

THE LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATOR SIMÓN BOLÍVAR AT THE MUSEUM OF ART IN BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA: TEN IMAGES BY FIVE ARTISTS

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ABSTRACT

This review compiles and analyzes a set of ten images related to the Latin-American Liberator, Simón Bolívar, that were never published as a single study. These ten portraits re-imagined by five different artists: José María Espinoza (1796-1883); Henry Riballier (1802-1889); W. Holl - M. N. Bate (1807-1871); Sergio Trujillo Magnenat (1911-1999); and Carlos García Arango (1930-2002), remain archived at the Museum of Art of the Bank of the Republic of Colombia in Bogotá. This study describes and explains the distinct motifs that are depicted in all of these reinterpretations of the image of Simón Bolívar.

KEYWORDS

Simón Bolívar | Latin-America | Museum of Art | Bank of the Republic of Colombia | Bogotá

This study focuses on the selection of a group of ten specific portraits of Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), that are archived at the Museum of Art of the Bank of the Republic in Bogotá, Colombia. The main objective and interest of this investigation is to reorganize and put together these ten images about Bolívar by five different artists while describing and explaining the motives behind these paintings that re-imagined and emulated the Liberator during certain moments of his life. This investigation analyses the most important events related to Bolívar that were indeed conceived in an artistic and cultural fashion by five artists that not only painted the visage and the body of the Liberator, but also contributed with the diversity and the multicultural perception of the iconographic representation of the founding father of Colombia, Venezuela, Perú, Ecuador and Bolivia. The selection of these ten portraits has been organized in a chronological way using the same order as the one kept by the archive of the Museum of Art of the Bank of the Republic in Bogotá, Colombia. Furthermore, it is important to mention that this collection of images did not pertain to any specific exhibition or gallery dedicated or related to Simón Bolívar, on the contrary, these images were either rescued by the Museum or were received as donations during different years. These peculiar creations are preserved by the Museum under a category related to the image of Simón Bolívar including the name of each specific artist that contributed with this sort of visual anthology about the Liberator. It is also important to mention that these portraits were never compiled nor published as a whole study. Lastly, this investigation brings a unique and fresh contribution that opens new doors within the Bolivarian iconographic scope since most of these portraits still remain unknown, and curiously, have not been disseminated as a complete or partial compilation dedicated to the images of Simón Bolívar that are available at the Museum of Art of the Bank of the Republic in Bogotá, Colombia.

The collection at the Museum of Art of the Bank of the Republic in Bogotá, compiles an interesting assortment of different images of the Latin American Liberator, Simón Bolívar. This peculiar anthology contains the works of five artists that re-imagined the figure of Simón Bolívar in different events that have something to do with the prolific life of the Liberator. The painters: José María Espinoza (1796-1883); Henry Riballier (1802-1889); W. Holl - M. N. Bate (1807-1871); Sergio Trujillo Magnenat (1911-1999); and Carlos García Arango (1930-2002), created images of Simón Bolívar that immortalized different visages and corporal representations of the Latin American hero during his life as a man and as a politician. In first place, we explore two images made by the Colombian artist, José María Espinoza (Uribe, 1983: 96-99), who met and sketched Simón Bolívar in person in a miniature elaborated with aquarelles on a small piece of ivory. The portrait depicting the Liberator with crossed arms wearing his uniform, his golden buckle with his initials and his spade hanging on his waist, is registered in the record as the Simón Bolívar by José María Espinoza, made somewhere between 1800 and 1899. This piece was received by the Museum on December 1, 1997 [fig. 01].



Fig. 01• Simón Bolívar by José María Espinoza. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>

The second image by José María Espinoza, is an ink drawing on paper, showing a sketch of an old Liberator wearing a coat on top of a vest. The datum of this draft shows the date of creation somewhere between 1800 and 1899, and it says it was received by the Museum on August 3, 1989 [fig. 02]. The third image of Bolívar was drew on paper by Henry Riballier

in the year 1880, and it depicts a Liberator with a confident expression also posing with crossed arms with his spade hanging on his right side. This piece was received by the Museum on December 31, 2009 [fig. 03]. Completed in 1823 in London, the fourth figure is an engraved (Sánchez, 1916, 28-29) image over paper made by W. Holl - M. N Bate. This distinct

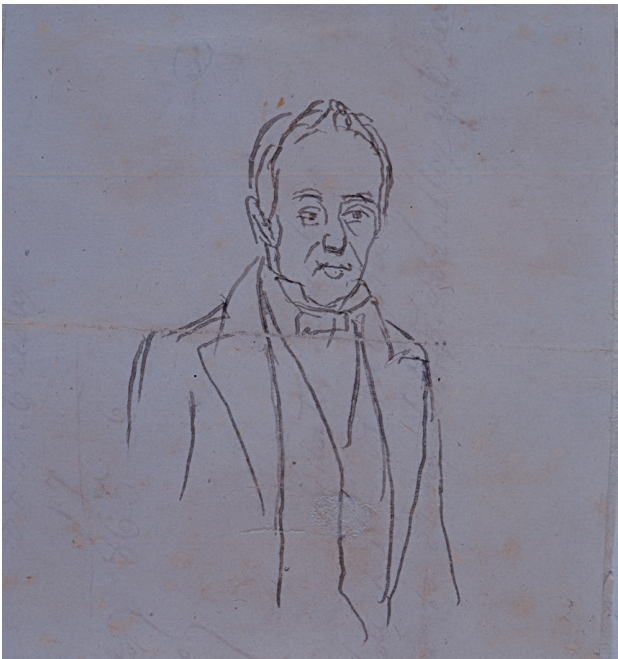


Fig. 02. Simón Bolívar by José María Espinoza. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>



Fig. 03. Simón Bolívar by Henry Riballier. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>

Bolívar poses with his long sideburns and a musketeer moustache while wearing his elegant suit of General and his medal of honor sent to him by a member of the family of American president, George Washington. This artistic representation of the Liberator does not have a date of creation in the record of the archive, and it was donated to the Museum in December 29, 1994 [fig. 04].

The next artist is Sergio Trujillo Magnenat, a Colombian painter of a recognized trajectory primarily known for his paintings, sketches, murals and a series of diverse modern corporal images used by the Colombian government during the commemoration of the Bolivarian Olympic games celebrated in Bogotá in the year 1938. Trujillo Magnenat also created a personal study of a sequence of portraits dedicated to the statue of the Liberator unveiled in "la plaza mayor de Bogotá". This collection was finished in 1980, archived at the Museum on June 9, 1980, and it has a total of eight paintings, nonetheless, only four of these figures depict the image of Simón Bolívar, and these are the ones we are including on this study. The first image revisits an important moment of Bolívar's life, "El Juramento en el Monte Sacro" (the oath of Monte Sacro). Bolívar can be observed raising his right hand surrounded by marble monuments simulating the moment in where the Liberator sworn in front of his mentor, Simón Rodríguez, that he was going to

fight for the freedom of the people of Venezuela and Latin America [fig. 05]. The second image from Sergio Trujillo Magnenat, shows the Liberator riding his white horse while piloting the campaign to go across the Andes. Bolívar can be seen in a vigorous shape dressed in a red coat with white pants and black boots while leading his troops in front of snowy mountain that depicts the journey of the crossing of the Andes [fig. 06]. The third image from the Sergio Trujillo Magnenat collection, is a peculiar representation that shows Simón Bolívar with darker skin accompanied by black slaves and Indians symbolizing the moment in where Bolívar abolished slavery. The painting is also accompanied by five white doves that fly over the slaves that with arms wide open thank the Liberator for his gratitude [fig. 07]. The fourth and last image from the Sergio Trujillo Magnenat's compilation, represents a moment in where the statue of the Liberator Simón Bolívar receives an adoration from a group of naked people that are paying tribute to a symbolic representation of Bolívar [fig. 08].

The next artist that painted two images of Simón Bolívar also archived at the Museum of Art in Bogotá, is Carlos García Arango. With a modern technique using oil on paper, García Arango depicts a different prototype of Bolívar emulating previous iconographic representations of the visage of the Liberator. First, a painting without a title finished in 1984, and received

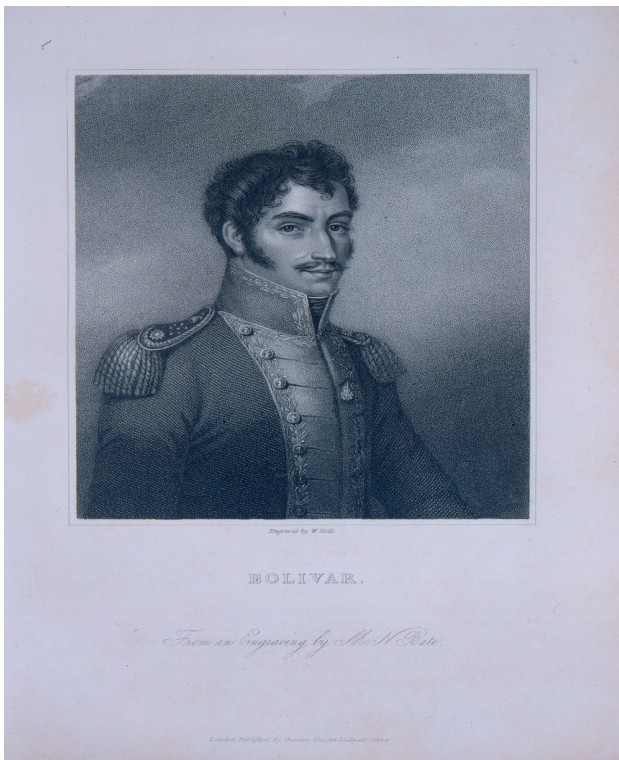


Fig. 04• Simón Bolívar by W. Holl - M. N. Bate. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>

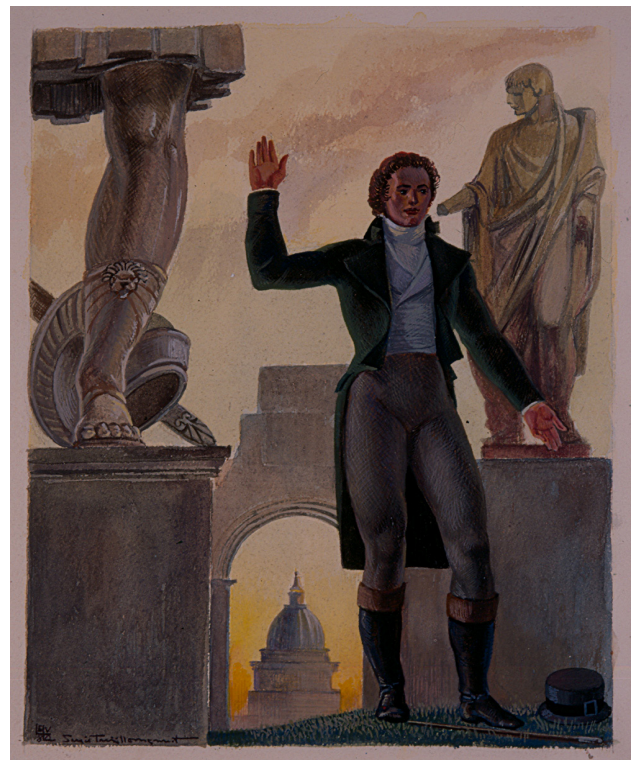


Fig. 05• Simón Bolívar by Sergio Trujillo Magnenat. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>

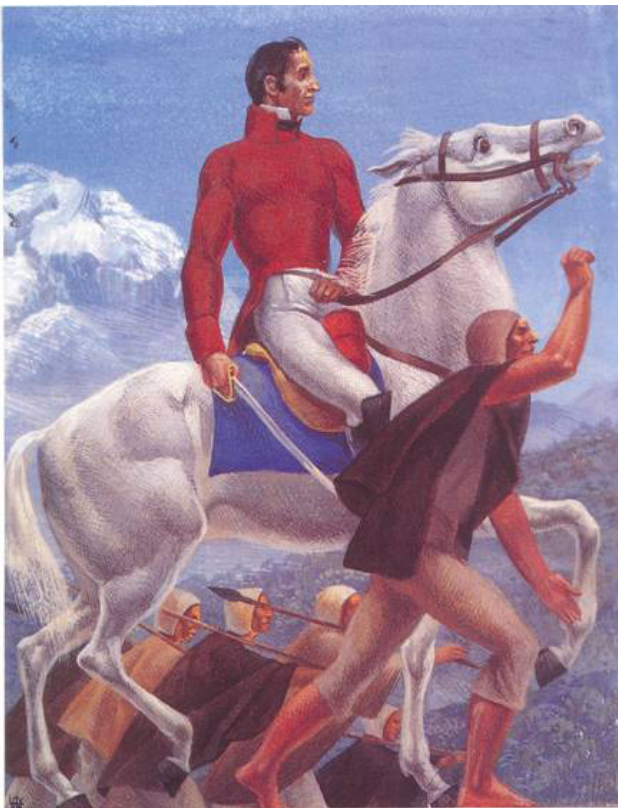


Fig. 06• Simón Bolívar by Sergio Trujillo Magnenat. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>



Fig. 07• Simón Bolívar by Sergio Trujillo Magnenat. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>



Fig. 08. Simón Bolívar by Sergio Trujillo Magnenat. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>

in the collection in May, 1, 1985, shows a very peculiar image of Bolívar mostly related to the bronze statues that reflect the bust of the Latin American hero. This particular image uses dark blue and black colors to give a sort of deepness to what it seems to be a hall in where Bolívar's visage can be seen in a duplicated fashion simulating the existence of two Liberators, the man and the myth. The monument seems to be resting on a pedestal while being admired by a multitude of people gathered in front of the dual Simón Bolívar [fig. 09]. The second painting from Carlos García Arango, does not have a title nor a date of creation, however, it was received by the Museum in May, 1, 1985. This oil on paper has a very different approach to the image of Bolívar, and it is a bit difficult to interpret the situation portrayed, nonetheless, the face of the Liberator appears in a small portion of the whole painting and it looks like one of the images painted by Peruvian artist, José Gil de Castro, in the year 1825 [fig. 10].

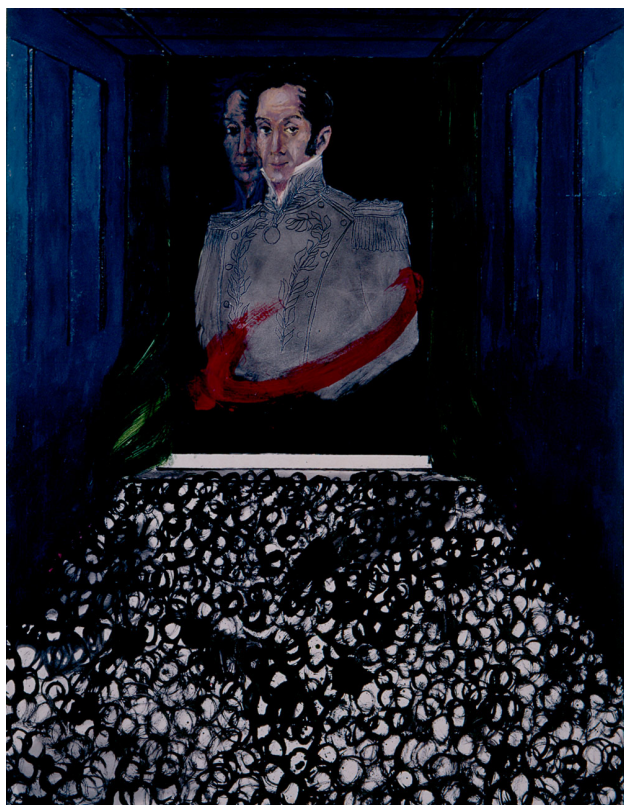


Fig. 09. Simón Bolívar by Carlos García Arango. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>



Fig. 10. Simón Bolívar by Carlos García Arango. <http://banrepcultural.org/coleccion-de-arte-banco-de-la-republica>

All of these ten portraits re-imagined by five different artists offer a quite unusual image of the Liberator depicted in many dissimilar ways. The richness of the contents of these images, opens without a doubt a new path in the investigation of the Bolivarian iconography inviting the reader to observe an emblematic and an atypical representation of the popular physiognomy of the Latin-American Liberator, Simón Bolívar.

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