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COLNAGHI STUDIES  
JOURNAL – 16  
MARCH 2025



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*Colnaghi Studies Journal* is published biannually by the Colnaghi Foundation. Its purpose is to publish texts on significant pre-twentieth-century artworks that have recently come to light or about which new research is underway, as well as on the history of their collection. Texts about artworks should place them within the broader context in which they were produced, provide visual analysis and comparative images.

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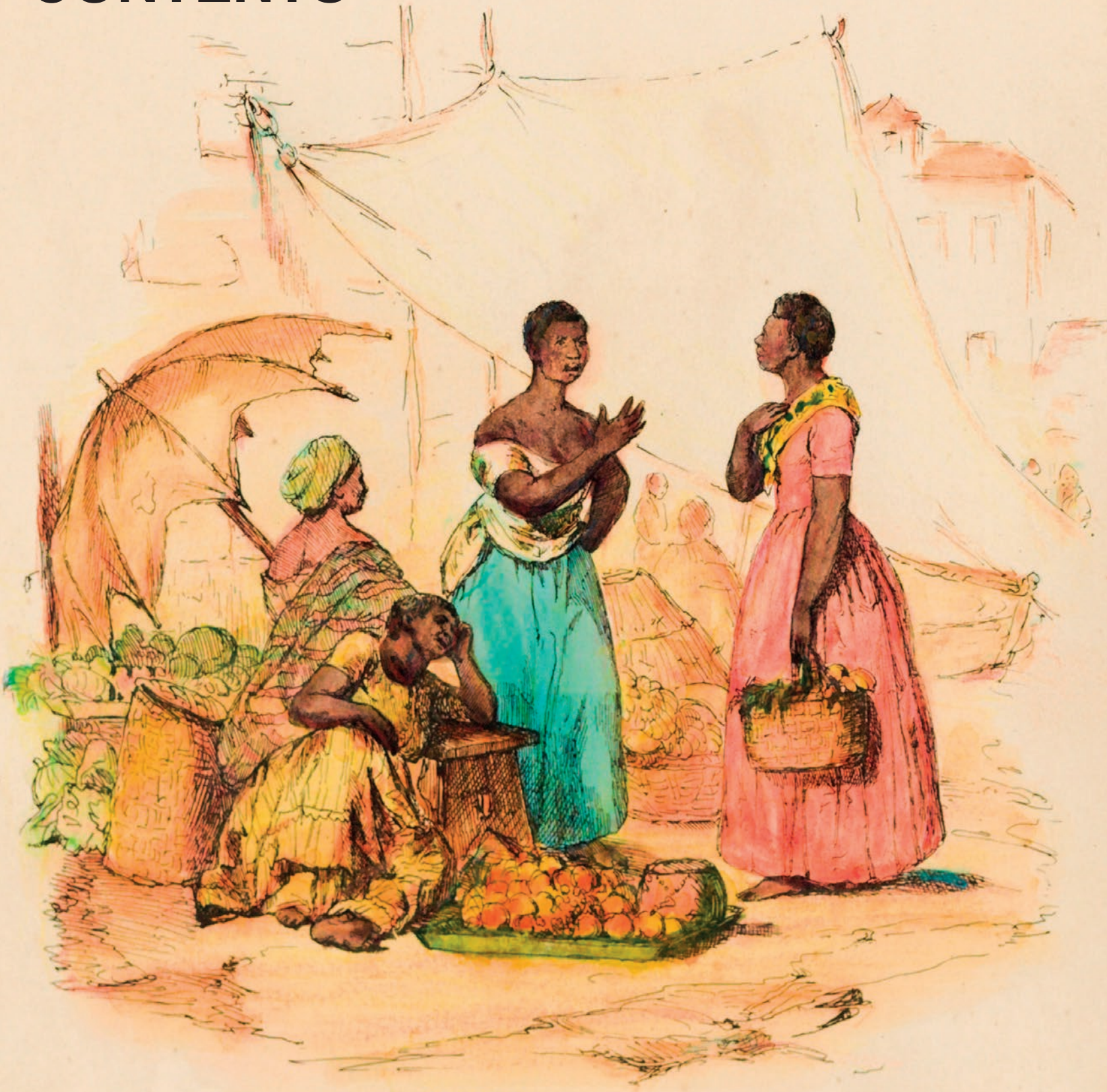
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# Images of fear and desire: the Brazilian *ibirapema* and indigenous women in the sixteenth-century European imagination

VIVIEN KOGUT LESSA DE SÁ

## INDIGENOUS OBJECTS AND EUROPEAN IMAGINATION

This paper is part of a broader research project into how indigenous art and material culture challenged existing European epistemologies in the sixteenth century. More specifically, it investigates how representations of indigenous artefacts both reflected and shaped European perceptions of indigenous Brazilians in the first century of contact. It seeks to explore how such artefacts – taken, bartered, smuggled – were made to fit different frameworks of understanding and how they served as conduits for European desire, fear, and imagination.

Cultural biography offers us useful tools to examine the way alien objects are culturally redefined and used by the many people involved in their histories of relocation.<sup>1</sup> Objects, under this perspective, carry multilayered meanings as they travel across time and space; they accumulate the different purposes ascribed to them by the many hands and eyes which come into contact with them. Considered this way, objects brought from the New World and their subsequent use as visual imprints of otherness invite us to consider the kind of attraction they exerted on a European audience. If an early modern Christian mentality understood exotic objects as micro-metaphors of God’s creation, it was necessary to inscribe them into a meaningful interpretation of the expanding world.<sup>2</sup> From our vantage point in the twenty-first century, we

cannot resist considering various questions surrounding the use of indigenous objects in sixteenth-century Europe. Why were some artefacts chosen over others to feature in iconographies of the Americas? Did these objects, despite their foreignness, reflect existing European traditions? What purpose did these “tokens of indigeneity” serve in constructing a certain image of otherness?

Indeed, as the growing influx of *Americana* furnished burgeoning private collections in sixteenth-century Europe, so did New World artefacts begin featuring in visual materials created by printers to accompany travel accounts and itineraries.<sup>3</sup> Gradually, an iconography of the New World began to emerge, which tried to visually translate indigenous exoticism to a domestic audience keen to vicariously experience overseas adventures. In these images, exotic objects often featured alongside the indigenous body, already considered shocking for its nakedness, body paint, and feather ornaments. Taken from their original context and transformed into tokens of indigeneity, these objects metonymically reinforced certain qualities such as craftsmanship and nobility, in the case of feather ornaments, or savagery and violence, in the case of exotic weapons. In either case, the use of indigenous artefacts in visual representations of the New World reveals deep epistemological crises elicited by colonial encounters in the Americas, as this paper hopes to demonstrate.



Fig. 1 / Sebastian Münster, *Tabula novarum insularum, quas diuersis respectibus Occidentales & Indianas uocant*, from *Cosmographia* (Basel: 1540).



In this context, indigenous objects found in early visual representations of Brazil can offer us a window, not so much into indigenous culture, but rather into early modern European anxieties and fantasies about Amerindians. In this specific case, we examine how visual representations of indigenous Brazilians and their artefacts tend to project a very specific image of femininity, one bound with early modern European anxieties about women and their perceived resistance to mechanisms of control. The main argument here is that, in these visual representations, indigenous women often feature as epitomes of dangerous savagery, a stereotype made more compelling by the presence of objects symbolizing violence and bestiality.

#### TUPI ARTEFACTS

This discussion about objects and images transiting between cultures casts long shadows. It is well known how featherwork obtained in Mexico and Brazil elicited a particular kind of fascination in sixteenth-century Europe. Exquisitely crafted objects, such as Mesoamerican feather mosaics and Brazilian feather mantles, soon became objects of admiration and desire for kings and clergymen alike, who would collect them and occasionally even wear them.<sup>4</sup> As a result, several of these unique objects are currently housed in European museums or private collections, leading to ongoing discussions involving legitimacy and cultural appropriation. Only recently there was widespread media coverage both in Brazil and abroad around a Tupinambá feather mantle that the National Museum of Denmark returned to Brazil after almost 400 years.<sup>5</sup> The sacred object is one of eleven mantles held in European collections since the seventeenth century,<sup>6</sup> despite relentless

campaigning for their return by descendants of the early Tupinambá living in communities in Brazil.

The Tupinambá, whose traditional artwork has been at the centre of these disputes, are a branch of the Tupi, the predominant indigenous group living on the coast of Brazil at the time the first Portuguese arrived in 1500. The original Tupi were subdivided into myriad tribes often at war with each other, though they shared several linguistic and cultural traits. Since they were the first indigenous group with which European travellers interacted on the coast of Brazil, the Tupi bore the early brunt of systematic colonial violence and disease. For this same reason the earliest indigenous artefacts brought to Europe from Brazil were produced by the Tupi.

This paper focuses on one such Tupi object, the *ibirapema*, a ceremonial wooden club which was used by tribes practising traditional sacrificial rituals at the time of the first contacts with Europeans. A tool as well as an artefact, the *ibirapema* was painstakingly prepared and decorated prior to being used to ritually execute a prisoner by smashing his skull, before he was roasted and cannibalized. But, unlike the feather mantle with its striking decorative elements, the *ibirapema* became an early token of indigenous savagery in early European representations of America. Like other Tupi artefacts taken from their original contexts, the *ibirapema* was deeply resignified as it was included into visual representations of the newly discovered Amerindians. Emptied of its ritualistic meaning and transformed from object to image, the *ibirapema* soon became a symbol of female danger in early printed images of America in circulation in Europe.

#### THE *IBIRAPEMA* IN EARLY EUROPEAN ACCOUNTS AND IMAGES

The *ibirapema* appears already in the earliest accounts of Brazil, though not in an obvious way. It possibly features for the first time in the letter written by the Portuguese Pero Vaz de Caminha from the shores of Brazil, officially documenting the Portuguese appropriation of the new lands.<sup>7</sup> Having arrived on the coast of present-day Bahia in April 1500, a fleet of Portuguese took official possession of what they believed was an island, and Caminha, in his capacity as the official scribe, offered the Portuguese king a detailed description of the land and the people they encountered. These were a group of local Tupinikim with whom the Portuguese peacefully interacted for almost ten days. Caminha's letter remains the earliest document about indigenous Brazilians as well as one of the first records of material exchanges between Europeans and local tribes. Despite the disappointment of finding the Tupinikim shockingly lacking in material possessions (as well as clothes), Caminha carefully noted objects and ornaments he saw. On one occasion, he witnessed an elderly tribesman approaching the Portuguese captain and delivering a long oration, which the Portuguese found amusing given that they could not understand a single word of it. Caminha noted how, all the while, the old man held “an oar” in his hand. Sheila Hue, in her edition of Caminha's letter, believes this “oar” to be in fact an *ibirapema*, and a sign of the man's importance and distinctive position within the tribe.<sup>8</sup> However, due to Portugal's strict policy of secrecy with regards to its new overseas possessions, Caminha's letter was not made public.

Instead, it was the letters written by the Florentine Amerigo Vespucci which offered the first descriptions of Brazil and “Brazilians” to a wider readership in Europe.<sup>9</sup>

These two letters, which purported to describe Vespucci's visits to the coast of Brazil in the early years of the sixteenth century (among other travels), were to sediment a specific view of indigenous Brazilians. This view underscored what was perceived as most exotic among the local inhabitants: their nakedness, their apparent lack of social hierarchy, and their cannibalistic practices. This provided the basis for a stereotype that would last through the century and beyond. The instant success of Vespucci's letters in print made his name not only indelibly associated with the newly discovered continent, but also sedimented the perception of indigenous Brazilians as savage cannibals, as Surekha Davies has convincingly argued.<sup>10</sup>

Vespucci visited the coast of Brazil in 1501 aboard a Portuguese fleet and penned his two letters from Lisbon; the earliest of these, popularly known as “Mundus Novus”, was written in 1503.<sup>11</sup> By 1550 “Mundus Novus” had run forty editions, according to Edward Gaylord Bourne.<sup>12</sup> Almost immediately his description of what became known as the fourth part of the world was reprinted in various languages, becoming an editorial success. A second letter, written in 1504, expanded on the information printed earlier, providing sensationalist details about the peoples Vespucci claimed to have encountered in the “New World”.<sup>13</sup> In this letter Vespucci narrates an incident that happened while the Portuguese had anchored somewhere on the northeast coast of present-day Brazil. The contact with the local tribe had been initially fraught until one day, Vespucci tells us, a group of women came down to the beach and began to coax the Portuguese ashore. After much deliberation, the Portuguese decided to send “a very agile and valiant youth” who, immediately upon setting foot on land, was surrounded by the





Fig. 2 / Johann Froschauer, woodcut depicting cannibalism in Amerigo Vespucci's *Mundus Novus* (Augsburg: 1505).

Fig. 3 / Anonymous, *Of the newe la[n]des and of ye people founde by the messengers of the kynge of porty[n]gale named Emanuel*, 1520, engraving, 30.1 x 45.6 cm, London, British Library.



women who began “to touch and feel him, wondering at him exceedingly”. Thus distracted the poor man failed to see “a woman come from the hill, carrying a great stick in her hand. When she came to where our Christian stood, she raised it, and gave him such a blow that he was felled to the ground. The other women immediately took him by the feet, and dragged him towards the hill.” What follows ties in with various later accounts which emphasized cannibalistic practices among the Tupi: the Portuguese watched in horror as “they all ran away towards the hill, where the women were still tearing the Christian to pieces. At a great fire they had made they roasted him before our eyes, showing us many pieces, and then eating them.”<sup>14</sup> It is not difficult to see how the “great stick” used to execute the young Portuguese sailor was used in the same way as the *ibirapema* in the ritual preceding the cannibal feast. What is surprising is to find it in the hands of an indigenous woman for, as far as all other extant accounts go, the ritual execution of prisoners was the prerogative of men, as we shall see below.

Vespucci's letters seem to have set the view that would prevail for most of the colonial period in relation to Brazil and its inhabitants. It is not surprising, then, to find from the early decades of the sixteenth century, geographical representations of cannibalism firmly situated in Brazil, as in Sebastian Münster's map of 1540 (fig. 1).<sup>15</sup> But one of the most enduring elements of Vespucci's account was the connection between cannibal violence and femininity, which would soon find expression in visual representations of Amerindians. This is the case with what is believed to be the first representation of cannibalism in the New World, a print made in Germany to accompany one of the Vespucci's letters (fig. 2).<sup>16</sup> The image



Fig. 4 / Theodor Galle after Johannes Stradanus, *Allegory of America*, ca. 1600, engraving, 27 x 20 cm, plate 1 of 19 in *Nova Reperta*, Cambridge, University Library.

carries elements which would become indelibly associated with New World savagery in sixteenth-century Europe, and which would reappear in other publications, as will be seen below. A caption which accompanies the image paraphrases some of Vespucci's descriptions highlighting, among other things, indigenous promiscuity and women's sexual role: “And the men have as their wives those who please them, be they mothers, sisters, or friends, among whom they make no distinction.” The print shows a group of people, typically naked except for feather ornaments covering their heads and genitals, while the Portuguese ships can be seen in the distance. One half of the image shows a cannibalistic scene in gruesome detail: several body parts being roasted over an open fire and consumed by people gathered under it. The other half displays a group of indigenous men wearing feather ornaments and body paint while holding bows, arrows, and what looks like a decorated spear. Yet, displayed in the centre of the image, and squeezed between anthropophagy and war, is a young mother nursing her baby while attending to two other young children. This juxtaposition of motherhood

and cannibalism served not only to make the image particularly unsettling; it also established a specific trope for female indigeneity in European imagination. If early accounts and images underscored indigenous nakedness and promiscuity, now indigenous women were being represented as bloodthirsty mothers. The image would soon be reused or imitated, as can be seen in a small English pamphlet published in Antwerp in 1520, purporting to show the “new lands and the people found by the messengers of the king of Portugal” (fig. 3).<sup>17</sup> Here, elements of the 1504 print seem to have been purposefully selected and reworked for their metonymic value as expressions of New World barbarity: severed human limbs dripping blood and roasting over an open fire, a warrior holding weapons and a woman nursing a child and tending to another.

Motherhood and cannibalism would reappear in Johannes Stradanus's iconic engraving, designed in the 1580s and celebrating Vespucci's role in the discovery of the New World, as part of a print series aptly titled *Nova Reperta* (New Inventions of Modern Times) which commemorated European feats in various fields (fig. 4).<sup>18</sup>



The image aptly represents Vespucci as an embodiment of European civilization, standing fully clothed on the left, holding the Christian banner in one hand and an astrolabe in the other. Having presumably just stepped off one of the Portuguese ships anchored in the background, Vespucci is shown in the act of “awakening” an indigenous Brazilian woman (“America”) from her slumber of ignorance. Reclining on a hammock and exposing her voluptuous naked body, America appears surrounded by various exotic animals, with an *ibirapema* resting next to her against the trunk of a tree. The stark cultural clash represented by these two characters risks overshadowing what happens in the background, exactly halfway between “Vespucci” and “America” and no less significant: a group sits around an open fire where human limbs are being roasted; one of them is a woman holding an infant in her arms, seemingly about to breastfeed.

This was not the only image created by Stradanus to celebrate Vespucci’s feats in the New World. In his series *Americae Retectio* (The Discovery of America) of the late 1580s, the etching titled “Vespucci” features the navigator aboard a Portuguese ship, surrounded by fantastical sea creatures and characters from classical mythology (fig. 5).<sup>19</sup> Vespucci stands on the upper deck holding an astrolabe in one hand and a sword in the other, an embodiment of a popular trope that linked conquest and knowledge in European imagination. Among the half-human creatures that emerge from the sea is an indigenous woman whose lower body seems non-human: though her breast and genitals are exposed, her half-submerged legs appear to turn into a scorpion’s poisonous sting. Tellingly, she sports a feather

headdress while holding, in one hand, a severed arm on a spit, and, in the other, “a great stick” reminiscent of Vespucci’s letter. She appears to be staring the Florentine straight in the eye with a look both of surprise and defiance.<sup>20</sup>

Both prints produced by Stradanus at the end of the century offer an important example of visual representations of Brazil that reinforced a perceived association between cannibalism and femininity. The *ibirapema*’s direct connection to the sacrificial ritual made it the prime symbol of indigenous violent savagery. Conversely, the perception that indigenous women were driven by bestial impulses placed them at the lowest level in an assumed scale of humanity. If indigenous people were understood as barely human, indigenous women, placed at the centre of cannibal practices, were an extreme version of near bestiality. It is worth noting that in Europe at the time femininity could be bound up with diabolical and inhuman practices, as shown in the growing rate of witch trials.<sup>21</sup>

Some of these tropes were both dispelled and reinforced in the account published by the German Hans Staden in 1557, based on his first-hand experience as a captive among the Tupinambá in Brazil.<sup>22</sup> In 1552 Staden had been captured on the coast near present-day São Paulo while working as a mercenary gunner for the Portuguese. He was then held captive for almost a year, spending most of this time being prepared for ritual execution and consumption. Staden’s story is remarkable not just for the wealth of ethnographic detail it provides at a time when this was all but lacking, but also for his almost impossible, but ultimately successful, escape.



Fig. 5 / Johannes Stradanus (designer) and Adrianus Collaert (engraver), *Americae Retectio: Amerigo Vespucci*, ca. 1589, engraving, 26.6 x 34.8 cm, Greenwich, Royal Museums Greenwich.



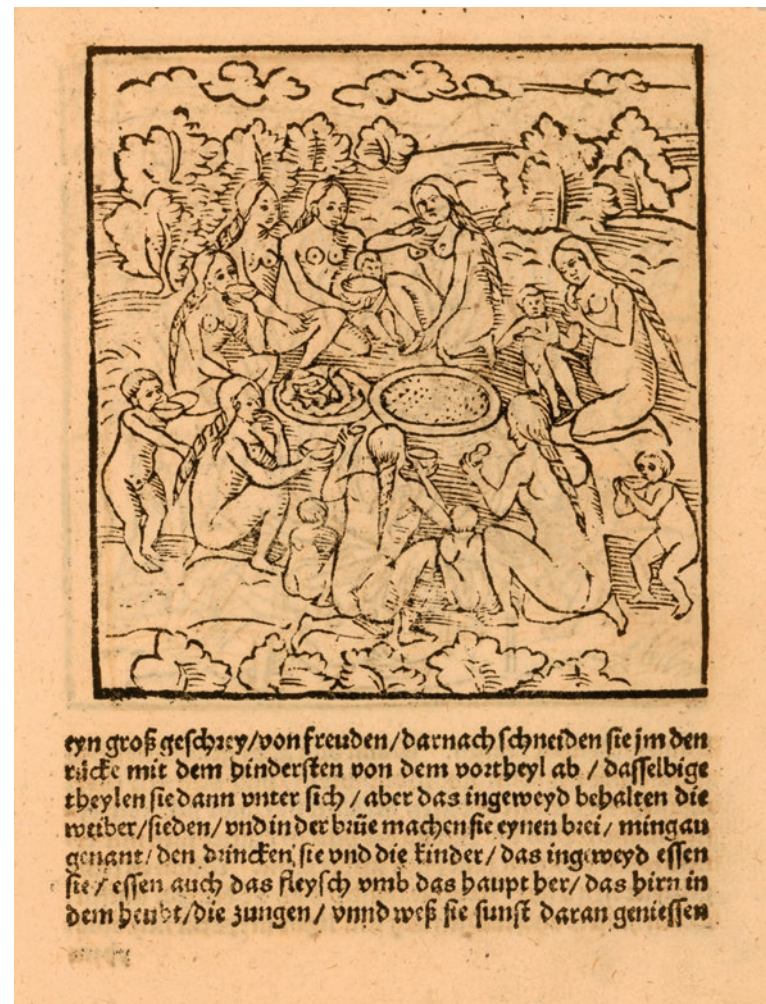


Fig. 6 / Hans Staden (author),  
“The Women’s Feast,” woodcut,  
11.2 x 10.5 cm, published  
in *Warhaftige Historia und  
Beschreibung eyner Landschafft  
der Wilden Nacketen grimigen  
menschenfressen Leuthen in der  
Newenwelt America gelegen*  
(Marpurg: Andreas Kolbe,  
1557).

Fig. 7 / Abraham Ortelius,  
*Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*  
(Antwerp: 1579). Cambridge,  
University Library.

After managing to return to Europe, Staden published what is possibly the only detailed account of Tupi sacrificial rituals given by someone who was himself also a potential victim of sacrifice, and aptly titled it “True Story and Description of a Country of Wild, Naked, Grim, Man-eating People in the New World, America”. Complete with an astonishing fifty-five woodcuts (some of which are believed to have been drawn by Staden himself), the book contains what Staden claims to be a “true and brief account of the manners and customs of the Tuppin Inbas”.<sup>23</sup> This includes images and details of the “Iwera Pemme, the club which they use to kill their captives”, and its meticulous preparation by the tribeswomen ahead of the sacrificial ceremonies.<sup>24</sup> Staden also places women at the centre of actions following the prisoner’s execution, such as the preparation of his dead body and its subsequent consumption. The graphic images he included in the *Historia* show women devouring human brains and entrails, accompanied by their children (fig. 6). Still, according to Staden and later chroniclers, the use of the *ibirapema* was strictly a prerogative of men, while women were only entrusted with its decoration. This contrasts directly with Vespucci’s aforementioned episode on the beach. While Staden’s work was to gain enormous currency among European readers and establish lasting tropes about New World inhabitants, it was allegorical depictions of the new continent circulating in Europe that would solidify the *ibirapema* as an emblem of intimidating femininity.<sup>25</sup>

One example is Abraham Ortelius’s *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, published in 1570, the first modern atlas (fig. 7).<sup>26</sup>



The *Theatrum* is both conventional and innovative: while it feminizes geography following classical models, it is also the first to draw up an allegorical image of America based on descriptions of Tupi women. This can be found on its frontispiece, which offers a portal to a world that, for most readers, was only accessible through maps and travel accounts. This gateway is adorned by five women displayed in hierarchical order, each representing one known continent, with a seated Europe reigning over the others. “America”, whose savage and untamed physicality is on full display, appears at the lowest level. In contrast to the other three allegorical figures, she sits or reclines on the floor, fully naked, a bow and arrows resting under her leg, her left arm outstretched clutching a severed head and the other holding a decorated *ibirapema*. This image seems to conflate European perceptions of American (and Brazilian) indigeneity: while her exposed breasts and genitalia may seem seductive, her arms and legs display her bloodthirstiness. Presented this way, America is both irresistible and dangerously untamed.

#### THE RETURN OF THE *IBIRAPEMA*

In its travels across place and time the *ibirapema* has been acquiring new meanings. From its origins as a sacrificial tool, to its appropriation as emblem of savagery in European collections and prints: what is its place in the present? Centuries after the Tupi were forced to relinquish their traditional sacrificial rituals, perhaps the *ibirapema* survives only as one more item in old cabinets of curiosities turned into ethnographic museums. Though there are indeed several Tupi wooden clubs currently held in museum collections around the world, the *ibirapema* has not enjoyed the celebrity status of the Tupinambá feather mantle, nor has it been at the centre of disputes for repatriation and cultural ownership.





Fig. 8 / Herbert de Paz, *The Invention of America*, 2021, acrylic and oil on canvas, 125 x 105 cm, Rio de Janeiro, A Gentil Carloca Gallery.

Quite the opposite: an online search will show how, as with other traditional Tupi artefacts, the *ibirapema* in its various iterations has found a thriving market as a decorative piece. One wonders if, like the people who originally crafted it, the *ibirapema* has had its cultural significance forcibly oppressed, silenced, and nearly destroyed.

Yet, the same artefacts which in sixteenth-century Europe were amassed in collections of exotica now seem to be undergoing a radical re-evaluation. The *ibirapema*'s image as a tool of fear and defiance has been resurfacing in the new wave of indigenous voices making themselves present in media, politics, and visual arts both in Brazil and abroad.<sup>27</sup> Working with a mixture of irony and pastiche to radically subvert existing exoticizing views of their culture, Brazilian indigenous artists offer a politically charged response to the colonial appropriation of their material heritage. One specific work seems particularly relevant here: the 2021 painting titled "The Invention of America", by Herbert de Paz, a Brazil-based Salvadorean artist (fig. 8). Paz recreates elements taken from the famous 1519 map of Brazil by Lopo Homem, where indigenous men are seen cutting brazilwood to furnish Portuguese ships, surrounded by lush tropical forest and red macaws. But Paz introduces new elements in the scene. Two enlarged figures to the left representing those whose forced labor was key in Brazil's colonial history – an indigenous man and a female African slave – seem to be watching a scene unfold to the right. In it, an indigenous man wields a decorated *ibirapema*, caught in the act of ritually executing his prisoner, none other than Christopher Columbus, who proudly holds the globe in his hands, oblivious of his impending fate.



NOTES

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3. Christian F. Feest, “European Collecting of American Indian Artefacts and Art,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 5 (1993): pp. 1-11.

4. Isabel Yaya, “Wonders of America: The Curiosity Cabinet as a Site of Representation and Knowledge,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 2 (2008): pp. 173-188; Shelton, “Cabinets,” pp. 191-192.

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12. Edward Gaylord Bourne, “The Naming of America,” *The American Historical Review* 1 (1904): p. 45.

13. Amerigo Vespucci, *Lettera . . . delle isole nuouamente trouate* (Florence: 1503); Markham, *Letters of Amerigo Vespucci*, pp. 1-41.

14. Markham, *Letters of Amerigo Vespucci*, p. 39.

15. The map was first published in Münster’s edition of the Ptolomey, *Geographia universalis* (Basel: 1540). For Münster’s representation of indigenous Brazilians see Surekha Davies, “America and Amerindians in Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographiae universalis* libri VI (1550),” *Renaissance Studies* 25 (2011): pp. 351-373.

16. Johann Froschauer, Amerigo Vespucci, *Mundus Novus* (Augsburg: 1505).

17. Anonymous, *Of the newe lādes and of ye people founde by the messengers of the kynge of portȳgale named Emanuel* (Antwerp: John Doesborowe, 1520); Edward Arber, ed., *The First Three English Books on America* (Birmingham: 1885).

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22. Hans Staden, *Warhaftige Historia und Beschreibung eyner Landschafft der wlden, nacketen, grimmigen Menschfresser Leuthen in der Newenwelt America gelege* (Marburg: Andres Kolben, 1557).

23. Neil Whitehead and Michael Harbsmeier, eds., *Hans Staden’s True History: An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 105.

24. Whitehead and Harbsmeier, *True History*, p. 56.

25. Theodor de Bry’s sensationalist reworking of the same woodcut would embed the image in European imagination. Theodor de Bry, *America Tertia Pars* (Frankfurt: 1592).

26. Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Antwerp: 1570).

27. Last year’s Brazilian pavilion at the Venice Biennale, for instance, was curated by indigenous artists and entirely dedicated to indigenous art.







Fig. 1 / Figure from a *belén*:  
*Shepherdess*, 1701-1800,  
Madrid, Museo de América.

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## The Nativity scene at Madrid’s Museo de América: a case study of the collecting in Spain of *Belenes* from the Real Audiencia de Quito

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SERGIO COCA CRESPO

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In the American viceroyalties of the Catholic Monarchy of Spain, “mestizo” traditions developed, whereby Christian European religious practices were shaped by the cultural traditions of indigenous peoples. Among these, the creation, assembly, and ceremonial use of nativity scenes or *belenes* in the Real Audiencia de Quito stand out, especially in the eighteenth century. Quito artists created figures of extraordinary quality, destined for various spaces, highlighting the closure of female convents, where enormous ensembles depicting the Mystery of the Nativity within broader narratives of theological and sociological relevance were displayed. This text discusses the value and formation of the collection of the Museo de América, one of the most important outside Ecuador, relating it to other *belenes* documented in Spain.

### I. THE *BELÉN* AND *BELENISMO*

The tradition of “setting up” or “assembling the *belén*”, also called the *pesebre* (manger) or *nacimiento* (nativity), refers to the visual representation with moveable figures of the Nativity of Jesus, for display during Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. *Belenes* possess historical-artistic and anthropological value as material testimonies of *belenismo*, the sum of knowledge, techniques, and traditions surrounding the creation and ceremonial use of nativity

scenes which capture the memory and identity of a community. As such, the *belén* has been declared in Spain a “Representative Manifestation of Intangible Cultural Heritage”, and an analogous recognition of these objects as the shared heritage of various countries is being sought from UNESCO.

The origins of *belenismo* are usually located in the Italian Peninsula in the thirteenth century,<sup>1</sup> and from there they took root in Iberia. *Belenismo* became a worldwide phenomenon from the sixteenth century onwards, with the Spanish monarchy’s formation of a global empire in which ideas, tastes, and beliefs circulated and combined throughout the “Old and New Worlds”. In this “first globalization”, as Serge Gruzinski termed it, the “viceregal” Americas played a central role.<sup>2</sup> *Belenismo* arrived in the Americas as part of the cultural heritage of the Europeans, acquiring its own personality, with an emphasis on devotional and iconographic references from the art of the Low Countries – and visual codes originating in Naples. Charles III, King of the Two Sicilies between 1734 and 1759, “Italianized” the court of Madrid, introducing the tradition of putting up *belenes* in his Neapolitan palaces.<sup>3</sup> Without a doubt, this gave impetus to the adoption of the tradition in Spain and the American viceroyalties, but it was already entrenched on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>4</sup>



Given the vast and complex entity that was viceregal America, our focus here is on *belenes* from eighteenth-century Quito, of which there are abundant examples in various public and private collections, mostly in Spain. Outstanding examples in Ecuador include those from the convents of La Concepción, Santa Clara, El Carmen Alto, and El Carmen Bajo,<sup>5</sup> some of which have recently been turned into museums and opened to the public. Also noteworthy are those in the Museo de la Moneda, the Osvaldo Viteri collection, and the Jacinto Jijón y Cramañó Museum.<sup>6</sup> In Colombia, the collection of the Museo Colonial de Santa Fe de Bogotá stands out. This was the former capital of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, coming under the jurisdiction of the Royal Audience of Quito in 1739 when it belonged to the Viceroyalty of Peru.<sup>7</sup>

According to Peña Martín, the history of *belenismo* in Quito still faces many challenges, even if it has received significant recognition as an artform.<sup>8</sup> Many figures have been separated from the physical and cultural environments which gave them meaning, and given the paucity of monographs on these objects, they are often given doubtful attributions. This results in many being catalogued as coming from Quito or made by named artists or workshops without any documentary evidence.

II. THE *BELENES* OF THE REAL AUDIENCIA DE QUITO  
Quito, seat of the Real Audiencia of Quito, was a great cultural centre,<sup>9</sup> and one of the most monumental cities in colonial America.<sup>10</sup> Schools of arts and crafts opened in many convents, providing high quality training to several generations of artists. This gave rise to the excellent “Quito School”, which reached its peak in the eighteenth century. One of its most emblematic traditions was *belenismo*, with nativity

scenes becoming the focus of domestic and conventual devotions, appealing particularly to cloistered nuns. Perfectly encapsulating the ostentatious spirit of the Baroque, these were objects of luxury, displayed in sumptuous “showcases” or “display cases”.<sup>11</sup> The cases were placed in oratories or dedicated *salas de pesebre* in convents, and in some high-end houses they were set up in permanence but only opened for Advent and Christmas.<sup>12</sup>

In general, the pieces are of small to medium size (between fifteen and forty-five centimetres in height), and are delicately carved and painted, with idealized faces and detailed accessories combining the expressiveness of Andalusian Baroque sculpture, the picturesque realism of Neapolitan *presepi*, and the light-heartedness of French Rococo.<sup>13</sup> The materials and techniques used allowed for easy and quick, almost serial production, creating attractive and inexpensive works, equally suitable for markets within and beyond the Real Audiencia.<sup>14</sup> Local features included carving in *tagua* (also known as vegetal ivory); the use of light “balsa” wood; textiles rendered in *estofado* (a polychromatic technique imitating gold brocade); *carnaciones* or flesh tones polished to a shine; the addition of *postizos* such as human hair and eyelashes to increase realism; and faces painted on lead masks. All this resulted in richly dressed figures with faces like those of porcelain dolls with blue eyes, delicate eyelashes, white skin, and rosy cheeks (fig. 1).

Quito nativity scenes represent events from the lives of Christ and the Virgin according to the Gospels. Centred on the Mystery of the Birth of Christ, they also included other episodes from the Virgin's life and Christ's childhood.<sup>15</sup> This theological narration

incorporates numerous “anecdotal” details, like those in Neapolitan *presepi*, the result being that the *belenes* came to resemble a “microcosm” of viceregal society<sup>16</sup> and a “space of memory”<sup>17</sup> felt and lived by the community.

The “Rider of the Star,” also called the “Knight of the Rose” due to the rich decoration of his garments,<sup>18</sup> is a paradigmatic figure and has no parallels outside of Quito. He is an angel on horseback, holding a pole topped with a star, and leads the procession of the Magi. The doctrinal and iconographic basis of the figure comes from various ancient sources which state that the star that guided the Kings to Bethlehem was in fact an angel sent by God. Other secondary characters (such as shepherds and pages) adopt the clothing and behaviours of the people of Quito. One that stands out is the “Herald” who plays a small trumpet to announce the arrival of the Magi and is dressed like a member of the Royal Guards. There is also the “Drunkard”, depicted drinking and oblivious to the events of the Nativity (fig. 2). There are furthermore “racialized” figures, particularly men, with stereotyped attributes associated with the “Indian” or the “Black” (other than King Balthazar), assuming the role of servants, for example, leading the Kings' horses or carrying their gifts alongside exotic mounts and luggage. Equally interesting are the decorations of the nativity scene, which are refined works of craftsmanship that directly echo the urban culture of Quito, with its Baroque temples and palaces.

The *belenes* were “living” ensembles, enriched with new elements incorporated by their owners, their meanings changing as they acquired new religious and anthropological dimensions. They included dolls that young novices brought as their dowries



Fig. 2 / Figure from a *belén*.  
*Drunkard*, 1701-1800,  
Madrid, Museo de América.





Fig. 3 / Attributed to Manuel Chili "Caspicara", figure from a *belén*: *Rider of the Star*, eighteenth century, Madrid, Convento del Corpus Christi de Madrid.

and were amortized as devotional figures in oratories and nativities; articles from trade with the East, such as porcelain figurines and silks;<sup>19</sup> local crafts made of wood and ceramics, including objects made by the nuns, who also made little clothes for the figures; and even small archaeological pieces from pre-Hispanic times.<sup>20</sup> The *sala de pesebre* thus became a true “sacralized chamber”, a sacred form of the *Wunderkammer*.<sup>21</sup>

### III. THE COLLECTION OF QUITÉÑO BELENES IN SPAIN

The preservation in Spain of *belenes* from Quito in various public and private collections corroborates the “magnitude of the production of the Quito workshops”,<sup>22</sup> and the great appreciation of them on the peninsula where numerous works arrived by ship from Guayaquil.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the available data suggests that *belenes* were not imported in large numbers, perhaps because Spain had its own tradition of nativity scenes.

The *belén* at the Museo de América in Madrid is still awaiting a monographic study. As one of the most notable outside Ecuador, it deserves to be better known, and the museum has for several years been keen to raise its profile and encourage its study via temporary exhibitions and scientific research. Fieldwork on the other examples from Quito in Spain – which have also not received the attention they deserve – make possible, nevertheless, interesting and useful comparisons.<sup>24</sup> These examples are listed below according to whether their ownership is private/ecclesiastical or public/state.

#### THE *BELÉN* OF THE CONVENT OF CORPUS CHRISTI OR LAS CARBONERAS, MADRID

The convent of MM. Jerónimas del Corpus Christi, or “Las Carboneras”, founded in Madrid in 1607 by



Fig. 4 / Attributed to Manuel Chili "Caspicara", figure from a *belén*: *Herald*, eighteenth century, Madrid, Convento del Corpus Christi de Madrid.

Doña Beatriz Ramírez de Mendoza, dowager countess of Castellar,<sup>25</sup> has one of the most beautiful and best-preserved *belenes* in Spain.

The *Mystery of the Nativity* includes the *Virgin* and *Saint Joseph* (forty-one and forty-four centimetres high) kneeling before the *Holy Child* in the manger (twenty-five centimetres tall), along with a smaller mule and ox (thirteen centimetres high). Next is the *Adoration of the Magi*, with, as characteristic of the Quito School, *Melchior*, *Gaspar*, and *Balthazar* on horseback. The Magi (each of them approximately twenty-four centimetres high) are adorned with peculiar headpieces: half crown, half turban. They are accompanied by two figures that make this nativity scene unique. The first is the *Rider of the Star* (twenty-two centimetres high) who has a beautiful face with blue eyes and blonde hair and whose quality even surpasses the specimens preserved in Quito (fig. 3).<sup>26</sup> The second is the *Herald* (twenty-two centimetres high), dressed in the fashion of 1750, with an elegant red coat, tricorn hat, braided wig, and sheathed pistols amongst the trappings of his mount (fig. 4).<sup>27</sup>

This *belén*, as one of the most famous fixtures in Madrid's celebration of Christmas (when it is displayed in the conventual church's lower choir), warrants further investigation.<sup>28</sup> Although convent tradition dates it earlier – around 1600, when it is said to have been donated by a professed sister – this may have happened later. The *Adoration* has also been attributed to a Neapolitan workshop.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the Quito connection of the entire ensemble is undeniable: close study of the figures points directly to the eighteenth-century workshop of Manuel Chili “Caspicara” (1723-1796, Quito), although there is no documentary evidence.<sup>30</sup>



Fig. 5 / Attributed to Manuel Chili "Caspicara", figures from a *belén*: The *Virgin* and *Saint Joseph*, eighteenth century, Antequera, Spain, Convento de las Descalzas de Antequera.

Fig. 6 / Figure from a *belén*, The *Virgin Mary* (detail), 1690-1699, Madrid, Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas.

Fig. 7 / Figure from a *belén*: Ox, 1701-1800, Madrid, Museo de América.



#### THE *BELÉN* OF THE CONVENT OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES OF ANTEQUERA (MÁLAGA)

In 1999, the convent of San José de MM. Carmelitas Descalzas in Antequera, founded in 1632,<sup>31</sup> opened a museum space which includes an interesting display in the “Sala del Nacimiento”.<sup>32</sup> The *Virgin* and *Saint Joseph* in the *Mystery* come from Quito, while the *Child* could have Neapolitan origins (fig. 5). Although it was not possible to study the figures outside the display case for conservation reasons, their high quality is evident, as is their excellent condition. This is the norm for works in cloistered settings which are rarely handled and often show minimal damage. There are clearly formal similarities with the figures from Las Carboneras, and they are accordingly attributed, like those in Madrid, to the circle of Caspicara.<sup>33</sup> The hypothesis that the *Virgin* and *Saint Joseph* were donated by Don Juan José de Villaluenga y Marfil seems accurate. A portrait of him by an anonymous artist hangs in the sacristy, with an inscription praising his merits and role as president of the Audiencia Real of Quito.<sup>34</sup> It is plausible that, upon returning to the peninsula around 1797, he delivered

the pieces to the convent, which he also generously endowed.<sup>35</sup> Thus, another route for the arrival of *belenes* from Quito is likely to be the munificence of the viceregal officials who brought their collections with them on the *tornaviaje* or return journey to Spain.<sup>36</sup>

#### THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEO NACIONAL DE ARTES DECORATIVAS

The Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas in Madrid, founded in 1912, includes in its collection nativity figures of various origins, including Quito.<sup>37</sup> There is a pair consisting of the *Virgin* and *Saint Joseph* (inv. CE08297 and CE08298), belonging to a nativity scene which may be the work of a “peripheral” or later (perhaps early nineteenth century?) workshop, or could even be from somewhere other than Quito. Another *Mystery* also in the collection is complete, with five figures of the highest quality, and in good general condition. This has been dated to the 1690s, making it a particularly early testimony, and includes the *Virgin*, *Child*, *Saint Joseph*, the *Ox*, and the *Mule* (CE00312 – CE00316).<sup>38</sup> Their size (no more than fifteen centimetres high) enhances the delicate and precious appearance of the *Virgin* (fig. 6). Thanks to the meticulousness of the carving and polychromy, the *Ox* and *Mule* are of an anatomical realism that is not always present in these figures. Other pieces from this collection have been deposited in the Museo de América since 1975. These include *Saint Joseph*, the *Virgin*, and a mule and ox from the same set. They are surprisingly similar – especially the ox – to those from Las Carboneras and La Concepción of Quito (fig. 7). The fact that they have same bulging, widely spaced eyes and open mouths with prominent tongues could indicate that they came from the same workshop, again, probably Caspicara’s.<sup>39</sup>







According to the museum's archives, the state purchased these pieces in 1957 from a private individual. This is a common occurrence: many colonial works that have remained in private hands for generations occasionally come onto the market, giving public bodies the opportunity to acquire them and thereby enrich the Spanish national heritage.

#### IV. A CASE STUDY: THE *BELENES* AT THE MUSEO DE AMÉRICA

The Museo de América in Madrid, created in 1941, has one of the best collections of *belenes*, in terms of size and quality, preserved outside South America. It includes a “*Belén Quiteño*” that is part of a display about the beliefs and mentalities of viceregal society (fig. 8). The pieces from this belong to different sets which have entered through various channels. A significant portion of the figures (up to fifty-four) belong to an incomplete set, produced in the same workshop although not necessarily by the same artist.<sup>40</sup> It is thought to be from the circle of Bernardo Legarda due to the clothing and

plump, oval faces with small eyes and long, upturned noses.<sup>41</sup> This collection was acquired by the museum in 1958 through the sale of a private collection to the state;<sup>42</sup> in other words, the acquisition was almost simultaneous with that of the *belén* at the Museo de Artes Decorativas, illustrating the intense trafficking of cultural goods that occurred during the Francoist dictatorship, especially in the post-war years.<sup>43</sup>

The ensemble includes an *Annunciation* with the *Virgin* (inv. 06823) and *Archangel Gabriel* (inv. 06817); the *Visitation*, with *Zechariah*, husband of Saint Elizabeth (inv. 06758), *Joseph* (inv. 06773), and the *Virgin* (inv. 06807). There is also a *Sleeping Saint Joseph* (inv. 06794), belonging to the episode of the Dream of Joseph after the Annunciation, which could have been accompanied by the *Praying Angel* (inv. 06833). The *Mystery of the Nativity* includes the *Holy Child*, the *Virgin*, and *Saint Joseph* kneeling, as is customary, and is very similar in composition, facial style, and treatment of the vestments to the one in Antequera. The *Mule* and

Fig. 8 / *Belén Quiteño*, 1701-1801, Madrid, Museo de América.



Fig. 9 / Figures from a *belén*: *Dromedary* and *Black Page*, 1701-1800, Madrid, Museo de América.

the *Ox* correspond to the aforementioned deposit at the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas.<sup>44</sup> The *Procession of the Kings* stands out for the quality and homogeneity of its components, with the three magi *Melchior*, *Gaspar*, and *Balthazar* (inv. 06763, 06734, and 06735, respectively), once again mounted on steeds, as seen in the *belén* of Las Carboneras.<sup>45</sup> There are also similarities in the robes of the kings and anatomy of their mounts. The frequency of these mounted processions in *belenes* from Quito is

perhaps due to the elitist connotation of the horse in the viceregal period. Regarding the members of the cavalcade, the quality of figures such as the *Black Page* (inv. 06835) stand out. The appearance of the mounts, curious hybrids between camels and llamas, elicits attention on account of their picturesque character and anthropological value. This is also true of the small parrots, toucans, and monkeys on their backs, emphasizing notions of American exoticism (fig. 9).





The double grouping consisting of the *Annunciation* and the *Adoration of the Shepherds* also includes a distinctive *Shepherdess* (inv. 06832), one of few female representations apart from the *Virgin Mary*, who kneels in prayer and is dressed in a bodice and skirt like those worn by women from the lower classes in the peninsula and American vicerealties. The *Drunkard* (inv. 06833), whose peculiarities have already been noted, also occupies a prominent place in this collection. Two “racialized” male figures also stand out, corresponding to a *Shepherd* (inv. 06837) and a *Page* (inv. 06834), which are both characterized as indigenous (fig. 10). The final scenes in the *belén* are the *Flight into Egypt*, with the *Virgin and Child* on a donkey (inv. 06782) and *Joseph* (inv. 06782bis) guiding the mount.<sup>46</sup>

The second major set to mention when reconstructing the history of *belenes* at the Museo de América was deposited in 1992 by the Embassy of Ecuador, belonging to the former collection of Mr. Ignacio de Urquijo y Olano, II Count of Urquijo (1907-2002). Urquijo was a diplomat, historian and Spanish ambassador to Ecuador from 1958 to 1970, where he gathered a significant amount of viceregal art, most of which he later donated to the Ecuadorian Instituto Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural.<sup>47</sup> This deposit was removed from the collection in 2015, but it is of interest as a case of contemporary collecting and the product of a humanist aristocrat residing in America. Ten of the seventy-four pieces were Quito figures from the eighteenth century: three *Magi*, once again mounted on horses; a beautiful *Star Rider* (though of lesser quality than the one from Las Carboneras); a *Virgin* and a *Saint Joseph* from a *Nativity*; the *Virgin* and the *Child* on the *Flight to Egypt*; another sleeping *Child*; and two *Angels*.



Fig. 10 / Figure from a *belén*: *Indigenous Shepherd*, 1701-1800, Madrid, Museo de América.

Fig. 11 / Figures from a *belén*: *Angel and Rider of the Star*, 1701-1800, Madrid, Museo de América.

Although important acquisitions in their day, the pieces from Urquijo were not first-rate.<sup>48</sup> But their removal from the collection revealed that one of the main figures was missing from the museum's ensemble: the “Rider of the Star”. Ana Zabía de la Mata, the museum's curator, has in recent years conducted a search in private collections, auction houses, and antique shops, which led her to identify two figures from a Quito *belén* at Francisco Escudero Antiques, an *Angel* and a *Rider of the Star*, which had belonged to the Count of Urquijo. These two unpublished pieces, which were bought by Escudero in 1978, were acquired for the museum in 2023 through a direct sale offer to the state. They were then presented at the museum's Christmas 2023 exhibition of the *Belén Quiteño*. The *Angel* (inv. 2023/19/01) appears standing, with the right arm raised and body turned in a very expressive manner. The *Rider of the Star* (inv. 2023/19/02) is also notable, even though it does not retain the pole with

the star that gives it its name, and it is of lesser quality than the one from Las Carboneras and others in collections in Latin America.<sup>49</sup> Importantly, it allows for the completion of the *belén's Procession of the Kings* (fig. 11). The stocky horse follows the characteristics of the Quito School, as does the costume – a corset and Roman sandals – and the delicate face of the angel reflects the androgynous nature of these divine messengers, popularly known as *embranchados*.<sup>50</sup>

In 2020, furthermore, a donation from the heirs of Miguel de la Quadra-Salcedo (1932-2016) was formalized. This included the set of *Magi* by an eighteenth-century Ecuadorian school workshop (inv. 2020/01/145, 146, and 147). Although these deviate from the standards of Quito production, they are interesting as objects of study and comparison to other pieces in the collection, as well as being a testament to the ethnographic and artistic collecting of an individual during his travels in America.





Fig. 12 / Figure from a *belén*: *Christ and the Apostles*, 1701-1800, Madrid, Museo de América.

While restrictions of space make it impossible to display certain pieces of the *Belén Quito*, despite their intrinsic value, the group of eight elements comprising the *Assumption of the Virgin*, one of the most original and highest quality ensembles in the collection, have been on public display, but are practically unpublished

until today (fig. 12).<sup>51</sup> This ensemble has been linked by Estebaranz to Caspicara.<sup>52</sup> One element represents *Christ and the Apostles* (inv. 06783) showing the descent of Christ to “officiate” at the Virgin’s funeral. Here his companions could be Peter, Paul, John, or James the Greater. The remaining seven *Apostles* (inv. 06791,

06800, 06804, 06805, 06806, 06812, and 06813) are also not identified but they are individualized, with attitudes of surprise (*Apostle* 06800), fervour (*Apostle* 06806 and *Apostle* 06813), and devout contemplation (*Apostle* 06791). The figure whose raised arm points towards Christ is typical of Baroque artists’ use of emphatic gesture (*Apostle* 06805). While it may seem strange that this group belonged to a nativity scene, it should not be forgotten that Quito *belenes* represented the entire history of Redemption, which culminated with the Transition (Dormition and Assumption) of the Virgin. In contrast to the inclusion of these episodes in other sets, however, here it is not the Dormition which is depicted but instead the moment immediately after. This contributes to its iconographic interest: the Virgin does not appear because she has already been assumed into heaven, and it is to this that the characters direct their gazes.

According to the museum’s documentation, these figures were donated in 1954 by an individual in the antique trade. Without excluding Justo Estebaranz’s proposal that it originally served as a domestic altar, perhaps in the house in Spain of a former viceregal official,<sup>53</sup> it is reasonable to suggest that the set belonged to a conventual nativity scene, as a result either through a direct commission or as a gift from a sister community.

The staging of the Assumption of the Virgin has its roots in medieval art and is closely linked to the Order of Saint Clare. Many examples from the sixteenth century onwards can be found in convents across all the territories of the Hispanic Monarchy.<sup>54</sup> There are ensembles on the same theme – albeit in different formats and groupings – in convents of Poor Clares and other orders in Spain, such as Las Descalzas Reales

in Madrid,<sup>55</sup> and in Quito, notably in the convents of Santa Clara and El Carmen Alto. The latter has one of the best-known, featuring three-quarter life-size figures of the *Sleeping Virgin*, *Mary of Cleophas*, *Mary Salome*, *Apostles* and *Angels*.<sup>56</sup> *Saint Peter* and a figure which could be James the Greater or Saint Thomas follow the same model as those in the Museo de América, allowing for a better understanding of the pieces in Madrid. The *Apostolate of El Carmen Alto*, which follows models created by Caspicara and whose anonymous author may have been a pupil or workshop assistant, was created between 1780-1790<sup>57</sup> for a brotherhood linked to the convent. Taking this connection into account helps us to date the museum’s *Assumption* which Caspicara must have created beforehand, certainly no later than 1779 or 1780.

## V. CONCLUSIONS.

Both during the viceregal period and subsequently, the demand for *belenes* from Quito exceeded the boundaries of the Real Audiencia and reached Spain through the donations and gifts that *indianos* (Spaniards returning to the home country after a prolonged stay in the viceroyalties) made over time, and by the purchase and gifts of pieces in recent years.<sup>58</sup> Some have remained in the same place since they first arrived in Spain, such as many of those in convents. Those now in museums have undergone greater movement, entering through purchases or donations, particularly in the twentieth century, as illustrated by the collection of the Museo de América. The *belén* ensembles in this collection merit further research, as do those in other documented collections in Spain. This should yield not only new data about those works which are already known but also reveal pieces and sets that are still unpublished.



NOTES

1. Francisco Manuel Valinas Lopez, *La estrella del camino. Apuntes para el estudio del belén barroco quiteño* (Quito: Instituto Metropolitano de Patrimonio, 2011), p. 27.

2. Serge Gruzinski, *Las cuatro partes del mundo: historia de una Mundialización* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010).

3. Gabrielle G. Palmer, *Sculpture in the Kingdom of Quito* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), pp. 123-124.

4. Ángel Peña Martín, “Arte, imagen y monasterios en el Quito virreinal, ss. XVI-XVIII. El ciclo litúrgico de Navidad” (PhD diss., Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1998), pp. 123-124.

5. Palmer, *Sculpture in the Kingdom of Quito*.

6. Francisco Manuel Valiñas López, “El belén ante la Historia del Arte (II). Notas para el estudio de sus contenidos y mensajes iconográficos,” *Cuadernos de Arte de la Universidad de Granada* 41 (2010): pp. 303-320.

7. Juan Pablo Cruz Medina, “El pesebre quiteño, una iconografía polisémica. Cristianización, imagen y construcción del cuerpo social en el contexto del Nuevo Reino de Granada. Siglos XVII y XVIII,” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 121 (2022): pp. 43-89.

8. Ángel Peña Martín, “Para celebrar la Pascua de Navidad. El belén quiteño barroco,” in *El arte de la escultura en América del Sur. Siglos XVI-XIX*, ed. Adrián Contreras-Guerrero (Madrid: Sílex, 2024), pp. 295-297.

9. Alexandra Kennedy Troya, “Transformación del papel de los talleres artesanales quiteños en el siglo XVIII. El caso de Bernardo Legarda,” *Anales del Museo de América* 2 (1994): p. 63.

10. An idea of its importance is given in the *View of the Entrance in Quito of the Spanish Royal Troops*, dated in 1809 and conserved in the Museo de América (inv. 2010/04/01).

11. The sculptor Bernardo Legarda had his own nativity scene in a room of his house. See Kennedy Troya, “Transformación del papel de los talleres artesanales quiteños,” p. 76, and Susan Webster, “La gracia quiteña: el arte de la talla,” *Descubrir el arte* 55 (2003): p. 56.

12. Angel Peña Martín, “Arte, imagen y monasterios en el Quito virreinal,” p. 241; Angel Peña Martín, “La Sala del Belén, Cámara de las Maravillas de las clausuras de la Real Audiencia de Quito,” in *Iberoamérica en perspectiva artística: transferencias culturales y devocionales*, eds. Inmaculada Rodríguez Moya, María de los Ángeles Fernández Valle, and Carme López Calderón (Castellón: Universidad Jaume I, 2019), pp. 393 and 396.

13. Palmer, *Sculpture in the Kingdom of Quito*, pp. 130-131.

14. María Jesús Andrés García, “Una colección de arte colonial quiteño en el Museo de América de Madrid,” *Anales Museo de América* 3 (1995): pp. 81-89; Alfonso Ortiz Crespo, “El tráfico de arte quiteño más allá de Quito,” in *Arte Quiteño más allá de Quito. Memorias del seminario internacional. Agosto del 2007. Quito*, eds. Alfonso Ortiz Crespo and Adriana Pacheco Bustillos (Quito: Fonsal, 2010), pp. 12-23; Angel Justo Estebaranz, “Arte quiteño en España,” in *Arte Quiteño más allá de Quito*, pp. 294-311; Valiñas López, *La Estrella del Camino*; and Alexandra Kennedy Troya, “Arte y artistas quiteños de exportación,” in *Arte Quiteño más allá de Quito*, pp. 24-43.

15. Valiñas López, *La estrella del camino*, pp. 53-59.

16. Webster, “La gracia quiteña,” p. 56; Cruz Medina, “El pesebre quiteño, una iconografía polisémica,” p. 53.

17. Peña Martín, “Arte, imagen y monasterios en el Quito virreinal,” p. 265.

18. Andrés García, “Una colección de arte colonial quiteño en el Museo de América de Madrid,” p. 83.

19. Kennedy Troya, “Transformación del papel de los talleres artesanales quiteños en el siglo XVIII,” p. 76.

20. Francisco Manuel Valiñas López, “El belén en la Real Audiencia de Quito. Introducción a su estudio,” *Cuadernos de Arte de la Universidad de Granada* 36 (2005): pp. 81-98; Peña Martín, “La Sala del Belén,” pp. 401-402.

21. Peña Martín, “La Sala del Belén,” p. 399.

22. Andrés García, “Una colección del arte coloniale quiteño en el Museo de América de Madrid,” p. 81.

23. Webster, “La gracia quiteña,” p. 54; Justo Estebaranz, “Arte quiteño en España.”

24. The *belén* now in Madrid Cathedral, which came from the former parish of the Virgen de Almudena, suppressed in 1868, will not be discussed in this paper as its attribution to an eighteenth-century Quito workshop is problematic.

25. Elías Tormo, *Las Iglesias del antiguo Madrid. Notas de estudio*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Imprenta de Á. Marzo, 1927), p. 129.

26. Valiñas López, *La estrella del camino*.

27. In Santa Clara de Quito, there is another which is a quite similar (Valiñas López, *La estrella del camino*, p. 126).

28. This is in contrast to several other artworks at the convent which have been studied (see Virginia Tovar Martín, “Noticias documentales sobre el convento madrileño de Las Carboneras y sus obras de arte,” *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología* 38 [1972]: pp. 413-425). This is likely to be due to the insubstantial nature of the convent archive, as noted by Elías Tormo (*La Iglesias del antiguo Madrid*, p. 132).

29. Félix Díaz Moreno, “Monasterio de Corpus Christi/ Convento de Las Carboneras (Madrid),” in *Camino de perfección: conventos y monasterios de la Comunidad de Madrid*, ed. Elena Muñoz Gómez (Madrid: Dirección General de Patrimonio Histórico, 2019), p. 370.

30. Peña Martín, “Arte, imagen y monasterios en el Quito virreinal,” p. 223; María Pía Timón Tiemblo, ed., *El belenismo en España. Informe técnico para el expediente de declaración de Manifestación Representativa del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial* (Madrid: Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España, 2022), p. 26. Caspicara, of indigenous origin, was trained along with Bernardo Legarda and is recognized as one of the best artists of the eighteenth-century Quito School.

31. Jesus Romero Benítez, *El Museo conventual de las Descalzas de Antequera* (Antequera: Centro Municipal de Patrimonio Histórico, 2008), p. 19.

32. This consists of a large display case with decorations recreating the Antequera landscape (similar to the

nativity rooms in Quito). An adjacent cabinet displays historical musical instruments, used by the nuns in their devotional practices, which adds a valuable anthropological note to the exhibition.

33. Peña Martín, “Arte, imagen y monasterios en el Quito virreinal,” p. 223; Timón Tiemblo, *El belenismo en España*, p. 26.

34. The portrait is painted in oil on a roll-up canvas, according to the Japanese typology of the *kakemono*, particularly suitable for transportation. In the same room, there is a similar portrait of Mr. José Carrión y Marfil, assistant to the Archbishop of Santa Fe de Bogotá, and relative of Mr. Juan José de Villaluenga. See “The Asian Influence on American Arts” <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/mAXxMwOlFM4LQ?hl=en> (accessed 7 September 2024).

35. Romero Benítez, *El Museo conventual de las Descalzas de Antequera*, p. 31.

36. López Guzmán, ed., *Tornaviage. Arte Iberoamericano en España*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2021); Ángel Justo Estebaranz, “De Quito a España: envíos de obras de arte durante el barroco,” *Laboratorio de Arte* 27 (2015): pp. 253-263.

37. Timón Tiemblo, *El belenismo en España*, p. 61.

38. See the catalogue entries on CERES, prepared by Mercedes Simal López. Available online: <https://ceres.mcu.es/pages/SimpleSearch?Museo=MNAD> (accessed July 30, 2024).

39. Timón Tiemblo, *El belenismo en España*, p. 26.

40. Letizia Arbeteta Mira, *Magos y pastores. Vida y arte en la América Virreinal* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 2006), pp. 189-190.

41. Arbeteta Mira, *Magos y pastores*, pp. 176 and 196. Legarda (ca. 1700-1773), of indigenous origin like other prominent artists of the Real Audiencia (see Webster, “La gracia quiteña,” p. 54), directed an important workshop and achieved great recognition. See also Kennedy Troya, “Transformación del papel de los talleres artesanales quiteños en el siglo XVIII.”

42. Arbeteta Mira, *Magos y pastores*, p. 166.

43. This sale included a total of 122 figures (Arbeteta Mira, *Magos y pastores*, p. 166), of which only some actually came from Quito.

44. It bears a striking resemblance to the one from Santa Clara de Quito. See Valiñas López, *La estrella del camino*, pp. 118-119.

45. Andrés García, “Una colección de arte colonial quiteño en el Museo de América de Madrid,” p. 83.

46. Similar figures by an anonymous eighteenth-century artist from Quito were formerly conserved at the Fundación Ávila, as we know from the excellent recent study by Ángel Peña Martín, “Para celebrar la Pascua de Navidad.”

47. Andrés García, “Una colección de arte colonial quiteño en el Museo de América de Madrid.”

48. Andrés García, “Una colección de arte colonial quiteño en el Museo de América de Madrid,” p. 81.

49. In other examples, the pole is a prosthetic, likely later and made by the nuns. The one at Las Carboneras is

similar to versions such as the on in the museum of the Banco Central de Ecuador (see Valiñas, *La estrella del camino*, p. 229).

50. Andrés García, “Una colección de arte colonial quiteño en el Museo de América de Madrid,” pp. 85-86.

51. In December 2023, the *Mystery* and *Procession of the Kings* on permanent display were replaced by the *Assumption* ensemble. The *Procession* is now reserved for the temporary Christmas exhibition of the entire *belén*.

52. Justo Estebaranz, “Arte quiteño en España,” p. 303.

53. Justo Estebaranz, “Arte quiteño en España,” p. 303.

54. See Ana García Sanz, “*Dormitio beata Mariae Virginis*: la Capilla del Tránsito de la Virgen en Las Descalzas Reales,” in *La otra corte. Mujeres de la Casa de Austria en los Monasterios Reales de Las Descalzas y La Encarnación*, ed. Fernando Checa Cremades, exh. cat. (Madrid: Palacio Real, 2019), p. 116. American convents frequently sent letters and gifts to their motherhouses in Spain. See the account of the correspondence between the convent of MM. Capuchin Sisters of San Felipe de Jesús in Mexico with the Toledo convent from which their founders came; Emilia Alba González, *Presencia de América en Toledo: aportación cultural y social: el establecimiento de las capuchinas toledanas en la Nueva España* (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense, 1999).

55. Ana García Sanz, “*Dormitio beata Mariae Virginis*,” pp. 116-123.

56. Ángel Peña Martín, “El Tránsito de la Virgen del monasterio del Carmen Alto de Quito (Ecuador), en el contexto del culto a la Virgen del Tránsito territorio de la Monarquía Hispánica,” in *Actas del XX Simposio Advocaciones Marianas de Gloria (San Lorenzo de El Escorial, 6-9 septiembre 2012)* (San Lorenzo de El Escorial: Instituto Escorialense de Investigaciones Históricas y Artísticas, 2012), pp. 1165-1186; Jorge Moreno Egas, “La Dormición de la Virgen del Convento del Carmen Alto de Quito: apuntes sobre su historia,” *SEMATA. Ciencias Sociales e Humanidades* 24 (2012): p. 134.

57. Moreno Egas, “La Dormición de la Virgen del Convento del Carmen Alto de Quito,” p. 135; Palmer, *Sculpture in the Kingdom of Quito*, p. 102.

58. Jesús Paniagua Pérez, “Arte quiteño en algunos lugares de España,” in *Arte Quiteño más allá de Quito. Memorias del seminario internacional. Agosto del 2007. Quito*, eds. Alfonso Ortiz Crespo and Adriana Pacheco Bustillos (Quito: Fonsal, 2010), p. 313.



## Painting and collecting in seventeenth-century Lima

RAFAEL RAMOS SOSA



Fig. 1 / *Drawing Room in a House in Lima*, engraving from M. Frezier, *Relation du Voyage de la Mer du Sud* (Amsterdam: 1717).

This study is intended to contribute to knowledge of the way paintings were collected in Lima, the capital of the vast Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru. Although an important contribution has been made in recent years to research on viceregal Peruvian collecting, it has focused largely on the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> It is argued here that the origins of the practice can be found in Lima in the previous century, and that it is only by going back to the earlier period that collecting practices in the viceroyalty can be fully understood.

To provide context, it should be noted that Lima and Mexico City were the capitals of the two great American viceroyalties of the worldwide Habsburg monarchy. They were home to the most important institutions of the “New World” and were governed by viceroys – alter egos of the king – around whom a court was generated. The models for these courts, as far as possible, were provided by the various European courts, particularly that of Madrid. The presence of the viceroy and his court generated a court culture which included cultivation of the arts. In Spain, the great collector of paintings was Philip IV, but the aristocracy also began to create collections in this period, imitating the king and his ancestors. The viceroys came from that Spanish aristocracy, and it is likely that they encouraged the appreciation of painting as an artform. Their example permeated viceregal society, especially in the capitals with the wealthiest, most cultured sectors which would imitate these practices, generating an artistic environment of international significance.

The collection of paintings as a hobby and practice must have begun and developed in the great houses of Lima. Documentary evidence of this, and some very early examples, have been preserved. The oldest paintings have, however, been lost due to the city’s frequent earthquakes. After Lima was founded in 1535, a particular type of housing developed which was consolidated and refined in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> The main house and its furnishings became a statement of prestige in Lima society, so much so that many thousands of pesos were invested in the construction, decoration, and maintenance of these great houses. Houses became a symbol of social status and the image of a family lineage, generating competition among wealthy citizens to demonstrate their authority, power, propriety, and personal tastes.

Inventories of goods provide a glimpse into the interior layout of these houses, with their different rooms containing furniture, sculptures, silverware, and, above all, framed paintings and prints. They reveal how many rooms were decorated with a great variety of paintings, prints, and other costly artistic objects. The impression given is of interiors of a varied nature, with a certain sense of accumulation of luxury objects and an eclectic taste expressing the owners’ wealth. This suggests that Lima’s wealthy citizens were above all motivated by a psychological desire for possession, typical of treasure hoarding and the *Kunstammer*.



The principle rooms in well-off Lima homes consisted of the main hall, the drawing room or “*sala del estrado*” for the owner’s wife (as shown in the Frezier engraving, dated 1713, with paintings of archangels with arquebuses), bedrooms and chambers, the study, the library, the oratory, the courtyard, and corridors, as well as the kitchen, service rooms, and a carriage house (fig. 1). Elsewhere I have suggested that one of the spaces where the rationales for collecting paintings – that is to say, the selection of types of painting for their artistic value according to personal taste – emerged might have been the study, sometimes also associated with the library.<sup>3</sup> The testimony of the chronicler Pedro Ramírez del Águila when writing about the city of La Plata (Sucre) in 1639 is very eloquent on this matter:

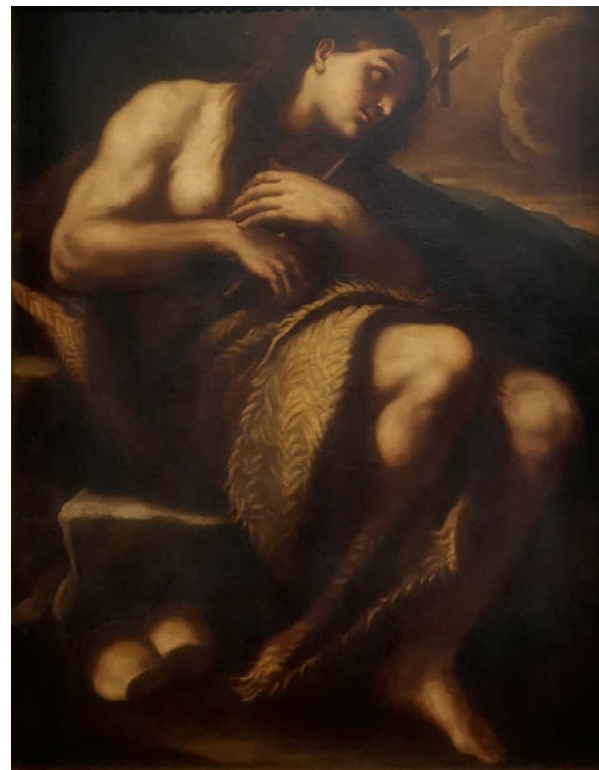


Fig. 2 / Unidentified Neapolitan painter, *Saint Mary of Egypt*, late seventeenth century, oil on canvas, Lima, Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú.

Fig. 3 / Alonso López de Herrera, *Veronica or the Holy Veil*, 1624, oil on copper plate, Mexico City, Museo Nacional de Arte.

Fig. 4 / Bassano workshop, *Months of the Year*, seventeenth century, oil on canvas, Lima Cathedral.

There are many libraries in this city which are very curious and plentiful, belonging to both theologians and jurists, worth four, six, eight and ten thousand pesos, and adorned with rich prints and paintings, vases, jars, gold and silk flowers, bouquets, jewels and reliquaries, and all kinds of curiosities. Great care is given to these due to the literary competition, which is as keen as in Salamanca or Alcalá. These are owned by convents, magistrates, lawyers, prebendaries and other members of the clergy.<sup>4</sup>

These libraries, which are mentioned in the inventories together with the “study”, were the place where intellectual work was done. They therefore lent themselves to artistic contemplation and aesthetic appreciation of the paintings and other objects they contained. The collectors were mainly high-ranking officials of the Crown or Church such as archbishops, the governing bodies of cathedral chapters, and figures associated with universities. These people had the education, culture, social status, and money to acquire, value, and enjoy the paintings. There were also educated clerics who, although they did not have great purchasing power, were learned experts, fond of the arts. They too played an important role in the culture and artistic environment of the time.<sup>5</sup>

As might be expected in the Hispanic world, by far the most frequent themes in painting were religious and devotional subjects. But there was also some appreciation of their artistic quality, and documents sometimes record painters’ names, with comments on a work’s value. Iconographies of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints are listed repeatedly. These include a



little-known but high-quality *Flight into Egypt* in a private collection in Lima, and a canvas of *Saint Mary of Egypt*, which I believe is of Neapolitan origin, perhaps by a follower of Mattia Preti (fig. 2). However, there are also other religious themes from the Old Testament, such as scenes from the life of Abraham, and the sons or tribes of Jacob.<sup>6</sup>

Paintings from almost all European artistic centres of the time arrived in the cultural and pictorial environment of Lima. In the sixteenth century, numerous shipments came from Seville, with works by Zurbarán and his followers as well as by Valdés Leal and probably Murillo. There is also evidence of paintings from Madrid, Flanders, the Italian schools, and other viceregal centres such as Cuzco, Quito, and Mexico. From Mexico City came paintings “by the famous Herrera of Mexico”. This was undoubtedly the Dominican painter Alonso López de Herrera, well known for his *Verónicas* (fig. 3). The will of the wealthy merchant Gonzalo Arias (1650) mentions eight paintings of hermits and thirteen sibyls by Herrera.<sup>7</sup> Themes and compositions by the Bassanos were also present in the city, as demonstrated by the series of months in the Lima Cathedral, donated by the Archbishop-Viceroy Liñán y Cisneros (fig. 4).<sup>8</sup>

There is evidence of numerous shipments of paintings by Zurbarán and his followers to the Indies. Most importantly, there was a *Virgen de la Antigua* “by the hand of Zurbarán” that was owned by Professor Diego de Vergara y Aguiar, left in his will to the Carmelite monastery in Lima. A Crucified Christ by the same master survives in the city’s Monasterio del Prado.





Fig. 5 / Unidentified artist active in Lima, *View of the Plaza Mayor, Lima*, 1680, oil on canvas, Madrid, Museo de América.

Fig. 6 / Andean artist, *Our Lady of the Rosary of Pomata*, 1669, oil on canvas, Thoma Foundation.

One of the pictorial subjects that best demonstrates the consolidation and cultural personality of the viceroyalty were the views of local landscapes, the number and variety of which grew over the years. This shows their increasing prominence in the visual culture of the Hispanic American Baroque, undoubtedly due to the appreciation of patrons and as a result of the growing awareness of differential traits. Thus, in 1671, Canon Agustín de Aller had ninety-two paintings, many of them on religious themes, but he also possessed “a

landscape of the city of Lima” (fig. 5) and “a landscape of Parnassus with nymphs”. In his house hung five portraits, a type of painting much cultivated among the local aristocracy, high officials, and rich merchants.<sup>9</sup> It seems that there were also specialist painters, such as the landscape artist Cristóbal Daza, who was of Spanish origin but had been settled in Lima since 1655. He was responsible for a highly valued “view of the port and fishing port of Chorrillos” that Admiral Francisco de Vitoria owned in about 1668.<sup>10</sup>



Devotional pictures of the Virgin with local iconography began to appear in abundance. The most widespread constant in the inventories is the Virgin of Copacabana from her sanctuary on the shores of Lake Titicaca, but there is also a record among the paintings of General Juan de Beingolea (1675) of a canvas of Our Lady of Pomata, three yards high by two yards wide, characterized by her crown with its plume of feathers (fig. 6).<sup>11</sup> This is in fact an image of the Virgin of the Rosary, a sixteenth-century sculpture made of polychromed wood, even though this figure normally appears dressed in rich clothing and ornaments in a frontal composition on an altar (typical of a devotional pictorial subgenre that has been called “religious *trompe l’oeil*” or “painted sculpture”).

Another popular category consisted of genre scenes. For example, in the inventory of Salvador Apelo (1675), there are, alongside a series of angels, landscapes and portraits, “three canvases of burlesque figures”, perhaps reflecting Flemish or Neapolitan influences.<sup>12</sup>

Of singular importance are the records relating to the female painter Juana de Valera, who came from Lima. When her husband José de Mujica died, she made an inventory of the assets in her house in 1667, including a total of 127 canvases, sixty-eight of which were painted by Valera herself. Most of them are religious and devotional. She also painted a series of large canvases including twelve of the Lara princes, twelve of the tribes of Israel, twelve angels, an Immaculate Conception, a Christ which was probably a Crucifixion, twenty-four still lifes, and six saints. Unfortunately, no more is known about this artist, who may have been self-taught or trained with a painter from the city. The large series she produced may indicate the influence of Zurbarán’s themes and style.



As things stand, she offers a tantalizing glimpse of how rich the artistic scene of Lima and Hispanic American art might have been.<sup>13</sup>

Our focus here is particularly on the owners of art on humanist themes, as it is likely to be in this group that the taste for painting took shape within a discourse surrounding beauty. Even so, religious painting was also frequently bought and owned for its unique artistic value, as we have been able to confirm in some cases. We will concentrate on a few collectors who illustrate the cultural atmosphere of the “city of kings”, either due to the large number of paintings they possessed or because of the particular subject matter. These individuals must have taken the first steps towards becoming collectors of paintings.

The bachelor and cleric Pedro de Castillo, of Sevillian origin, was a far-sighted man. While suffering from an illness, he made a will in 1629 and a personal inventory of his assets in 1639, listing his belongings, house, and furniture. His home contained sixty-four canvases and fifteen prints, a large ivory crucifix, a gilded wooden image of the Virgin Mary, and a metal Infant Christ.<sup>14</sup> Among the devotional paintings, there were “twelve canvases of the Passion made in Rome, one and a quarter yards high, trimmed and gilded”. There were two portraits, one of him and another of the bishop of La Paz, Fray Domingo Valderrama Centeno, who was his relative; twelve paintings of the sibyls; another “of the forge of Vulcan”; and another “of the banquet of the gods”. Undoubtedly the most interesting painting in the current context was “a large canvas two and a quarter yards long of the descent from the cross, by the hand of the famous *morisco* of Madrid”. It can be assumed that this refers to Juan de Pareja, Velázquez’s

enslaved assistant and follower. This would make it the best Spanish painting at the time in Lima.

Bartolomé de Salazar y Poza was a judge of the Royal Court, rector of the University of San Marcos and a member of the city council. On his death in 1670, his widow, Leonor de Valencia, made an inventory of his belongings. It is striking that the paintings recorded are mostly non-devotional, although a series of the twelve patriarchs “at full length” and Noah’s ark also appear. There are furthermore ten “big landscapes” and thirteen “*países de fábulas*” (landscapes relating to fables). Up to thirteen portraits are listed, including various viceroys and rulers, as well as the deceased himself, his wife, and three “canvases of portraits of poets”. Salazar was also fond of mythological themes, such as Venus and Cupid and the stories of Andromeda and Psyche, and somewhere in the house there was a view of “the Plaza de Madrid”. The room called the “study” is expressly mentioned, as well as eight hundred “bodies of books”, emphasizing the intellectual nature of his work. The paintings seem to express his humanist preferences and the institutional nature of his office, with a kind of gallery of rulers’ portraits, possibly similar to the ones that would have been in the viceregal palace and city hall.<sup>15</sup> An example of such a portrait from late seventeenth-century Lima is the recently restored image of the Marchioness of Villafuerte, Constanza de Luján (fig. 7) by the hand of an unidentified artist.<sup>16</sup>

The sea captain and merchant Laureano Jacinto Gelder, originally from Seville, was an unusual character who died in Lima in 1670. Based on an inventory of his goods in 1675, he was a wealthy merchant with a number and variety of objects in his house. It seems that he was also involved in the art trade.



Fig. 7 / Unidentified artist active in Lima, *Portrait of the Marchioness of Villafuerte*, ca. 1680-1700, oil on canvas, Orduña, diocese of Vitoria.





Fig. 8 / Bernabé de Ayala, *Virgin of the Kings of Seville*, 1662, oil on canvas, Lima, Casa de Pilatos.

Among other devotional paintings, he owned “fourteen very old paintings of the tribes, two yards high, with frames”; twelve paintings of the life of Adam; twenty-two paintings of princes from various kingdoms; portraits of the king and queen; a “portrait of the Holy Christ of Burgos”; “a three-yard-high canvas of the portrait of Our Lady of the Kings”, the patron saint of Seville (fig. 8); sixteen city landscapes painted on paper; twenty-four countryside landscapes in tempera; and twenty-two still-life oil paintings.

A “view of Puertobelo” three yards long is also of interest. A telling feature of the art trade of the time and its leading figures is the fact that he was in

possession of “two long, narrow drawers with rolled oil paintings in them belonging to Don Pedro de Oreitia, knight of the Order of Santiago and general inspector of the states of Flanders, who brought them from Spain to be sold by the deceased on behalf of the aforementioned, according to a report found among his papers”.<sup>17</sup> We can thus see how personal shipments were one of the routes by which Flemish paintings circulated to the New World.

Dr. Esteban de Ibarra (1611-1672) was a Lima Creole with great influence in the city. He belonged to an important family, as his brother Álvaro became president of the Audiencia – the highest authority in the viceroyalty when the viceroy was absent. Esteban was a doctor, a canon of the cathedral school, receiver of the Holy Office, and a commissioner of the Crusade, and he must therefore have had a great humanist education. His position as receiver made him the target of an accusation of major fraud, for which his assets were seized in 1671. After his death, these assets were appraised before they were put up for public auction in 1673. The specialists called in to make this assessment were the painters Tomás Ortiz de Aguilar and Diego de Aguilera. They carried out an inventory of the pictures in the house which were in total 208 paintings and prints. The collection was distributed in three rooms: the study, the bedroom, and the dressing room. In terms of subjects, the collection of pictures was unusual because of the large number of “flowers”, “vases”, and “bouquets”. In all there were fifty-nine such works, sometimes accompanied by birds or fruit. The next largest category was of thirty-seven still lifes of various sizes. This was followed by thirty-two devotional canvases, to which must be added some landscapes with religious scenes.

There were another eighteen with scenes from the Old Testament; fourteen with the months of the year; eleven of “storms”; seven mythological paintings; six groves of trees; four hunting scenes; two genre paintings (“boy with birds” and “three rogues”); a portrait of the inquisitor Diego Arce Reinoso; a “view of the town of Huancavelica”; and one of the “siege of Pavia”. Almost all the paintings were framed, demonstrating the care taken by their owner to preserve and better display the canvases, which resulted in a higher price in the appraisal. However, the most highly valued canvases in terms of cost, in line with their artistic quality, were not the flower paintings. The most expensive was “a large canvas of the siege of Pavia, three yards long and two and a half wide, with a gold moulding” worth 200 pesos. Next came a painting of Saint Anne, four yards long by three wide, with a gold frame, worth 150 pesos. This was in the bedroom. Four canvases were valued at 100 pesos each: Venus and Adonis, the banquet of the gods, a battle, and a picture of Moses. It should be noted that the documentation refers to the disappearance of some of the goods from the house in those years, so it is not surprising that other valuable canvases, such as portraits, which would be expected in a residence of this status, do not appear.<sup>18</sup>

A good example of the sumptuous nature of Lima’s interiors can be appreciated by the inventory of the property of the Creole Luis de Betancur y Figueroa, an inquisitor between 1642 and 1659. He is known for being a customer of the best sculptor of the time, the Sevillian Juan Martínez Montañés, from whom he commissioned a Crucified Christ in 1640. The inventory of his assets carried out on 11 May 1659 shows a great variety of luxury objects from various origins (Nicaragua, Seville, Barcelona, and Venice) together

with devotional paintings and sculptures, and expressly mentions “the inquisitor’s study”. It records particular themes, such as a painting “of a woman selling fish”; four canvases of the seasons of the year; four paintings of the liberal arts; and three large canvases depicting David beheading Goliath, “Roman piety suckling her father”, and Judith beheading Holofernes. There are also numerous paintings of still lifes and framed prints that we assume were engravings. The most interesting note mentions “sixteen still lifes from the hand of Balderrama, each one a yard long, others a little longer and others a little shorter”. Balderrama may have been a local painter specializing in fruit paintings about whom nothing is known.<sup>19</sup>

Another example of a collection with a cosmopolitan character is the inventory made in 1677 by María de Arcos, wife of Captain Juan Antonio de Céspedes y Toledo, knight of Santiago, a merchant and prior of the consulate of Lima. In addition to devotional images, the document records eighteen full-length paintings of famous Spanish painters, twelve paintings of the seven Lara princes, fourteen Flemish paintings of the life of the Virgin, twenty paintings of different fables and fruits, six paintings of ships, sixteen still lifes, two of which were “Flemish paintings – one showing dead game and the other a shotgun”; three still lifes that were “Seville paintings” with a figure in each; a painting of “a sleeping girl”; another “of two rogues eating grapes and melon”;<sup>20</sup> a large “painting of the city of Seville”; and two pictures of Santa Rosa, which were “paintings from Cuzco”.<sup>21</sup> This last reference demonstrates that the particular features identifying the Cuzco school of painting had already started to emerge in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup>



Another Creole with a long career in the service of the Spanish Crown was Juan Ochoa Salmerón, the longest-serving rapporteur of the court of the Audiencia.<sup>23</sup> The son of Spanish parents, he was rector of the University of San Marcos in 1663 and mayor of Lima in 1656. When he died, his widow, Josefa Barreto de Castro, made a long inventory of his assets (1675) which went through the rooms of the house, listed as the drawing room, main hall, corridors, oratory, study, another room, and bedrooms. In it, no less than 347 paintings and more than 100 framed prints appear, most of them on devotional themes. There are also humanist subjects and fables, as well as two portraits of the archbishops Toribio de Mogrovejo and Pedro de Villagómez, which may denote a close relationship to the ecclesiastical authorities of the city (fig. 9).



Fig. 9 / Unidentified artist active in Lima, *Portrait of Toribio de Mogrovejo*, ca. 1650, oil on canvas, Lima, Barbosa-Stern Collection.

The inventory also mentions a few medium and small-format sculptures in wood, highlighting a rare “bronze image of the Assumption” a yard high.<sup>24</sup> There must have been problems with the inheritance, because in 1679 his widow and their son, the bachelor and cleric Marcelo de Ochoa, agreed to appraise a selection of paintings that were in a separate, safe room. We think these might have been of higher quality and value, perhaps arranged in something like a paintings gallery. Here the number amounted to ninety-six canvases and twenty-seven prints, all of them with frames. Some are described. In addition, for the appraisal to be professional and as accurate as possible, each party was to appoint a judge and a specialist – in other words, an experienced painter. Barreto appointed the well-known master José de la Parra as appraiser; her son chose Ignacio de Macinas, a priest and also a painter, of whom this is the first mention we have.<sup>25</sup> Some of these works are worth highlighting, such as “a foreshortened painting of Our Lord with Saint John kissing his feet, gilded and engraved on the moulding, worth fifty pesos”, and, in particular, the only canvas for which the painter is mentioned: “a Virgin of the Angels, three yards long and three wide, by Medoro, worth one hundred pesos” (fig. 10). This painting, by Medoro Angelino, was by far the most expensive, demonstrating the way this Italian painter, who worked for several decades in Peru, was still well remembered and appreciated many years after his death.<sup>26</sup>

In conclusion, there were many paintings inside the great houses of Lima. There seems to have been a special taste for pictures, an echo of the “triumph of painting” in Spain related to the courtly collecting of the seventeenth century. Those following this trend, both in Lima and in Spain, owned canvases for their symbolic value, as well recognizing painting as a liberal art.



Fig. 10 / Angelino Medoro, *Virgin of the Angels*, ca. 1600, oil on canvas, Lima, Museum of the Descalzos.

Knowledge of painting and making judgements was part of the owners’ culture, a social distinction marking out the most cultured sectors of society.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps we can speak, then, of an incipient practice of collecting paintings and of autonomous artistic taste and appreciation of beauty (which had yet to be defined) in which the themes of local landscapes and the viceregal religious devotions were of particular importance.



NOTES

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3. Rafael Ramos Sosa, “Concurso de artes y letras: aspectos artísticos del siglo de oro en Charcas,” *Anuario de Estudios Bolivianos* 14 (2008): pp. 397-415.

4. Jaime Urioste, trans., *Noticias políticas de Indias y relación de la ciudad de La Plata 1639* (Sucre: Universidad Boliviana Mayor, 1978), pp. 58-59.

5. Francisco Pacheco, *El arte de la pintura*, trans. Bonaventura Bassegoda (Madrid: Cátedra, 1990), p. 544; Vicente Carducho, *Diálogos de la pintura*, trans. Francisco Calvo Serraller (Madrid: Turner, 1979), p. 379; Agustín Bustamante García, “Valores y criterios artísticos en el siglo XVI español,” in *El arte en las cortes de Carlos V y Felipe II* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999), pp. 25-37.

6. Akemi Luisa Herráez Vossbrink, “Zurbaranesque Tribes of Israel in the New World,” in *Zurbarán: Jacob and his Twelve Sons*, eds. Susan Grace Galassi, Edward Payne, and Mark A. Roglán (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europeos e Hispánicos, 2017), pp. 75-86.

7. Lima, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN): protocols by Martín Ochandiano, no. 1287, fol. 1177 v. Antonio Holguera Cabrera, “Gonzalo Arias: una aproximación crítica al coleccionismo limeño durante el siglo XVII,” in *Coleccionismo, mecenazgo y mercado artístico en España e Iberoamérica*, eds. Antonio Holguera Cabrera, Ester Prieto Ustio, and María Uriondo Lozano (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2017), pp. 15-29.

8. Eduardo Wuffarden, “La catedral de Lima y el triunfo de la pintura,” in *La basílica catedral de Lima* (Lima: Banco de Crédito del Perú, 2004), p. 253.

9. AGN: protocols of Nicolás García, no. 714, 1671, fol. 78.

10. Rafael Ramos Sosa, “Gloria y tragedia de un pintor virreinal: don Cristóbal Daza Morales en Lima,” *Archivo Español de Arte* (2025): in press.

11. AGN: protocols of Nicolás García, no. 718, fol. 952.

12. AGN: protocols of Nicolás García, no. 718, fol. 503 v.

13. Guillermo Lohmann Villena, “Noticias inéditas para ilustrar la Historia de las Bellas Artes en Lima durante los Siglos XVI y XVII,” *Revista histórica* 13 (1940): p. 28. AGN: protocols of Bartolomé Fernández Salcedo, no. 510, 1667, fols. 368-372.

14. Lohmann, “Noticias inéditas,” p. 30. AGN: protocols of Cristóbal de Arauz, no. 141, fols. 94-99 v.

15. AGN: protocols of Nicolás García, no. 713, fol. 1003, 1 August 1670.

16. Rafael López Guzmán, *Tornaviage*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 2021), p. 235.

17. AGN: protocols of Nicolás García, no. 718, fol. 1004 and following.
18. Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional: Inquisition, bundle 4793, box 2, notebook 13. Cited in Pedro Guibovich Pérez, *En defensa de Dios* (Lima: Ediciones del Congreso del Perú, 1998), p. 167.

19. AGN: protocols of Marcelo Antonio de Figueroa, no. 630, fol. 1057. The inventory is mentioned by Guillermo Lohmann Villena, *Noticia General del Perú*, vol. I (Madrid: Atlas, 1985), p. XXIII n. 65. There is a still-life painter who worked in Seville called Francisco Barranco, but this does not seem to be him.

20. This theme recalls Murillo’s painting in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, and the subject was also represented in sculpture. See Rafael Ramos Sosa, *Arte festivo en Lima virreinal* (Seville: Gobierno de Andalucía, 1992), pp. 229-230.

21. AGN: protocols of Nicolás García, no. 718a, fol. 297 v.

22. José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la pintura cuzqueña* (Lima: Fundación Wise, 1982).

23. Seville, Archivo General de Indias: Letter from the Count of Salvatierra about Juan Ochoa Salmerón from 1655, Lima 57, N. 23.

24. AGN: protocols of Nicolás García, no. 718, 24-4-1675, fols. 1124-1140.

25. AGN: protocols of Nicolás García, no. 720, 7-4-1679, fols. 152-153. The paintings were valued at a total of 1,787 pesos.

26. Jesús Sánchez Gil is currently writing his doctoral thesis on this painter at the University of Seville.

27. Jonathan Brown, *El triunfo de la pintura: sobre el coleccionismo cortesano en el siglo XVII* (Madrid: Nerea, 1995).





## Imagining a Mexican gladiator: Aztec combatants and European print culture<sup>1</sup>

DELIA COSENTINO



Fig. 1 / "Il Sacrificio gladiatorio," in Francisco Saverio Clavigero Echegaray, *Storia antica del Messico* (Cesena: G. Biasini, 1780-1781), book 4, facing p. 48. Chicago, Newberry Library, Special Collections.

Shortly after the fall of the Aztec (Mexica) Empire in 1521 to Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés and his army, Europeans began to make sense of the world they had invaded through a classical lens. The fact that the Spanish invasion coincided temporally with the Renaissance rediscovery of classical antiquity meant that the colonization of Mexico could be viewed as a parallel process to the Christianization of pagan Rome.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, with numerous contemporary case studies demonstrating various efforts to draw connections between the two ancient imperial cultures, the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan has been described as “Altera Roma”, or another Rome.<sup>3</sup> It was assumed, therefore, that like ancient Rome with its dazzling Colosseum as a theater for gladiator fights, ancient Mexico must too have hosted similar spectacles centred on armed combatants who fought to the death. While this was not exactly the case, so began a complex process of elision and strategic manipulation through which one particular native ritual practice, an event involving a combatant who was tethered to a large stone, came to be described as Aztec gladiator sacrifice.

From the sixteenth century through the nineteenth century, images, texts, and the language around a specific genre of native warriors in combat were curated, merged, and translated by various agents across time and space. The clearest culmination of this process came with the work of the Mexican Jesuit

philosopher Francisco Javier Clavigero, who published a wildly popular history of the Aztecs while exiled in Italy during the second half of the eighteenth century. The circulation and reproduction of Clavigero’s *Storia antica del Messico* (1780) and especially its engraving of Aztecs in combat fostered a powerful legacy in print culture (fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> A number of subsequent publications especially in Europe but also back across the Atlantic Ocean contributed to a widespread fascination with a classicized image of Aztec combatants and for related evidence of gladiatorial practices in Mexico. Ultimately a craze for exoticized combat imagery helped to cultivate the crisp visual articulation of the neoclassical Aztec gladiator as an appropriate hero in art and popular culture for the newly sovereign Mexican state by the mid-nineteenth century.

### THE “STRIPING” CEREMONY

As was the case for many cultures throughout the ancient world, sacrificial practices were deeply embedded in ancient Mexican religious traditions and generally related to the idea that humans and gods were active reciprocal beneficiaries of each other’s favours. In response to rain, harvests, human reproduction, war victories, and other divine gifts, the Aztecs and other Mesoamericans repaid their debt with a variety of offerings, including flowers, incense, and blood. Some ritualized offerings were part of annual festivals in which sacrificial victims personified gods.



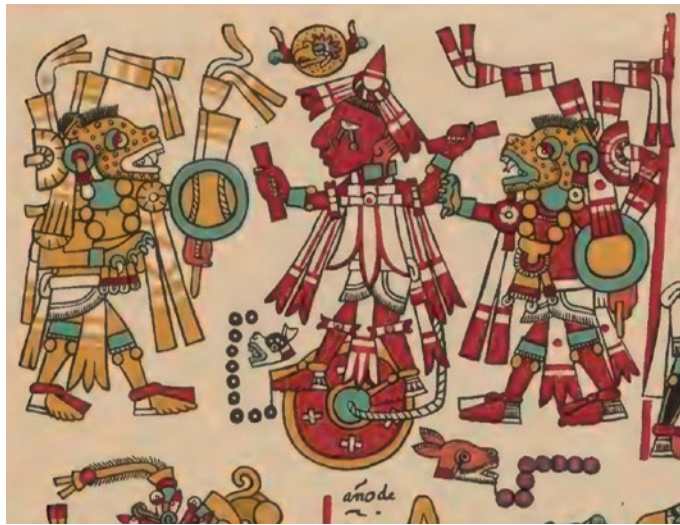


Fig. 2 / “Tlacaxipehualiztli,” in *Codex Zouche-Nuttall*, ca. 1200-1521, plaster, chalk, and natural pigments on deer skin, 19 x 1113.5 cm, London, British Museum.

Fig. 3 / “Tlacaxipehualiztli,” in *Codex Tudela*, fol. 10r, 1530-1554, Madrid, Museo de América.

One such festival was known among Nahuatl speakers as the Feast of the *Tlacaxipehualiztli*, or flaying of the men in honour of the god of renewal, Xipe Totec. In a culminating ceremony called *tlahuahuanaliztli*, or “striping”, a war captive secured for the purpose was dressed in honour of Xipe and tethered to a round stone called a *temalacatl*.<sup>5</sup> There he had to fight a series of costumed warriors wielding obsidian-studded clubs used to create cuts or bloody stripes on his body. Often with little or no adequate weaponry of his own, his fate as a sacrifice to Xipe Totec in the so-called striping was sealed. The rope not only bound the captive through a hole in the *temalacatl* but also served as a symbol of fecundity,<sup>6</sup> therefore we may understand that layered meanings characterized the ritual sacrifice.

A resonant combat scene is recorded in *Codex Zouche-Nuttall*, a screenfold manuscript today located in the British Museum but originally from the Mixtec region of Oaxaca before its invasion by the imperial Aztec in the fifteenth century (fig. 2).<sup>7</sup> In the opening pages



of the book, we see a standing figure with raised arm, constrained by a cord on a circular platform and flanked by two opponents. Key features of the striping ceremony are all present, including a captive with painted skin who is dressed in elaborate white and red regalia emblematic of Xipe.<sup>8</sup> The warriors facing him don even more festive costumery, including jaguar masks; not only is the victim outflanked, but his foes of animalistic ferocity display their sharp claws for scratching and wield shields while he has none. Two tears roll down his cheeks.

The pre-Hispanic prototype for representations of the striping are mirrored in comparable scenes in early colonial manuscripts, such as *Codex Magliabechiano* and *Codex Tudela* (fig. 3).<sup>9</sup> In these early sixteenth-century examples from Aztec Central Mexico, the captive figure, whose legs and arms are shown only protected by cotton balls, faces a single opponent who is now fully outfitted as a jaguar, consistent with one league of warriors in the Aztec state. Accompanying written texts confirm that these

are representations of festivities during the Feast of *Tlacaxipehualiztli* for which the victim is given a weapon, but it is studded only with cotton balls, portending his inevitable defeat and subsequent sacrifice to Xipe.

A decisive visual translation of these earliest representations of combat sacrifice into more illusionistic visions can be seen in manuscripts whose contents were overseen by mendicant missionaries in the later sixteenth century. In such examples rendered by native artists, the culminating event of the *Tlacaxipehualiztli* ceremonies is rendered as perceptual drama in framed illustrations demonstrating their training in European representational strategies. This is seen, for example, in a drawing included in Dominican friar Diego Durán’s *Historia de las Indias* (fig. 4), where the combat is situated in an articulated landscape with a horizon line as opposed to more conceptual representations of figures in space, as seen in earlier examples of the striping. Note too that the bound captive is presented with nothing but a loin cloth, and he now stands on a squared, elevated

platform with steps leading up to the circular stone and underscoring the heightened position that he occupies before his ultimate fall. The scene is rendered as a spectacle with an audience that includes the Aztec emperor. A similar but distilled example can be found in the *Tovar Codex*, an abridged version of Durán’s history, which also provides us with an illusionistic window into what feels like a fading Aztec past.

Although he was unlikely to have had the opportunity to see such native representations from Mexico, the Dutch engraver Theodor De Bry was privy to written descriptions of the sensationalized ceremony and rendered a related scene in his compendium of prints of the Americas, intended to circulate in Europe.<sup>10</sup> In fact, his appears to be the first illustration of combat sacrifice by a European artist. Given that De Bry never travelled to the American hemisphere, his depiction was informed by texts like that of the Spanish missionary José de Acosta whose own history had been published for a European readership and who details aspects of the sacrifice in honour of Xipe.<sup>11</sup>



Fig. 4 / “Tlacaxipehualiztli,” in *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la tierra firme*, fol. 103r, 1579, Madrid, Biblioteca Real de Madrid.





Fig. 5 / “Tlacaxipehualiztli,” in Theodore de Bry, *Americae nona et postrema pars*, vol. 9, 1602. Los Angeles, University of California Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, Special Collections.

De Bry therefore only had his imagination as a source for his visualization of the complex array of activities around the *Tlacaxipehualiztli* feast (fig. 5). On the left, we see the key figure of interest here, a naked captive mostly revealing his backside to us, rendered with heightened naturalism particularly visible in his musculature. His leg is bound to a large square block. He raises a shield to defend himself against a figure who is fully dressed in a heavy robe and stylized feathered headdress. The adjacent scenes in a setting that resembles a medieval European town illustrate a continuous narrative of moments before and after the combat, with the final view of the captive being flayed at the centre of the frame.

Notably in the related text, De Bry details the broader context for the unique form of sacrifice and in doing so

never evokes the word “gladiator”. Instead, following Acosta, he describes the combatant as a prisoner or serf who is feted with lavish clothing, jewellery, food and drink and treated like a divine figure for a year leading up to the fateful event. At the appointed time, De Bry explains, the combatant is tethered to the stone, but should he have the strength and good fortune to survive the attack, he is freed and “considered an excellent captain for the whole of his life”.<sup>12</sup> Such an honourable fate did not await the combatant in De Bry’s illustration, who even when shown living does not evoke the formidable heroism of a Roman soldier.

#### ENTER THE GLADIATOR

The word gladiator is derived from the Latin *gladius*, or sword, so a gladiator is in his essence a classical swordsman. If the weapon is what principally characterizes the gladiator, it is worth noting that the Mesoamerican ritual of the *tlahuahuanaliztli* is most clearly identified by the combatant’s relationship to the stone to which he is bound, that is, the *temalacatl*. In most representations, such a scene is quickly noticeable because of the circular form that marks the spot of combat, and indeed, written descriptions make clear that the striping ritual is set to happen when the victim is bound to the stone for the fight of his life. We see this, for example, in Book Two of the bilingual *Florentine Codex*, an encyclopedic text overseen by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún in the late sixteenth century, which documents a vast array of information about Aztec traditions. There, the *tlahuahuanaliztli* is described under an entry entitled “*Temalacatl*” which is introduced not as a stone but rather as the “place” where the striping happens, further underscoring the centrality of this monolith to the ritual event that unfolds on top of it.

Moreover, under this same entry, the captive is said to be given a pine club and a feathered staff, which is to say weapons of limited capacity.<sup>13</sup> Again, there is no mention of the word gladiator in the original *Florentine Codex*. Instead, the word is introduced beginning with twentieth-century English translations of its contents.

A significant linguistic change is introduced by Franciscan Juan de Torquemada in his *Monarquía Indiana*, written at the end of the sixteenth century but published in 1615. The text has no illustrations, so it is Torquemada’s word use that interests us here. In Book Ten, amongst descriptions of various annual festivals, he describes the ritual involving a captive tethered to a stone specifically as “*Teatro di gladiatorio*.”<sup>14</sup> In doing so, he not only ties this native tradition to classical Roman practice, but he also underscores the drama and spectacle of it by invoking a theatre, like entertainment at the Colosseum. Torquemada’s new linguistic lens through which to see a very particular ritualized act of combat opens the door to the possibility of conceiving of parallel classical practices on both sides of the Atlantic.

The invitation is taken up most consequentially in the work of Father Francisco Javier Clavijero, a Creole philosopher who had been expelled from his native Mexico in 1767, fleeing with his fellow Jesuits to Bologna, a vibrant center for educated churchmen. There he wrote his *Storia antica del Messico* as a response to what he saw as European ignorance of native cultures, particularly the Aztec.<sup>15</sup> Although Clavijero cites many sources as having informed his history, in fact much of the material is drawn from Torquemada’s *Monarquía Indiana*, now consolidated and repackaged for a late eighteenth-

century European audience. First published in Italian, Clavijero’s history quickly achieved great popularity and influence, its appeal enhanced by more than two dozen copperplate prints likely rendered by local printmakers in Bologna. Some of the illustrations are clearly copied from earlier models, including both native codices and European depictions,<sup>16</sup> but others follow less obvious prototypes. One such example is the engraving labelled “*il sacrificio gladiatorio*” (see fig. 1). Here, Torquemada’s nomenclature is amplified in visual form. Clavijero’s engraver has situated the event in a theatrical setting, with an enormous, round sacrificial stone that becomes a stage-like platform occupying the bottom half of the engraving. Set against an Albertian-style, perspectival backdrop with receding buildings, the combat is physically elevated, not simply off the ground but also by the hulking bodies engaged in the fight, their musculature on the front and back of the torsos perhaps the defining feature of the figures, now both almost nude. Stripped from the scene is any sense of a relationship between the event and the feast of Xipe Totec, which goes unmentioned in the text. Clavijero’s written description offers no indication of the original purpose of the combat, an offering for the earth’s fecundity during an annual festival. Instead, what he calls “the most celebrated sacrifice” is defined by the performance of a battle between the prisoner and a Mexican officer which takes place “before the multitude of people that assembled at such a spectacle”.<sup>17</sup>

Clavijero’s gladiator sacrifice image was undoubtedly informed by Torquemada’s words and likely other Mexican source material like drawings after codices, but perhaps even more relevant, I surmise, are scores of representations of gladiators circulating in Italy at the time.



One notable example is a work by the sixteenth-century engraver known as the Master of the Die, whose prints were part of an emergent print capitalism, sold for a profit and saturating the market (fig. 6). The Renaissance print of ancient Roman gladiators would be a logical point of reference for an Italian engraver imagining how to picture Aztecs engaging in what to him must have sounded very much like a comparable form of entertainment. Details like the poses of the figures and the theatrical setting, as well as the leg guards worn by the figure with his back towards the audience, suggest a strong connection between Clavijero's copperplate scene of gladiator sacrifice and the earlier print. While we cannot be certain that this particular print informed the image in *Storia antica*, it is certain that European models existed in Clavijero's midst.



Fig. 6 / Master of the Die, *Two Gladiators Fighting in front of an Arch*, 1530-1560, engraving, 20.5 x 23 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The success of *Storia antica* and Clavijero's overall reach can be measured at least in part by its publication history, following the original Italian version of 1780. It was soon translated into English on both sides of the Atlantic, most immediately in London in 1787 and there again in 1807, but even before its second edition in England, the book had debuted multiple times in the new United States. It was published in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1804 and 1817, and in Richmond, Virginia in 1806. A German edition was published in Leipzig in 1790. Although originally written in Spanish prior to its translation into Italian for the original 1780 publication, a Spanish edition was the last of the major ones to come out, first published in London in 1826 before a succession produced in Mexico City in the years 1844, 1853, 1861, and 1883, as well as one in Jalapa, Mexico in 1868. Nearly ten more Spanish editions were published in Mexico over the next one hundred years well, into the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> Notably, of the over two dozen engravings included in each of his histories, it is his engraving of gladiator sacrifice – with differences in each version – that finds an afterlife beyond the numerous iterations and translations of Clavijero's history. Indeed, we see the engraving copied, colourized, modified, and embellished in various ways to which we now turn.

One legacy of Clavijero's engraving of gladiatorial sacrifice can be found in the kind of universal histories that survey cultures and customs from around the world, which became especially popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. For example, as part of the Picturesque Universe series published by Fermin Didot in Paris, the French magistrate and geographer Philippe Lasnon de La Renaudière contributed a volume on Mexico and Guatemala. In that contribution, an



Fig. 7 / "Combat de Gladiateurs," in Philippe Lasnon de la Renaudière, *L'Univers pittoresque: Mexique et Guatemala* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1843). Chicago, Newberry Library Special Collections.



Fig. 8 / "Gladiatorial Sacrifice," in John Frost, *Pictorial History of Mexico and the Mexican War* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait and Co. for James A. Bill, 1850). Chicago, Newberry Library.

altered version of Clavijero's print is used to illustrate what is now presented as a generalized demonstration of culture in Mexico (fig. 7). Both the caption and composition echo the prototype from Clavijero, but the background has dropped out. Moreover, a simplified version of La Renaudière's engraving from 1843 appears just a few years later in a publication produced in Philadelphia in 1846, demonstrating the swift transatlantic reach of La Renaudière's version. Interestingly, this iteration of the gladiatorial sacrifice, as it is captioned, appears in a short chapter on "Manners, Customs, and Social Condition of the Aztecs" alongside other images also derived from Clavijero's history, which, as mentioned earlier, had been published twice in Philadelphia in the preceding decades (fig. 8). Thus, the author, John Frost, appears to have been consolidating different kinds of information from a variety of sources, including in his engravings.



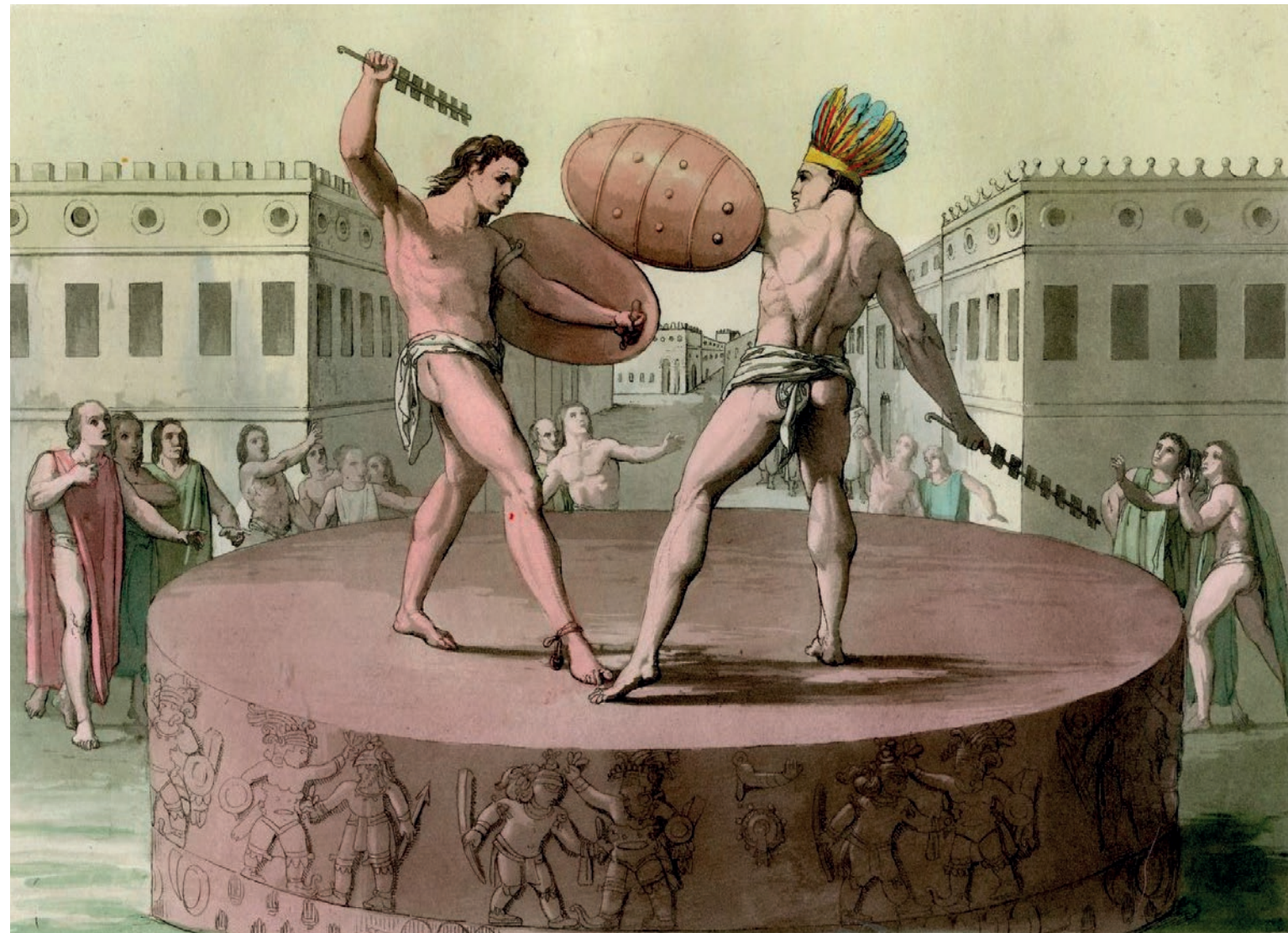


Fig. 9 / Gallo Gallina, "Sacrificio Gladiatorio," in Giulio Ferrario, *Il costume antico e moderno* (1815-1827). Chicago, Newberry Library, Special Collections.

#### A TEMALACATL UNEARTHED

A further development in the construction of the image of Aztec gladiators, still grounded in Clavijero's prototype, appears in another early nineteenth-century universal history, but with an important update. A significant addition reflecting new, incoming information is visible in an engraving by the artist Gallo Gallina included in a compendium of costumes of ancient and modern peoples by the ecclesiastic Giulio Ferrario of Milan. In a volume of Ferrario's *Il Costume* focusing on America, Gallina depicts the familiar scene, now colourized and with imagery embellishing the horizontal edges of the *temalacatl* (fig. 9). It features a repeating pattern of paired figures also apparently in combat, like the two men depicted atop the stone itself. This is not simply an imaginative addition but instead reveals another stream of new information coming into Europe from Mexico. Indeed, not long after the publication of Clavijero's history, the central plaza of Mexico City was redesigned as part of a larger set of urban reforms under the Bourbon dynasty. The city's main plaza received a neoclassical makeover, including new fencing, fountains, and, at its centre, the ultimate (though short-lived) placement of the equestrian statue of King Charles IV of Spain. As the existing surface was disrupted in order to be repaved, residents witnessed the startling rediscovery of some of the most sensational Aztec sculptures known to date.

Among the accidental unearthing was, perhaps most significantly, the crown jewel of late imperial expression, the monumental circular Calendar Stone, alongside the Coatlicue stone, an awesomely frightful figure who was quickly reburied. The third major monolith was another cylindrical mass of andesite, but this one thicker than the Calendar Stone at about one

yard in height and nearly three yards in diameter. This was the Stone of Tizoc, which was understood to be an actual *temalacatl* or sacrificial platform, decorated with reliefs along its surfaces and with a hole in the middle, consistent with both visual and textual descriptions of combat sacrifice.<sup>19</sup> After being unearthed, it was propped up vertically against the nearby main cathedral, where it remained over a decade later when the Prussian explorer Alexander von Humboldt passed through Mexico. When Humboldt returned to Europe, he prepared his 1810 publication on the mountains, monuments, and people of the Americas and included in it an engraving of a detail from the lateral sides of the Tizoc Stone, based on a drawing by Guillermo Dupaix.<sup>20</sup> In the detail, stylized depictions of pairs of figures appear in combat; one warrior in a large, feathered headdress grabs the hair of another warrior who faces him. This scene repeats for a total of fifteen times around the circumference of the *temalacatl*. Thus, for Ferrario's *Il Costume*, Gallina incorporated this new information derived from the discovery of a model *temalacatl* – the Tizoc Stone – as illustrated in Humboldt's book.

In turn, Gallina's colourful and embellished version of the copperplate engraving of Aztec gladiatorial sacrifice gave way to a host of even more imaginative reconstructions. This includes a strange painting by the equally unusual French antiquarian Jean-Frédéric Waldeck, today found in the Museo Soumaya in Mexico City. *Reconstrucción ideal de una ceremonia prehispánica* (ca. 1830) is a sensationalized, even gaudy depiction of an enclosed plaza that serves as the stage for a bloody fight on a *temalacatl* – replete with designs on its lateral façade also following the Tizoc Stone, but more fantastical, almost monkey-like figures.





Bloodied bodies are strewn in the foreground as an audience looks on below strangely shaped animal statues and unfamiliar temple forms.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, a print entitled *Combat on the Gladiatorial Stone* by the nineteenth-century illustrator Armand Welcker shows a creative reimagining of the *temalacatl*, now modelled along the lines of the relief on the face of the Calendar Stone and placed within a rugged setting alongside a low-slung building resembling architecture more associated with the Maya region of Southern Mexico. This bespeaks a sense of creative freedom still more untethered to any real cultural history and fuelled instead by a range of print cultures with transatlantic circulation as well as a hearty taste for stylized drama.

In a parallel case of sensationalism around Aztec gladiators in print culture, I turn to one final odd case. In an 1844 book published in the United States, an American author of German descent named Brantz Mayer includes a simple line drawing captioned “Gladiatorial Stone” that helped to fuel a misguided rumour which hung on for decades.<sup>22</sup>

He makes a claim based on information gleaned through a friendship with Dr. Isidrio Gondra at the National Museum in Mexico that the image of a circle with two figures in combat replicates an intriguing carving on a monolith that remained buried under the central plaza – not unlike the Tizoc Stone which had been unearthed fifty years earlier (and which Mayer also illustrates). Citing Clavijero’s description of the gladiatorial sacrifice, identified as “the most noble” and “reserved alone for captives renowned for courage”,<sup>23</sup> Mayer reports that the nine-foot-in-diameter carving was painted in bright colours. In fact, no such stone existed, but the deception continued with subsequent publications claiming that the sacrificial stone in question was much larger than and distinct in shape from the drawing published by Mayer.<sup>24</sup> Instead, subsequent publications depict a rectangular form that encompassed the original circle, surrounded by four additional scenes of warriors, including a colourized version now referred to as “the polychrome stone”, further promoting the idea that it was a sensational gladiatorial stone still buried beneath the plaza.<sup>25</sup>

In fact, the drawing that had sparked rumours was actually a copy of a pre-contact Mexican manuscript painted on animal skin located in the National Library of Paris and known as the *Aubin Manuscript no. 20*.<sup>26</sup> Resembling a divinatory board, the central round image is largely destroyed and basically illegible. Two copies made in the late eighteenth century seem to preserve what had once appeared in the *Aubin Manuscript*’s central portion and thus are likely the source of the image of the supposed gladiatorial stone reproduced in Mayer’s line drawing. Complicating the history even more, Katarzyna Mikulska has suggested that the late eighteenth-century historian Antonio de León y Gama, who also documented the Stone of Tizoc when it was first unearthed, may have imaginatively recreated the central features of the original in his copy of the *Aubin Manuscript* which is also housed in the National Library of Paris (fig. 10).<sup>27</sup> While this revelation might simply shed light on an early modern attempt at reconstruction, the frenzy and misguided rumours that the resultant image generated in its wake relates to broader intrigue around the Aztecs that had been building over previous centuries.

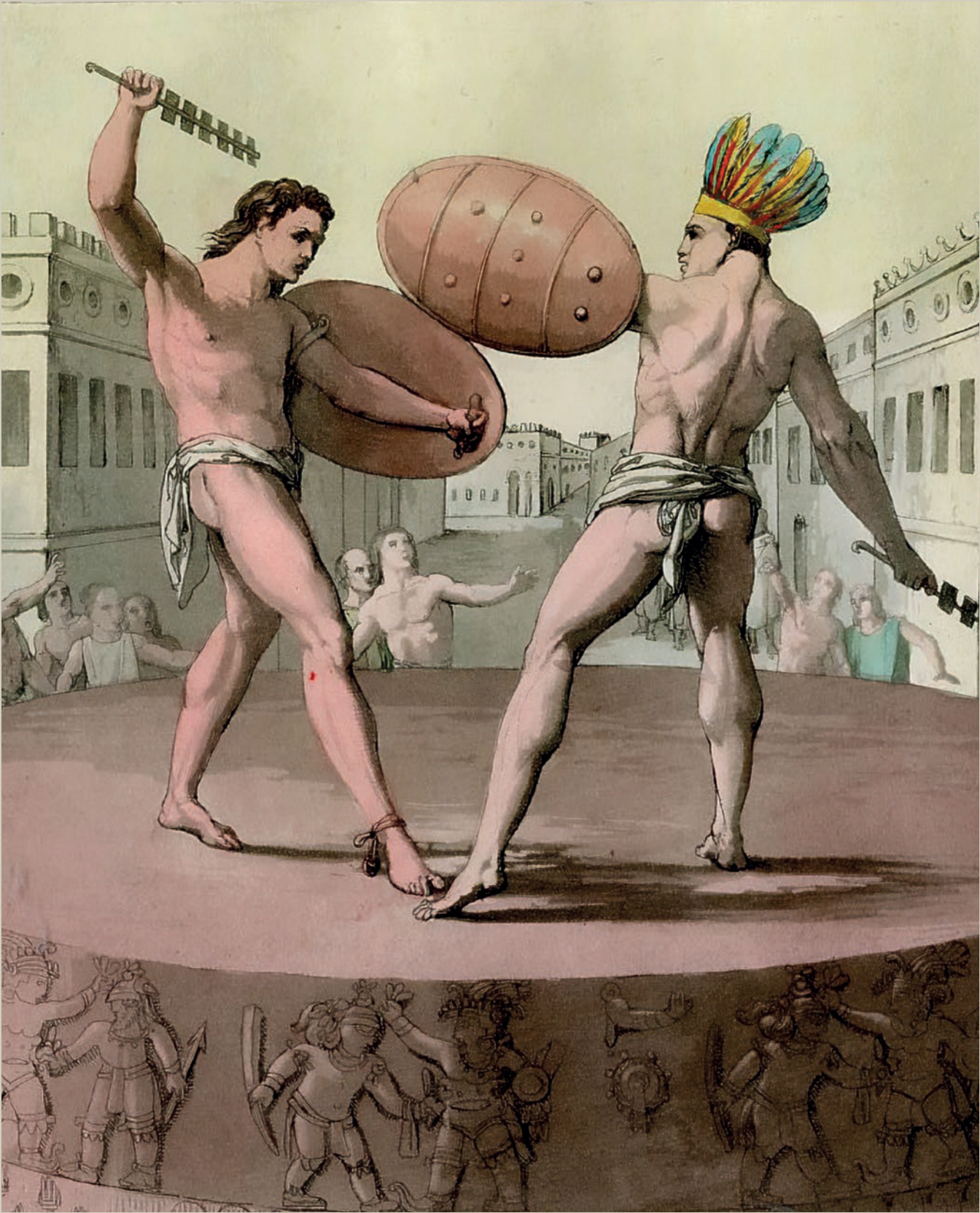
As the preceding examples make clear, by the nineteenth century, there was a widespread fascination with Aztec combatants and related evidence of gladiatorial practices. In the most deceptive of these cases, recounted above, the situation to be glimpsed in the layered genealogy of printed images circulating transnationally is reminiscent of the children’s game of telephone, where messages are whispered from one person to the next, often resulting in a garbled conclusion. Also known as Arabic telephone, Chinese whispers, and Russian gossip, these alternate names for the game seem to evoke not only a sense of cross-

cultural incomprehensibility but also perhaps a simultaneous thrill and latent anxiety over things that are only somewhat familiar and possibly unsafe. A parallel intrigue also took hold in Mexico, where following Independence from Spain coupled with the loss of half of the territory to the United States, the figure of the valiant gladiator enjoyed an extended period of exploration as a national icon.<sup>28</sup> European print culture played a significant role in cultivating the language and imagining the iconography around Aztec gladiators from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.



NOTES

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## A *Santiago Mataespañoles* silver statuette: Contact zones and changing iconographies in nineteenth-century Peru

HELENA SANTIDRIÁN MAS

One of the objects in the collections of the Museum of Pilgrimage in Santiago de Compostela is a small, chiselled silver statuette representing Saint James on horseback rearing over a male figure (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Probably produced in Cuzco, Peru,<sup>2</sup> and measuring approximately forty-two centimetres at its highest point, it has been catalogued as *Santiago Mataespañoles*, a variation of the iconography of the *Santiago Caballero* or *Matamoros* (Saint James the Knight or Moor-slayer). It was probably executed in the second third of the nineteenth century, in the years following the Peruvian War of Independence (1809-1826). The image of *Santiago Matamoros* was inspired by the legend of the saint's divine intercession in favour of Christians fighting against Muslims (*Moros*) in the Battle of Clavijo (844 AD). All its variations (*Mataindios*, *Mataespañoles*, *Matarrojos*) illustrate how visual culture adapts with time to shifting social realities and reflects the tension of "contact zones", spaces in which different cultures meet.<sup>3</sup>

This article will examine the silver statuette in the Museum of Pilgrimage as an example of the "arts of the contact zone", arguing that, despite its derivation from the traditional *Santiago Matamoros* iconography, the object does not constitute a passive reaction to an imported image. Rather, the *Santiago Mataespañoles* reflects the circumstances of the indigenous American population and manifests their desire for freedom, the agency of their visual culture, and their rights over their territory and resources.

It is an expression of resistance at a tumultuous time following centuries of colonization.

The statuette is composed of three figures: two men and a horse. The rider, executed in a separate piece of silver, can be identified as the Apostle Saint James the Greater, carrying a sword in his right hand. With his left hand, he holds the horse's reins, which are made, like the stirrups, of thin chains. The saint, bearded with long hair, wears a knee-length robe decorated with a pattern of stars and flowers, fastened with a belt at his waist. On his head rests something similar to a pilgrim's hat with a feather (now broken) attached to its front. The rearing horse is proportionally smaller than the apostle, and his head is rendered schematically. The other man, much smaller than Saint James, can be identified as a Spanish colonizer and crouches or kneels below the horse's front legs. His dress is similar but his hat is more humble. The sculptural group entered the museum's collections in 1998, when it was acquired from a family in Vigo, Spain. Nothing else is known about its provenance, which makes it a challenging object, open to interpretation. Beyond its evident political resonance, which will be further explored towards the end of this essay, the specific use and function of the statuette are difficult to establish. It may have belonged to an individual of high social standing who was part of the indigenous population and had the access and economic means to pay for silver.



Fig. 1 / Colonial School (Cuzco, Peru), *Santiago Mataespañoles*, 1834-1866, chiselled silver, 42 cm high, Santiago de Compostela, Museo das Peregrinacións e de Santiago.





Fig. 2 / Attributed to Gabriel de la Corte, *Santiago Matamoros in the Battle of Clavijo*, second half of the seventeenth century, oil on canvas, Santiago de Compostela, Museo das Peregrinacións e de Santiago.

Fig. 3 / Attributed to Juan de Borgoña, *Santiago de Compostela*, ca. 1550, oil on panel, Santiago de Compostela, Museo das Peregrinacións e de Santiago.

Given the hybrid meaning of an object of this kind, it may have been kept in a private house, a public administration building linked to the newly established republic, or a church. To understand it fully, one must begin by explaining the origin of its particular iconography in northwest Spain and trace the development of the saint's image in and from the Iberian Peninsula to the Spanish territories in America over the centuries, as well as their political and historical implications. Ultimately, the concept of

contact zones sheds light on the historical and material significance of the object.

#### THE LEGEND OF SANTIAGO MATAMOROS

The Apostle Saint James is supposed to have spent time in Spain preaching before returning to the Holy Land where he was martyred in Jerusalem in around 44 AD.<sup>4</sup> According to legend, his disciples transported his body back to the Iberian Peninsula, in what is known as *Traslatio Sancti Jacobi*, to be buried

in the ancient town of Iria Flavia, twelve miles from what is now Santiago de Compostela.<sup>5</sup> His burial was forgotten until 813 AD when Theodomir, Bishop of Iria, was informed by a local man of supernatural lights and stars in the sky, which he believed pointed to the apostle's tomb. A church was founded on the location and over the centuries has become one of the three major pilgrimage sites of the Christian world, along with Jerusalem and Rome. It is now the cathedral of Santiago.

The Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 711 AD led almost immediately to the emergence of a resistance movement among the Christian population which had been pushed into the North. Between 711 and 1492, when the Muslims were

finally expelled from the peninsula (or converted to Christianity), a series of military campaigns and political maneuverings, controversially called the *Reconquista* (Reconquest), were directed against Muslim kingdoms in Spain and adopted the character of a crusade. This would be of great significance both in historiographical and, as it will be evident further in the essay, artistic and iconographical terms.

During the *Reconquista*, three decades after the discovery of the apostle's tomb, Saint James is supposed to have appeared miraculously during the Battle of Clavijo. His supposed divine intercession, assisting Christian soldiers in killing "Moors", has generated, in a visual process defined as "othering", one of the most common iconographies in the visual culture of the Iberian Peninsula: *Santiago Matamoros* (Saint James the Moor-slayer) (fig. 2).<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, the saint is represented riding a white horse with a sword in his hand, in the act of killing "Moors". He often wears a pilgrim's hat (usually brown with a wide brim, folded in the front), sometimes with a red feather or a scallop shell (a symbol of pilgrimage) attached to it, and a long cape. The horse is often rearing or galloping in battle over bodies, which are sometimes beheaded, and James occasionally also wears armour (fig. 3). In recent years, some museums and churches have chosen to catalogue these works as *Santiago Caballero* (Saint James the Knight), simply changing the titles to avoid islamophobic connotations instead of challenging the iconography with recourse to a decolonizing methodology. In 2021, a wooden polychromed sculpture of *Santiago Matamoros* in the cathedral of Santiago was removed from a chapel that was later dedicated to Bishop Theodomir without any institutional, ecclesiastic, or curatorial explanations.<sup>7</sup>







Fig. 4 / Mateo de Prado, *Santiago Matamoros*, ca. 1667, polychrome wood, Santiago de Compostela, Cathedral.



Fig. 5 / Miguel de Romay, *Santiago Matamoros*, ca. 1705-1708, polychrome wood, Santiago de Compostela, Cathedral.

Fig. 6 / José Ferreiro, *Santiago Matamoros (Battle of Clavijo inside the tympanum)*, granite, Santiago de Compostela, Praza do Obradoiro, façade of the Pazo de Raxoy (city hall).

Although institutions may be inclined to hide these objects, rather than finding appropriate ways to explain them, this kind of imagery remains on view in Santiago de Compostela's public spaces, as on top of the Baroque baldacchin (fig. 4), on the cathedral's organ (fig. 5), and on top of the city hall's facade (with the *Matamoros* above and a bas-relief of the Battle of Clavijo inside the tympanum) (fig. 6).<sup>8</sup> However, the Museum of Pilgrimage, which owns the silver statuette, has dedicated a whole section to this iconography, its origin, development, variations, and controversial nature. This represents a small but significant step forward for the decolonization of art history, making the complicated histories of these multi-layered works accessible to contemporary audiences, instead of trying to hide them.

The history and historiography of Santiago and the *Matamoros* are of major importance because they

quickly became patriotic symbols. Saint James was called *Patrón de España* (patron, guardian of Spain) in the *O Dei Verbum Patris*<sup>9</sup> – a hymn for the King of Asturias Mauregato by Beato de Liébana.<sup>10</sup> The apostle was later proclaimed Patron of Spain by King Philip IV and Pope Urban VIII.<sup>11</sup> “Santiago!” and “*Santiago y cierra, España*” (“Saint James, come and close, Spain!”) have traditionally been used as war cries and petitions to the apostle to intercede in favour of whoever shouts them. Spanish far-right political groups have recently adopted the phrase as well.

The figure of Santiago has been used throughout the history of Spain, especially during Francisco Franco's regime (1939-1975), to enhance Spanish patriotism and rally sentiment against any number of “others”: Muslims in particular, but subsequently any “enemy” of Christianity and the nation. Santiago was one of many historical and biblical characters of Spanish



and world history converted in this period into symbols of patriotism, remaining so in the collective imagination for decades.<sup>12</sup> A primary school manual printed in 1961 presents a diagram of the ideological and historical pillars of what Spain and being Spanish means: alongside Columbus, the Catholic Kings, and Franco himself, is Santiago.<sup>13</sup> During Franco's dictatorship, *Matamoros* was transformed into *Matarrojos* (killer of “reds”, meaning communists), refiguring the saint to fit a new, twentieth-century crusade. In recent years, Santiago and the *Matamoros* have been used to promote far-right unity in Spain against the arrival of immigrants, sometimes even using explicit images reminiscent of the traditional iconography in political campaigns. The iconography and its meanings have thus changed over the past century, but their function of othering and signalling a perceived foreign foe has been maintained in pursuit of national unity and patriotic ideology.

#### SANTIAGO IN AMERICA

In 1492, Muslims were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula by Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, and in the same year Columbus's expedition arrived in America. As the Spanish Empire's horizons widened, and one “enemy” was expelled from a Christian land, a different one was found in the “New World”. The parallels between the so-called *Reconquista* and the conquest of the Americas are numerous, and both were construed as crusades: fights against non-Christian peoples combined with the imperative to spread Christianity. With the establishment of the Spanish Empire in America at the end of the fifteenth century, Christian iconographies were exported to the conquered territories. The chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo recorded that Santiago interceded in a battle against the Aztec warriors in favour of Hernán Cortés during the conquest of Mexico, establishing a parallel between Spain and the “New World”, and the “Moors” and the “Indians”.<sup>14</sup>



*Santiago Matamoros* was here reconfigured into *Mataindios*, and works representing *Santiago Mataindios* started to be painted and sculpted throughout the new viceroyalties (fig. 7). Their purpose was to encourage Spanish soldiers to colonize the new land and conquer the new enemy.<sup>15</sup>

One of the most prominent images of *Santiago Mataindios* is located in the Church of Santiago Tlatelolco, Mexico City (fig. 8).<sup>16</sup> The Tlatelolco image is a wooden relief depicting Saint James on horseback, towering over four dying Aztec men, who can be differentiated from the Spanish soldiers because they are naked, do not have beards, and have long black hair. Some of the Spanish soldiers are comparable to the figure of Santiago: they are characterized by bushy, black beards and a strong, stereotypically masculine expression. In the relief, the principal figures are the horse and his “knight”, who dominates the scene visually and his victims in an exceptionally violent and bloody way.

One of the Aztecs is partly hidden behind the legs of the horse, with only his agonized expression and contorted, bloody limbs visible. It has been argued that Santiago was identified by some of the indigenous population as a local god, but many scholars dispute this, maintaining that they had no choice but to submit to the religion and iconographies of their oppressors. As Olaya Sanfuentes has noted, “the European chronicles insist on the necessity of the Christian victory over indigenous idolatry”.<sup>17</sup>

Indigenous Americans soon started to produce artistic responses to these images. Mary Louise Pratt cites Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, an indigenous convert to Christianity, who included a woodcut of a *Santiago Mataindios* in his *First New Chronicle and Good Government*, a twelve-hundred-page document with over four hundred didascalic images, compiled in 1615 (fig. 9).<sup>18</sup> In this work the author critiques and denounces the treatment of indigenous people by the Spanish administration.<sup>19</sup>

Fig. 7 / Colonial School (Peru), *Santiago Mataindios*, 1775–1800, oil on canvas, Santiago de Compostela, Museo das Peregrinacións e de Santiago.



Fig. 8 / Attributed to Miguel Mauricio, *Santiago Mataindios*, seventeenth century, polychrome wood and gold leaf, Mexico City, Church of Santiago Tlatelolco.

Fig. 9 / Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *The Miraculous Intervention of Saint James the Apostle in the Conquest of the Americas*, woodcut, from *The First New Chronical and Good Government*, ca. 1615.



The woodcut represents Saint James with simple black lines according to the traditional iconography described above. Dressed in full armour, with the cross of the Order of Santiago on his chest, the saint rides a horse that gallops over the body of an indigenous man. The figure of the apostle is majestic and dominant, holding up his sword in a threatening position, yet with a serene and pious expression. Pratt notes that Poma de Ayala’s text was sent to King Philip III of Spain to report what was happening in the colonies, using the image in question – which previously promoted the empire and Christianity, to denounce the conquerors’ treatment of the native population.<sup>20</sup> Poma de Ayala



concludes by affirming that the conquest “should have been a peaceful encounter of equals with the potential for benefitting both, but for the mindless greed of the Spanish”.<sup>21</sup> The *Mataindios* woodcut is one of the examples with which Pratt explains what she calls “arts of the contact zone”:

[these are] social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.<sup>22</sup>





Fig. 10 / Unknown artist (possibly a descendant of the Inca nobility), *Inca Series: The Kings of Peru*, 1840-1850, oil on canvas, 60.3 x 41.8 cm each, Jaime Eguiguren Art & Antiques.

THE STATUETTE IN CONTEXT

The *Mataespañoles* silver statuette can be seen as a potent example of the art of a contact zone and an explicit native response to the Christian iconography of the *Mataindios*, particularly significant because of its dating. During the nineteenth century, Spain lost its territories in America. Peru declared independence in 1821, but military and diplomatic hostility continued until 1879. A comparison of the silver statuette with a group of works produced in roughly the same time and place illustrates the ambitions and desires of

certain members of the indigenous population. A series of portraits of *The Kings of Peru* (fig. 10), probably painted by a descendant of Inca nobility, is another example of this intent to legitimize their right to the land by asserting proprietorship before the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. It highlights Inca heritage by presenting a history that challenges the Spanish idea of a crusade in the name of Christianity. Fundamentally, it claims: “we were here first”, asserting the indigenous population’s right to own and control its land and gain independence.

The silver statuette in Santiago de Compostela has a very similar purpose. Several factors make this object exceptionally significant including its iconography, its production at a time when tension with Spain was at its height, and its material. The simple fact of using silver was a statement of power: it was a material prohibited to the native population by the viceroyalty.

The iconography of *Santiago Mataindios*, known to the indigenous population since at least Poma de Ayala’s *Chronicle*, completed in 1615, appears in the statuette transformed into *Santiago Mataespañoles*. The apostle, who by the nineteenth century must have been venerated in Peru, is now shown attacking a Spaniard. His dress can be described as European, perhaps of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, and fits the typical imagery of a colonizer. The statuette was probably produced in or near Cuzco and dates to the second third of the nineteenth century. The viceroyalty had dissolved as an institution, but Spain was still trying to reconquer the Peruvian territories, exerting pressure and power by means of sieges and violent attacks. Only in 1867 was a treaty of peace signed, and in 1879 Spain finally recognized the independence of Peru. It is likely to have been in this climate that the statuette was commissioned and produced. The apostle, who was shown interceding against the indigenous people in the images imported by the Spanish colonizers, now became their protector saint.

The fact that the statuette is made of silver is particularly significant. Little is known about silver produced by the indigenous populations in the Spanish territories. Very few objects survive, and consequently, very little literature has been written on

the subject. Most studies on Peruvian silverwork are about archaeological Inca and other findings from the pre-Hispanic period. These are usually religious objects, anthropomorphic statuettes or silver pins of incredibly high quality, which indicate a mastery of inlay techniques and excellence in working with all precious metals. In the mid-sixteenth century, the Spanish Crown prohibited the utilization of silver by indigenous peoples: only Spaniards were allowed to enter the metalsmiths’ guilds or practice any precious metal craft.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that Cuzco’s artisans maintained some level of sovereignty over their craftsmanship, and even legally challenged the expropriation of their land.<sup>24</sup> After the 1545 discovery of silver in Potosí (located in contemporary Bolivia but then part of the Viceroyalty of Peru), the exploitation of this metal became the most profitable Spanish enterprise in the American territories until the nineteenth century. Hundreds of thousands of indigenous people were enslaved, tortured, and killed in Potosí and other silver and metal mines.<sup>25</sup>

The simple fact of using silver to produce the *Santiago Mataespañoles* was therefore a bold statement of freedom, an act of revolution. It was made by an indigenous silversmith in a forbidden material, the extraction of which had led to the death and enslavement of thousands, in a city which had maintained some level of self-rule over silver production. The *Santiago Mataespañoles* silver statuette not only makes a claim over indigenous rights to the land but also to the rich resources that had been extracted and exported from it. It documents the injustice of the fortunes that Spanish colonizers had amassed through the suffering of the indigenous population.





CONCLUSION

Although the *Mataespañoles* derives from the iconography of the *Matamoros*, and subsequently *Mataindios*, there are some critical differences between the silver statuette and the other imagery discussed above. Contrary to the *Matamoros* and the *Mataindios*, the silver statuette does not wear the cape which conveyed a sense of absolute dominance and oppression of the apostle over those trampled by his horse. The silver statuette is significantly less explicit and violent, and it is not clear if Saint James is actually killing the Spaniard under his horse, or whether the image simply symbolizes the regaining power from their oppressor.<sup>26</sup>

The *Mataespañoles* is not a passive or automatic response to the imported European iconographies. Nor is it simply a variation on a traditional theme: it is an intentional reappropriation of an artistic tradition that had been forbidden for centuries, combined with a reinterpreted and re-elaborated image. It conveys a specific message, advocating for legitimacy over a land and its resources, freedom from a colonizing empire, and denouncing violence suffered over centuries. Unpacking the iconography of the silver statuette, produced in a period in which violence could be justified by the struggle for independence, becomes a pivotal tool for a decolonized art history, opening a window on what the intention of the indigenous craftsperson might have been. The *Santiago Mataespañoles* embodies a tension deriving from the confrontation of two cultural, social, and religious groups cohabitating in one of Pratt’s contact zones. It is an object that speaks to multiple meanings, resonances, and histories.

NOTES

1. I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Nicola Jennings for her encouragement to publish and her personal and academic support. I would also like to thank Roberto Aneiros García, Curator at the Museo das Peregrinacións e de Santiago, for his kindness and generosity when discussing this silver statuette and for sharing information about it. I am also grateful to Kathryn Davies, who was the first to read and mark the academic essay from which this article originated.
2. María Esperanza Gírey Liste, “Santiago Mata-Espanhóis [Escola peruana],” in *No caminho sob as estrelas: Santiago e a peregrinação a Compostela*, eds. José Antonio Falcão and Santiago do Cacém, vol. I (Beja: Câmara Municipal, 2012), p. 276; Mariel Larriba Leira, “Santiago Mataespañois,” in *Un museo en crecimiento: Museo das Peregrinacións, adquisicións 1996-2001: exposición conmemorativa do 50 aniversario da creación do museo*, ed. M<sup>a</sup> Isabel Pesquera Vaquero (Santiago de Compostela: Dirección Xeral de Patrimonio Cultural, 2001), p. 140. Gírey Liste and Larriba Leira have also proposed Arequipa or Puno as possible places of production of the statuette. There is another catalogue entry written on this work that I have not been able to consult: Cristina Esteras Martín, “Santiago, ¿Mataespañoles?,” in *Santiago e América*, exh. cat. (Santiago de Compostela: 1993).
3. Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* (1991): pp. 33-40.
4. “Hic Spaniae et occidentalia loca predicat,” *Breviarium Apostolorum*, end of the sixth century/beginning of the seventh century; and after, *De Orribu et Obitu Patrum*, attributed to Isidore of Seville, beginning of the seventh century, in Juan Carmona Muela, *Iconografía de los santos* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2015), p. 409.
5. *Traslatio Sancti Jacobi*, eleventh century, Book III of the *Codex Calixtinus*, in Carmona Muela, *Iconografía*, p. 407.
6. “Othering” is a term used by Edward Said in his influential study *Orientalism* (1978), where it describes the process in which a collective of people identified with a specific cultural tradition opposes itself to a different group, negatively presenting the differences among them, and considering “the other” inevitably inferior due to these differences.
7. Susana Luaña, “Santiago Matamoros, retirado de su lugar de honor en la Catedral y trasladado a una capilla en obras,” *La Voz de Galicia*, 3 January 2021, <https://www.lavozdeg Galicia.es/noticia/santiago/2021/01/02/santiago-matamoros-retirado-lugar-honor-catedral-trasladado-capilla-obras/00031609611144211595823.htm> (accessed August 2024).
8. Helena Santidrián Mas, “The Iconography of Santiago Matamoros in Compostela: A Paradox,” *Journal d’Ambroisie* I (2022): pp. 7-15, [https://www.journaldambroisie.com/\\_files/ugd/c3e473\\_847009a5766a410d8117b457a4104f37.pdf](https://www.journaldambroisie.com/_files/ugd/c3e473_847009a5766a410d8117b457a4104f37.pdf). This was the first article I wrote on *Santiago Matamoros*, which focused on the controversy generated by the cathedral’s removal of a sculpture of the *Matamoros* from a chapel. Some of the ideas for the present essay derive from it.
9. Carmona Muela, *Iconografía*, p. 409.
10. Fray Justo Pérez de Urbel, “Orígenes del culto de Santiago en España,” *Hispania Sacra* 9 (1952): p. 18.
11. Roberto J. López, “La pervivencia de un mito bélico en la España moderna: la imagen de Santiago caballero,” in *Religión y conflictos bélicos en Iberoamérica*, ed. David González Cruz (Sevilla: Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, Fundación Caja Rural del Sur, 2008), p. 50.
12. Robert Mullen, *Call of the Camino: Myths, Legends and Pilgrim Stories on the way to Santiago de Compostela* (Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press, Simon & Schuster, 2010).
13. Agustín Serrano de Haro, *Yo soy español* (Madrid: Editorial Escuela Española, 1961), p. 91.
14. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España* (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1955).
15. Javier Domínguez García, “Santiago Mataindios: la continuación de un discurso medieval en la Nueva España,” *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 54 (2006): p. 48.
16. Francisco De la Maza, “¡Santiago y a ellos!,” in *Novedades* (18 June 1950), in *Páginas de Arte y de Historia* (México: INAH-UNAM, 1971) in Costanza Ontivero Valdés, “Las andanzas de Santiago en la nueva España y la imagen del indio: Santa María Chiconautla,” *Ad limina* 14 (2013): p. 198.
17. Olaya Sanfuentes, “Inventiones iconográficas en América,” p. 55. Sanfuentes mentions several chronicles: Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios Reales de los Incas*; Francisco López de Xerez, *Verdadera Relación de la conquista del Perú*; Pedro Sancho de la Hoz, *Relación de lo sucedido en la conquista y pacificación de estas provincias de la Nueva Castilla después que el capitán Hernando Pizarro se partió y llevó a SM la relación de la victoria de Cajamarca*; Miguel Estete, *Relación de viaje que hizo el señor capitán Hernando Pizarro*. The translation is mine. See also Olaya Sanfuentes, “Inventiones iconográficas en América. El caso de Santo Tomás y el de Santiago mata-indios,” *Diálogo Andino* 32 (2008): p. 55.
18. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, vol. I (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1980), p. 295. Written in 1615. Available online (Internet Archive): <https://archive.org/details/guaman-poma-de-ayala-felipe-nueva-coronica-tomo-i-ocr-1980/page/294/mode/2up?q=santiago> (accessed August 2024).
19. Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” p. 34.
20. Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” p. 35.
21. Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” p. 35.
22. Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” p. 34.
23. Martha Egan, “The Silversmith’s Art in Viceregal Peru,” *Metalsmith* (1996): p. 24.
24. Luisa María Vetter Parodi, “La platería andina colonial a través de la historia de la familia Sacayco,” *Historia y Sociedad* 35 (2018): p. 116.
25. Parodi, “La platería andina colonial a través de la historia de la familia Sacayco,” p. 116.
26. These differences and ideas emerged from a conversation with Dr. Inmaculada Mas Álvarez in front of the statuette in the museum on 16 November 2024.





Fig. 1 / Francisca Manoela Valadão, *Market Scene* or *Fruits: From Nature*, 1860, oil on canvas, Brazil, Ecila and Sérgio Fadel Collection.

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## “Market Scene” (1864) by Brazilian artist Francisca Manoela Valadão: Gazes in Black and White

CLÁUDIA DE OLIVEIRA<sup>1</sup>

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“Market Scene” is the title given *a posteriori* to the Brazilian artist Francisca Manoela Valadão’s (ca. 1830-1889) painting *Fruits: From Nature* (1864), exhibited at the 16<sup>th</sup> General Exhibition of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro (fig. 1). Unfortunately, the complete history of the canvas has been lost to time, and the work has failed to generate significant critical recognition. This article examines Valadão’s social context and raises questions about her art, seeking to provide new insights and interpretations through feminist art history and women’s social history frameworks. My objective is to highlight alternative narratives in women’s artistic contributions. As *Market Scene* was likely a title assigned by later auctioneers, I will analyze the canvas based on its original title, “Fruits: From Nature” with the aim of revealing the painter’s intention to showcase her skill in executing the theme, genre, and narrative.

### I – THE PAINTER

Francisca Valadão was part of the Brazilian imperial slave-owning elite, and as a woman of this social class, she received an advanced education that likely included music, language, drawing, and painting lessons, in addition to needlework. Information about her training as a painter is scarce, and there are many gaps in her life story as a woman. We know that Valadão was born in Rio

de Janeiro in 1830 and was one of six children of the Barons of Petrópolis – Manoel de Valadão Pimentel (1812-1882) and Eleodora de Souza Valadão (1806-1831).<sup>2</sup> Valadão died on 3 July 1898, at the age of sixty, unmarried, at her father’s summer residence on Paquetá Island in Rio de Janeiro, due to generalized rheumatism. She left a will, although the beneficiaries remain unknown.

Her father, Manoel Valadão Pimentel, was the son of Portuguese farmers who migrated to Brazil in the late eighteenth century and settled in the coffee-producing and exporting region of Rio de Janeiro state. Through education and hard work, he became a prominent physician in Rio de Janeiro, a Brazilian Imperial Court at time, and a wealthy man. Besides being a professor at the Rio de Janeiro Medical School, he was the personal physician of Princess Isabel, daughter of Emperor Pedro II. For his professional achievements, he was granted the title of Barão de Petrópolis by the Emperor in 1855. The baron acquired a rural state in the Rio Comprido neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro (which, since the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Family in 1808, had become a residential area for the local elite), located along the Rio Comprido River, which flowed from the tropical Tijuca forest. The region had gained prominence in the nineteenth century due to its location on the route to the imperial palace in the São Cristóvão neighbourhood (fig. 2).





The baron also became the owner of a summer residence on Paquetá Island, in Rio de Janeiro Bay, when the island became a popular resort for treating ailments such as melancholy and rheumatism (fig. 3). Although we don't know exactly when the baron acquired the property, during the nineteenth century the island was a summer destination for the Brazilian noble elite, foreigners, Brazilian writers like Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, who described it in his novel *A Moreninha* (1844)<sup>3</sup>, and painters like Giovanni Battista Castagneto and Pedro Bruno (fig.4). Based on this, we can infer that Valadão likely lived at or regularly visited her Paquetá Island property from the 1860s until her death in 1898.

My research in the archives of the Archdiocesan Curia of Rio de Janeiro has uncovered numerous records confirming that Francisca Valadão, like other members of her family and other women of her social class, owned slaves. The documentation regarding the birth records of Valadão's slaves spans the 1860s, 1870s, and

Fig. 2 / Pieter Godfried Bertichen, *Chácara do Visconde d'Estrela - Rio Comprido*, 1856, engraving, 31 x 45 cm, Brazil, Coleção Itaú Cultural.

1880s and shows that she attended all the baptisms of her slaves' children. What motivated the artist to depict a Rio de Janeiro popular market scene featuring enslaved Black individuals, despite being a slave owner herself? Why did she choose to represent slave labour, a controversial issue at the time in Brazil, in a Fine Arts Salon? What significance did she attribute to the enslaved Black population in nineteenth-century Brazil?

When the artist presented her work at the Imperial Academy's Salon, she was thirty-four years old. To exhibit at the 1864 General Fine Arts Exhibition, Valadão certainly invested in drawing and painting studies, either with private Brazilian teachers at her residence or with French painting teachers who began arriving in Rio de Janeiro in the 1840s. Once in the Imperial capital, these French artists opened private studios where they taught classes and exhibited at the General Exhibitions of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts. Thus, pejorative descriptions like “amateur dilettante artists”, whose creations were a “pastime” or “entertainment”, do not apply to women who exhibited at the General Fine Arts Exhibitions. They were amateurs because they lacked institutionalized education, as they were not allowed to attend Academy Schools until 1892. However, not attending Academy Schools does not mean these artists did not invest in art studies.

At the 16<sup>th</sup> Fine Arts Exhibition in 1864, thirty-six artists, including men and women, foreigners and Brazilians, displayed their works. In addition to Francisca Manoela Valadão, the female artists who exhibited were: sisters Luisa and Angela Hosxe (Luisa displayed two pencil drawings and Angela a view of the Tijuca waterfall); Joaquina Cardoso, who displayed a pencil drawing and two print copies; Josefina Houssay, who exhibited two portraits and one in miniature; a woman named Margarida (surname unknown),



Fig. 3 / Thomas Ender, *Rio de Janeiro View*, 1817, oil on canvas, 104 x 188 cm, Vienna, Akademie der Bildenden Künste.

who displayed three pastel drawings; Maria Antonia Abreu Lima, who exhibited a pencil drawing and a print copy; and Virginia Lombardi, who displayed three landscapes.<sup>4</sup> The Rio de Janeiro newspapers that covered the 1864 exhibition, such as *Correio Mercantil*, *A Actualidade*, and *Imprensa Acadêmica*, mentioned only two female exhibitors: Mlle. Josephine Houssay and Mlle. Angela Hosxe. Francisca Manoela Valadão received no

critical comments in the press, despite being awarded an honourable medal.

The above information indicates paradoxical data. According to art historians Jorge Coli (1999) and Tadeu Chiarelli (1995), the visual representation of Black people in nineteenth-century Brazil meant representing slavery, which made it an entirely unsuitable theme for





Fig. 4 / Pedro Bruno, *Paquetá*, oil on wood, 31.5 x 40.5 cm, Brazil, Coleção Itaú Cultural. Photographic reproduction by Miguel Martins.

academic premises and inappropriate for presentation at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>5</sup> However, as noted, the jury awarded Valadão a medal. On the other hand, it seems that her painting was not well received by the press, which did not mention her or her work. It is essential to contextualize the painting’s reception by the press at the time, as from 1850 onward, with Minister of Justice Eusébio de Queiroz’s law establishing measures to repress the African slave trade in the Brazilian Empire,<sup>6</sup> the press allied itself with slave owners and daily reminded the population that freed slaves would increase the number of unwanted individuals, swelling the ranks of the poor and violence in urban and rural areas. Thus, both the painting and the painter seem to have been condemned to obscurity in their own time by the press, as Valadão never exhibited again. In the late twentieth century, Brazilian art collectors Sérgio and Ecila Fadel acquired the painting, then titled *Cena de Mercado*, and in 2016 – 152 years after its first and only public exhibition – it was again presented to the public in the “Women Artists” exhibition organized by the São Paulo Museum of Art. One of the curators of the exhibition, Brazilian historian Lilian Schwarcz, wrote in the catalogue:

[Valadão’s] painting finds few peers in Brazilian eighteenth-century production, where the representation of inanimate beings focused on interior scenes. Her approach shows greater affinity with scenes of this genre in Dutch Baroque painting, whose themes are the language of the streets and the production of contrasts between elevated subjects represented by ordinary objects... Our gaze snakes between the points of interest, from the vegetables on the left to the black workers, slave or freed women, dressed in traditional African clothing or turbans. Two of them gaze directly at the observer, a common strategy in market scenes to draw us into the painting... Amidst the tropical fruits, Valadão inserts the work of black African *quitandeiras*, who disseminated African culture in the complex social hierarchy of eighteenth-century Brazil.<sup>7</sup>

## II – THE PAINTING

*Fruits: From Nature* depicts, in the foreground, an exuberant scenario with a vast variety of tropical fruits and vegetables, which are abundantly displayed on wooden tables and barrels. Brazilian wildlife elements also share the scene. In the background, five Black figures, possibly free or enslaved workers, sell their products to a white female buyer. Valadão depicts her characters in motion, with arms raised or crossed, seated or standing. The Black *quitandeira* in the centre right background appears to be announcing her products to attract a buyer’s attention, while the group of figures on the left turn in different directions, engaging and directing the viewer’s gaze through theirs. This painting is of great importance,

as it constitutes one of the first representations of the Brazilian Black population in an oil painting; it was presented in an art exhibition in Brazil; and finally it constitutes a visual representation of “Black Atlantic” culture.<sup>8</sup> Although we cannot confirm which visual matrices the painter had access to, the composition suggests that the artist may have been influenced by classical European market scenes and likewise the iconography of European travelling artists in nineteenth-century Brazil.

From the European art perspective, *Fruits: From Nature* represents an extremely significant scene of everyday life in the Imperial capital in the mid-nineteenth century, combining still life and genre painting. This style was pioneered in the sixteenth century by Flemish

artist Pieter Aertsen. The painter, along with his nephew and student Joachim Beuckelaer, developed a genre featuring domestic scenes with furniture, utensils, and food, represented in impressive sculptural and realistic forms. These paintings broke spatial planes on the canvas, constructing objects and figures in a montage form to create an impression of abundance. In these canvases, artists often give prominence to the figure of the female peasant, usually positioning her in the foreground, pointing towards the product for sale, as noted by Lilia Schwarcz.<sup>9</sup>

This style was popularized by many Dutch Baroque artists, such as Jan van Kessel the Elder (1626-1679) and Frans Hals (1582-1666). The style was also taken up by female French painter Louise Moillon



Fig. 5 / Joaquim Lopes de Barros Cabral Teive, *Quitandiera*, 1840, Brazil, Coleção Itaú Cultural.

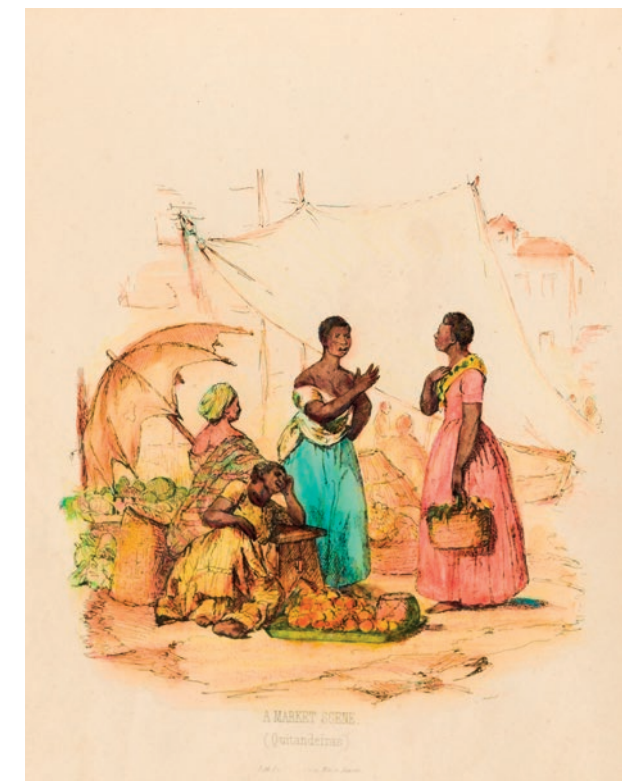


Fig. 6 / Eduard Hildebrandt, *A Market Scene (Quitandiera)*, 1846-1849, Brazil, Coleção Itaú Cultural.





GRUPO DE NEGROS, (em frente da Igreja de S. Gonçalo)

Fig. 7 / Attributed to Luiz Schlappriz, *Grupo de Negros* (em frente da Igreja de São Gonçalo), ca. 1863, engraving, 26.2 x 19 cm, Brazil, Coleção Itaú Cultural.

(1610-1696), who was part of the circle of seventeenth-century French artists who dedicated their careers to still life, including Jacques Linard (1597-1645), Sebastian Stoskopff (1597-1657), and Bauguin Lubin (ca. 1612-1663). All were followers of Flemish and Dutch painters.<sup>10</sup> Such works often demonstrate extremely skilled pictorial achievements. According to Alsina, artists would draw the depicted scene freehand from the direct observation of nature, without the need for “tracing”.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, *Fruits: From Nature* also suggests a dialogue with the iconography produced by European travelling artists, starting with French painter Jean Baptiste Debret, who depicted various aspects of the daily life of enslaved people at court, especially the labour of Black workers and Black female *quitandeiras*<sup>12</sup> in the *ganho*<sup>13</sup> or at leisure (figs. 5, 6, & 7). However, the watercolours of these travellers, although visual records made from quick sketches, do not fit into the compositional construction of the market scene genre. Moreover, contemporary art historiography dedicated to the iconography of enslaved Black peoples in the nineteenth century has recognized the need to place the images made by travelling artists in a broader context since, as products of the colonial gaze, they were conceived as records of “exotic” populations, and produced within the culture of the “Black Atlantic”; such colonial representations of Black people fit within the violent history of slavery and the slave trade, and express an aesthetic informed by asymmetrical structures of power, supported by multiple discriminatory levels reflecting European prejudices regarding civility, culture, class, race, and gender, from the perspective of white, European, male artists, made for consumption by the “civilized” world.<sup>14</sup>

Alongside the novel representation of race, Valadão’s choice of genre is surprising for a woman of her time, as it presumably would have required a visit to the depicted space, a popular market and gathering point for enslaved or freed Black people. The depiction of this bustling market atmosphere in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro carries interesting implications for the fields of women’s history and women in art in nineteenth-century Brazil. According to contemporary literature on the behaviour of white women from affluent classes, the only suitable place for a woman was the domestic environment. Women were expected to marry, have children, and manage their households. It was considered unacceptable for a white woman to circulate through the city streets, especially among slaves, exposing herself not only to malicious comments but also danger, strangeness, and barbarism.

However, Valadão’s painting suggests that these urban spaces were sometimes frequented by women from this social class. When creating preparatory drawings for the canvas, the artist is unlikely to have been in the interior of her studio, since this genre of painting required direct observation of nature, in this case, of the objects and people being represented. When could the painter have constructed the scene presented in her canvas? We can speculate that, during her travels to and from Paquetá Island, she might have stopped her carriage near the Candelária Market, en route to Pharoux Pier, which operated ferry services connecting Praça XV from Rio de Janeiro to Paquetá Island beginning in 1835. In this market, located on Peixe Beach, Black workers and *quitandeiras* regularly gathered. *Fruits: From Nature* therefore visually documents the varied experiences of women in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro, beyond



their prescribed roles as protected and domesticated guardians of morality. Despite Francisca Manoela Valadão’s social standing, she seems to have been allowed access to the market scene in the painting.

### III—THE SINGULARITY OF THE PAINTING

One of the most significant aspects of the composition is the use of chromatism and light by the painter to prioritize the opulence of Brazilian nature, including a record of slavery. The artist challenges conventional market scene iconography by featuring Black figures instead of white female peasants, positioning them in the background with subtle nuance. This rearrangement of characters on the canvas introduces a fissure in the structural compositional elements of market scene imagery and the iconography of Black people, forcing the white gaze to confront the Black gaze. On the other hand, the painting, as a representation of members of the Black population at work, draws the viewer’s attention to the slave system within the configurations of capitalism in modernity, where traditional captivity transforms into modern forms of colonial exploitation.

The intense chromatism used by the painter organizes the image into multiple planes and directs the viewer’s gaze to the profusion of warm colours in shades of red, yellow, orange, reddish orange, and yellowish orange, speckled with cool greenish tones that highlight the tropical flora and fauna in the foreground. This profusion of warm colours is painted on a predominantly ochre-brown base, which, in combination with the brushstrokes, accentuates the volume of the represented objects. The oil finish renders the lines well-defined, creating a more vivid appearance and emphasizing the shine of the fruits, vegetables, and animals.

Through the painter’s skill in using colour, this chromatic opulence creates a sense of distance, with the foreground, characterized by its warmer colours and a more luminous finish, receding into tones that gradually become more diffuse in the background, where the Black workers and white buyer are positioned. The intense use of colour, while emphasizing the richness and diversity of tropical nature, also highlights the theme of labour exclusively performed by the Black population.

The representation of non-white bodies in this kind of scene is innovative and introduces a fresh perspective. By depicting Black figures and the environment of the South Atlantic, the artist privileges the tropical landscape over its European counterpart. The substitution of the European peasant woman with Black workers effectuates a profound transformation in the narrative conventions of traditional market scenes.

As a Brazilian woman artist and slave owner, Valadão’s painting offers a unique perspective on the daily life of Rio de Janeiro’s inhabitants during this period, inserting Black people into the fabric of everyday urban experience. The depiction of the two Black figures on the left side of the composition is particularly noteworthy. Although their status as free or enslaved labourers remains uncertain, the artist’s portrayal of their gazes subverts traditional representations of docility (fig. 8). The visual narrative transcends the confines of the image, presenting a nuanced exploration of urban labour.

The gazes of the Black figures can be read to express hopelessness, disillusionment, disdain and uncertainty towards the act of being portrayed. They also suggest distrust and discomfort with the scene. One of the Black women avoids the painter’s gaze, instead



diverting her attention to the ongoing action, while the Black man returns a gaze that suggests disgust and bitterness towards the situation; the direct gaze of the woman behind him, and her frontal pose with arms crossed, seems to communicate both resignation and defiance. Collectively, their gazes seem to address the extreme metaphors of enslavement; Black people are relegated to the confines of “otherness”.

From the perspective of an art historian today, Valadão’s interventions in representing Black workers assume another dimension, whether through the strangeness or surprise at seeing a female painter from the slave-owning elite present a scene that would not traditionally appeal to the nineteenth-century Brazilian audience at the 1864 Salon. By removing the Black figure from the realm of the “exotic”, the painter avoids trivializing Black characters and slavery to appease a potential bourgeois clientele, which had no interest in looking at images of their slaves. In *Fruits: From Nature*, the social role of the slave does not appear as an archetype or allegory, symbolizing the mythical and primitive, but rather as a vital subject in the colonial economy. The arrangement of the Black models on

the canvas suggests that the painter did not merely “insert” them as elements in exotic performances but represented them as people inhabiting a political and cultural space marked by racial violence. Francisca Valadão’s pictorial operation subtly displaces Black subjects from caricatural frameworks, positioning them within a cultural space based in reality.

However, it would be misleading to claim that the painter deliberately sought to shine a light on the injustice of slave labour or criticize the institution of slavery in her painting. There are no sources to support either assumption. Nevertheless, what might have simply seemed interesting narrative and compositional solutions to the painter ultimately revealed the tense and paradoxical relationship between the white and Black population in nineteenth-century Brazil. By depicting a complex and highly charged exchange of gazes between the Black figures and the viewer/artist, Valadão highlighted the exploitation of Black people in Brazil at the 1864 Salon. Thus, we see that the painter, by drawing on the European model of “genre” painting, depicting scenes from everyday life, established alternative interpretive possibilities in her composition.

Fig. 8 / Francisca Manoela Valadão, detail of *Market Scene* or *Fruits: from Nature*, 1860, oil on canvas, Brazil, Ecila and Sérgio Fadel Collection.



NOTES

1.

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Email: olive.clau@gmail.com
2.

*Anais do Museu Imperial, Ministério da Educação* (Brazil: 1954), p. 161.
3.

Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, *A Moreninha* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições de Ouro, 1980).
4.

Miriam Oliveira, *Abigail de Andrade: artista plástica do Rio de Janeiro no século XIX* (Master’s thesis, Escola de Belas Artes, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1993).
5.

Jorge Coli, “Como Estudar a Arte Brasileira do século XIX,” in *Brasil Redescoberto*, ed. Carlos Martins (Rio de Janeiro: Paço Imperial, 1999); Tadeu Chiarelli, *Um Jeca nos Vernissages* (São Paulo: Edusp, 1995).
6.

The *Lei Eusébio de Queirós* was Brazilian legislation that prohibited the trafficking of Africans as slaves. The law was signed on 4 September 1850 by Emperor Dom Pedro II and was named after its author, Eusébio de Queirós, then Minister of Justice. The law was a response to pressure from the British government to end the slave trade. The last clandestine landing of enslaved Africans in Brazil occurred in 1856, demonstrating the law’s effectiveness. The Lei Eusébio de Queirós had a rapid impact, weakening the institution of slavery and imposing economic defeats on traffickers and slave owners. It was a significant victory for the abolitionist movement.
7.

Lilian Schwarcz, *Mulheres Aristas no Brasil*, exh. cat. (São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2016), p. 158.
8.

“The Black Atlantic” refers to the transnational cultural and historical connections between Africa, America, the Caribbean, and Europe, formed during the African diaspora. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
9.

See Schwarcz, *Mulheres Aristas*, p. 45.
10.

Dominique Alsina, *Louyse Moillon: La Nature Morte au Grand Siècle* (Paris: FATON, 2009), p. 63.
11.

Alsina, *Louyse Moillon*, p. 64.
12.

The *quitandeiras* were Black women, enslaved or free, who worked as street vendors or market sellers, offering fresh and artisanal products. The term *quitanda* comes from the Kimbundu language of Angola, meaning “market” or “sale”. It is essential to highlight that the *quitandeiras* played a vital role in the economy and culture of Rio de Janeiro during the slave trade and post-abolition periods. See Maria Odila Silva, “Nas Fimbrias da Escravidão Urbana: negras de tabuleiro e de ganho,” *Revista Estudos Econômicos. São Paulo* 15/9-109 (1985): p. 78.
13.

“Slaves in the *ganho*” were slaves hired out for wages. In the context of colonial and imperial Brazil, these enslaved individuals were forced by their masters to work on the streets, bringing back home a predetermined amount of money at the end of each day. See Patrícia March de Sousa, “Aos Olhos do
- Observador Estrangeiro: a roupa na construção,” *Revista acervo, Rio de Janeiro* 31 (2018): pp. 49-66, esp. 69.
14.

Anne Lafont, *Uma Africana no Louvre* (Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, 2022).





Calendar

Summer 1967

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts  
1379 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal 25, Quebec  
Telephone 842-8091

Calendrier

Été 1967

Le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal  
1379, rue Sherbrooke ouest  
Montréal 25, Québec  
Téléphone 842-8091



Some faces from the past in The Painter and the New World

Quelques visages du passé (Le Peintre et le Nouveau Monde)

## The Painter and the New World: celebrating the centennial of the Canadian Confederation through a hemispheric approach

ALENA ROBIN

The year 1967 marked the centenary of the Canadian Confederation. Among the different celebrations commemorating the event around the country, the city of Montreal hosted the international fair called Expo 67: *Terre des Hommes/Man and His World*. With pavilions from some sixty nations around the globe, Expo 67 provided Montreal with the opportunity to show itself as a city open to the world. In this context, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) organized a temporary exhibition entitled *The Painter and the New World* which ran during the summer for less than two months (9 June – 30 July 1967), displaying a survey of paintings ranging from 1564 to 1867, the year of the formation of the Canadian Confederation. The exhibition offered a selection of artworks representing the topics of seas, lands, people, and ideas connected to Canada, the United States, and the former colonies of Spanish America and Brazil. This essay considers the surprisingly significant role played by both the exhibition and David Carter, its curator and the museum's director at the time, in helping to establish Canada's cultural relationships with the rest of the Americas.

At a moment when the disciplines of art history and museum studies are struggling to decolonize their content, an exhibition such as this one is somewhat problematic to revisit since it is embedded in a

colonial discourse. Celebrating the settlement of external nations and the grandiose lands conquered by Europeans on the American continent, the “New World”, it failed to address the violence and suffering involved in the invasion and occupation of that territory (fig. 1). My aim is, however, to investigate the geopolitics of the time and examine how the visual arts were a tool to activate relations between nations. Given Canada's status as a former British colony, its proximity to the United States, and their intertwined relationship with Latin American countries, the Canadian context is particularly interesting. As outlined by James Rochlin, it was only in 1931 that Canada gained independence in foreign policy which had been until that time handled by Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Although Canada was first invited to join the Pan American Union in 1909, the country remained passive in building hemispheric relations until the outbreak of the Second World War. Eventually, Ottawa began to formulate occasional strategies in relation to Latin America that were quite distinct to that of Washington and reshaped the structure of US-Latin American relations. These circumstances are relevant to the organizing of *The Painter in the New World*; Carter was an art historian and curator who had trained and worked in the United States prior to his arrival in Montreal, and, perhaps as a result, he embodied the role of curator as diplomatic agent, supporting the Montreal museum in shaping global relations.<sup>2</sup>

Fig. 1 / Promotional material illustrating some of the portraits displayed in the exhibition *Le peintre et le Nouveau Monde / The Painter and the New World* (9 June - 30 July 1967), Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal/Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



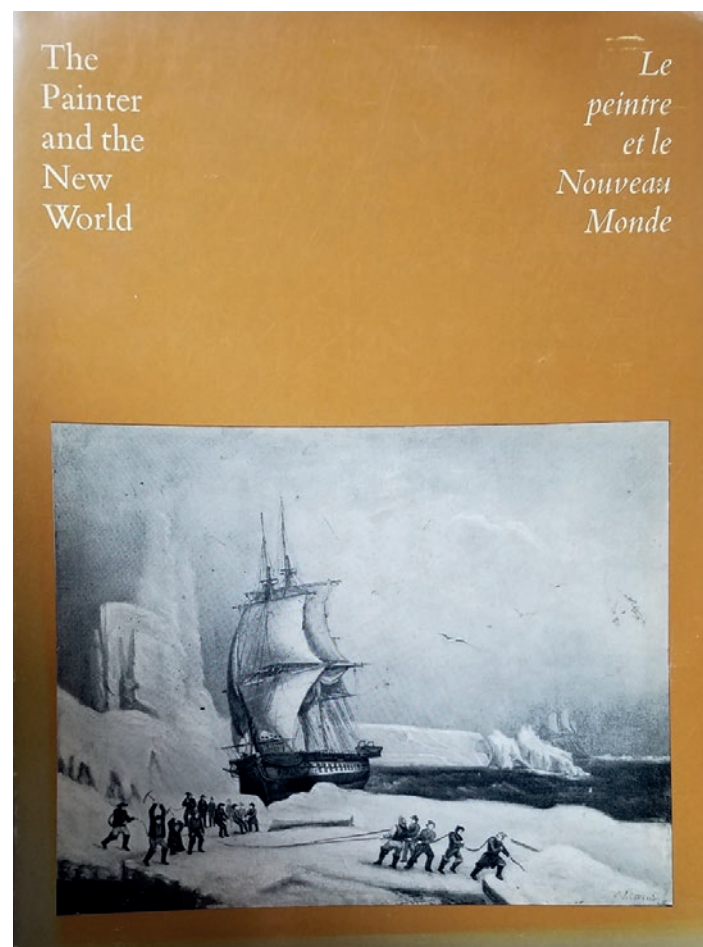


Fig. 2 / Front cover, David G. Carter, *The Painter and the New World: A Survey of Painting from 1564 to 1867, Marking the Founding of Canadian Confederation*, Exhibited from June 9 to July 30, 1967 / *Le peintre et le nouveau monde: étude sur la peinture de 1564 à 1867 pour souligner le centenaire de la Confédération canadienne* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1967).

As a specialist of Latin American art based in Canada, I find the 1967 MMFA initiative intriguing. It is not clear how colonial art from the Spanish Americas and Brazil was connected to the Canadian Confederation. I will therefore consider the specific circumstances in which the exhibit was conceived; how the director made initial contacts with museums and collectors, establishing cultural and diplomatic relations; the choice of artworks; and the reception by the audience who visited the exhibition. Given my area of expertise, special attention is paid to the artworks from the former colonies of Latin America.

This project combines a close reading of original documents from the MMFA archives, the exhibition catalogue for *The Painter and the New World*, and a review of the press coverage of the show. Within the museum archives are seven and a half boxes full of documents narrating the making of the exhibition and its reception, mostly letters, telegrams, handwritten notes, and newspaper clippings. This material reveals Carter's research process, his critical reflection, and the many contacts established as he was conceiving the exhibition. The catalogue consists of a bilingual (English and French) essay of approximately ten pages in each language, short biographies of the artists on display, a list of the works exhibited with their technical information, a few colour slides, and a large number of black and white reproductions (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> The press coverage in both anglophone and francophone newspapers in Canada and the United States was mainly restricted to the publication of official media releases from the museum, but a few offered a more personalized appreciation of the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue. There are also a few photographs of the exhibition installation in the archives.



Fig. 3. David G. Carter, Director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1964-1976).

#### DAVID CARTER AND THE NEW WORLD

David Carter was the director of the museum at that time and also curator of the exhibition. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in art and archaeology from Princeton in 1944 and, after working as a courier with the Department of State during the Second World War, earned a Master's degree from Harvard in 1949 (fig. 3).<sup>4</sup> He then specialized for two years at the Institute of Fine Art in New York, prior to becoming assistant curator of painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1952.<sup>5</sup> In 1955 he left that position to become the curator of painting and engraving at the

John Herron Art Institute of Indianapolis, where he also taught art history. From 1959, Carter was director of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art in Providence, Rhode Island. He was then appointed director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in April 1964, remaining in that position until 1976. Although Carter seemed to have developed a profound knowledge of medieval art, specifically from northern Europe, he was also recognized as an authority in the field of Spanish art due to an exhibition that was held while he was at the John Herron Art Institute, *Spanish Masters, from El Greco to Goya*.<sup>6</sup>

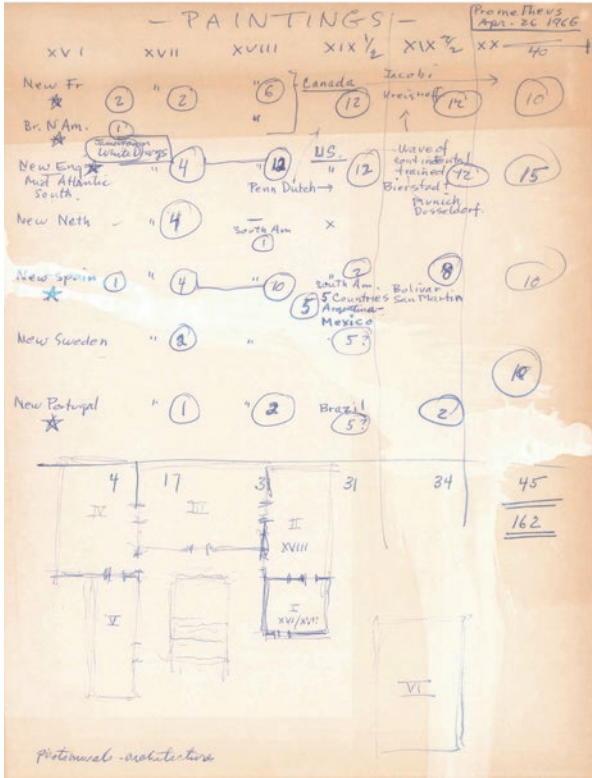


Carter must have been exposed to the field of Latin American colonial art in the United States, prior to coming to Canada. Indeed, in the 1960s, there had already been a continued interest in Latin American art in the US for some time – not only Modern art but also pre-Columbian and colonial art – through temporary exhibitions and the acquisition policies of different museums.<sup>7</sup> The US interest in Latin American art was guided by Pan-Americanism and the “Good Neighbor” policy, which sought to foster hemispheric solidarity during World War II and the Cold War.<sup>8</sup>

Soon after Carter’s arrival in Montreal, one of the first exhibitions he curated was *L’art des saints – Images of the Saints* in the spring of 1965, offering a reflection of sainthood as seen in changing artistic styles from Early Christian to modern times. The exhibition included a series of fourteen paintings on copper plates of Christ, the Virgin, and the Apostles – a loan from J. J. Klejman, a private collection in New York.<sup>9</sup> The cycle is signed by Nicolás Enríquez, an eighteenth-century painter from colonial Mexico. Part of this cycle of copper paintings was again exhibited in Montreal for *The Painter and the New World*.<sup>10</sup> The fact that Carter included this cycle in his Montreal exhibitions demonstrates that he had sufficient knowledge and connections in relation to colonial Latin American art to include it in a larger artistic discourse.

In terms of geography, Carter’s 1967 Montreal exhibition refers to “artists in the New World”, “the Americas”, “Hispanic-America”, the “Spanish Dominions”, the Viceroyalties of Peru, Nueva Granada, and Nueva España, Nouvelle France, and New England, as well as specific towns or regions within these areas. Carter sometimes refers to South America, usually when he wanted to encompass Brazil (fig. 4).

Fig. 4 / Distribution of the exhibition content by geographical areas and centuries.



However, he does not employ the term “Latin America”. This might suggest his awareness of the debates around the inadequacy of the term Latin America to denote a single, homogenous identity.<sup>11</sup>

Although the catalogue includes biographies of the painters from the Spanish viceroyalties, it does not include a bibliography, which might have indicated the resources used to document the lives of the artists from colonial Hispanic America. In Carter’s notes, there is nevertheless some evidence that he was reading George Kubler and Martin Soria’s *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800* (1959) and Alfredo Boulton’s *Historia de la pintura en Venezuela* (1964).

In a letter of 28 March 1967, the private collector H. H. Behrens recommended that Carter read some foundational books on Mexican colonial painting, such as those by Justino Fernández, Francisco de la Maza, and Francisco Pérez Salazar.<sup>12</sup> The work of these authors is still recognized as fundamental to the historiography of the field.

The Montreal audience had previously been exposed to some Latin American art exhibitions at the museum, but mostly of contemporary art in the 1940s, and pre-Columbian art in the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> In the 1960s, there were some incipient collections of Latin American art in Canadian museums.<sup>14</sup> In particular, the MMFA had a growing collection of pre-Columbian art.<sup>15</sup>

**ESTABLISHING CONNECTIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA**  
Securing loans for the exhibition was not an easy task, and the result was not representative of the efforts invested by David Carter and his team. Cultural diplomacy played an important role in the organization of *The Painter and the New World*, with communication initiated through the Canadian embassies in Latin American countries. The correspondence suggests that many museums initially responded enthusiastically, but requests did not necessarily materialize in loans for the exhibition. Private collectors from Latin America seemed more willing to lend works from their collections than governmental institutions.

More loans came from Mexico than from any other Latin American country. The Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH, National Institute of Anthropology and History) provided one work. Jorge Hernández Campos, from the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes in Mexico (INBA, National Institute of

Fine Arts) responded positively that his organization was looking forward to establishing a closer link with Canada, mentioning a desire to host an exhibition of contemporary Canadian painters, using the selection made annually for the São Paulo Biennial.<sup>16</sup> Bilateral exchanges were a common facet of cultural diplomacy.

Part of the reason for Carter’s success with Mexican loans was due to the advice of the president of the MMFA, Mr. A. Murray Vaughan, who resided part of the year at Cuernavaca and had connections with the artistic scene there. Murray recommended enlisting gallerist Inés Amor as a mediator for the Mexican loans.<sup>17</sup> Inés Amor is an iconic figure in Mexican Modern art as she founded the first art gallery in Mexico City, Galería de Arte Moderno, in 1935.<sup>18</sup> Through her initiatives, the gallery promoted the careers of young artists beyond the support of the Mexican government, providing them with an opportunity to sell their work on a national and international level. For example, she was fundamental in establishing the collection of Mexican art at the Philadelphia Museum in the 1940s. Amor’s name was also mentioned to Carter by Mr. D. W. Fulford, First Secretary at the Canadian Embassy, and Mr. William R. Johnston, General Curator of the Museum in Montreal.<sup>19</sup>

Carter’s request to Inés Amor came in late, as the letters are dated from February and March 1967. The Montreal museum specifically requested that her gallery be the central collecting point where works to be borrowed from Mexico could be properly packed under her supervision, exported to Montreal, and returned to their particular owners using her gallery’s premises. According to the correspondence relating to this request, Inés Amor had a “long experience not only with the Mexican regulations



themselves but, equally important, with the officials who administrate them”.<sup>20</sup> Initial contact had already been made with the Mexican governmental cultural authorities, and the Canadian embassy was also involved at some point, but Inés Amor’s involvement was crucial, for example, in reassuring private collectors that the shipping of their works would be properly managed.<sup>21</sup> Among the most important works from private collections that travelled to Montreal was a feather mosaic on loan from Franz Mayer in Mexico City. Other private lenders included H. H. Behrens and Antonio Miracle.

In Peru, Carter was in contact with Francisco Stastny, the director of the Museo de Arte in Lima. In a letter to Carter, Stastny said that his museum was extremely interested in receiving the catalogue of the exhibition, as well as the general catalogue of the Montreal Museum. Stastny even went on to say, “Perhaps we could establish an exchange system, for all publications.”<sup>22</sup> Contacts with other South American countries like Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela, judging from the correspondence in the museum’s archives, seem to have been much more complicated, and only a small selection of works came from these. Three were sent from Buenos Aires: two from the Museo Histórico Nacional and another from the Museo de Bellas Artes. A few works came from South American private collections including that of Alberto Braga-Lee from Brazil; and Maria Eugenia Samorán de Curiel and Carlos F. Duarte, both from Venezuela.<sup>23</sup> Although many letters were sent through the Canadian embassies, most of the loan requests were declined. This may be an indication that the relations between Canada and the southern hemisphere were not very strong at this point, including on the cultural scene. Only in 1968, when the government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau came into office, did the Liberals embark upon a

major foreign policy review that highlighted the need for Canada to form stronger relations with Latin America.<sup>24</sup>

Although not clearly alluded to in the documents in the MMFA archives, the dictatorships in place in Argentina and Brazil might have obstructed cultural diplomacy efforts. Canada had business relations with Brazil through Brascan, a Canadian tramway, light, and power company established in Brazil in the late nineteenth century; this connection would eventually play a leading role in introducing Brazilian Contemporary art to Canada in the mid 1970s.<sup>25</sup> However, it does not seem to have helped Carter in his efforts to secure works by Brazilian artists. At some point, Carter expressed his concerns to Mr. F. W. O. Morton, Third Secretary at the Canadian Embassy in Rio de Janeiro:

Brazil is not represented by any native-born Brazilian artists and I am relying largely on artists such as Franz Post, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutchman, one... Rugendas from Germany... I am still waiting to hear from Vienna concerning the possibility of borrowing watercolours by Thomas Ender.<sup>26</sup>

At the same time, Carter reached out to scholar and collector David James in the United States:

While I worked up a fairly respectable list of possibilities for Mexico and Spanish America I am at this point extremely weak in terms of representation of Brazilian painting between the dates 1560 and 1867... I would be most appreciative of works which might be borrowed including any of your own which you think might be of interest in this context.<sup>27</sup>



Fig. 5 / Probably Potosí School (Bolivia), *The Apostles Saint Judas Thaddeus and Saint Simon*, late eighteenth century, oil on canvas, 76.6 x 58.4 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of Miss Mabel Molson.





Fig. 6 / Anonymus, *The Virgin with Angels and Saints Francis-Xavier and Dominic*, eighteenth century, oil on canvas, 115.3 x 76.8 cm, Quebec City, Musée de la civilisation/ Collection du Séminaire de Québec, Lionel Roy.

Carter's efforts in Brazil and other South American countries would have benefitted from a cultural mediator, like Inés Amor for Mexico.

In fact, most of the colonial Latin American paintings came from institutions in the United States, such as the Brooklyn Museum, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Davenport Art Gallery (now Figge Art Museum). All of these US museums had longstanding collections of Latin American art.<sup>28</sup> The nineteenth-century works representing Latin America mostly came from different collections in Europe and the United States. Carter, due to his education and previous employment, was well connected with museums and collectors in the

US. He is indeed credited with having improved the relationships between major American art institutions and the MMFA during his directorship.<sup>29</sup>

Museums in Canada did not have extensive holdings of colonial Latin American art, yet these collections were also taken into consideration for the selection of artworks for *The Painter and the New World*. One painting came from the MMFA's own small colonial art collection (fig. 5) and three from the Lionel Roy collection housed in the Musée de la civilisation, in the collection of the Séminaire de Québec in Quebec City (figs. 6-8).<sup>30</sup> This is a clear indicator that, although obscure today, these collections were known and appreciated in the 1960s.



Fig. 7 / Anonymus, *Mater Dolorosa*, eighteenth century, oil on canvas, 164.7 x 134 cm, Quebec City, Musée de la civilisation/ Collection du Séminaire de Québec.



Fig. 8 / Manuel de la Serna, *Our Lady of the Pilar*, eighteenth century, oil on copper, 40.2 x 52 cm, Quebec City, Musée de la civilisation/ Collection du Séminaire de Québec.



#### THE EXHIBITION: A PARTICULAR REPRESENTATION OF THE NEW WORLD

While colonial Hispanic America ended when the former colonies became sovereign nations in the 1820s, the date range of Carter’s survey of colonial painting, ending in 1867, was aligned with Canadian history and the nation’s confederation. This unusual chronology allowed for the inclusion of international artists who travelled to and depicted young independent nations – not a traditional way of addressing the periodization of the New World south of the US border. This fact did not seem to raise concern from the curating team in Montreal, as they viewed these lands as aligned in their desires for “independence and maturity”.<sup>31</sup>

The exhibition presented a double path: “a visual account of the development of a New World and the development of the art of painting in that world”.<sup>32</sup> The display was organized around six different sections: 1) “Faith, Loyalty, and Conquest”; 2) “The Conflict against Oblivion”, which included portraiture and still-life, the longest section of the exhibition; 3) “The Testing of National Vitality at Old World Founts”, exploring the exposure of New World artists to the courts, academies, people and scenery of Europe; 4) “Romanticism, Fantasy, and Mythology”; 5) “The Range of Experience”, as depicted in genre and war painting; and 6) “Curiosity, Science and Empire”, through the eyes of travelling artists of the nineteenth century. Of 359 artworks, less than a quarter were related to countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Peru. These artworks were displayed in all the sections, but mostly in the first and second which included religious paintings and portraiture made by colonial painters who worked in Latin America, and in the last section, with representations of Latin America from the perspective

of travelling artists foreign to those lands. From the few surviving photographs of the display and installation, it is clear that the architecture of the museum was incorporated into the exhibition strategy, with the majestic staircase used as a central point connecting the different sections (figs. 9, 10 & 11).

One of the highlights from colonial Mexico was the above-mentioned feather mosaic on loan from Franz Mayer, a German émigré who settled in Mexico City and worked in finance, but whose true passion was collecting artworks, books, furniture, and decorative arts.<sup>33</sup> To introduce this *plumeria*, the MMFA prepared a specific press release which emphasized the exceptionality of such a loan, due to the fragility of the medium, and underscored that it was made possible through the diplomatic intervention and generosity of Mr. Mayer himself.<sup>34</sup>

Most of the artworks from colonial Mexico were easel paintings. Many works were anonymous, while some were by celebrated painters such as Baltasar de Echave y Rioja, Cristóbal de Villalpando, Nicolás Rodríguez Juárez, Miguel Cabrera, and José de Páez, still recognized today as pillars of the New Spanish school of painting. The majority of these illustrated religious subjects, but there was also an important selection of portraits.

The section dedicated to Latin America as represented by travelling artists – who were from either Europe or the United States but spent a considerable amount of time in the Americas in the nineteenth century, when the countries were independent nations – stressed their association with the New World rather than their place of birth.<sup>35</sup> These artists depicted the grandiose architecture, countryside, and ethnographical views of the different nations.



Figs. 9 & 10 / Installation of the religious section and portrait section, *Le peintre et le Nouveau Monde / The Painter and the New World* (9 June – 30 July 1967), Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal / The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



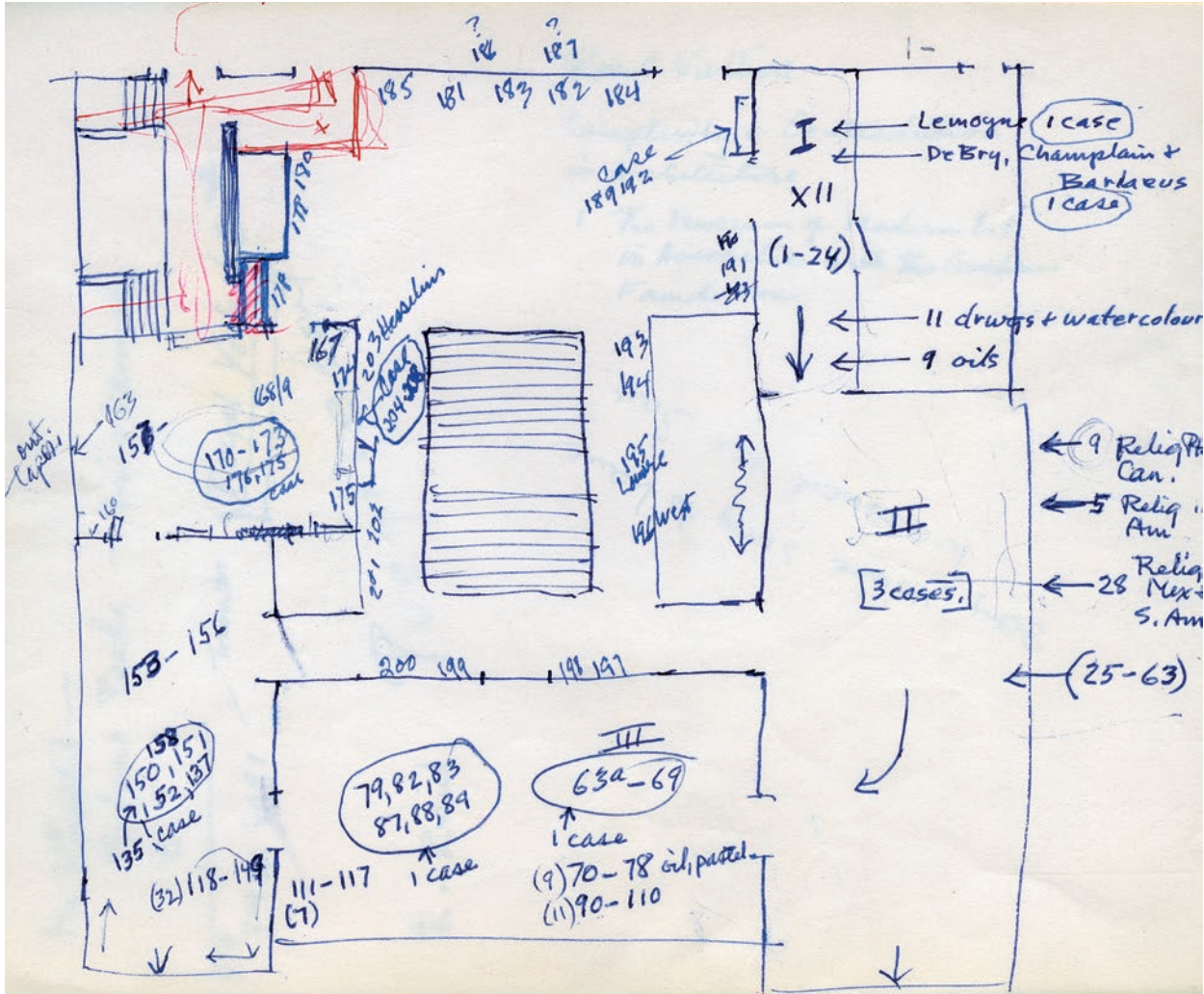


Fig.11 / Sketch of the installation in the Museum, *Le peintre et le Nouveau Monde / The Painter and the New World* (9 June – 30 July 1967), Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal/The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Among the works included, for example, was a view of Mexico City’s main square by Pietro Antonio Gualdi, who was born in Italy but travelled to Mexico City in 1835 and stayed in the country until 1851. A similar case is presented by German artist Johann Moritz Rugendas who is recognized for his depictions of landscapes and ethnographical representations in several countries of Latin America in the first half of the nineteenth century. By the Austrian painter Thomas Ender were seven small watercolour views of Rio de Janeiro, made while he was travelling in Brazil in 1817. Two works by the US painter Frederic Edwin Church also portrayed the landscape of South America, alongside other paintings depicting landscapes from other parts of the Americas, such as an iceberg from Newfoundland.

#### SCOPE AND RECEPTION OF CARTER’S VISION

It is hard to address the legacy of such a wide-ranging exhibition. Many stakeholders in the planning of the exhibition were aware, from an early stage, that *The Painter and the New World* was an ambitious project. In a letter to Carter, D. W. Fulford, First Secretary of the Canadian embassy in Mexico, commented that, “‘The Painter and the New World’ should provide a fascinating theme for a Centennial Exhibition, Spanish colonial art, in particular, is still remarkably little known in Canada.”<sup>36</sup> One of the issues that Carter had faced while making his selection of works was to show the breadth of colonial Latin American painting, in quality, chronology, and geographical distribution.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, some of the artworks he was interested in borrowing were already promised for concurrent exhibitions; others were in a too delicate state of conservation to travel abroad. From the museum archives, it is clear that he was well aware of

the limitations of his selection: “I should like to see the Mexican and South American section as strong as possible in view of the preponderance of American and Canadian items.”<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, *The Painter and the New World* installation was somehow overshadowed by the fascination with Expo 67. The events took place in completely different areas of the city: the museum is located in the downtown core, while the international fair was held on Saint Helen’s Island, in the middle of the Saint Lawrence River, accessible by the then newly inaugurated subway system. Expo 67 received much more visibility, which is important to factor in when considering the disappointing number of visitors to the exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The exact numbers have not been found, but a concern with low turnout is recorded in Carter’s correspondence.<sup>39</sup>

The exhibition did not travel to other museums, but the catalogue elicited a great deal of interest in the United States. John Canaday, a journalist from the *New York Times*, did not see the show due to a lack of publicity in the United States. He did, however, publish a note based on the catalogue: “It could hardly have been anything but a great exhibition by the evidence of the catalogue, a big book, *The Painter and the New World*, with each of the 346 paintings reproduced large and clear.”<sup>40</sup> And he went on to add: “The Canadians have now given us of the way to arrange a thematic exhibition.” After the publication of this review in *The New York Times*, there were many requests from the United States for copies of the catalogue. Furthermore, when the MMFA sent the catalogue to the lenders, many expressed a desire to acquire additional copies to share within their circles at their own cost.



Other specialists referred to it as having the potential for “a unifying theme in a history of the Americas course”.<sup>41</sup> Another described the exhibition as a “knockout” and stated that he knew of “nothing else that covers the Spanish element so well”.<sup>42</sup>

The most poignant comment came from Alfred Frankenstein, a specialist of American painting and art critic at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who was teaching two summer courses in the history of American painting at Harvard University. He missed the exhibition, which he described as “the greatest American show in all of human history”, calling his failure to visit the exhibition one of the “greatest disappointments” of his professional career, adding “in fact, I would call it a major tragedy”. He eventually ended up publishing a note in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where he highly praised the exhibition, based solely on the catalogue:

*The Painter and the New World* did not limit itself to painting in Canada, and there lies its unique importance: it was the first exhibition ever organized to cover painting in all the Americas, North, South, and Middle... The book’s artistic revelations cannot be taken seriously enough. Most of us know nothing at all about the history of painting in Canada and very little about the history of painting in Latin America.<sup>43</sup>

In spite of the optimistic US press response, more than half a century after the exhibition was held, its legacy in relation to Latin American colonial art in Canada is not that obvious. Although the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is still today the cultural institution in Canada most actively involved in acquiring and exhibiting

Latin American art, *The Painter and the New World* did not lead to any acquisition by the museum or any other Canadian collection. It did not stimulate government policies, an increased interest in Latin American art, or further exhibitions at Canadian institutions. *The Painter and the New World* is, however, a significant example of the many connections that David Carter and his team established as cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. It marked an important initiative in the study of Latin American art in Canada.





NOTES

1. James Rochlin, *Discovering the Americas: The Evolution of Canadian Foreign Policy towards Latin America* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), pp. 11-12. I wish to acknowledge the funding received by Western University through the Western Strategic Support Grant that allowed me to initiate this project, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Insight Development Grant, and the support received by my research assistants Ivan Baruj Vazquez Clavellina and María Laura Flores Barba. I am also grateful to the colleagues at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Musée de la civilisation in Quebec City, who assisted me in this research project.

2. Lynda Jessup and Sarah E. K. Smith, “Guest Editors’ Introduction: Curating Cultural Diplomacy,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 3 (2016): pp. 283-288; and Sarah E. K. Smith and Sascha Priewe, eds., *Museum Diplomacy: How Cultural Institutions Shape Global Engagement* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023).

3. David G. Carter, *The Painter and the New World: A Survey of Painting from 1564 to 1867, Marking the Founding of Canadian Confederation, Exhibited from June 9 to July 30, 1967/ Le peintre et le nouveau monde: étude sur la peinture de 1564 à 1867 pour souligner le centenaire de la Confédération canadienne* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1967).

4. “Memorial. David G. Carter ‘45,” Princeton Alumni Weekly, 8 July 2015 <https://paw.princeton.edu/memorial/david-g-carter-45> (accessed August 2024)

5. Archives Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (hereafter MMFA Archives): Communiqué de presse, 1958-1979, 153/69, 23 April 1964; and Georges-Hébert Germain, *A City’s Museum: A History of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2007), pp. 128-133.

6. *El Greco to Goya: A Loan Exhibition of Spanish Painting of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, The John Herron Art Institute, 1963.

7. See, for example, Holly Barnet-Sanchez, “The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art: United States Museums and the Role of Foreign Policy in the Appropriation and Transformation of Mexican Heritage, 1933-1944” (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 1993); Mari Carmen Ramírez and Theresa Papanikolas, eds., *Collecting Latin American Art for the 21st Century* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2002); Mari Carmen Ramírez, María C. Gaztambide, Héctor Olea, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, and Melina Kervandjian, eds., *Resisting Categories: Latin American and/or Latino?* (Houston: Museum Fine Arts, International Center for the Arts of the Americas, 2012); Aubrey Hobart, “Treasures and Splendors: Exhibiting Colonial Latin American Art in U.S. Museums, 1920-2020” (PhD diss., University of California Santa Cruz, 2018); Edward Sullivan, ed., *The Americas Revealed: Collecting Colonial and Modern Latin American Art in the United States*, exh. cat. (New York: The Frick Collection, 2018).

8. See, for example, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “The Good

Neighborhood and Bad Times,” in Ramírez et al., *Resisting Categories*, pp. 424-435, and the documents compiled on pp. 541-583.

9. MMFA Archives: *L’art des saints/ Images of the Saints*, Box A 1979, File 393-11, Lender Agreement, 1 February 1965.

10. The whereabouts of this cycle are currently unknown. Nicolás Enríquez remains to this day an obscure painter, who has gained some attention in the last few years. Iлона Katzew, Nicolás Enríquez in *Painted in Mexico 1700-1790: Pinxit Mexici*, ed. Iлона Katzew (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2017), pp. 184-187.

11. See, for example, Joseph Randall Shapiro, “The United States Collects Pan American Art,” in Ramírez et al., *Resisting Categories*, pp. 580-583.

12. MMFA Archives: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650, File 1638, Box 58, 28 March, 1967, H. H. Behrens, letter to David G. Carter.

13. The following exhibitions on art from Latin America were mounted at the MMFA during that time: *Contemporary Art of the Western Hemisphere: A Collection of the IBM Corporation Representing the Latin American Countries, Newfoundland and the Province of Canada, the United States and its Possession*, December 1941; *Mexican Art Today*, September to October 1943; *Chilean Contemporary Art*, December 1943; *Mexican Contemporary Paintings and Drawings*, September 1946; *The Nathan Cummings Collections (Ancient Peruvian Ceramics)*, November and December 1955; and *Tarascan Art of Ancient Mexico*, November and December 1956. Only in 1961 was the Montreal audience exposed for the first time to Mexican colonial art through *Mexican Art from Pre-Columbian Times to Present Day*, which ran in February and March of 1961.

14. On collections of art from Latin America in Canada, see Alena Robin, “Mapping the Presence of Latin American Art in Canadian Museums and Universities,” *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 2 (2019): pp. 33-57. <https://doi.org/10.1525/lavc.2019.120004> (accessed August 2024)

15. On the extension of their collection, see Erell Hubert and Victor Pimentel, “Les arts précolombiens au Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal,” *RACAR* 2 (2013): p. 721, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1020791ar> (accessed August 2024); and Erell Hubert, “Arts from Latin America at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts: Over a Century of History,” *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 1 (2022): pp. 93-100.

16. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650, 23 January 1967, Jorge Hernandez Campos to David G. Carter. For early participation of Canada in the São Paulo Bienal see Kirsty Robertson et al., “‘More a Diplomatic than an Esthetic Event’: Canada, Brazil, and Cultural Brokering in the São Paulo Biennial and ‘Isumavut’,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 2 (2013): pp. 60-88.

17. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650, 2 March 1967, David G. Carter

to Inés Amor. A. Murray and his wife Marguerite Vaughan were avid collectors of Mexican art as well, and long-term benefactors of the MMFA. They personally donated or funded much of the museum’s collection of Mexican drawings and prints: see Hubert, “Arts from Latin America,” p. 95. An exhibition of their collection was held in 1979 in Fredericton. According to the curator Ian G. Lumsden, the Vaughans resided for approximately thirty years in their Mexican residence. Ian G. Lumsden, ed., *Mexican Works from the Vaughan Collection* (Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1979).

18. Jorge Alberto Manrique and Teresa del Conde, *Una mujer en el arte Mexicano. Memorias de Inés Amor* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1987); Salomon Grimberg, “Inés Amor and the Galería de Arte Mexicano,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 2 (2011): pp. 3-13; Rachel Kaplan, “Mexican Art Today: Inés Amor, Henry Clifford and the Shifting Practices of Exhibiting Modern Mexican Art,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 3.2 (2014): pp. 264-288, [https://doi.org/10.1386/jcs.3.2-3.264\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jcs.3.2-3.264_1) (accessed August 2024)

19. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650, 15 February 1967, David G. Carter to Inés Amor.

20. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650, 26 January 1967, D. W. Fulford to David G. Carter; 15 February 1967, David G. Carter to Inés Amor.

21. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650, 21 February 1967, H. H. Behrens to David G. Carter.

22. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650. File 1640, 6 April 1967, Francisco Stastny to David G. Carter.

23. From Venezuela, Carter was particularly interested in a portrait of the Independence figure Simón Bolívar, however, this was also unsuccessful. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650, file 1640, 16 March 1967, David Carter to Luis Felipe Huiži.

24. Rochlin, *Discovering the Americas*, pp. 63-91. In the specific case of Brazil: Rosana Barbosa, “Brazilian and Canadian Relations: A Historical Survey,” in *Brazil and Canada in the Americas*, ed. Rosana Barbosa (Halifax: Gorsebrook Research Institute), pp. 31-54, and Rosana Barbosa, *Brazil and Canada: Economic, Political, and Migratory Ties, 1820s to 1970s* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2017).

25. On the early years of Brascan, see Christopher G. Boone, “Streetcars and Politics in Rio de Janeiro: Private Enterprise versus Municipal Government in the Provision of Mass Transit, 1903-1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2 (1995): pp. 343-365, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00010786> (accessed August 2024); Duncan McDowall, *The Light: Brazilian Traction, Light and Power Company Limited, 1899-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), and Patricia Best and Ann Shortell, *The Brass Ring: Power, Influence, and the Brascan Empire* (Toronto:

Random House of Canada, 1988). On the role the company played in introducing Brazilian art in Canada, see Alena Robin, “Geopolítica institucional en dos colecciones de arte brasileño en Canadá,” forthcoming.

26. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650. File 1640, 9 May 1967, David G. Carter to F. W. O. Morton.

27. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650. File 1640, 23 January 1967, David G. Carter to David James.

28. Clara Bargellini, “El coleccionismo estadounidense,” in *México en el mundo de las colecciones de arte. Nueva España*, vol. 2, ed. María Olga Sáenz González (Mexico City: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores/UNAM/CONACULTA, 1994), pp. 256-299.

29. Germain, *A City’s Museum*, p. 133.

30. On these collections, see Alena Robin, “Colonial Art from Spanish America in Québec,” *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 1 (2022): pp. 80-92.

31. Carter, *The Painter and the New World*, n.p.

32. Carter, *The Painter and the New World*, n.p.

33. For the museum bearing his name and legacy, see Héctor Rivero Borrell Miranda et al., *The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico: Treasures from the Museo Franz Mayer/ La Grandeza Del México Virreinal: Tesoros Del Museo Franz Mayer* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2002).

34. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0059 E, 1651-1691. File 1661, no. 80, 16.6.67, “Collection d’œuvres américaines exposées au Musée des Beaux-Arts,” *Le Soleil*, 29 June 1967, p. 22.

35. “Rétrospective sur les peintres qui ont fixé l’époque de la colonisation pour la postérité,” *Le Soleil*, 12 June 1967, p. 9.

36. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650, 30 December 1966, D. W. Fulford to David G. Carter.

37. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650. File 1641, 18 January 1967, David G. Carter to Perry T. Rathbone. Mr. Rathbone was then the Director of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

38. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650. File 1642, 14 March 1967, David G. Carter to Elizabeth M. Rochow.

39. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0057 E, 1622-1637. File 1630, 4 September 1967, David G. Carter to Alfred V. Frankenstein.

40. John Canaday, “Post-Mortem, with Pleasure,” *New York Times*, 20 August 1967, p. D21.

41. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650. Box 57, file 1630, 12 September 1967, Richard Furry to Marie-Louise Funke. Richard Furry was professor of History at Duke University.

42. Archives MMFA: *The Painter and the New World*, AHM-0058 E, 1638-1650. File 1642, 18 July 1967, Richard H. Randall to David G. Carter. Randall was director of the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland.

43. Alfred Frankenstein, “The Unnoticed ‘New World,’” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 15 October 1967, p. 29.



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Images of fear and desire: the Brazilian *ibirapema* and indigenous women in the sixteenth-century European imagination

VIVIEN KOGUT LESSA DE SÁ

BRAZIL  
Fig. 8 Courtesy of Herbert de Paz

CAMBRIDGE  
Figs. 4 & 7 Cambridge University Library

LONDON  
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Fig. 2 Historic Images / Alamy Stock Photo

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND  
Figs. 1 & 6 Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

The Nativity scene at Madrid’s Museo de América: a case study of the collecting in Spain of *Beleães* from the Real Audiencia de Quito

SERGIO COCA CRESPO

MADRID  
Figs. 1, 2, 8, 9, 10 & 12 Museo de América, photograph by Joaquín Otero Úbeda  
Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 11 courtesy of the author

Painting and collecting in seventeenth-century Lima

RAFAEL RAMOS SOSA

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Figs. 2, 3, 4 & 8 Courtesy of the author  
Fig. 5 Ministry of Culture, Spain  
Fig. 7 Museo del Prado

DALLAS  
Fig. 6 © Public domain, courtesy of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation, photograph by Jamie Stukenberg

LIMA  
Fig. 9 Colección Barbosa-Stern, Lima  
Fig. 10 Museo de los Descalzos, Lima. Photograph by Jesús Sánchez Gil

Imagining a Mexican gladiator: Aztec combatants and European print culture

DELIA COSENTINO

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Figs. 1, 7, 8 & 9 The Newberry Library

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Fig. 2 © The Trustees of the British Museum

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Fig. 5 Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA, Los Angeles, California

MADRID  
Fig. 3 Museo de América, photograph by Joaquín Otero Úbeda  
Fig. 4 Biblioteca Nacional de España

NEW YORK  
Fig. 6 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

PARIS  
Fig. 10 Bibliothèque nationale de France

A *Santiago Mataespañoles* silver statuette: Contact zones and changing iconographies in nineteenth-century Peru

HELENA SANTIDRIÁN MAS

COPENHAGEN  
Fig. 9 Royal Danish Library

MADRID  
Fig. 10 Courtesy of Jaime Eguiguren Art & Antiques  
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Fig. 6 Courtesy of the author

“Market Scene” (1864) by Brazilian artist Francisca Manoela Valadão: Gazes in Black and White

CLÁUDIA DE OLIVEIRA

BRAZIL  
Fig. 1 Brazil, Ecila and Sérgio Fadel Collection

PETRÓPOLIS, BRAZIL  
Fig. 3 Courtesy of Miguel Salles Gallery

RIO DE JANEIRO  
Figs. 5, 6 & 7 Coleção Martha e Erico Stüchel

SAO PAULO  
Fig. 4 Brazil, Coleção Itaú Cultural

VIENNA  
Fig. 2 Wikimedia

*The Painter and the New World*: celebrating the centennial of the Canadian Confederation through a hemispheric approach

ALENA ROBIN

MONTREAL  
Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 & 11 The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Photo Archives MBAM / MMF  
Fig. 5 Photograph by Jean-François Brière, courtesy of MMEA

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