

99. Portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Miguel Cabrera. c. 1750 C.E. Oil on canvas.

Form: Realistic

Content

Function: Portrait

Context

Artist: Miguel Cabrera

Inspiration = previous portraits of Sor Juana and the portrait of St. Jerome (see below); because this portrait was painted after her death

He wanted to portray her as a religious symbol as well as an intellectual. He was portraying her as a hero (Neoclassical* ideal) but not in the traditional sense

*Neoclassicism = a movement that drew inspiration from classical antiquity

Ways she is presented as an intellectual:

direct eye contact, with a calm and intelligent face

her hand turns the page, showing she is in the midst of learning and growing her intellect

her quill pens remind us of her writings

similar to images of St. Jerome (the patron of her religious order); seated at a desk surrounded by images of learning



Red curtains are typical in elite, higher status portraits

Books communicate her deep love of learning:

the book she is reading is by St. Jerome

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

Religious garments convey the deep connection she had with her faith:

typical nun attire of 18th c. Mexico

wearing rosary (prayer) beads which she actively playing with

large medallion under her chin called an escudo; showing the annunciation



Sor Juana was considered one of the first feminist of the Americas because she joined a religious order and became a nun in order to pursue her intellectual interests

Engaged in debate with philosophers and scientists of the time

Instead of marrying, she decided to pursue her intellectual passion in a Carmelite convent before converting to the Jeroimite order (more freedoms)

Despite being a nun, she defended her rights as a woman, which eventually drew concern from the church

Church forced Juana to sell her library and give up her pursuits, and she was made to sign a document declaring she would cease her education

After being denied her intellectual abilities...Sor Juana served as a nurse in an infirmary; she caught a disease and passed away