



Francisco Leopoldo Reiter

Oviedo, 1736 – Oviedo, 1813

Our Lady of Covadonga

Circa 1774 – 1777

Oil on canvas

120 × 95 cm

This painting is of extraordinary historical importance, as it depicts the very **first *Santina***, the image of Our Lady of **Covadonga** as it would have looked in the eighteenth century, when the image was kept inside the niche of the silver reredos that presided over the altar of the Church of the *Santa Cueva*. The figure is shown in a strictly front-facing position, holding an ear of wheat – a reference to the fields of Asturias – in her right hand and cradling the infant Jesus with her left. Her incarnation as **Our Lady of the Battles** is revealed through the inclusion of the angels on either side; two of the celestial figures are crowning her, while the two below are bearing **symbols of the victory over the Muslims**, with standards and other spoils taken from the vanquished enemy.

This painting presents a faithful reproduction of the sacred image of the Virgin Mary, and therein lies its great importance: **it was produced shortly before the fire that destroyed the original sanctuary in 1777**, along with everything else we see in this painting: the sacred image, the jewels that encrusted the carving, and the niche in which it was kept. As such, this painting is the most reliable record we have of the original votive image.

Additionally, this artwork has an extraordinary backstory: it was discovered only recently, in 2001, in a storage box in the sacristy of the parish church of Santa María de **Muriellos** in the municipality of **Quirós**. Upon its discovery, the painting was brought to this museum, and underwent an exhaustive process of examination and restoration. Today, it is an essential resource that provides us with a better understanding of the history of Covadonga.