of the painting

Son Bernardo: the happiness of your conquests is due to God and your advancement to the King; be thus grateful to both Majesties to count on the blessing of your loving father / Matías de Gálvez]. At that date Matías de Gálvez was commander general of New Spain and Guatemala, hence the fact that the letter was

written from there. In 1783 he was singled out with the appointment of viceroy of New Spain.³ On the back of the canvas is an inscription which reads: “Jos. Nicol. Escalera, pinci, / Abana, A.D. 1781” (fig. 1), which clearly identifies the artist who painted this work, the Cuban José Nicolás de la Escalera.

Iconography

The letter held by the sitter in his left hand allows him to be firmly identified as the Spanish politician and military officer Bernardo de Gálvez.

Bernardo de Gálvez was born in Macharaviaya, a small village in the province of Malaga, on 23 July 1746. Both his father and uncle had political careers associated with Latin America. His father, Matías de Gálvez (1717-1784), became lieutenant-general and viceroy of New Spain (fig. 2), while his uncle José de Gálvez obtained the privileges of Marquis of la Sonora, inspector general [*visitador*] of New Spain, minister of the Council of the Indies and minister of State to Charles III.

Following the example of his father, Bernardo opted for a military career from an early date. Aged only 16, in 1762 he entered the Spanish army as a cadet in the Military Academy in Ávila, leaving it as an Infantry lieutenant and from there participating in the campaign against Portugal in the context of the Seven Years' War.⁴ In 1765 he was posted as captain in a Royal Infantry regiment to the viceroyalty of New Spain. In 1766 he was sent to Louisiana as a regimental colonel and governor of the province, temporarily replacing Luis de Unzaga.⁵ In 1770 Gálvez was made commander of Nueva Vizcaya where he was noted for his action in combat against the Apache people,⁶ taking full advantage of this successful experience in subsequent campaigns and leaving a written record of it entitled *Noticias y reflexiones sobre la Guerra que las tropas españolas mantienen en la América contra los*



Fig. 2 Ramón Torres, *Matías de Gálvez y Gallardo, Viceroy of New Spain, 1783*. Madrid Museo de América, inv. 1984/06/01.

Indios Apaches y otras naciones bárbaras.⁷ In 1772 he returned to Spain where he served with the Cantabrian Regiment posted in the French town of Pau. He remained there for three years, during which time he learned French, which proved extremely useful during his subsequent period in Louisiana.⁸ In 1775 Gálvez returned to Spain following after his time in France and joined the Seville Infantry, participating in the expedition to Algiers where he was seriously wounded. In recognition of his gallantry and resistance, fighting alongside the Rifles in order to achieve the mission entrusted to them, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and posted to the Military Academy in Ávila. Soon after, on 22 May 1776, he was made colonel of the Fixed Louisiana Regiment with the destination

⁴ Frontela 1992, p. 19.

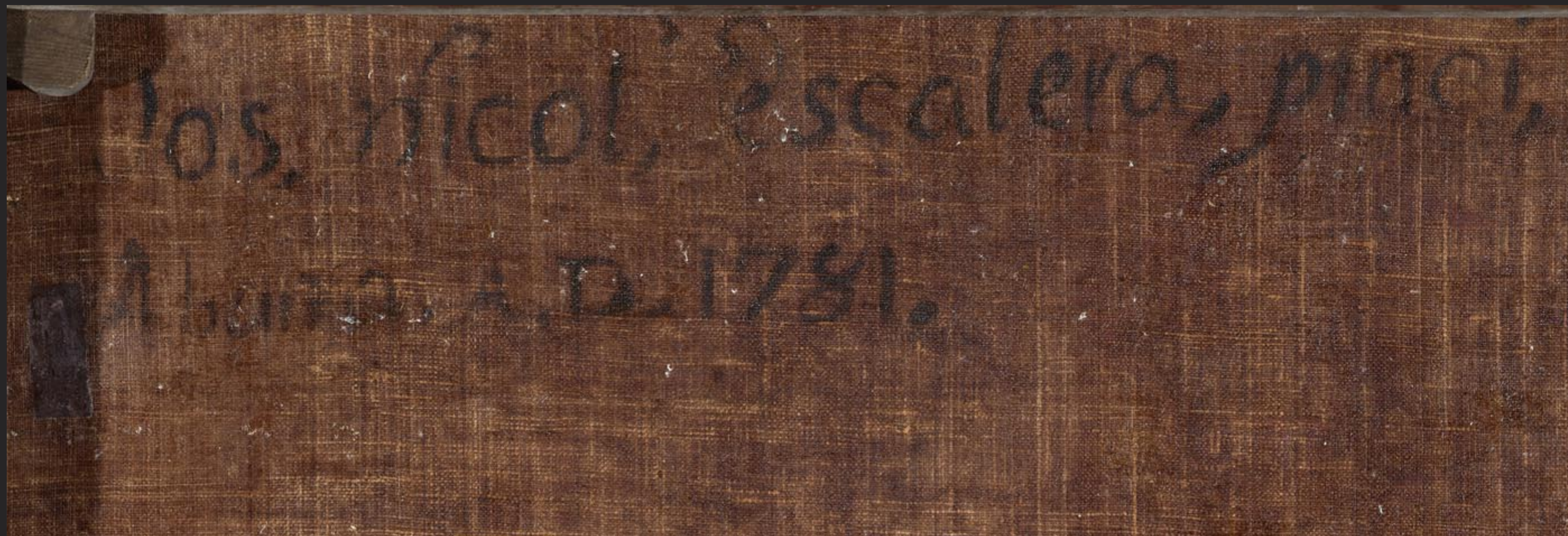
⁵ *Ibid.* p. 19.

⁶ Guerrero Acosta 2015, p.15.

⁷ Biblioteca Nacional de México, vol. II of various papers of the Church of Mexico (P-1-2-8), Subdirección, estante P, in Frontela 1992, p. 22.

⁸ Guerrero Acosta 2015, p. 29.

³ Frontela 1992, p. 13.



of New Orleans. Just ten months later, on 19 July, he was appointed acting governor of the province of Louisiana and on 1 January 1777 he was made governor. This was followed by a period of intense activity focused on countering the British threat to the Spanish colonies, while Gálvez also offered early and decisive help to the cause of American independence. He sent cargoes of arms, munitions, blankets and medicines down the Mississippi to the revolutionary armies and assisted them in battles as important as Saratoga. He also helped the numerous American colonists who were fleeing the British troops and between 1778 and 1779 founded various towns populated by emigrants from the Canary Islands⁹ and Malaga, including Barataria, Nueva Iberia and Galveztown, the latter named in his honour. In addition, he loaned 74,000 dollars to the Americans and sent provisions downriver to a value of 25,000 doubloons, which were distributed to Washington's army and the divisions in the South under General Lee.



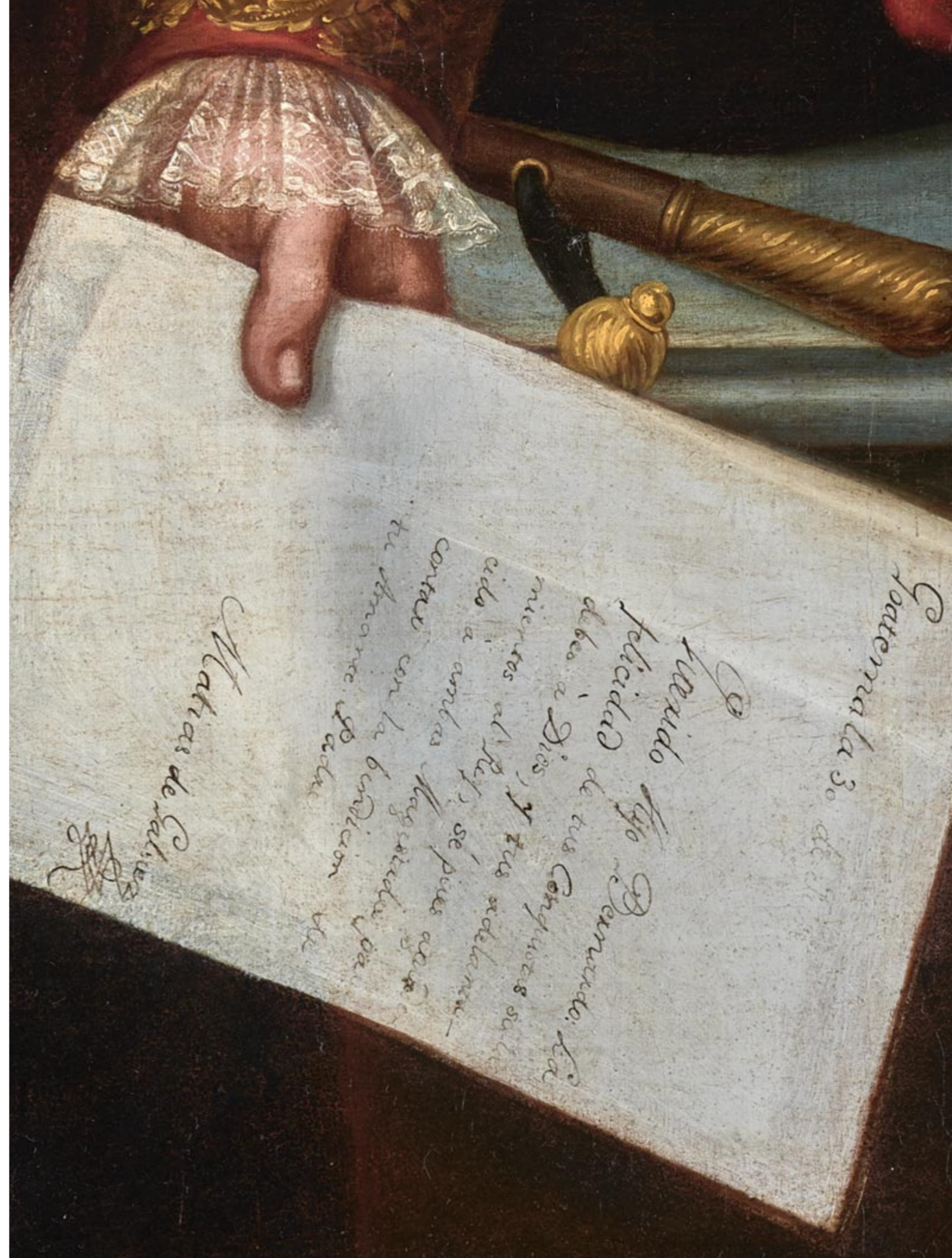
Fig. 3 Anonymous artist, *Portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez in Field Marshal's Uniform*, ca. 1780. The Historic New Orleans Collection, inv. 2000.80.1.

In 1779 Bernardo de Gálvez was promoted to brigadier and was also made permanent governor of Louisiana.¹⁰ Soon after, on 21 June, Charles III formally declared war against Great Britain and Gálvez decided to take the offensive and surprise the British forces, capturing various forts such as Fort Bute in Manchac and the one in New Richmond, as well as eight British ships. These victories gave him control over the Lower Mississippi Basin and its immense valley and earned him promotion to brigadier and field marshal of the Royal Armies (fig. 3).¹¹

In 1780 Gálvez focused his military operations on the key British territories in the Gulf of

Mexico, the fortresses of Mobile and Pensacola. On 14 January he embarked on capturing Mobile, which he achieved with some difficulty after two months, on 14 March 1780.¹² The letter which Bernardo de Gálvez holds in the present portrait, written by his father, relates to that conquest, for which he receives his congratulations.

The next objective was the capture of Pensacola, capital of West Florida and the headquarters of British civic and military power. Pensacola represented a threat to the security and trade of both Louisiana and the viceroyalty of New Spain. In order to secure the ships and troops necessary for the offensive



⁹ Machado Carilla 2023.

¹⁰ Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Títulos de Indias, 188-52. The position confirmed on 8 May 1779, in Frontela 1992, p. 25.

¹¹ Frontela 1992, p. 28.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 30.



Fig. 4 Map of the entry to the Bay of Santa María de Gálvez, Pensacola, 1787. Ministry of Defence, Instituto de Historia y Cultura Militar.

Gálvez went to Havana in August 1780¹³ where he recruited sufficient forces to assemble a fleet, a total of around 4,000 men.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the expedition failed due to a hurricane. Gálvez returned to Havana in November and remained there for some months, putting together a new squadron with which he set sail for Pensacola on 28 February 1781.¹⁵ On 9 March he and his troops disembarked on the island of Santa Rosa to the east of the entry to Pensacola Bay. However, the narrowness of the channel (fig. 4), the currents and firing from the British troops

located on both sides of the mouth of the bay made it impossible to proceed.

Nonetheless, on 18 March Gálvez decided to enter the channel by himself in command of the brig the “Galveztown”, anxiously watched by the rest of the fleet. Astonishingly, the ship navigated the narrow strait without any damage and was followed the next day by the other vessels with almost no casualties or direct hits. The troops were thus able to establish themselves on dry land prior to the arrival of reinforcements from New Orleans and Mobile. Finally, on 9 May 1781 Gálvez

took Pensacola (fig. 5). The surrender was signed the following day,¹⁶ as a result of which Spain recovered West Florida and all the English settlements on the Gulf of Mexico were abandoned, with the exception of St. Augustine and the island of Jamaica.¹⁷

The magnitude of Gálvez’s success was recognised two years later with the title of Count of Gálvez.¹⁸ At the age of thirty-five he was also promoted to lieutenant-general, making him the youngest officer of this rank in the Spanish army. In addition, the king decreed that Pensacola Bay would be renamed the Bay of Santa María de Gálvez (see fig. 4) in order to perpetuate the memory of the heroic officer who had captured it and that the brig “Galveztown” in which Gálvez had arrived would feature on his coat of arms, together with the motto YO SOLO [I alone] (fig. 6).¹⁹ Finally, Charles III appointed him governor and independent captain general of Louisiana and West Florida, the name given to the territory captured from the British, with an annual salary of 10,000 *pesos*.²⁰

In August 1781 Gálvez was once again in Havana where he had been placed in command of the Hispano-French invasion of Jamaica being prepared at the time. In February 1782 he established himself in Guarico. The Spanish troops occupied the Bahamas but were soon sent back to base



Fig. 5 Medallion inset into the frame of a British flag captured at Pensacola. Portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez, ca. 1781. Wash on parchment. Museo del Ejército, MUE-40390.01.



Fig. 6 Coat of arms of Bernardo Gálvez. The Historic New Orleans Collection. The Kemper and Leila Williams Foundation.

¹⁶ The king, Don Bernardo de Gálvez, pensioned knight of my royal and distinguished Order of Charles the Third [...], 4 March 1782, p. 19.

¹⁷ Caughey 1934; Frontela 1992, p. 36 and Reparaz Madinaveitia, undated.

¹⁸ Conceded to him on 20 May 1783 by Charles III and on the same date he received the title of Viscount of Galveztown. Frontela 1992, p. 8; González-Doria 2000, p. 142 and Olmedo y Cabrera 2007, p. 195. On 15 March of the same year he was also granted the privilege [*encomienda*] of Bolaños in the Order of Calatrava. To obtain that privilege, Charles III was obliged to specify: “[...] I have disposed that he can benefit from the privilege of Bolaños in the Order of Calatrava, which I have granted to him, retaining the cross of the Royal and Distinguished Order of Charles III of which he is a pensioned Knight.” AHN, Consejos, Leg. 5058, A.1783, Exp. 2, in Frontela 199, p. 167 y O’Donnell 2015, p. 34.

¹⁹ AHN, Consejos, Leg. 5085, Royal Decree by which the King grants as a crest on the Coat of Arms of don Bernardo de Gálvez the brig Galveztown with the motto YO SOLO, San Lorenzo 12 November 1781, in Frontela 1992, p. 53 and The king, Don Bernardo de Gálvez, pensioned knight of my royal and distinguished Order of Charles III [...], 4 March 1782, p. 22.

²⁰ The king, Don Bernardo de Gálvez, pensioned knight of my royal and distinguished Order of Charles III [...], 4 March 1782, p. 23.

¹³ Quintero Saravia 2015, p. 451.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 452.

¹⁵ Frontela 1992, p. 32 and Reparaz Madinaveitia, undated.



Fig. 7 Anonymous artist, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, ca. 1785. Palacio del Ayuntamiento, Mexico City.



Fig. 8 José Germán de Alfaro, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, 1785. Mexico City, Museo de Historia de México.

following the signing of a peace treaty with Britain²¹ through which Spain recovered West and East Florida. On 17 May 1783 Gálvez returned to Cuba and on 16 July he embarked for Cadiz.²² He arrived in Madrid in October 1783 with his entire family and received a hero's welcome. Taking advantage of his time in Spain he held a solemn act in the Franciscan conventual church of San Gil, in which Charles III invested him with his personal Order,²³ to which Gálvez had been entitled since 1777 but which he had not physically received during to

being out of Spain since 1776. During the time he remained in Madrid, almost a year, he lived on calle de Alcalá.²⁴

Appointed captain general of Cuba while retaining command of Louisiana, Bernardo Gálvez embarked once again from Cadiz for Latin America in October 1784, arriving in La Guaira on 14 January 1785.²⁵ He remained there for some days, receiving the news that his father, Matías de Gálvez, viceroy of New Spain, was gravely ill. Gálvez decided to go to Cuba and

while calling in Puerto Rico en route received the news that his father had died in Mexico City on 3 November. He finally reached Havana on 4 February 1785²⁶ but only stayed there for a short time as on 20 April he was appointed viceroy of New Spain, succeeding his father. Gálvez arrived in Mexico City as the new viceroy on 16 June 1785 (figs. 7 and 8).²⁷

During the time of his mandate, which lasted almost a year and a half until his premature death from amoebic dysentery in the

archiepiscopal palace in Tacubaya on 30 November 1786,²⁸ Gálvez was extremely popular, taking advantage of bullfights, elegant promenades and balls in order to mix with the population and gain their favour. Gálvez was thirty-eight when he arrived in Mexico with a young wife and two small children, representing a striking contrast with previous viceroys who were all much older.²⁹ In addition, as a man of the Enlightenment he encouraged study of the sciences in the viceroyalty, particularly botany.³⁰

²¹ Quintero Saravia 2015, p. 612.

²² *Ibid*, pp. 624-625.

²³ Olmedo y Cabrera 2022, p. 92.

²⁴ Quintero Saravia 2020, p. 334.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 197.

²⁶ Quintero Saravia 2020, p. 340.

²⁷ Guerrero Acosta 2015, p. 67.

²⁸ Quintero Saravia 2015, pp. 755, 761-762.

²⁹ Castillo Crimm 2016.

³⁰ Quintero Saravia 2015, pp. 738-741 and Medina Ávila 2015.

Gálvez's remains were transported to Mexico City and buried there, initially in the cathedral and then in the church of San Fernando. His death was greatly mourned by the population.³¹

The importance of Bernardo de Gálvez for American independence was crucial. Between 1776 and 1779 he assisted the thirteen colonies in their aim of achieving independence from Great Britain, regularly sending arms, blankets, food and more down the Mississippi river. This activity was not publicised, possibly in order to avoid open conflict with the British, but as the historian Thomas E. Chávez has noted: "Spain assisted the United States to achieve its independence from Britain [...]. Under the command of Bernardo de Gálvez, Spanish victories consolidated the British defeat and contributed to the United States securing the maximum concessions, particularly in the western territories."³²



Fig. 9 José Nicolás de la Escalera, *Saint Joseph with the Christ Child*. Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 84.7 cm. Havana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Cuba.

The artist

José Nicolás de la Escalera Domínguez was born on 8 September 1734 in Havana, Cuba. He was the third son of Agustín Francisco Isidoro de la Escalera Tamariz, born in the city of Écija, Spain, and Manuela Domínguez, a Creole woman born in Havana. Escalera Domínguez was baptised on 15 September 1734 in Havana cathedral, as recorded in the baptismal register of "blancos" [white people].³³

Little is known of Escalera's artistic training although he may have acquired the rudiments of painting in a monastery in Havana. His style

reveals the influence of trends deriving from the Sevillian Baroque of Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682), some of whose works were present in Cuba. Escalera forged a style based on a late, saccharine version of the Baroque by this point completely outdated in Europe. One example is *Saint Joseph with the Christ Child* (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Cuba), in which his dependence on Murillo's sentimental models is clearly evident (fig. 9).

José Nicolás de la Escalera Domínguez primarily devoted his activities to producing works on religious subjects, many of which were originally part of altarpieces although they are now independent images. One



Fig. 10 José Nicolás de la Escalera, *The Holy Trinity*. Oil on canvas, 180 x 202 cm. Havana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

example is *The Holy Trinity* (fig. 10; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Cuba) which originally formed part of an altarpiece in the conventual church of San Francisco de Asís in Old Havana.³⁴

One of the artist's principal patrons was the Count of Casa Bayona who, between 1760 and 1766, commissioned him to paint the nine altarpieces and four dome pendentives in the church of Santa María del Rosario in the town of that name,³⁵ the present-day municipality of Cotorro, Havana, which belonged to the Dominicans of the monastery of San Juan de Letrán. This was undoubtedly Escalera's most

important religious commission and the fact that it has survived intact makes it one of the few examples of Cuban Baroque art. The canvases of the altarpieces depict a series of Dominican saints while the pendentives illustrate episodes from the life of Saint Dominic and an unusual *Saint Dominic and the Family of the Count and Countess of Casa Bayona* (fig. 11). The latter is thought to be the first image of a person of colour in Cuban art: a depiction of one of the slaves owned by the family.³⁶ This pendentive is also interesting for the fact that it depicts Escalera himself, the second figure in the upper left area, shown as one of the servants in the Casa Bayona household.

³¹ Fernández de San Salvador 1787.

³² Olmedo y Cabrera 2017, p. 17.

³³ Rigol 1982, p. 286, Appendix 2.

³⁴ López Núñez 2013, pp. 22-23.

³⁵ Martínez O'Farrill 2017.

³⁶ *Ibid.*



Fig. 11 José Nicolás de la Escalera, *Saint Dominic and the Family of the Count and Countess of Casa Bayona*. Pendant, church of Santa María del Rosario, Havana.

Alongside religious painting the genre in which José Nicolás de la Escalera was most successful was portraiture. The first known work by his hand of this type is his depiction of *Luis Vicente de Velasco*, the naval captain who had died in the defence of the fortress of El Morro during the capture of Havana by the British, a work which the artist himself sent as a gift to Charles III (fig. 12).³⁷ This posthumous image reveals many of the characteristics of the official colonial portrait which Escalera habitually employed in his works of this type. They include the presence of the sitter's coat of arms in order to emphasise his noble origins and the inclusion of a text that details his glorious deeds and the reasons for his fame.

One of the artist's most notable portraits is that of *Luis de las Casas y Aragorri* (1745–1800), governor and captain general of Cuba from 1790 to 1796. De las Casas was one of the most esteemed colonial rulers due to the progress he facilitated in both culture and trade on the island. The portrait dates from 1797 and was commissioned by the Board of Patrons of the Casa de la Beneficencia [Children's Home] to honour its founder (fig. 13).³⁸ De las Casas is depicted full-length in an image that adheres to the above-mentioned conventions of official portraiture with its emphasis on the subject's elevated social status, expressed through the inclusion of his coat of arms, in turn superimposed over an

³⁷ López Núñez 2006, p. 46.

³⁸ López Campistrous, undated.



Fig. 12 José Nicolás de la Escalera, *Luis Vicente de Velasco*, 1763. Oil on canvas, 104 x 81 cm. Madrid, Museo Naval.

elaborate red curtain that adds dignity to the setting and with a lower zone in which the sitter's deeds and achievements are set out in a Rococo-style cartouche.

Escalera also executed portraits of leading Cuban ecclesiastical figures, including the bishop of Santiago de Cuba, *Antonio Feliú y Centeno*, painted in 1789 (fig. 14). Once again, this work clearly reveals the influence of Murillo, with the composition enclosed in a stone border comparable to the one used by that artist in his *Self-portrait* (London, National Gallery, inv. NG6153). This model was in turn copied by Pedro Núñez de

Villavicencio for his portrait of *The Archbishop of Seville, Ignacio Spinola Guzmán* of 1670, an image disseminated via an engraving (fig. 15) that may have provided the basis for the depiction of Bishop Feliú.

José Nicolas de la Escalera was extremely successful as a painter in Cuba during his own lifetime, becoming one of its leading artists of the late 18th century. As his own will states, through his professional activities he came to own slaves and properties which he bequeathed to his sisters. He died unmarried on 4 July 1804 aged sixty-nine.³⁹

³⁹ Martínez O'Farrill 2017.



Fig. 13 José Nicolás de la Escalera, *Luis de las Casas*, 1797. Oil on canvas, 211 x 129 cm. Havana, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Cuba.



Fig. 14 José Nicolás de la Escalera, *Antonio Feliú y Centeno*, 1789. Oil on canvas, 84 x 69 cm. Madrid, Museo de América, inv. 238.



Fig. 15 Pedro Núñez de Villavicencio, painter, and Richard Collin, engraver, *Ambrosio Ignacio de Spinola y Guzmán*, 1681. Etching and engraving, 365 x 245 mm. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, sign. IH/9072.

The portrait

As noted here in the summary of his life and activities, the leading role played by Bernardo de Gálvez in the process of American independence led to a request at the early date of 18 December 1779 from the New Orleans agent to the United States Congress, Oliver Pollock, for a portrait of Gálvez to be sent to that institution. It was to be hung there as a tribute to his victories over the British forces and in gratitude for Spain's assistance. The document, housed in the Archivo de Indias, reads as follows:

“Monsieur, New Orléans le 18 x^{bre} 1779,

Par la connoissance que j'ai de vos favorable sentimen envers la / glorieuse cause d'Amerique, que j'ay constamment exprimentée.

En la consequence demande a votre Excellence / de vouloir me permettre de faire tirer votre portrait, que je / prendrai la liberté de faire parvenir a Mon maitre l'honorable / Congrès par la premiee occasion, a fin de perpetuee votre / memorie dans les Etats Units d'Amerique, faisant nombre dans votre rang élevé, comme un soldat et un homme d'honneur, avec / ceux qui ont été d'un particulier service dans la Glorieuse Dispute de la liberté. J'ay l'honneur d'etre avec respect, votre excellence très obeissant et très humble serviteur. Oliver Pollock.» (Appendix 1)

Bernardo de Gálvez must have received the letter in early January 1780 at a time when he was preparing with his forces for the capture of Mobile. The siege started on 14 January and the town was finally taken two months later, on 14 March. It is difficult to imagine that during this



Fig. 16 Joaquín Inza, *José Gálvez, Marquis of Sonora and President of the Council of the Indies*, 1782. Diputación de Málaga.

period the field marshal would have been able to give much thought to Oliver Pollock's request. Just a few months later, in August 1780, Gálvez went to Havana where remained on and off for almost a year and half. Havana was a city with an extremely flourishing economy and one that was home to painters who could fulfil the request for his portrait.

The present portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez was painted in Havana by one of the leading artists of the day who had already completed important commissions to depict prominent figures on the island, as noted above. The work is dated 1781 and both the sitter's clothing and the letter he is holding provide a context for its execution, at a key moment not only for the

subject but also for Spanish power in the Americas. As described above, Bernardo de Gálvez is depicted wearing the uniform of a lieutenant-general, which dates the painting to after his victory at Pensacola, following which the Spanish monarch recognised his heroic conduct by promoting him from field marshal to that rank, the second highest in a military career after that of captain-general, which Gálvez obtained just three years later. On his uniform coat he wears the emblem of the Royal Order of Charles III, thus representing the figure of the monarch who had granted him that high honour in 1777. Finally, the letter from his father, which expresses pride in Gálvez's military victories and emphasises that these are due to God and the king, functions to honour the figure of his parent who had encouraged him in his military career. The result is an apparently simple portrait with a very discreet setting but one filled with symbolic content given that it not only celebrates the figure of Gálvez but also exalts the fatherland, God, Gálvez's father and the king of Spain.

The repertoire of attributes in the painting and its date suggest that it could perhaps be the model devised to be sent to the United States Congress. However, although this is undoubtedly José Nicolás de la Escalera's most successful portrait by some way, it was not comparable to that of the Spanish painters. Aware of this, Bernardo de Gálvez may have sent the portrait to Madrid, the home of his uncle José de Gálvez (1720-1787) who was Secretary of State in the Despacho Universal de Indias [Secretariat of the Indies].⁴⁰ It must have been José de Gálvez who commissioned Joaquín Inza (1736-1811), a specialist portrait painter⁴¹ with close ties to the court who had already painted José de Gálvez's portrait (fig. 16), to produce a new image of his nephew based on Escalera's.

⁴⁰ Santos Arrebola 1999 and Pernía 2013.

⁴¹ Valverde 1979, Urrea 1989 and Núñez Motilva 2015.



Fig. 17 Joaquín Inza, draughtsman, and Manuel Salvador Carmona, engraver, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, 1781. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, sign. IH/3417/1.

The portrait by Inza has not been located, possibly because it was sent back to Havana to fulfil the commission from the American Congress. However, there is an engraving after it by Manuel Salvador Carmona (1734-1820) (fig. 17). The inscription and text on the print explains that it is based on a drawing by Joaquín Inza, that it was painted in 1781 and that it is the true image [*veram Efigiem*] of Bernardo de Gálvez.⁴² Given that Gálvez had been out of Spain since 1776, it is difficult to know how his exact appearance could have

been known there in 1781 other than through him sending his portrait from Latin America.

In Carmona's engraving the figure is almost identical to the one in the portrait by José Nicolás de la Escalera: the rounded face with identical features, the short white wig with a curl on either side, the uniform of lieutenant-general, the pose with the right arm resting on the hip, etc. The only difference is the omission of the entire setting, which is replaced by a plain background, a device commonly found in

⁴² The inscription in the border of the image reads: «Exmo. Duci D. D. Bernardo de Gálvez, Occidentalis florite debelatori: Hanc ipsius veram Efigiem amica grata Manus, que faciebat dicavit». Carrete 1989, p. 125, no. 186.



Fig. 18 Bartolomé Vázquez, *Portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez*, 1782. Etching and engraving, 177 x 120 mm. Biblioteca Nacional de España, sig. IH/3417/2.

Hispanic portraits of the period and one intended to emphasise the importance of the sitter. This compositional device is to be seen not only in portraits by Joaquín Inza but also by Mariano Salvador Maella and even Francisco de Goya. With the omission of the side table on the right-hand side of the composition the sitter now holds a baton of command rather than the letter and has his hat under his arm, both elements that emphasise his position of authority.

Carmona's print was intended to disseminate the image of the Spanish hero and victor of Pensacola at the court in Madrid, hence the description of him as "*Occidentalis florite debelatori*" [conqueror of West Florida].

Carmona's print provided the basis for another one executed the following year, 1782, by the printmaker Bartolomé Vázquez (1749-1802) with the aim of further promoting the figure of the Spanish hero, now depicted bust-length (fig. 18).

The present portrait is thus not the one sent to Congress given that this one very probably remained in Madrid in the possession of José de Gálvez, but it may be the modello for the one that was sent. On 8 May 1783 Oliver Pollock wrote to the president of Congress to inform him that he had the portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez in his possession and that he hoped he would accept it for display in the building:

«Sir,

Your Excellency will have observed in the narrative. I had lately the honor to submit to your Perusal the signal Attachment of Don Bernardo de Gálvez, Gov^r of Louisiana to the Interest of the United States and the repeated services he rendered to their cause. These sentiments & services have imprest on my Bosom the liveliest sense of Gratitude.

Penetrated with respectful Attachment I requested & obtained his Excellency's Portrait with the view of presenting it to the United States.

I Flattered myself that the representation of so early & so warm a friend could be agreeable to Congress and under that conception I pray leave now Sir to Solicite their Acceptance of it. With perfect respect I have the honor to be your Excell^y most obed^t and Alible Serv^t. Oliver Pollock / Philad^a 8th May 1783» (Appendix 2).

The portrait was accepted the following day, as recorded in the letter from Elías Boudinot, president of Congress, to Pollock, a document which, like the previous one, is housed in the National Archives in Washington:

«Philadelphia, May 9th 1783,

Sir, I have the honor to inform your in answer to your favour of the 7th ins^t that Congress have cheerfully accepted the portrait of Don Bernardo de Gálvez late Governor of Louisiana in consideration of the early & zealous friendship of that Gentlemen frequently manifested in behalf of these States, and have directed me me [sic] to cause it to be hung up in the Hall of the Presidents House.

It is with Pleasure I make this communication.» (Appendix 3)

No trace remains of that portrait and its fate is not known. When the matter was investigated in 2013 no sign of it was found in the Congress building in the United States and for this reason a copy of a portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez was commissioned.⁴³ The portrait copied for that purpose is the one attributed to the royal portraitist Mariano Salvador Maella (1739-1819),⁴⁴ a work that is very similar to the present image by José Nicolás de la Escalera in compositional terms with the exception of the elimination of the background. It even includes the letter held in his right hand, written by his father Matías de Gálvez (fig. 19). This suggests that Escalera's painting was copied on more than one occasion in Spain with the aim of disseminating Bernardo de Gálvez's image.

The face, however, does not correspond to any of the earlier portraits of this sitter and is rather



Fig. 19 Attributed to Mariano Salvador Maella, *Bernardo de Gálvez*, 1784. Malaga, De Haya-Gálvez family.

an idealised one, much younger and more refined than Gálvez's chubby one, who was also shorter in height (fig. 20), as revealed in the following comparative image showing the faces from the two known portraits of this subject. It is evident that all have shared features not to be found in the one attributed to Maella, which has sadly become the most widely disseminated image of Bernardo de Gálvez.

⁴³ In 2014 a copy of this portrait by the Malaga painter Carlos Monserrate was sent to the United States Congress and was hung in the Capitol on 9 December of that year. Olmedo y Cabrera 2022, p. 114.

⁴⁴ According to Olmedo y Cabrera 2022, p. 92, the attribution of this portrait to Mariano Salvador Maella was made by Juan José Luna, the late expert on French painting at the Museo del Prado. However, José Manuel de la Mano, the expert on Maella, who has examined the painting, does not consider it to be by that artist, painter to Charles III, for which reason he did not include it in his monograph on the artist, see De la Mano 2011. For her part, in her article on this portrait Soledad Cid González acknowledges that "the attribution to Maella continues to give rise to some doubts". Cid González 2016, p. 101.



Fig. 19 Comparative image of Bernardo de Gálvez's face in chronological order. The face at the lower left corner is the one in the portrait attributed to Maella.

Conclusion

The portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez presented here was executed in Havana by the Cuban painter José Nicolás de la Escalera in 1781. The reappearance of this image has made it possible to complete and contextualise the history of the request made to Gálvez in 1779 for a portrait of him to be hung in the American Congress.

The present portrait was executed after the Spanish military officer and hero's victory at Pensacola, the moment when he was promoted to lieutenant-general (the youngest officer to achieve this rank), as his uniform clearly indicates. Bernardo de Gálvez had been contacted in late 1779 to provide a portrait of himself for the United States Congress (Appendix 1) with the intention of singling out and celebrating his role in support for the cause of American independence. Due to the various military operations in which Gálvez was involved it

was not until 1781, when he spent several periods in Havana, first waiting for funds and ships then resting from battle after the victory at Pensacola, that it was possible to undertake the creation of the work. Although the finest portrait by the Cuban painter José Nicolás de la Escalera, Gálvez's image was not of the level of those executed in Spain by painters close to the court. For this reason Gálvez sent Escalera's portrait to be used as the model by a court painter, who would create a more appropriate image to hang in the American Congress. Thanks to the engraving of 1781 by Manuel Salvador Carmona (see fig. 17), which has an inscription stating that it is the "true image" of the hero, we know that in general terms the portrait followed Escalera's, with the same face, uniform and pose. It is also stated on the print that the artist chosen to paint Bernardo de Gálvez's portrait (subsequently followed by Carmona) was Joaquín Inza, who had close connections with the court.

Carmona's engraving served to disseminate Bernardo de Gálvez's image in Spain and other engravers such as Bartolomé Vázquez produced further prints based on Carmona's model (see fig. 18). With regard to the portrait by Joaquín Inza, it must have been sent to Havana then after the military engagement in the Bahamas Bernardo de Gálvez sent it to Oliver Pollock, the American agent who had requested his image. As recorded in Pollock's letter of May 1783 (Appendix 2), the portrait arrived and was accepted the next day by the president of Congress to form part of the decorations of the building (Appendix 3). Its present whereabouts are unknown.

With regard to the present portrait, it must have remained in Spain, probably in the possession of José de Gálvez, Secretary of State for the Indies and Bernardo's uncle, who would have received it and been entrusted with finding a portraitist to produce a more elevated depiction of the sitter. José himself had also been portrayed by Joaquín Inza in 1782 (see fig. 16). José Nicolás de la Escalera's depiction served as a model for other canvases that continued to disseminate the image of Bernardo de Gálvez in Spain, including the work attributed to Mariano Salvador Maella (see fig. 19) which, although featuring a very idealised face, follows the prototype of the one executed by Escalera in Havana.

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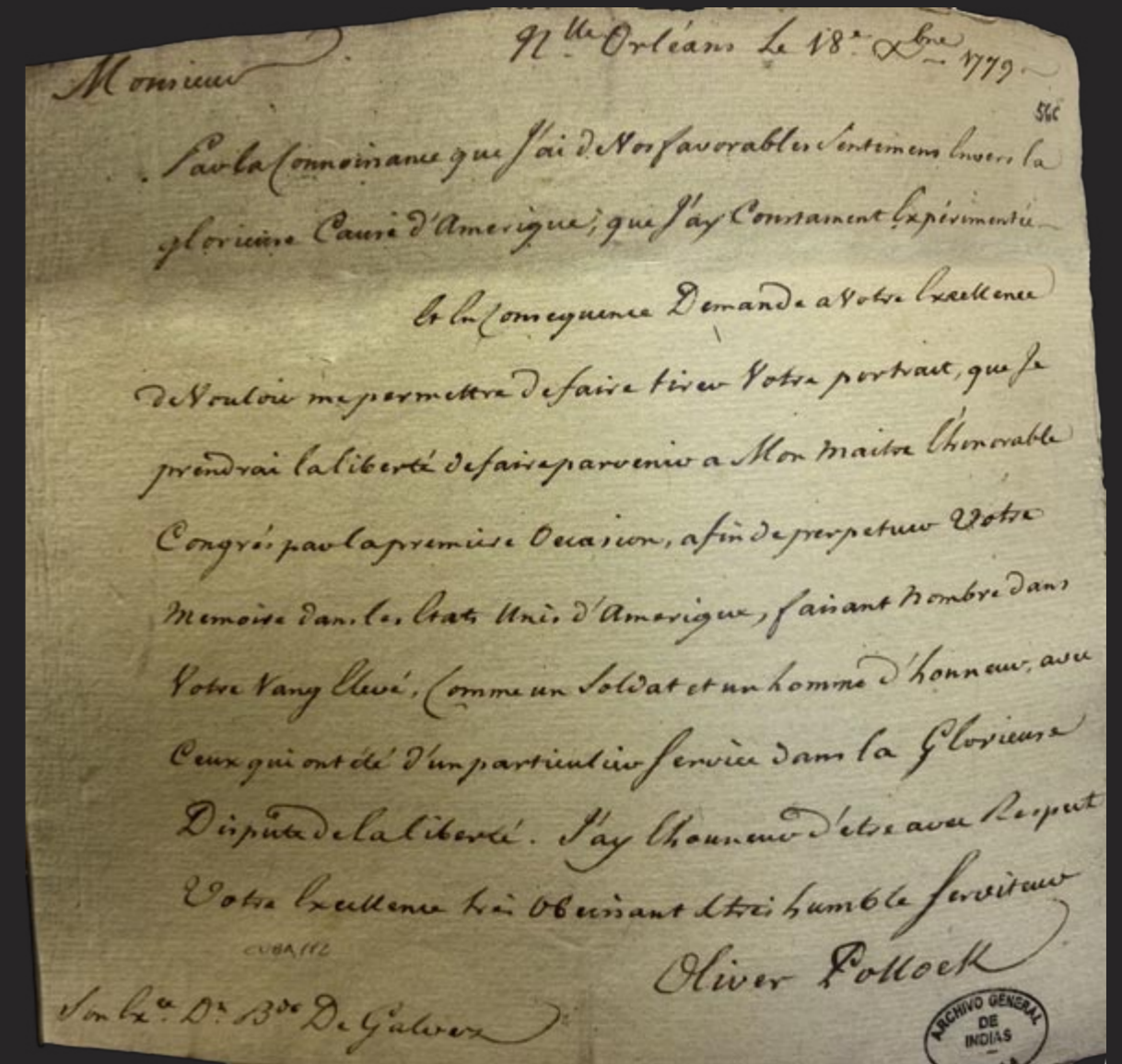
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Documentary appendix



Appendix 1. Letter from Oliver Pollock, dated December 18, 1779, requesting a portrait of Bernardo Gálvez. Document reproduced in Olmedo and Cabrera 2017, p. 112

Sir
 Your Excellency will have observed in the Narrative
 I had lately the honor to submit to your Perusal the
 signal Attachment of Gen. Bernardo de Galvez
 Gov. of Louisiana to the Interest of the United
 States and the repeated services he rendered to their
 Cause - These Sentiments & Services have impress'd
 on my Bosen the liveliest sense of Gratitude
 Penetrated with respectfull Attachment
 I requested & obtained his Excellency's Portrait with
 the view of presenting it to the United States.
 I flatter myself that the representation of
 so early & so warm a friend could be agreeable to
 Congress, and under that Conception I pray
 leave now for to Solicite their Acceptance
 of it -
 With perfect respect, I have the honor
 to be
 Your Excellency's most Obedt and
 Humble Serv^t - *Oliver Pollock*
 Philad^a 8th May 1783
 His Excellency the President of Congress

Appendix 2. Letter from Oliver Pollock dated May 8, 1783, announcing that he has a portrait of Bernardo Gálvez that he wishes to donate to the United States Congress. Document reproduced in Olmedo and Cabrera 2017, p. 114

1783
 May 9th
 Oliver Pollock Esq^r 186
 Philadelphia May 9th 1783
 Sir,
 I have the honor to inform you
 in answer to your favour of the 7th inst^t that Con-
 gress have cheerfully accepted the portrait of Don
 Bernar^d De Galvez late Govern^r of Louisiana
 in consideration of the early & Zealous friend-
 ship of that Gentleman frequently manifested in
 behalf of these United States, and have directed me
 to cause it to be hung up in the Hall of the
 Presidents House
 It is with Pleasure I make this
 communication -
 and am &c - -
O P

Appendix 3. Letter dated May 9, 1783, from the President of Congress accepting to hang the portrait of Bernardo de Gálvez that was sent. Document reproduced in Olmedo and Cabrera 2017, p. 115

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