

Francisco de Zurbarán and the Mechanisms of Business Travel in the Spanish Empire.

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During the seventeenth century, the viceregal city of Lima was an important center of trade that attracted the rich and powerful. All the major monastic orders had foundations there and when they came to commissioning works of art for their churches they often looked to Spain to supply paintings, sculpture and other decorative and practical objects. But how did these commissions find their way to Spain and how were the products carried to their destinations? The answers to these questions are not as straightforward as they might appear as an examination of the career of the Sevillian painter Francisco de Zurbarán reveals.

This paper examines some of the logistics of shipping paintings across the Atlantic by looking at several primary documents. These include a commission Zurbarán completed for the convent of La Encarnación and a lawsuit the artist filed against the captain of a ship who was responsible for the destruction of some of the artist's works. These rarely examined documents reveal important details about how risk and liability were managed during the long journey paintings took between Sevillian studio and Limeñan convent church. Zurbarán's participation in the overseas art trade, which is documented from 1636 to 1659, suggests that despite the risks and some set-backs artists found such ventures reasonably profitable.