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**TREASURES AND SPLENDORS: EXHIBITING COLONIAL LATIN
AMERICAN ART IN U.S. MUSEUMS, 1920-2020**

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ABSTRACT

Treasures and Splendors: Exhibiting Colonial Latin American Art in U.S. Museums, 1920-2020

Aubrey Hobart

Over the last century, art museums in the United States have mounted dozens of exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art, but their reasons for doing so have changed over time. Most of the exhibits from 1920-1959 played an important role in international diplomacy as the U.S. government attempted to influence Americans' attitudes about Latin Americans, and vice versa, for economic and political gains. However, government interest largely waned in the 1960s and '70s, leaving a power vacuum that was filled by individual art collectors, who became the tastemakers of the era. This was financially unsustainable, though, and by the 1980s and '90s, major conglomerates began to convert their fiscal power into charitable goodwill by sponsoring crowd-pleasing blockbuster exhibitions. Yet for all these shifts, the most rapid changes in American society came after the turn of the millennia with the rise of the internet and an increase in international terrorism. As technology and social pressures have combined to make the past more accessible and desirable, there has been an increase in the number of museum exhibitions and reasons for their existence. The last two decades have seen exhibits produced on behalf of national governments, wealthy art collectors, and corporate entities, but now they tend to be more driven by scholarship and academic interests, as well.

While this project is interested in tracking and documenting these changes over time, its focus on the relatively small number of exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art in the United States over the last hundred years serves a greater goal; the questions it asks are more philosophical. What role does the museum play in society? What happens to public opinion when trusted and authoritative institutions forward specific visions of culture and cultural production? Whose voice is really being heard and assimilated? Although I cannot offer definitive answers to these questions, this project does ultimately suggest that museums do not simply reflect popular notions about other cultures, but in fact play major roles in constructing those opinions. Even though the vast majority of the population will never see any given exhibition—let alone read every label, peruse all wall text, or study every item displayed—museums, often subtly, sometimes overtly, exert influence by drawing attention to specific cultures and histories, and by privileging particular perspectives. The ways influence has been manifested in and through museum exhibitions are the topic of this study; also under consideration are the consequences of the kind of work museums have done and might possibly do in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

In the popular imagination, the words “treasures” and “splendors” may evoke thoughts of wooden chests overflowing with gleaming gold coins, enormous sparkling jewels, and, inevitably, a single strand of pearls. One might envision an adventurer hacking their way through thick jungles, discovering piles of precious objects left behind by pirates, or one might picture Howard Carter prying open the mummy’s secret tomb. It is a romantic notion of wealth, fame, mystery, and excitement. Yet museums frequently use these same words to title their exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art.¹ What is splendid about paintings of Catholic saints? When is a statue of the Virgin Mary considered a treasure? These works do often feature precious materials, such as stamped gold-leaf patterns, silver crowns, embedded emeralds, or mother-of-pearl, and the American Hemisphere has always been a great source of riches and luxury items, but I suspect it is more than that. There is something about the bright jewel-toned colors often used in these objects, something in their Baroque complexity and sacred nature that compels museums to describe them as brilliant, exquisite, costly things.

To the people of the United States and Western Europe who consider themselves the inheritors of the philosophies of the ancient Greeks and Romans, text tends to be the primary vehicle of meaning. We mistrust our senses and believe that nothing is “true” until it is put into words by being spoken aloud or written down.

¹ Though it is worth noting that at most large museums, curators have no say in what their exhibitions are called; that is usually decided by the museum’s marketing team.

This idea is codified in our laws and affects the ways in which we think about the world. We pore over the connotations of words, attempting to extract every bit of information. Yet there are times when we are overly casual with our terminology and allow the weight of tradition or the fear of inconvenience to muddy our intent. At other times, our words are so powerful that we can (and I will argue that museums do) change the way that people understand history and culture, even when we do not speak to them directly or even realize we are affecting them at all. By examining the exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art assembled in U.S. museums over the past century, I intend to demonstrate how that can be done.

On Terms

On June 3, 2016, the email listserv of the Association for Latin American Art (ALAA) exploded in outrage. On a forum that was mostly used for the occasional job posting, call for papers, or minor research question, a graduate student from Tufts University revealed that the College Art Association (CAA) had altered the dissertation categories on its website. According to her, all doctoral dissertations that had been written after 2002 on the subject of Latin American Art History were being classified under the heading “Central America/Caribbean.” For days, offended ALAA members raved about this change, citing ignorance or negligence on the part of CAA, even to the point of invoking the specter of then U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump and his campaign promise to build a wall along the Mexican border. Fortunately, some level-headed individuals contacted the president of CAA, Suzanne

Blier, to inform her of their concerns. She investigated immediately and found that the problem arose “as a result of the incorrect migration of CAA’s archive of dissertation listings by the publisher.”² Blier stated that the categories would be removed from the website over the summer and that CAA would work on getting them corrected.

This was not enough action for many concerned “Listeros” (listserv members) and demands were made that ALAA (a CAA affiliate group) be involved in CAA’s correction process. Members feared that without representation, the “correction” would only be a return to the original categories, which were already inadequate to describe the broad field of Latin American art. Yet ALAA members could not even decide amongst themselves what the appropriate categories should be. Would it be best to stick to pure geography? That would place dissertations about Central American or Caribbean art in the same category as U.S. and Canadian art; all of these nations are technically considered a part of “North America.” While this may be geographically correct, Central America and the Caribbean islands tend to have more cultural and linguistic similarities to South America than to the United States and Canada. Other ALAA members felt it was equally important to include a temporal element in these dissertation categories, as the study of pre-Columbian/pre-Hispanic art differs widely from the study of colonial or contemporary art.

² Elisa Mandell, “Re: CAA’s New Dissertation Categories!!!!!!!!!!,” ALAA Listserv, June 3, 2016.

In the end, the graduate student who had originally brought the matter to the attention of ALAA joined the Executive Committee of CAA to work on improving the subject listings. Six months later, the site showed evidence of change; the geographic dissertation categories included “North America,” “Central America and Caribbean,” and “South America.”³ However, there were also some puzzling mixed temporal and cultural categories, such as “Ancient Art 500 BCE to 500 CE,” in addition to “Ancient Greek/Roman Art,” which falls within the same time frame. While there was a category for “Native American Art (post-1500),” there was no category for Native American art before 1500, and no clarity as to what might be considered Native American art. By March 2018, the categories shifted again to a much more workable solution. Now scholars could choose up to three descriptors for their work from geographic, temporal, and subject matter categories. Yet some of the subject matter categories remain bizarre. While Asian American art and African American art are listed, Asian art and African art without the “American” qualifier are not. There is no category for European/Anglo American art because that is considered the default of all Americans until proven otherwise, but there is no category for just American art either. The category Native American/First Nations remains but there is also a category for Indigenous Peoples. Islamic art is called out, but not Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, or any other religious art. Latinx art, too, is an odd choice. It is the non-gendered version of Latino art, which itself is only used

³ College Art Association, “Dissertation Submission Guidelines,” *CAA.Reviews*, accessed March 9, 2018, <http://www.caareviews.org/about/dissertations>.

because it would sound ridiculous to say Latin American American art, even though that is what it means. At any rate, it is obvious that there are significant problems with terminology in art history, as represented by the College Art Association, and that these categories should be more carefully thought through (see Appendix A for one possible approach to the CAA dissertation guidelines). Using the present method to classify scholarly work is inconsistent, confusing, and limiting, and it would be naive to dismiss these concerns as purely academic.

In addition to professional organizations like CAA, art categories are most commonly used in universities, museums, and auction houses. They affect such things as the kind of funding that is available to scholars, how and where their knowledge is disseminated, which organizations can be joined, what jobs are available, and where specific art objects may be found. Much more broadly, these categories also have a strong effect on how we determine our own cultural and ethnic identities. So, the existence of unclear terminology regarding Latin America not only affects scholars of Latin American art and history, but everyone who lives in these countries and how people around the world think about them.

Thus far the term “Latin America” has been used uncritically, but it is the first term that must be clarified in order to understand the exact region in question. The phrase “Latin America” seems to have been coined in France in the late nineteenth century as a reaction against the terms “Hispanic America” or “Spanish America” and “Ibero-America.” The first two terms were used to refer to all of the countries of the

American Hemisphere that were once colonized by Spain.⁴ The latter designation, “Ibero-America,” was itself an adjustment from Hispanic/Spanish America. It was coined in order to include the influential South American nation of Brazil, which had been colonized by Portugal, Spain’s neighbor on the Iberian peninsula. However, both of these classifications excluded several other South American and Caribbean nations that had been colonized by the French, such as Haiti and French Guiana. Thus, the French invented the name “Latin America” to include all the nations of the Americas whose primary languages after colonization (Spanish, Portuguese, or French) were derived from Latin, in opposition to Anglo America, which was English-speaking. Technically, the geographic boundaries of Latin America, then, include all of the American Hemisphere with the exceptions of Canada, the United States of America and its territories, the former British colonies of Belize and Guyana, and the former Dutch colonies of Suriname and the Lesser Antilles. However, for the purposes of this project, “Latin America” will be used more inclusively and as it is conceived of in the popular imagination: to denote the geographic region that contains all of the countries and territories in the American Hemisphere that are located south of the United States.

The exclusion of Canada from Latin America may seem puzzling if one is basing these categories purely on linguistic differences. French-speaking people

⁴ Although what is today known as the southwest United States was once controlled by Spain, no single European power ever fully colonized the whole of the geographic region now occupied by the U.S., which suggests that the coverage indicated by the terms “Spanish America” or “Latin America” is arbitrary and contingent on current national identity politics; it is not strictly a matter of colonial control, full or otherwise.

account for more than thirty percent of the population of Canada, and French is one of the country's two official languages. In practice, however, the issue is that the terms "Latino" and "Latina" (gendered demonyms used in the U.S. that specifically indicate Latin Americans or Americans of Latin American descent) have become racialized. Further, in the United States, "Latino" and "Hispanic" have become conflated, and are generally used to refer to anyone whose skin color or physiognomy suggests that they might have some Indigenous Latin American heritage. The commonly understood racial usage of this terminology is evidenced by the fact that white people from Spain often reject the label Hispanic (despite its literal meaning of "one who speaks Spanish as a primary language"), and that French-speaking white Canadians refuse the label Latino even though they speak a Latin-derived language.⁵ Most people who live in Latin American countries reject the term Latino for similar reasons, preferring instead to identify by nationality (Colombian, Guatemalan, etc.) or as part of a specific cultural or ethnic group. A strong streak of anti-Haiti sentiment among some Latin American nations (*Antihaitianismo*) may even mark specific countries as "too black to be Latino," which indicates that this has indeed become a racial rather than linguistic category.⁶ While the variants of "Latino" are primarily used in the United States, the dominance of U.S. media around the world has helped

⁵ Jaime Gonzalez, "I'm White in Barcelona but in Los Angeles I'm Hispanic?," *Public Radio International*, October 28, 2015, <http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-10-28/im-white-barcelona-los-angeles-im-hispanic>.

⁶ Hector Luis Alamo, "Too Black to Be Latino," *Gozamos*, January 5, 2012, <http://gozamos.com/2012/01/too-black-to-be-latino/>.

to globalize the idea of a “Latino” race even as the majority of non-Americans refuse its conceit.⁷

White Americans are not expected to claim the label “European American” for themselves, on the basis of the region from which their ancestors arrived, which is further proof that many of the words we use that seem to be innocently rooted in geography or language families, including “Latin American,” “Latino,” and “Hispanic,” are really coded racial language for “brown.”⁸ Since 1980, the U.S. government has made some effort to separate race from ethnicity on its forms. People now generally have the option to choose whether they identify as “Hispanic or Latino” and then to select their race(s).⁹ In 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau published an American Community Survey where more than half of the “Hispanic” respondents chose “white” as their only racial category, and forty percent selected “Some Other

⁷ The variants of Latino include Latino, Latina, Latino/a, Latin@, and Latinx, most of which are attempts to avoid the inherent gendered nature of a Spanish word that ends in “o,” indicating the masculine or “a,” indicating the feminine. Although I generally prefer to use Latinx for this reason, the term is rarely understood outside of academia, so I will use the more common Latino instead.

⁸ The Chicago Manual of Style 16th edition suggests that “Common designations of ethnic groups by color are usually lower-cased,” but “Names of ethnic and national groups are capitalized,” so “black” and “white” when referring to a person’s skin color will not be capitalized in this dissertation unless it is part of a direct quote, part of a proper noun, or the beginning of a sentence, however “Indigenous” will always be capitalized when it refers to a person.

⁹ In the 2010 U.S. Census, a respondent could choose from six different racial categories: white, black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or Some Other Race. Respondents could also select “Two or More Races.” Note that there is no category for Indigenous peoples of any nation other than the United States except for “Some Other Race.”

Race” that was not white, black, Asian, nor Indigenous.¹⁰ Yet despite the clear preferences of more than half of the “Hispanic” population, it is clear that Latinos in general are not associated with whiteness in the United States. This becomes evident when politicians and pundits begin discussing “the Latino vote” as something different from than the “mainstream” white vote.

In the art world, these words are used in slightly different ways. “Latin American art” is understood as the larger category for artwork that comes from a Latin American country seemingly without consideration for the racial background of the artist.¹¹ “Latino art” is more specific; the term is generally used to identify contemporary art made by Americans of Latin American descent. In that sense, Latino is often used as a synonym of “Chicano,” an American of Mexican descent. This further conflation confirms that many Americans have no nuanced understanding of Latin American countries or cultures, and tend to assume that all Latinos (or at least those who are “visibly” Latino) are from Mexico. In reality, as of the last national census in 2010, sixty-three percent of “Hispanic” people in the U.S. are of Mexican descent, meaning that more than a third of the “Latinos” in the U.S.

¹⁰ Jeffrey S. Passel and Paul Taylor, “Who’s Hispanic?,” *Pew Research Center’s Hispanic Trends Project*, May 28, 2009, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/05/28/whos-hispanic/>.

¹¹ Although membership in the Association for Latin American Art (ALAA) is open to scholars studying pre-Columbian, colonial, or contemporary art, anyone who says that they study Latin American art without any further clarification probably specializes in contemporary art from Latin America. Scholars who work on earlier material tend to identify themselves more specifically as specialists in pre-Columbian/pre-Hispanic/Ancient art or colonial Latin American art.

are not Mexican or “Chicano.”¹² “Latino art,” then, is temporally rooted in the last forty years or so, produced in the United States, and more often associated with race than the category “Latin American art” is.

Ultimately, the terms “Latin America” and “Latino” are too entrenched in common usage to be likely to change. Any synonyms we introduce would simply take on the same racialized characteristics, as “Hispanic” has done. Even attempts to degender the masculine word “Latino” by using ungainly terms like Latinx, Latino/a, or Latin@ have mostly led to confusion or ridicule. What art historians can do, however, is be much more thoughtful about using these terms to describe places, people, or things. Being more precise with terminology would help combat the idea that all Latin American countries and cultures are interchangeable, as well as drive research and funding into areas of artistic production and scholarship that have been largely neglected. While this kind of effort is certainly more challenging and expensive than exhibiting the same established “Latino” artists repeatedly, it will result in more meaningful and diverse exhibits without relying on the racial makeup of the artists, as if that is the only thing that informs their artistic production.

Problematic terminology in the field of Latin American art history is not limited to geographic categories, as the ALAA case study proves. Members were also concerned that their areas of study be categorized by era in addition to place, as scholars working on historic art (as opposed to contemporary art) are vastly

¹² “The Hispanic Population: 2010” (U.S. Census Bureau, May 2011), <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>.

outnumbered. Over the past century, scholars have generally agreed that the history of Latin America should be divided into three basic eras: pre-Columbian/pre-Hispanic, colonial/viceregal, and modern/contemporary. For decades, these clunky terms have segregated conferences, university and museum departments, and scholarship in general.¹³ Fortunately, while academics have little control over the use of “Latin America,” they do more-or-less police the boundaries of the pre-Columbian/pre-Hispanic, colonial/viceregal, and modern/contemporary divide, so it might be possible to begin using more appropriate terminology within the field.

The easiest of these temporal categories to critique are the awkwardly paired “pre-Columbian” and “pre-Hispanic.” Grammatically, there is no consensus on the correct spelling of these terms. Does one use a space, no space, or hyphen between the words? Are both parts capitalized (Pre-Columbian), only the proper names (pre-Columbian), or only the first letter if there’s no space (Precolumbian)? More importantly, consider the meanings of these terms. Pre-Hispanic indicates the time period before the Spanish landed in the American Hemisphere, while pre-Columbian refers specifically to the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the Caribbean in 1492. That these terms are used synonymously erases the fact that the Spanish arrived in different parts of the Americas at different times; they reached the Caribbean in 1492, invaded Central Mexico almost twenty-five years later (1519), and landed at the

¹³ In addition to being ineffective terms, as I shall explain further, they are also not parallel and thus make no logical sense as a group. “Pre-Columbian/pre-Hispanic” are both spatial and chronological terms, referring to a period of time before something happened but only in the American Hemisphere; “colonial” and “viceregal” reference the governmental system in place at the time; and “modern/contemporary” are solely temporal categories but refer to a continually shifting point of time.

borders of the Inka empire in South America more than a decade after that (1532). “Pre-Hispanic” also has the effect of erasing the presence of non-Spanish European colonists (like the Portuguese, French, British, and Dutch), as well as merchants from Asia, and African slaves.

The greatest concern when using these terms, however, is that scholars have defined thousands of years of Indigenous histories across half of the planet Earth by the nation (or the individual!) that later stood on the same land. No one refers to forty thousand years of First Australian history as the pre-Cookian era, nor is the study of the historic Alaska Natives known as the pre-Russian period. So then why classify the Olmec, a civilization that ended around 400 BCE and thus missed the Spanish invasion by nearly two thousand years, as pre-Hispanic? Inherent in both “pre-Hispanic” and “pre-Columbian” (however they might be spelled) is an unavoidably Eurocentric view of history. Additionally, pre-Hispanic sounds uncomfortably close to Prehistoric, which might imply an unfortunate association between Indigenous Americans and “primitive cavemen” in the minds of ill-informed individuals. Even for the better informed, the proximity to the term “prehistoric” devalues Indigenous forms of recordation and is hopelessly inapt. For all of these reasons, I reject the terms pre-Hispanic or pre-Columbian and urge others to do so as well. Let Indigenous peoples exist on their own merits, not solely as victims of European imperialism.

The second contentious email popped up on the ALAA listserv a few months later, on October 10, 2016. To mark the passage of Columbus Day/Indigenous People’s Day, artist Art Scott posted the following message, “Dear ALAA Happy

Indigenous People's Day! Please use Pre-1492 and Post-1492... It's time.”¹⁴ Many scholars replied that date-specific terms were no better than using pre-Columbian or pre-Hispanic; the focus was still on the arrival of Europeans whether they were directly mentioned or not.¹⁵ Overall, the consensus seemed to be that no one really likes the term pre-Columbian, but as it is relatively well-known and connotes a specific time and place, it is functional enough to keep using. A significant number of other respondents said that they preferred the term “ancient,” as in the Ancient Americas, and the thread ended with no real compromise or consensus.

The term “ancient” is not without its own problems. Since the Renaissance, the word “ancient” has been used in the West to refer to the period of time before the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the rise of state-imposed Christianity in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. To the average American or European, “ancient” conjures images of classical Greece, Rome, and Egypt, or perhaps even earlier civilizations. While there were, of course, many groups of Indigenous peoples in the Americas during the “ancient” period, we create confusion in the historical record when we use the same word to also describe the Mexica-Aztecs or the Inka whose empires flourished more than a thousand years later: the same period of time, in fact, that Renaissance artists and scholars were starting to look back at their own “ancient” past. It is terribly reductive to think of all Indigenous Americans as ancient; it also

¹⁴ Art Scott, “Dear ALAA Happy Indigenous People’s Day!,” October 10, 2016.

¹⁵ Also suggested in the ensuing discussion thread were “pre-conquest,” “pre-colonial,” and “pre-contact” but these are uncommon and retain the same temporal issue.

conforms to the stereotype of Indigenous peoples being frozen in the past rather than being sophisticated citizens who learned from and further developed the achievements of their predecessors, like their European counterparts. If Leonardo da Vinci and Christopher Columbus are not “ancient,” then neither are Moteuczoma II and Atawalpa. Additionally, “ancient,” or rather its Spanish equivalent “antiguo,” was the first primitivizing word that the Conquistadors chose to describe the people they encountered in the American Hemisphere. After five centuries of struggle against colonialism and its lingering effects, do we really want to revert to using the term the invaders preferred?

Because of the problems associated with the terms “pre-Columbian,” “pre-Hispanic,” “pre-1492,” “ancient,” etc., the term “Autonomous” will be used throughout this dissertation. It refers to that period of history during which the Indigenous people of the Americas governed themselves without interference from any other continent. Some may argue that certain cultural groups like the Mexica and Inka were well known for their conquest and control of other polities, so the nations they conquered cannot be considered autonomous states. While this is true, if an Indigenous group is conquered by another Indigenous group, there is still an Indigenous group acting as the primary governmental authority, which is all that is implied with the capitalized “Autonomous.” They were not under the control of any European nation.

Of course, no term will ever be perfect; there is always a loaded political underlay for any designation that clusters multiple cultures together. Perhaps a future

scholar will suggest that “Autonomous” is a poor choice because of some context that I am presently lacking. However, it seems preferable to the other options at the moment, for all the reasons listed above, and at the moment it is relatively neutral. It has not yet accrued the baggage of connotations. The best any academic can do is be deliberate about the language choices they make and understand the possible consequences of those choices.

For example, consider the apparently synonymous terms “colonial” and “viceregal.” In the United States, “colonial” seems to be the more common word, while scholars working in South America seem to prefer “viceregal.” One can only speculate as to the reason, but it would make sense that people in a formerly colonized nation would not necessarily wish to be constantly reminded of the violent history and submissiveness implied in “colonial.” In this case, “viceregal” seems more neutral and less fraught, if less widely understood. In this dissertation, however, I will continue to use the word “colonial.” Part of the reason for this is temporal. The Viceroyalty of New Spain was formed in 1535 and the Viceroyalty of Peru in 1542. However, the Spanish conquered New Spain in 1521 and Peru in 1532. If one uses the term “viceroyalty,” it technically does not cover the span of time when Spain governed the colonies but no official viceroyalty had been established. “Colonial” in this respect is more inclusive. In addition, there were many parts of Latin America that were under Spanish, Portuguese, French, or British control but were never officially part of a viceregal territory. As colonies, however, they can still be referenced as “colonial.”

Jonathan Brown, a retired professor of Spanish art at NYU who later took on the study of “Spanish American” art, dislikes the term “colonial.” It “carries the burden of second-class status...” he argues, and “implies the domination and subordination of a territory and its inhabitants, who are dependents of the conquerors.”¹⁶ Once you start in this direction, he suggests, “the path is clear; the final stop becomes ‘derivative’ and thus inferior.”¹⁷ I understand and respect this position, but this is precisely why I prefer to use colonial; not to enforce hierarchies or make claims as to the quality of Spanish American art vis a vis European art, but as a reminder that the transition from autonomy to colonization was oppressive, violent, and ongoing, not the peaceful sharing of power implied by “viceregal.” For these reasons, although I understand and respect the choice of Brown and many of his South American colleagues to use the term “viceregal” to refer to the second major era of Latin American history, I choose to use the descriptor “colonial.”

A related linguistic concern is what to call the arrival of Europeans to the American hemisphere. The Spaniards themselves termed this event “the Conquest,” which has been widely used for more than five centuries and has a celebratory and victorious air. More recently, scholars and politicians from Latin American countries have begun to use the term “encounter,” in order to avoid the uncomfortable connotations of “conquest.” However, I feel this is far too mild a term to encapsulate

¹⁶ James Fenton, “Moses in Mexico,” *The New York Review of Books*, October 12, 2017, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/10/12/villalpando-moses-in-mexico/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the reality of what happened. One might have a romantic encounter, or encounter a dog in the park. I would not describe an armed group violently seizing property from its rightful owners as an “encounter.” Instead, I choose to use the word “invasion” to describe the actions of Europeans when they arrived in the American Hemisphere.

The other frequently used terms that must be challenged are the vague and unsatisfactory “modern” and “contemporary.” The word “modern” in general usage indicates a relation to the present moment of time and the very recent past. Amongst historians, however, the term is often used to cover the last five hundred years of human experience. A number of scholars point to the Italian Renaissance as the exemplar of the “Early Modern” period when many of the guiding principles of modern life were instituted, such as capitalism and humanism. In the field of art history, the capitalized term “Modern” is used in yet another way. It is understood as the artistic product of mostly American and European artists in the mid-twentieth century who embraced the aesthetics of minimalism and abstraction. In short, the word modern covers such a breadth of time that its meaning has become watered down to the point of uselessness. Similarly, the word “contemporary” is beginning to lose its focus. A synonym of modern, contemporary began to be used in the art world when Modern crystalized around the mid-century and scholars needed to be able to refer to works of art that were more recent than Modern. Some define contemporary art as that made by living artists, though it is unclear what it would be called after the artist dies. Others suggest that it is art made in the twenty-first century. In museum and university settings, the general impression one gets is that contemporary art is any

work produced after 1970 or so. “Contemporary” is rapidly running into the same problem as the word modern, though. After being used for several decades, the term is losing its ability to conjure the present moment. How contemporary can art be if it has been in a museum of contemporary art for fifty years?

More specifically to the present work, one must also consider the association of the terms modern and contemporary with Latin America. As mentioned earlier, the phrase “Latin American art” already carries a connotation of modernity, but is itself confusing. In the interests of clarity, then, the term “National” will be used in place of modern or contemporary in this dissertation to refer to the art produced in any given country after it became a self-governing and independent nation free of European control. This could additionally be broken into Early, Middle, and Late periods, as necessary. Though this idea of National art may not be particularly useful for scholars who specialize in what is now called modern and/or contemporary art, it is sufficient for my needs.

Therefore, in this proposed schema for identifying the broad strokes of Latin American history, rather than relying on Eurocentric descriptors like pre-Hispanic, or ever-shifting temporal markers like contemporary, the three main periods will be defined by their prevailing system of government: Autonomous, Colonial, or National.¹⁸ While this system offers more clarity, it also has the benefit of avoiding hierarchies of race and supposed levels of civilization. What are today known as the

¹⁸ There is plenty of precedent for a focus on government as the distinguishing factor between two historical periods, such as the distinction between the Roman Republic and Imperial Rome, or Pharaonic Egypt and Ptolemaic Egypt.

separate fields of Latino Art and American Art (“American” generally being a euphemism for white/Anglo Americans), could instead join to become the much more equitably balanced “National Art of the United States” (art made by any resident of the United States after 1776) without any implication of racial makeup or first world superiority. Further, this kind of category would help to ensure that members of “minority” groups can be included in the larger conversation rather than being segregated into ahistorical groupings like “Native American Art,” which usually has the effect of freezing Indigenous peoples in time, or othering categories like “African American Art.” The physical and conceptual segregation of “African American Art” in the museum not only allows visitors the opportunity to easily bypass exhibitions that often appear only as afterthoughts to larger white/Anglo shows, it also erases the contributions to “American Art” that black artists have made over the last two and a half centuries when all of the “African American Art” has been stripped from a “mainstream” show in order to be exhibited separately. I do not mean to say that there is no value in studying art grouped by ethnicity or culture, and one would be right to worry that these unique voices could be lost in the louder current of white American art production if they were all collected together in a homogenous mass, but if Latino Art, Native American Art, African American Art, Asian American Art, Women’s Art, Queer Art, etc. became subcategories of National Art of the United States, along with a subcategory for white/Anglo Art (and let us call it what it is; I do not think we should continue to perpetuate whiteness as the default in the United States), I suggest it would be a better reflection of our diverse history and national culture.

All that said, basing the categorical system of the history of the Americas on the basis of government, as understood temporally and geographically, would certainly simplify museum and university departments, and professional conference sessions, as well as allow for new ways of thinking about the art and history of the world. At the moment, there is little overlap between scholars who study the colonial period of the Americas and those who study the colonial periods of African or Oceanic nations because the dates do not necessarily align. Imagine, however, the fruitful sharing of ideas if scholars who studied the Colonial, regardless of place or time, were to collaborate. How did the Spanish colonial presence in sixteenth-century Peru differ from the British colonial presence in nineteenth-century India, or the French in the twentieth-century Congo?

It is also important to address two more interrelated terms: America and American. In the early sixteenth century, the lands of the “New World” were designated the Americas. By rights, anyone who lives in the Americas can be called American. However, the citizens of the United States of America often shorten the ungainly name of their country to “America” and then use the demonym American to refer to themselves. In order to avoid confusion in this project, yet remain sensitive to the claims of other nations in regard to these labels, I will use the word American rarely and only to refer to citizens of the United States of America, as there is no other English-language demonym for this group, but when referring to the country itself, I will use United States or U.S. rather than America. In this way, I hope to

make it clear that the United States does not have sole ownership of the term America.

Along these lines are issues with the terms Europe, Spain, and the New World. Europe is a historically changing group of countries with relatively frequent border shifts, containing a wide variety of different cultures and languages. To presume that all Europeans could think or act in perfect unison is absurd. Yet one must have a word for the location from which the colonizing nations struck out and Europe is widely understood. In the case of this project, the word Europe will mostly refer to the Western European colonizing countries of the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Portugal, and to a lesser extent for my purposes, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. Yet even these national names suggest a stability that may not have been true historically. When Columbus sailed from the Iberian peninsula in 1492, the countries that are today known as Spain and Portugal were a loose confederation of Christian kingdoms that had just succeeded in removing the Moors after more than seven hundred years of occupation. Still, it is generally agreed that “Spain” was the primary aggressor in the colonization of the Americas, so I will use that designation here. As for “New World,” it was coined in the early sixteenth century to differentiate the newly discovered lands of the Americas with the lands of Africa, Asia, and Europe that had long been known to the European invaders. However, it suggests subjugation and hierarchy. While I will not use it myself, the phrase appears several times herein as part of an exhibition or book title.

Another controversial term that will appear throughout this project is folk art. This term is most often used to refer to art that is made by people who are not professional artists and whose style may not conform to Western expectations of proportion or perspective. Characterized as naïve, colorful, and utilitarian craft work, it is commonly excluded from the realm of fine art. The term “folk art” thus carries unfortunate connotations. Alternative formulations, like “crafts,” “primitive art,” “tribal art,” “applied art,” and “popular art” are no better. “Crafts,” “primitive art,” and “tribal art” hold the same inappropriate connotations as “folk art,” and the general public does not know what constitutes “applied art” or “popular art.” Because many of the early exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art in this country included a category for “folk art,” I will be using this phrase, for lack of any real alternative. However I will either use it in the capitalized form if it was designated a specific part of an exhibit and discussed as such by the curators, or in quotation marks to indicate my unease with the term.

Dissertation Goals and Methods

This dissertation has four aims. First, as this Introduction should make evident, I have an interest in language and how it is used in the field of Colonial Latin American art history. Paying attention to specific terms yields information on the speaker; those who say “encounter” and “viceregal” and those who prefer “invasion” and “colonial” are clearly coming at the material with differing points of view. Repeated language, such as curators frequently calling exhibitions the first of their

kind, suggests the priorities of the field. Additionally, reading subtext yields particular insights into the culture of the time. As an example, when the adjective “colorful” is applied to Latin American art in the 1940s, it is really being used as a euphemism for primitive and unsophisticated. Although that old rhyme about sticks and stones still haunts the playgrounds of American schoolchildren, words certainly *can* hurt us, especially when they strike at our identity, so I will continue to interrogate and challenge the language of the field throughout this project.

My second aim is to provide a historiography of the relatively recent field of Colonial Latin American art history. Though some have sketched the bare bones of its development, notably Marcus Burke and Linda Bantel in the catalog for their exhibition *Spain and New Spain* in 1979, to my knowledge there has been no detailed analysis of how interest in the field waxed and waned over the previous century, as evidenced by museum exhibitions on the subject.¹⁹ Further, this project serves to document seventy-six Colonial Latin American art exhibitions that have been mounted in the United States. I do not doubt I have missed several that left little to no trace in the historic record, but this project should at least provide a starting point for any who would like a summary of the work done in the field, its major shifts and arguments, and the themes that have already been addressed so that scholarship can progress rather than continue to repeat itself.

¹⁹ Linda Bantel and Marcus B. Burke, *Spain and New Spain: Mexican Colonial Arts in Their European Context* (Corpus Christi, TX: Art Museum of South Texas, 1979).

This leads into my third aim: an examination of the collective effect of exhibitions. In museum literature, curators and educators will often analyze and critique a specific exhibition from a very practical perspective. Did it meet its stated goals? Did visitors engage with the material? Occasionally, they may comment on a handful of exhibits with a common element, such as being produced by the same museum or being rejected by the public as too controversial. However, as far as I know, no one has ever looked at an entire subset of exhibitions based on subject matter to discover trends and patterns over time. This methodology has proven to be illuminating and I would be interested to see it replicated in another relatively small field, such as African American Art or Oceanic Art, to see if the same trends map onto one another or are wildly divergent. It would be far more difficult to do in larger fields because of the sheer number of exhibitions that have been produced on the Italian Renaissance or Impressionist Art, for example, but if one could reduce it further to exhibits of specific artists or topics, perhaps, it might become manageable. In so doing, we may begin to approach a question that has long plagued Museum Studies scholars: what effects do museums actually have on the world at large? As I will demonstrate, museums play a surprisingly significant role in shaping public opinion: far more so than they realize, I suspect. In an increasingly fractured United States, that is splintering along ever more specific racial, ethnic, and religious fault lines, museums are the gatekeepers of our histories and cultures. Taking the macro view is therefore necessary if one wants to understand the messages that museums are sending in aggregate.

Following that idea, my fourth aim is to investigate into how museums have been affected by, influenced, and even, in some cases, manipulated by outside forces. Given their efficacy at disseminating information, it is no wonder that governments, private individuals, and corporations have wished to take advantage of museums' good reputations for their own ends. I will describe how museums were used as tools of propaganda to support political and economic agendas both in the United States and Latin America. Despite, or perhaps because of, their status as nonprofit institutions, museums have also been targets of corporate agendas and frequently promote capitalist enterprise. In other instances, museum exhibits cater to individual egos when they showcase the objects assembled by private collectors. Power, hubris, and greed are three of the four most motivating forces in human history. I expect that the museum's love for its community and the objects in its care can help counterbalance these other forces, but only if museums are consciously aware of what is happening. That again requires looking at the big picture to understand the underlying structures in play and the effect they might have as a whole.

In order to fulfill my four aims, I have adopted a roughly chronological and thematic approach. Chapter one covers the period of time from 1920-1959 when the U.S. government concerned itself with supporting displays of Latin American arts and culture to facilitate good relations with its southern neighbors. During this period, exhibitions that included Colonial Latin American art were primarily intended to convince ordinary Americans and Latin Americans alike to work together in the face of a global threat. Like previous colonizers, the United States wanted Latin America's

resources, but rather than outright invasion, it decided to try cultural diplomacy instead. After providing context for the government's goals, I focus primarily on two exhibitions in New York City (*Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* at MoMA and *America South of U.S.* in Brooklyn) that were produced within a year of each other and included Colonial art more to bridge the Autonomous period with the National period than on its own merits.

The second chapter moves from 1960-1979, addressing the changing political landscape of the civil rights movements and the desperate fearfulness of the Cold War. Rather than trying to befriend Latin America in these decades, the U.S. government seemed largely to ignore it unless the United States could take advantage of oil resources, or was responding to the perceived threat of communism by overthrowing the elected governments of several Central and South American countries. Given this neglect, the ones left holding the torch were private collectors who found something special in the art of the Colonial period. I focus primarily on two collectors who were exemplary for having had the most exhibitions, but represent opposite types in almost every other way: the very traditional Mrs. Freyer and the rather cavalier Dr. Adams. Between them, one gets a sense of how interest in the field was sustained despite a dearth of official support. This section ends with a discussion of the exhibition *Spain and New Spain*, which was a vanguard for the new professionalism and scholarship in the field.

Chapter three concentrates on the years 1980-1999 and the influence of corporate sponsorship in the creation of museum exhibitions. Major international

conglomerates like Banamex and Disney exacerbated the tendencies in these decades to believe that bigger was better. The rise of the blockbuster hinted at the profits possible when corporations piggybacked onto the public's trust for museums. All of this cumulates in the exhibition *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* which was sponsored by a Mexican media mogul and opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1990. Also in this chapter is an examination of the identity politics of the 1990s, including political correctness and the push back against the Columbian Quincentennial in 1992, as well as a turn toward the Indigenous perspective in Colonial Latin American art history, which was reflected in the Brooklyn Museum's *Converging Cultures* in 1996.

The fourth and final chapter covers the years 2000-2020, which touches on the internet age and a remix culture that manifests in the museum world as a complex convergence of governmental, corporate, and private interests. I track the reemergence of blockbusters and the next generation of private collectors, but discover the field is presently turning away from this model. Instead, museums are now building their own collections of Colonial Latin American art as a necessary part of comprehensive institutions and producing scholarly shows with a more narrow focus than in decades previously. Highlights of this chapter include a visitor survey of the exhibition *Highest Heaven* (2016) and an interview with the collector whose works are included in the exhibit, along with an analysis of the scholarly exhibition *Painting a New World* at the Denver Art Museum in 2004 that offers a model for

future shows. I finish this section with speculation as to the future of Colonial Latin American art exhibits.

In the end, my reliance on Colonial Latin American art is a construct that offers an accessible door to a larger idea. I intend to argue that museum exhibitions do not simply reflect what society at large thinks about another culture, but in fact help to construct public opinion on that culture *even when the vast majority of the population never sees the exhibition*. If a museum can examine its own language, and the messages it sends through exhibitions and catalogs, I suggest that it can break free of governmental, private, and corporate agendas (or at least embrace them strategically), and promote better cultural understanding in a time when tolerance and empathy are desperately needed. It is a great deal of power, but it always has been, and it is better that it is used knowingly rather than influenced by outside forces.

As far as I know, this project is the first of its kind. There do not appear to be any other large-scale analyses of exhibitions according to subject matter, so I had no particular model or methodology to follow. Instead, I began this project by collecting every exhibition catalog I could locate: a method which necessarily excluded those exhibits that did not produce catalogs or those with titles containing no obvious connection with Colonial art; I had no real way of discovering those, especially in earlier periods. Then I attempted to categorize the shows, finding several flaws in my reasoning early on. Originally, I had planned on limiting my focus only to exhibitions of Colonial Mexican art, but this was too few for a convincing study and eliminated too many interesting stories. Thus I opened the project up to include exhibitions of

Colonial Latin American art, necessitating a definition for Latin America. This categorization, too, was not as straightforward as I had anticipated. I wanted to discuss comprehensive blockbuster exhibitions that claimed to portray the arts of Mexico, Peru, and Brazil from the earliest days until the present moment, as well as small exhibits that focused solely on the Colonial period, so I decided that a show had to contain at least one-third Colonial material to be included in this study. Then there was the matter of the southwestern United States, which had been a part of Mexico/New Spain until the mid-nineteenth century. While there have been many fine local exhibits over the years that connect this region with Latin America, I found that they were often challenging to trace in the historic record, difficult to parse geographically, and often incorporated native arts from areas of North America colonized by the English and French. The inclusion of these exhibitions would have ballooned this project beyond comprehension. For these reasons, I made the deliberate choice not to include these exhibits, but encourage any interested scholars to take up this line of research.

When the boundaries of my project were more-or-less set, I then had to decide on my approach to the material. With no particular model to follow, I turned to a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, including newspaper articles, blog posts, census and genealogical data, legal texts, book and exhibition reviews, press releases, documentaries, podcasts, YouTube videos, personal interviews and emails, and society pages to provide evidence as to what the museum staff, funders, collectors, or viewers of any given show thought of its creation, execution, and reception. It is

fortunate that Visual Studies is an interdisciplinary field because it soon became apparent that if I wanted to tell something other than a conventional art historical story, I would need to reach beyond my comfort zone and consult research in political science, economics, psychology, sociology, and law, in addition to the expected fields of art history and museum studies. Still, I believe the final product was worth the effort.

My initial interest in this subject stemmed from a background in museum studies and twenty years of experience working in and around museums in a variety of roles, in addition to my scholarly work in anthropology and the arts of the Americas. With a goal of rejoining the ranks of museum professionals as a curator, I went into this research intending to learn the history of my field and what has already been done, so that my future exhibition development work could grow from the examples of my predecessors and colleagues rather than replicate their accomplishments. While I believe I have completed this task, and could now comfortably discuss the nuances of exhibiting Colonial Latin American art, the patterns I found in the process have much more profound implications, not just about museums, but who we are as a people and how we relate to other cultures. As indicated above, I certainly do not claim to have all the answers, but I hope I have at least raised some interesting questions.

1920-1959: MEXICAN ART AS DIPLOMACY

“Poor Mexico! So far from God, so close to the United States.”

- Attributed to Porfirio Díaz, President of Mexico (1830-1915)

Although a few interested Americans began collecting Latin American art in the late nineteenth century when the construction of a railway made travel to another country possible, it was not publicly exhibited in the United States until the 1920s. By then, a rapidly changing social climate and a burgeoning middle class with time and money to spare began looking for exotic entertainments and found them in Latin America and the American southwest. “Indian” pottery, blankets, and “dolls” were all the rage north-of-the-border, while people also embraced the music, dances, and “colorful folk arts” from further south. It is difficult to imagine the exhibitions of a century ago, after the Impressionist salons but before the advent of the modern “white cube” aesthetic in museums. In fact, many exhibits were not mounted in museums at all but other in public spaces like libraries and town halls. Still, these venues allowed a very insular population to view unusual objects from far distant places that they would not have had an opportunity to see otherwise. It must have made an impression.

However, by the 1930s, the severe pressures of the Great Depression and the looming global conflict necessitated foreign aid that would not be coming from occupied Europe. Desperate for assistance, the United States government moved into the entertainment business, trying to both distract its citizens and encourage them to

push aside their ideas of American exceptionalism for the sake of the greater good, while simultaneously selling a glorious vision of the American Dream to allies in Latin America. Museum exhibitions were one way that the U.S. government could prove to its people that Latin American cultures were (almost) as sophisticated and civilized as their own.

The Roaring Twenties

Although it is not widely acknowledged today, relations between the United States of America and Mexico were dynamic in the interwar period (1918-1941). The bloody decade of civil war known as the Mexican Revolution ended in 1920 and the restoration of political stability soon led Mexico's new leaders to assess their nation's relationships with its closest neighbors. At the same time, the United States was struggling to return to normalcy after the conclusion of the Great War, but by 1922, advances in technology and industry had cemented the country's status as a global power and seemed to offer unlimited economic opportunities. At this confluence in history, the leaders of both the United States and Mexico realized that the other nation could provide critical benefits to their own people.

Despite being known for technological innovations like mass production, the invention of the airplane, and the burgeoning moving pictures industry, the U.S. was considered by the established nations of Europe as a very young country and culturally bereft. In return, Americans had become convinced that post-war Europe

was both spiritually and intellectually bankrupt.¹ The answer, therefore, lay with Mexico: a neighboring country with an exciting National (Modern) art scene that did not seem to be dependent on European modes (although, that relation was present to varying degrees), and had deep roots in sophisticated Indigenous cultural practices dating back millennia. Mexico could presumably provide the United States with an ancient history free of European control, just as they had crafted for themselves centuries earlier.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, American academics and artists became invested in the idea of the “primitive.” This fascination with “authenticity,” thought to stem from a proximity to nature and a supposed lack of technology, was largely a reaction against an increasingly industrial, materialistic, and impersonal modern society. However, the general public cared very little about past cultures until Howard Carter’s team discovered King Tutankhamun’s sumptuous tomb in 1922.² Further discoveries of significant Maya sites around the same time led the Yucatán peninsula to become known as the “Egypt of America.”³ Mexico’s Indigenous past quickly became an important marker of cultural authenticity in the United States,

¹ Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 165, 193.

² *Ibid.*, 10, 99.

³ *Ibid.*, 100.

essentially ensuring the appropriation of Mexican culture as part of its own heritage.⁴

A Mexican historian dubbed this “archaeological Monroism.”⁵

One immediately visible manifestation of this cultural usurpation was the rise of “Mayan Revival” or “Neo-Mayan” (sic) architecture, which incorporated symbolic forms from many of Mexico’s native cultures as decorative elements in U.S.

buildings.⁶ Generally categorized as a sub-type of Art Deco design, Mayan Revival architecture was most popular in California and the southwest U.S. Extant examples include Frank Lloyd Wright’s Ennis House in Los Angeles (1924), the Mayan Theatre (sic) in Denver (1930), and 450 Sutter Street in San Francisco (1929).⁷

Though this period evidenced a vogue for Mexican-inspired architecture, the clamor for Mexican art in the 1920s and 1930s was many magnitudes greater.

Prior to 1920, American exposure to Mexican art was sparse, but as the decade progressed, artistic influence flooded from Mexico to the United States.⁸ Part of the reason for this was an increasingly wealthy upper middle-class that drove the

⁴ Holly Barnet-Sanchez, “The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art in the United States: Appropriations and Transformations of Heritage 1933-1945,” in *Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993), 188.

⁵ Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 93–94. This is in reference to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 that opposed European colonialism in the Americas. The policy was meant to prevent European conflicts from spilling into the Americas and to clear the way for U.S. dominance in the American Hemisphere.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷ Cindy Casey, “Architecture Spotlight: Art Deco’s Mayan Revival,” *Untapped Cities*, February 24, 2012, <http://untappedcities.com/2012/02/24/architecture-spotlight-art-decos-mayan-revival/>.

⁸ Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 126.

demand for fine art, as did the creation of more than sixty new art museums in the U.S. from 1920 to 1930. At the same time, there were not many well-known contemporary American artists, so Mexican artists who had benefitted from their nation's post-war political stability and government patronage were able to fill the gap between supply and demand.⁹ Muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros (known collectively as *Los Tres Grandes*) were the most famous Mexican artists of the time, and all took prestigious commissions in the United States. They were highly in demand, in spite of their Socialist leanings and political activism, because their styles, which were inspired by forms from the Autonomous past, reflected a blend of past and present that appealed to wealthy Americans.

Mexican “folk” and decorative arts also became increasingly popular in the United States in the 1920s.¹⁰ Significantly less costly than European goods, these *objets d'art* were eagerly snatched up by an American middle class eager for exotic novelty. In general, Americans learned about Mexican “folk art” either by vacationing in Mexico, which was increasingly common in the 1920s, or through exhibitions that toured the U.S., such as *Las Artes Populares en Mexico*. Alberto Pani, the Mexican Secretary of Exterior Relations, conceived of the exhibit in 1921 as

⁹ Ibid., 127.

¹⁰ Ibid., 125, 135.

a way to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of Mexican Independence.¹¹ The exhibition functioned as a way to advertise Mexican goods and culture to the United States while still supporting the fierce nationalism and pride in Autonomous heritage that was common after the Revolution. “*Artes Populares* was not simply a survey of existing traditions, but a strategic ordering and evaluating of Mexico’s visual heritage directed toward incorporating the Indian into the modern state.”¹²

After opening in Mexico City with a two-volume catalog written by artist and scholar Gerardo Murillo (also known as Dr. Atl), the exhibit traveled to Los Angeles in 1922 where it was “presented and perceived as a means of improving Mexican-American relations.”¹³ The show then toured the “United States of North America” with a greatly reduced catalog written in English by the novelist Katherine Anne Porter. It is difficult to trace the exhibit’s exact itinerary, but there is evidence that it was mounted in Washington D.C., as well.¹⁴ Ultimately, Pani’s initiative to introduce Americans to Mexican “folk art” was so successful, that it convinced his government

¹¹ Kathleen Vanesian, “Las Artes Populares En Mexico: Mexico’s First Folk Art Exhibition,” February 15, 2012, <http://www.ladap.org/las-artes-populares-en-mexico-mexicos-folk-art-exhibition/>.

¹² Diana Fane, “From Precolumbian to Modern: Latin American Art at The Brooklyn Museum,” in *Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America* (Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 21.

¹³ Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 135.

¹⁴ Katherine Anne Porter, *Outline of Mexican Popular Arts and Crafts* (Los Angeles, CA: Young & McCallister, Inc., 1922). The English catalog was offered as a souvenir of the “Mexican night” held at the National Museum for the Pan American Students’ Association of the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University on April 5, 1923.

to promote Mexican art in the same way for decades, despite the changing conditions between the United States and Mexico.

By the mid '20s, relations had again soured between the two countries.

According to humorist Will Rogers, the main issue was that,

They [Mexico] got to passing laws, what they could do with their own lands and their own Natural resources, and here they wasent (sic) asking us anything about 'em. Can you imagine the nerve of some little upstart Nation telling an American oil millionaire that he could dig Oil only fifty years more before taking out another lease?¹⁵

Essentially what happened was that the new Mexican government, desperate for cash, had decided to enforce Article 27 of their constitution claiming that subsoil resources were national property and thus not subject to foreign corporate ownership.¹⁶ The move enabled the government to raise taxes on American oil companies operating in Mexico. Around the same time, the Cristero War (1926-1928) was pitting the secularist and left-leaning Mexican government against the Catholic Church. Americans worried about an influx of refugees across the border due to the conflict, which was not entirely unwarranted. Just a few years prior, during the decade of the Revolution (1910-1920), an estimated nine hundred thousand Mexican immigrants and refugees crossed into the United States.¹⁷

¹⁵ Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 63–64.

¹⁶ Jonathan C. Brown, "Why Foreign Oil Companies Shifted Their Production from Mexico to Venezuela during the 1920s," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (1985): 369.

¹⁷ Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 1.

Although many different groups attempted to improve U.S.-Mexican relations in the latter half of the 1920s, from the U.S. government to small artist cooperatives, all agreed that an emphasis on artistic culture and shared heritage was the best way of achieving their goal. Frances Flynn Paine, an art promoter and dealer from Texas, solicited money from the General Education Board, which was itself funded by the wealthy Rockefeller family, to hold another Mexican “folk art” show at the Art Center of New York in 1928.¹⁸ Paine noted that Latin American antagonism against the U.S. had increased “alarmingly” in recent years, but she believed that “the Arts, fine and applied, offer possibilities of lessening the feeling of antipathy Mexicans feel for us.”¹⁹ Eventually, she founded the Mexican Arts Association, a nonprofit arts guild, whose mission was “to create closer cultural contact between the [two] countries and to give the people of Mexico a market and outlet for their arts and to give the people of this country for practical use the motifs and designs used by the Mexicans in their Applied and Fine Arts.”²⁰ It is important to note the goals stated here. While Mexican artists were only being offered economic opportunities and a larger market in which to sell their wares, Americans were being offered access to Mexican culture and heritage in general, in the forms of “motifs and designs” that could be appropriated and used as desired. This condescending attitude was

¹⁸ Ibid., 137–38.

¹⁹ Ibid., 137.

²⁰ Ibid., 138.

exceedingly common at the time and was part of the reason for the antagonism toward the U.S. that Paine recognized.

At the same time that Paine was organizing “folk art” exhibitions in the United States, the U.S. government was sending celebrities to various locations in Latin America on goodwill tours. These ran from the mid-1920s to the early 1940s and were not all successful. By 1941, a visit from actor Douglas Fairbanks Jr. caused a weary Brazilian minister to quip, “One more goodwill mission and we’ll declare war on the United States.”²¹ In the 1920s, though, the idea was still novel and the 1927 trip to Mexico by famed aviator Charles Lindbergh was a triumph. Well aware of his role as a cultural ambassador, Lindbergh said, “My stay has been one of my pleasantest experiences, and I hope that the flight has been of some value in bringing about a better feeling between the people of Mexico and my own country.”²² While Lindbergh was as popular in Mexico as he was in the rest of the world, most of the reason that Lindbergh enjoyed his stay was the introduction to his future wife, Anne Morrow, the daughter of the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Dwight W. Morrow.

As much as the art initiatives and celebrity visits were meant to improve the relationship between the United States and Mexico, no one was more effective at actually improving relations than Dwight Morrow during his three brief years in

²¹ Darlene J. Sadlier, *Americans All: Good Neighbor Cultural Diplomacy in World War II*, 1st ed, Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 35.

²² Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 64.

office. A friend of President Calvin Coolidge and a partner at J.P. Morgan & Co., Morrow was made the ambassador to Mexico from 1927 to 1930. By all accounts excellent at his job, it was Morrow's idea to invite Lindbergh, Will Rogers, and other influential Americans to Mexico, in order to improve Mexicans' views of Americans and vice versa. Most famous for helping to negotiate the peace treaty that ended the Cristero War, Morrow also helped resolve the dispute over Mexican oil with the Calles-Morrow agreement of 1928. Toward the end of his appointment, Morrow worked to promote Mexico as a "primitive" but more authentic society and began to establish formal programs to develop cultural relations with Mexico.²³ These programs expanded significantly in the 1930s, when Americans were the most interested in Mexican culture.²⁴

The Threadbare Thirties

Of course, the wild economic prosperity that the United States enjoyed in the 1920s was not sustainable. In October 1929, the American stock market famously crashed; banks failed, and businesses began laying off their employees in droves. In 1930, approximately four million Americans were unable to find work; by 1931, the number had risen to six million and in 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, there were as many as fifteen million unemployed workers in the United States: about

²³ Ibid., 62.

²⁴ Ibid., 55.

twenty percent of the total population.²⁵ As is often the case in unfortunate situations like these, Americans began to blame immigrants and migrant workers for taking American jobs and social services. This xenophobic backlash was aimed primarily at Mexicans, and critics demanded action from the Hoover administration. In response, the government began to strictly enforce existing legislation, like the Immigration Act of 1917.²⁶ The Act, originally meant to restrict immigrants from Asia, contained a literacy requirement and vague lists of undesirable people, including alcoholics, criminals, idiots, paupers, political radicals, and anyone with a mental or physical ailment.²⁷ Interpreted broadly, the Act could deport nearly any foreign national for nearly any reason, and it did. The repatriation drive reached its peak in 1931, and by 1937 almost half a million Mexicans (and some Mexican-Americans) had been forced out of the United States.²⁸ This left both countries with no particularly good opinion of the other. Or did it?

Despite the political and economic clashes over immigration and oil, Americans were increasingly fascinated by Mexican culture in the 1930s. So many books on the subject were published in the early part of the decade that “Americans

²⁵ “The Great Depression - Facts & Summary,” *HISTORY.com*, 2009, <http://www.history.com/topics/great-depression>.

²⁶ Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 81.

²⁷ Howard Bromberg, “Immigration Act of 1917,” November 22, 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20151122000936/http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/588-immigration-act-of-1917.html>.

²⁸ Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 82.

were finding it difficult to escape their ‘Mexican heritage.’”²⁹ At the time, National Mexican art was reaching the height of its popularity as the members of *Los Tres Grandes* worked separately on enormous mural projects in places like New York City, San Francisco, and Detroit.³⁰ In this way, Mexican art was made more accessible to Americans than ever before. Wanting to build on this momentum, U.S. Ambassador Dwight Morrow contacted Dr. Frederick P. Keppel, the president of the Carnegie Corporation and Acting Director of The American Federation of Arts, with an idea for an exhibition of Mexican art to be shown in New York City. Morrow apparently “felt that public opinion about Mexico was so bad in this country, what with the talk of bandits, revolutions, and so on, that it might help if we could show that Mexico produced some nice art.”³¹ He then suggested that his friend René d’Harnoncourt be tapped as curator for the project.

D’Harnoncourt was an interesting choice. Born into an aristocratic family in Austria in 1901, the young count found himself in Mexico in 1926, nearly penniless, and unable to speak Spanish or English.³² He was a talented artist, however, and made a living painting lampshades and watercolors for the tourist market, and eventually collecting antiques and decorative items for wealthy Americans. The

²⁹ Ibid., x.

³⁰ Ibid., 139.

³¹ Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art*, 1st ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 267.

³² Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 66.

Morrors originally hired d'Harnoncourt for this latter service, and it was this experience with the Mexican art market that made Morrow put him forward as curator for the art show he had in mind.

With funding from the Carnegie Corporation and organizational support from The American Federation of Arts, the *Mexican Arts* exhibition opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in October of 1930, despite the fact that the museum's director, Edward Robinson, strongly disliked Mexican art.³³ Showcasing objects from the colonial period to the contemporary moment, d'Harnoncourt explicitly selected "only such works of art as are an expression of Mexican civilization," meaning that European-influenced Colonial paintings were not welcome.³⁴ Instead he focused on what he called "Applied Arts," including featherwork, metalwork, stone and wood carvings, painted objects, leatherwork, pottery, straw work, textiles, masks, costumes, furniture, basketry, and glassware, which were divided chronologically into "early" and "contemporary" periods. A smaller quantity of items fell under the "Fine Arts" categories of paintings and sculptures, again divided chronologically. The earlier objects, he argued, both Fine and Applied, represented an unconscious expression of embedded national characteristics, while the Post-Revolutionary objects showcased the conscious expression. For d'Harnoncourt, Mexican artistic excellence required the

³³ Ibid., 144.

³⁴ Rene d'Harnoncourt, *Mexican Arts* (The American Federation of Arts, 1930); Lonn Taylor, "Wonderful Things: Artifact and Argument in the Brooklyn Museum's" *Converging Cultures*," *American Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (1997): 140.

maker to embrace Mexico's unique dichotomy of "foreign ideas and Indian psychology."³⁵

The *Mexican Arts* exhibit was meant to travel to eight cities around the United States with stops at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C., the Milwaukee Art Institute, the J.B. Speed Memorial Museum in Louisville, and the Witte Museum in San Antonio. In actuality, it traveled to thirteen cities, and was viewed by more than 450,000 Americans. The Metropolitan Museum alone saw 25,000 visitors in just four weeks, and the show set attendance records in San Antonio with more than 6,000 visitors on a single day.³⁶ These numbers suggest that there was broad public interest in the display of Mexican art. Critics also offered favorable reviews of the exhibition, though it seems they generally preferred the Applied Arts section, where "the Mexican genius is most fully realized" to the Fine Arts, which were "too heavy-handed and purposely limited in scope to afford permanent satisfaction."³⁷

In the end, Morrow and d'Harnoncourt's exhibition accomplished its goal of challenging the reigning stereotype of Mexico as a land of lazy, uncivilized *banditos*. Instead, many Americans began to appreciate at some level that Mexico had its own

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican*, 143–46.

³⁷ Ibid., 145.

deep artistic culture. An editorial in the *New York Times* stated, “Mexico seems so alien, so remote. Yet when we are privileged, as now, to seek her national point of view, in terms of art that has been so wisely and comprehensively chosen, barriers tend to go down and there grows a neighborly impulse toward reciprocity.”³⁸ Of course, replacing one stereotype for another is not necessarily progress. Americans were still quite condescending toward Mexicans, viewing them as less advanced than themselves, but perhaps more like noble savages than barbarians. It was not much of an improvement, but it did prove Morrow’s point that the American people could be convinced to think differently about their southern neighbors through the power of Mexican art exhibitions. The Mexican government would try a similar strategy a decade later, but the events of the 1930s ensured a very different political and artistic landscape for that exhibit.

After President Hoover’s hands-off approach to the stock market crash of 1929 and the disastrous consequences in the form of the Great Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president of the United States in 1932. It was in his first inauguration speech on March 4, 1933, that Roosevelt famously stated that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”³⁹ In addition, he laid out his foreign policy; “I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbor: the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others; the

³⁸ Ibid., 146.

³⁹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “American Rhetoric: Franklin Delano Roosevelt - First Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1933, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrfirstinaugural.html>.

neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors.”⁴⁰ Although he spoke broadly of a world of neighbors, the Good Neighbor policy was primarily targeted at the nations south of the U.S. From 1933 to 1945, the United States renounced its right of intervention in Latin America, which had long been used to protect American corporate interests, especially in the area of the Panama canal.⁴¹ In return, the United States expected Latin Americans to respect U.S. investments on their soil and to follow its lead on the global stage.⁴² Amazingly, this Good Neighbor policy more or less worked. According to historian Bryce Wood, “It was ‘principled action,’ because the United States not only renounced intervention and interference in domestic politics, but it actually did not intervene or interfere.”⁴³ Though this meant cooperating with infamous dictators like Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, and Anastasio García in Nicaragua, it also meant that Latin America would almost universally support the United States in World War II, supplying necessary raw materials and military forces to the Allies.

The economic devastation and international unrest that permeated the 1930s, shook American culture to its core. In response, President Roosevelt initiated the New Deal: a series of federal programs aimed at offering relief to the poor and

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Stephen G. Rabe, “The Johnson Doctrine,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2006): 49.

⁴² Ibid., 51.

⁴³ Ibid.

unemployed, stabilizing the economy, and reforming the financial sector in order to prevent further crises. One of the largest facets of the New Deal was the creation of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a national agency charged with creating jobs for the unemployed. Although the WPA mostly focused its efforts on finding jobs that were suitable for unskilled laborers, like constructing public buildings or laying roads, many of America's cultural producers were also suffering. To address this need, the WPA created Federal Project Number One to commission work from artists, musicians, actors, writers, and researchers who would create and document American art. The Federal Art Project (FAP) was the largest branch of Federal Project Number One, and the one that focused on the employment of visual artists and artisans.

While thousands of artists labored to produce work that was generally appreciated more for its economic benefits than its aesthetic value, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) decided to take the opposite approach, making aesthetic achievement the only criteria for art. MoMA was first imagined in early 1929 by three wealthy women who were passionate about Modern art: Abby Rockefeller, Lizzie Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan.⁴⁴ "The Ladies," as they were known, quickly put together an impressive board of influential people and academics, including Professor Paul J. Sachs, the Director of the Fogg Museum at Harvard University. Sachs tapped Alfred Barr, one of his former students, to be the director of

⁴⁴ Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 3–18.

the new museum. At that moment, Barr was a young Associate Professor of Art History at Wellesley College who was teaching the country's first course on Modern Art. On November 8, 1929, just two weeks after the Black Tuesday stock market crash and six months after The Ladies thought it would be nice to have a museum of Modern art in New York, MoMA opened on the twelfth floor of the Heckscher Building on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 57th Street in New York City.⁴⁵ The museum was instantly popular, as much for its social capital and entertainment value, as it was for its exhibits of new art.

Between FAP on one hand and MoMA on the other, the lines between popular culture and elite culture began to blur in the '30s. Art Historian A. Joan Saab argues that while the Federal Art Project promoted the "pedagogy of artistic production," which suggested that the process of making art made good citizens, MoMA was promoting the "pedagogy of cultural consumption," which linked the purchase of aesthetically pleasing yet functional objects with democracy.⁴⁶ The museum did this through regular exhibitions of everyday items that Alfred Barr felt met his strict standards of aesthetic worthiness: a marriage of form and function. These exhibits, such as *Useful Household Objects Under \$5* (1938) and *Useful Objects of American*

⁴⁵ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁶ A. Joan Saab, *For the Millions: American Art and Culture Between the Wars*, Arts and Intellectual Life in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 10.

Design Under \$10 (1939), were wildly popular and further blurred the lines between art, education, and commerce.⁴⁷

Both FAP and MoMA further challenged notions of culture by offering radical new definitions of art; together they desacralized art, making it more accessible to the general public and redistributing the nation's cultural wealth.⁴⁸ Yet, while the artwork being produced by artists in the FAP was deeply rooted in the nation's economic woes and often produced in reaction to them, MoMA tried to divorce art objects from any kind of historical context. Barr was interested in what he called "pure art" without social or political implications.⁴⁹ This led him to design bare, white gallery spaces that presented artworks or well designed, machine-made objects in isolation and without visual distraction (Fig. 1). While this is commonplace in today's museums, Barr's "white cube" was revolutionary in the 1930s.⁵⁰

Given Barr's interest in the design of ordinary items and elevating them to the status of fine art, it is not surprising that there was a close relationship between MoMA and some of the major national department store chains that were based in New York City. Retail firms like Macy's and Lord & Taylor made direct reference to

⁴⁷ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 91.

⁵⁰ Whitney B. Birkett, "To Infinity and Beyond: A Critique of the Aesthetic White Cube" (Master's Thesis, Seton Hall University, 2012).

MoMA shows and other museum exhibits in their advertising campaigns.⁵¹

Department stores and museums also borrowed display techniques from one another (Fig. 2). Frederick Kiesler, author of the influential book, *Contemporary Art Applied to the Store and Its Display* (1930), urged cooperation between museums and retail stores, believing that the partnership was of national importance. According to Kiesler, the department store was “the true introducer of modernism to the public at large,” as it “revealed contemporary art to American commerce.”⁵²

Mexican Oil and Alphabet Soup

In the late 1930s, as trouble loomed in Europe, the relationship between the United States and Mexico had again devolved. The Mexican oil workers’ union began demanding the basic benefits that American workers could finally take for granted, such as forty hour work weeks, weekends off, better working conditions, and sick days.⁵³ The oil companies, many of them based in the United States, refused these requests, claiming they could not afford the changes. The oil workers went on strike, then agreed to go before an arbitration board. Financial experts on the board discovered that the oil companies could easily spare the funds to meet worker demands so they ruled in favor of the union. However, the companies refused to

⁵¹ Saab, *For the Millions*, 86.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵³ Owen L. Anderson and J. Jay Park, “From South of the Border, Down Mexico Way: The Past, Present, and Future of Petroleum Development in Mexico, Part I,” *Natural Resources Journal* 56 (Summer 2016): 283.

accept this decision and appealed to the Mexican Supreme Court, again losing their case. When it became clear that the oil companies would not pay, regardless of the courts' rulings, the President of Mexico, Lázaro Cárdenas decided to nationalize the oil industry. On March 18, 1938, he took control of all of the oil production in Mexico on behalf of his country and negated any private claims. In furious retaliation, the oil companies began massive campaigns urging people in the U.S. and around the world to boycott Mexican products. Many countries closed their markets to Mexican oil, intending to cause a massive surplus and dropping prices to untenable levels. This worked, to some degree, and the Mexican economy suffered. However, Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy was still in place, so the U.S. government refused to intervene, much to the disgust of the U.S.-based oil corporations. Considering what was percolating on the world stage in 1938, Roosevelt knew that he could not afford to antagonize Mexico. He worried that any U.S. sanctions would make Mexico more susceptible to German, Italian, or Japanese interests and threaten the security of the United States.⁵⁴

Between the art exhibits glamorizing Latin America, and the news reports demonizing them, people in the U.S. had mixed feelings about the region in the late 1930s. Yet that ambivalence went both ways. In 1935, the U.S. Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles explained,

⁵⁴ Alejandro Ugalde, "The Presence of Mexican Art in New York between the World Wars: Cultural Exchange and Art Diplomacy" (Dissertation, Columbia University, 2003), 397.

In Latin America there is a frank skepticism as to the existence of interest here in the things of the mind and of the spirit. There is admiration of our capacity for organization and achievements in industry and business, but open incredulity of our interest in literature, music, art, and philosophy. On the other hand, in the United States, knowledge of Latin American civilization, social institutions, and economic moves is pathetically limited.⁵⁵

This awareness of the American hemisphere's cultural misunderstandings and fears of political destabilization in the face of looming war eventually led President Roosevelt to establish a new federal agency tasked with responding to perceptions of the Latin American threat to the security of the United States. The government wanted to stabilize the economies of Latin American nations, secure and deepen U.S. leadership in the region, and combat Axis influence and propaganda.⁵⁶ For this, they needed to forward the ideals of Pan-Americanism and shared culture. Thus, the Office for the Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations Between the American Republics (OCCCRBAR) was founded in 1940. A year later, the name was changed to the slightly less convoluted Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA).⁵⁷ Linguist Darlene Sadlier argues that the OIAA was "a rare and not ignoble instance of the U.S. government investment in culture as a way of reaching out to

⁵⁵ Sadlier, *Americans All*, 9.

⁵⁶ Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch, "Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940-1946) and Record Group 229," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86, no. 4 (November 1, 2006): 786.

⁵⁷ The acronym for this agency is sometimes noted as OCIAA or CIAA in the literature, but the National Archives specifies OIAA.

other nations and to people at home.”⁵⁸ The OIAA was still selective, patronizing, and steeped in stereotypes, but it did become a highlight of “reverse mandate” diplomacy, which was meant to broaden the American mind when it came to the rest of the world.⁵⁹

To accomplish their ambitious goals, the OIAA turned to mass media. Radio was the best means for communicating with the American public at the time and by mid-1942 there were a staggering 1,500 programs about Latin America being broadcast every week throughout the United States.⁶⁰ While much of this content was expressly educational, like the *Inter-American University of the Air*, others were single episodes of ongoing programs like *Ripley’s Believe It or Not*, dramatized news programs like *March of Time*, regular features on variety shows, and a great deal of musical programming. Concurrently, the OIAA offered U.S. programs to Latin American countries, working with broadcasters to boost radio signals across the hemisphere. These shows were in direct competition with the radio programming offered by the Axis powers who not only had more powerful transmitters, but also broadcast in Spanish, Portuguese, German, and sometimes Italian.⁶¹

After radio, the other main target of OIAA efforts was film. In the 1930s, movies that were set in Latin American countries, such as *The Cuban Love Song*

⁵⁸ Sadlier, *Americans All*, 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁶¹ Ibid.

(1931), *Girl of the Rio* (1932), *Flying Down to Rio* (1933), *Bolero* (1934), *In Caliente* (1935), and *Rumba* (1935), were wildly popular. Many filmmakers of the era, wanting to take advantage of this trend, would insert a nightclub scene into an otherwise unexceptional narrative so the protagonists could enjoy a Latin dance, or listen to a sultry songstress in an exotic costume. One such scene is “What a Rumba Does to Romance,” in *College Swing* (1938), a comedy that is ostensibly about a young woman who inherits a university, but features a five minute rumba extravaganza for no reason that is related to the plot. The sheer quantity of similar scenes makes it clear that Latin American culture was one of the hottest fads around. Unfortunately, “Latin American culture” is all it can be called; filmmakers in the U.S. rarely differentiated between Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, or any other nation.⁶²

Throughout the decade, U.S. movies about Latin America generally relied on a handful of derogatory stereotypes: the bandit revolutionary, the tango dancer/gaucha cowboy, jungle-dwelling savages, the prisoners of Devil’s Island, or the sensual and exotic dwellers of the Caribbean islands.⁶³ However, this changed

⁶² One might charitably chalk this up to ignorance or the fast pace of early movie production, but it still happens today. *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull* (2008) both depict central Mexican imagery in South American jungles, as if all the Autonomous cultures south of the Rio Grande were the same. Even the animated series *Elena of Avalor* (2016) which features Disney’s first Latina princess and is generally praised for its racial diversity, featured a song titled “Let Love Light the Way” in the episode “Navidad,” where characters wear Peruvian hats, hang Mexican *papel picado* decorations for Christmas, and sing a Puerto Rican *parranda* (a secular Christmas carol). The target audience of children ages 2-7 may not care about this homogenization of culture, but it is a symptom of a larger issue that will be discussed further in chapter three.

⁶³ Sadlier, *Americans All*, 38.

somewhat in the early '40s. The OIAA was concerned about alienating Latin American audiences and mandated that Hollywood produce films that would portray Latin America in a better light. Additionally, the war was preventing American movies from being screened in Europe and Asia. To make up for the loss of income, studios in the United States decided to expand in Latin America, meaning that their films would need to appeal to the largely white and affluent business elites who owned the theaters. Thus, the Motion Picture Association tried to avoid relying on offensive stereotypes and began producing films showcasing Latin America's modernity and white middle class.⁶⁴ Ultimately, though, this was only a minor shift. In the movies, a Latin American setting remained code for a tropical paradise filled with exotic people. Clearly the OIAA attempts to educate people in the U.S. about Latin America were not hugely successful.

The third prong of the OIAA approach to improving hemispheric solidarity through the sharing of culture was through traveling "informational exhibits" that were displayed in museums, department stores, bus and railroad stations, libraries, and city halls around the country.⁶⁵ Though radio programs and films were able to reach more people, these exhibits held a great deal more information and could offer context and more depth of understanding. Neither the OIAA nor the President's office ever explicitly suggested that the exhibits were more important than the agency's film

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 162.

or radio efforts, but it is telling that the man that Roosevelt hired to lead the OIAA had experience in the museum and art worlds, not in film or radio.

On August 16, 1940, the President appointed Nelson Rockefeller, son of the world's first billionaire, to head up the agency that would later be known as OIAA.⁶⁶ As Coordinator, he would have very little direct oversight and reported only to President Roosevelt. At the time, Rockefeller had no political experience or any record of public service, but even at the age of 32, he was an experienced business executive who had worked for Chase Bank, Rockefeller Center, and Creole Petroleum, the Venezuelan subsidiary of his father's massive conglomerate, Standard Oil.⁶⁷ He spoke Spanish fluently, had business interests in the area, and was passionate about art. Not only was Rockefeller an avid art collector, he was also a trustee for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Museum of Science and Industry, and was the President of the Board at MoMA, the museum his mother Abby had helped found. Rockefeller's disparate interests in international politics and Latin American art rapidly coalesced into an exceptionally ambitious museum exhibit that would tie Mexican art appreciation to American national security as the United States prepared to enter the Second World War.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 10–12.

A Bit of Mexican Flavor

The show in question was MoMA's *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* and more than any other exhibit of Latin American art, it has been the focus of a great deal of scholarly attention because it overlapped so many political, social, and economic spheres.⁶⁸ *Twenty Centuries* was not just an art exhibit; it was the event of the summer. Socialites feted the famous Mexican artists and art historians who had a hand in the show, trying to generate a few inches in the society column of the *New York Times*.⁶⁹ The Macy's on Herald Square opened a complementary display titled *Mexico in Manhattan*, that was intended to "pervade the store with Mexican flavor" by featuring more than 150 items of Mexican-inspired merchandise in a dozen departments.⁷⁰ Kaufmann's furniture store organized a Mexican furniture exposition called *Below the Rio Grande*, featuring a recreation of Empress Carlotta's bedroom and selling furniture in the "high Rancho Grande kitsch style."⁷¹ Kresge's five and

⁶⁸ See Holly Barnet-Sanchez, "The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art: U.S. Museums and the Role of Foreign Policy in the Appropriation and Transformation of Mexican Heritage" (Dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1993); Cathleen Paquette, "Public Duties, Private Interests: Mexican Art at New York's Museum of Modern Art, 1929-1954" (Dissertation, University of California Santa Barbara, 2002); Alejandro Ugalde, "The Presence of Mexican Art in New York between the World Wars: Cultural Exchange and Art Diplomacy" (Dissertation, Columbia University, 2003).

⁶⁹ "Mexicans Are Feted By Modern Museum," *New York Times*, May 22, 1940.

⁷⁰ "Shows Mexican Goods: Macy to Feature 150 Items as Museum Opens Exhibit," *New York Times*, May 16, 1940.

⁷¹ John Phillip Santos, "In 1940, All Things Mexican Were All the Rage," *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1990.

dime store displayed Mexican pottery in its shop windows.⁷² Carlos Chávez, the founder and director of the Symphony Orchestra of Mexico, presented concerts of Mexican music in support of the exhibit.⁷³ Even the newspapers would breathlessly report sensational but meaningless facts about the show, including the number of objects and exact insurance valuation of the shipments. They made much of the romantic idea that thousands of artworks had been shipped from Mexico City to New York City by rail. Apparently, the art was guarded by an entire platoon of Mexican soldiers to the border but Americans crowed that just two armed Texas Rangers were needed to accompany the show on the remainder of its journey through the United States.⁷⁴

Twenty Centuries was in the right place at the right time to capitalize on the American public's craze for Latin American culture. New York was then hosting the 1939-1940 World's Fair, which apart from promoting American industry, was also concerned with the tenets of the Good Neighbor Policy.⁷⁵ Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and the Pan American Union all had popular pavilions at the Fair. At the same time, Carmen Miranda was lighting up the Great

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "Music of Mexico," *New York Times*, May 12, 1940.

⁷⁴ "3 Box Cars Bring Mexican Art for Exhibit That Will Open May 15 at Modern Museum," *New York Times*, April 12, 1940.

⁷⁵ Saab, *For the Millions*, 129–56.

White Way in her U.S. debut: *The Streets of Paris*.⁷⁶ New York's theaters had been suffering from a severe slump in ticket sales due to the nearby Fair, but the Brazilian Bombshell was credited with "saving Broadway," despite appearing in just two scenes of the musical revue.⁷⁷ Macy's again jumped on the bandwagon, launching a "South American Turban Tizzy" as Miranda's look influenced the entire city.⁷⁸ Although women in the U.S. appropriated this outlandish fashion for themselves, seeing it as generally representative of all of Latin America and/or South America, Miranda herself had appropriated and adapted it from clothing worn by poor black women in Bahia, a state in the northeast of Brazil. These women were the descendants of Senegalese slaves who wore *balangandãs* (silver trinkets that served as protective amulets) and turbans as part of their Islamic faith practices.⁷⁹

While Latin America was all the rage in New York, global events would coalesce to center the city as the capital of Western power, finance, and culture. A few days before *Twenty Centuries* opened in May, Nazi Germany invaded France. By mid-June, Paris had fallen to the Axis powers. Though it had long been a source of art, fashion, music, and literature in the West, a German-occupied Paris could not be

⁷⁶ Paul Bullock, "Legends," Documentary, *Carmen Miranda: Beneath the Tutti Frutti Hat* (BBC Four, October 9, 2007).

⁷⁷ Martha Gil-Montero, *Brazilian Bombshell: The Biography of Carmen Miranda* (New York: D.I. Fine, 1989), 74–85.

⁷⁸ Vicki Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds., *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community*, Viewpoints on American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 199.

⁷⁹ Gil-Montero, *Brazilian Bombshell*, 57.

the cultural leader of the Allied world. Therefore, during the summer of 1940, the world turned to New York City and its arts institutions, like MoMA, for cultural guidance. *Twenty Centuries* was poised to make the maximum possible impact.

Coincidentally, the show was originally designed to be exhibited in Paris, but fate intervened. In the summer of 1939, MoMA's Curator of Architecture, John McAndrew, went to Mexico on vacation. There, he visited his friend, the artist Diego Rivera, who had photographs of artworks that had been selected for a comprehensive Mexican art exhibit originally intended for the Jeu de Paume, a museum of Modern art in Paris.⁸⁰ However, no one in Mexico wanted to ship their priceless treasures to a war zone, so the show was canceled. As it happened, MoMA had also had a recent cancellation: a collection of works by the Romanian Modernist sculptor Constantin Brâncuși who lived and worked in France. With German U-boats intent on destroying Allied shipping in the Atlantic, it was not safe to send Brâncuși's work to the United States. Therefore, when McAndrew returned to New York, he made the suggestion to Alfred Barr that they stage the Mexican exhibit in place of the Brâncuși. Intrigued, Barr mentioned the idea to Board President Nelson Rockefeller who enthusiastically agreed.

In October 1939, Rockefeller visited Mexico himself. Officially, his mission was to discuss health programs being funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, but he mostly wanted access to President Cárdenas in order to negotiate more favorable

⁸⁰ Ugalde, "The Presence of Mexican Art," 414–17.

terms for Standard Oil after the nationalization had taken place, and he planned to use a major exhibit of Mexican art at MoMA as a bargaining chip.⁸¹ Despite being fond of Rockefeller personally, Cárdenas refused to allow any concessions for Standard Oil.⁸² He did, however, like the idea of an art exhibit as a means of establishing goodwill in the United States, so he promised an enormous show covering all eras of Mexican art history.⁸³ From Cárdenas' perspective, such an exhibit would restore Mexico's position in American public opinion, depoliticize issues between the two nations, foster a feeling of goodwill to aid in future negotiations, reactivate trade relations and tourism, and enhance Mexico's national self-respect and pride.⁸⁴

Though the exhibit was deliberately created in order to improve diplomatic relations between the countries, both Cárdenas and Rockefeller agreed that its true purpose could not be publicized. In a memo to MoMA's Vice President, John Abbott, regarding the exhibition's first press release, Rockefeller wrote,

This release will tactfully stress the point that the Exhibition is of an entirely cultural nature and has nothing to do with the political or economic relations between the two countries. We want to be sure that the public in this country does not think that we are taking sides because the feeling is running pretty high in both countries at the present time concerning certain matters. Because of this situation I want it to be perfectly clear to the public that the Museum initiated this Exhibition because of the quality and importance of the art of Mexico... I don't want the public or the business interests in this

⁸¹ Paquette, "Public Duties," 202.

⁸² Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 223.

⁸³ Paquette, "Public Duties," 203–4; Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 223.

⁸⁴ Ugalde, "The Presence of Mexican Art," 408.

country to get the impression that we are being used by the Mexican Government as a method of spreading political propaganda, or that we are being used by the American Government as a means of spreading propaganda concerning the so-called “good neighbor policy”—which in the eyes of many business men has become a farce as far as Mexico is concerned...⁸⁵

Making such a point of the matter, of course, belies the fact that the exhibit was entirely politically motivated and everyone involved was well aware of it.

While he was in Mexico, Rockefeller met Alfonso Caso, the Director of the Museum of Archaeology. As the premier scholar of Autonomous art in Mexico, Caso was chosen to head the MoMA project with the aid of three other well-respected and experienced curators.⁸⁶ Dividing the exhibition’s content chronologically, Caso took on the task of curating what they would call “Pre-Spanish” art. His collaborators included Manuel Toussaint, an art historian, who would curate the Colonial art; Miguel Covarrubias, an artist and scholar, who was responsible for the National (Modern) art; and Roberto Montenegro, a painter and the former director of the Museum of Popular Art in the Palacio de Bellas Artes, who supervised what they termed Folk art.⁸⁷ All of these men had worked with and/or for the Mexican government at some point in their careers, so they understood the diplomatic role that *Twenty Centuries* was intended to play in the United States.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Paquette, “Public Duties,” 204.

⁸⁶ Ugalde, “The Presence of Mexican Art,” 410.

⁸⁷ Montenegro had also been involved in the 1921 exhibit, *Las Artes Populares en Mexico*

⁸⁸ Ugalde, “The Presence of Mexican Art,” 410.

Considering the scope of this massive international exhibition and only a few short months in which to work, it is not at all surprising that the organizers encountered complications and difficulties while pulling the show together. The first issue was the fact that the exhibit had four curators in charge of four separate sections, but there was no one tasked with synthesizing all of the pieces. Although a thread of continuity was implied with the exhibit's title and concept, there was no attempt to single out a clear narrative to guide visitors through the two thousand years of Mexico's art history. In a letter to Nelson Rockefeller, dated March 6, 1940, MoMA's Director of Publications, Morton Wheeler, wrote:

All our troubles have arisen from the fact that the exhibition did not have, from the start, a director to devote his entire time to forming a general concept and supervising, from day to day, the inter-relation of the four groups. This we have done as well as we could since we arrived [in Mexico], but we have had to deal not only with the complication of doing everything in two languages...but above all the well-known Mexican sense of time (or lack of it)...⁸⁹

Covarrubias in particular encountered difficulties in organizing the National art section of the exhibit. He was distressed that he was not being paid for his work, and that as the third choice for curator he had had even less time to work on his section than the other three curators.⁹⁰ The real challenge, however, was in managing the egos of the artists: a task that none of the other curators had to tackle. Most of the artists that Covarrubias contacted to be in the exhibit refused to participate and he had

⁸⁹ Barnet-Sanchez, "The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art," 124.

⁹⁰ Ugalde, "The Presence of Mexican Art," 432.

to talk each one around individually, including several who refused to be in group shows with other specific artists who had also been selected. It was an exhausting but masterful display of diplomacy on Covarrubias's part, and meant that the art of the 1930s was perhaps overrepresented in the exhibit at the expense of the more groundbreaking work of the 1920s, simply because it was easier to arrange.⁹¹

Another concern was a series of anti-loan demonstrations held at Monte Albán in Oaxaca where curator Caso was still excavating. The people of the region were upset because they had already had their ancestral treasures seized once and brought to Mexico City for display; the state of Oaxaca had to sue the federal government in the early 1930s to get them back.⁹² There was real fear in Mexico that the U.S. government would simply keep some or all of the artworks that were lent to MoMA, including a beautiful gold pectoral from tomb 7 at Monte Albán, that depicted the Mixtec god of death.⁹³ Ultimately, there was little the Oaxacan people could do, as the exhibit already had the approval of the President of Mexico, but MoMA staff worried that the demonstrations would negatively affect publicity.

An event that got much worse publicity was an art contest that MoMA sponsored in Mexico. Wanting a poster that they could use to advertise the exhibit, MoMA placed announcements in all the major Mexican newspapers on February 23,

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 431.

⁹³ Antonio Castro Leal, ed., *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (Mexico: Museum of Modern Art and the Instituto de Antropología e Historia de México, 1940), 48.

1940 offering prizes of \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second place, \$250 for third place, and five \$100 prizes for honorable mentions.⁹⁴ To put those amounts into perspective, the annual median income of a man in the United States in 1940 was \$956; thus first prize was roughly the equivalent of a year's salary and may have been worth even more in Mexico.⁹⁵ Suffice to say, there was a great deal of interest in the competition. However, since the exhibition was scheduled to open in May, a tight turnaround was inevitable, and the deadline for the contest was set for March 11th, just over two weeks later. Posters had to be submitted to Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, a professional artist who was working with Covarrubias on the National art portion of the exhibit and who had drafted the requirements of the contest. When Ledesma himself took first prize on March 12th with a work entitled *Shinca*, the results were highly controversial, to say the least.⁹⁶

One of the three judges for the poster contest was MoMA's Director of Publications, Morton Wheeler.⁹⁷ Although there is no record of why Ledesma's work was chosen or how he was even eligible to participate in the first place, one must forgive the distracted Wheeler for his part in that imbroglio. At the time, he was in Mexico trying to coordinate the publication and printing of the exhibit's catalog,

⁹⁴ Ugalde, "The Presence of Mexican Art," 429.

⁹⁵ "The 1940 Census: 72-Year-Old Secrets Revealed," *NPR.Org*, accessed January 5, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2012/04/02/149575704/the-1940-census-72-year-old-secrets-revealed>.

⁹⁶ Ugalde, "The Presence of Mexican Art," 429. I have been unable to trace this work or discover if MoMA ever used it in a poster as intended.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

which was proving to be exceptionally challenging. Not only did he have to find a way to consolidate the voices of the four curators, assemble photographs of many of the objects in the exhibition, and appease the Mexican government as sponsors of the show, he was also attempting to create a bilingual catalog, meaning not only two languages with their associated translation issues but two measurement systems, as well; both standard and metric units had to be used for the dimensions of each work of art. Wheeler had just a few months to accomplish this gargantuan task in another country with different priorities and he found it exceedingly difficult. In an undated letter to MoMA Director Alfred Barr, Wheeler's frustrations bleed through every line.

I have tackled some strange jobs in my life--in Spain, Holland, Germany, France and England--but I have never been so hopelessly frustrated as here. What I cannot cope with is being lied to, day after day, and by the most honest people in Mexico (because others have lied to them). Again yesterday--as fifty times before--I discovered that work which I had been told was done had not even been begun, and that the evidence that had been showed me to prove that progress was being made, was falsely constructed just to keep me and others quiet. What is so discouraging about it is that, in spite of all the anguish of these three months, the book can't possibly be first rate because of the compromises and concessions that have been necessary on every side.⁹⁸

Unsurprisingly, given these setbacks, the catalog was not ready in time for the exhibition's opening in mid-May. Instead, MoMA offered visitors a copy of *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, with this explanation inside: "A brief guide to the exhibition published in the absence of the official catalog, which is being printed

⁹⁸ Barnet-Sanchez, "The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art," 144.

in Mexico and has been unavoidably delayed.”⁹⁹ Eventually, the official catalog was printed and shipped to New York, but not without some further concerns. Pasted into each copy was a corrections sheet, listing twenty-six mistakes in the text, with the disclaimer: “The reader’s indulgence is requested for errors attendant upon the hurried printing of the book in Mexico by printers unfamiliar with English.”¹⁰⁰

While these implications of Mexican inefficiency may seem needlessly dismissive today, they are very much of a piece with the way in which people in the U.S. viewed Mexicans in 1940. In a draft version of the catalog’s foreword, MoMA’s Director, Alfred Barr, believed it necessary to address such American prejudices.

Comparisons are odious only to those who fear the truth. Let us be frank: many Americans have until recently felt a certain condescension toward Mexico. We have been more stable politically, stronger in war, better organized industrially and commercially, more efficient in developing (and abusing) our national resources. But have these political and technological achievements produced a civilization culturally superior to that of Mexico? With regret we must admit that they have not, for as the exhibition goes for to prove, Mexican culture as it is expressed in its art seems in general to be more varied, more creative and far more deeply rooted among the people than does ours.”¹⁰¹

At some point in the publishing process, though, Barr must have been convinced that such an intervention was not as important as he had originally imagined. The final (unattributed) text in the catalog instead reads,

⁹⁹ Museum of Modern Art, *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* VII, no. 2/3 (May 1940).

¹⁰⁰ Leal, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*.

¹⁰¹ Barnet-Sanchez, “The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art in the United States,” 184–85.

The more thoughtful of us will not see the exhibition without provocative reflections about the nature and value of our two civilizations, for Mexican culture, as expressed in its art, seems in general to be more varied, more creative, and far more deeply rooted among the people, than ours. The Mexicans, of course, have one great advantage over us. They have an incomparably richer artistic past – two pasts, in fact – a European and a native, both of which survive in modified form today.¹⁰²

The published version of Barr's text removed any hint of a political or economic relationship between the United States and Mexico, focusing only on culture, as Rockefeller had earlier insisted. While the exhibit was entirely motivated by political designs, those of securing hemispheric solidarity on the eve of the Second World War on the part of the U.S., and of improving economic relations after the privatization of the oil industry on the part of Mexico, neither country wanted these motivations to be clearly stated. Worries that the American public might see such an exhibit as propaganda meant that the focus had to be on Mexican culture instead.

The problem, of course, was that the curators and government sponsors of the show had different ideas of what Mexican culture was than the Americans who were hosting the show. The staff at MoMA wanted to accentuate cultural differences between the United States and Mexico and consciously eliminated any elements of shared contemporary life.¹⁰³ This was most evident in the decorative arts where everyday objects, such as silverware, that the Mexican curators had selected as evidence of their country's modernity and participation in the global economy were

¹⁰² Leal, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, 11.

¹⁰³ Barnet-Sanchez, "The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art in the United States," 183.

removed by MoMA staff for being too similar to what Americans were using in their own homes and thus lacking novelty.¹⁰⁴ Rather than taking the opportunity to contextualize National Mexican art within a sophisticated, urban frame, MoMA instead reified the idea that only “colorful,” “fun,” and rural “folk” objects could represent what was “truly” Mexican.¹⁰⁵ Rockefeller verbalized this approach in his first announcement of the exhibition in February 1940.

The exhibition, as a whole, will telescope both time and space. Many centuries and many thousands of miles will be brought within its scope. The exhibition will trace the growth of Mexico’s culture through twenty centuries of evolution: showing first the greatness of its Pre-Columbian or Pre-Spanish periods, then the splendors of the Colonial era, and, finally, the strength and vigor of the Modern period. The Popular or Folk Arts of all these periods will be well represented because they form so persistent and colorful a part of the life of the Mexican people.

To know the arts of Mexico is to know and understand the Mexicans themselves, for the two are so inseparably interwoven. One cannot come to know and love the arts of this country without developing a great warmth and affection for the people themselves. They are truly an extraordinary people with a genuine understanding and appreciation of beauty – a depth of religious feeling dating back to Pre-Spanish days; gentleness and a love of fun and play, together with remarkable imaginative gifts.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Barnet-Sanchez, “The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art,” 131.

¹⁰⁵ Barnet-Sanchez, “The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art in the United States,” 183.

¹⁰⁶ Museum of Modern Art, “Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art Being Assembled for the Museum of Modern Art,” *Press Release*, February 21, 1940, https://www.moma.org/d/c/press_releases/W1siZiIsIjMyNTE4MiJdXQ.pdf?sha=9c36401289fa330f.

Lead curator Alfonso Caso recognized the implications inherent in this speech and strongly objected to them, but his complaints were ignored by MoMA staff.¹⁰⁷ Jean Charlot, a French artist of Mexican and Russian heritage who lived and worked in Mexico and the United States, also took note of Rockefeller's patronizing tone in his critique of the exhibition.

Releases given by the Museum to the press suggest that the arts of Mexico are characterized by "gentleness and a love of fun and play." The emphasis put by the display on the tender innocence of Mexican toys, the colorfulness of peasant costumes, the amused exercises of sophisticated artists, comes dangerously close to proving this point. It is as if the vast Mexican panorama had been surveyed through a rose lorgnette. Considering the world today, so cruelly different from the optimistic world of yesteryear, the art of Mexico at its most severe scores a prophetic point; it would have been a more responsible performance if the present show had had courage enough to underscore it.¹⁰⁸

Despite all of these difficulties and misunderstandings, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* managed to open on May 15, 1940 at the Museum of Modern Art, a little more than six months after it had been proposed. For the benefit of World's Fair tourists, the exhibit was on display all summer from 10am to 10pm.¹⁰⁹ It was the first, and last, exhibit to ever take up the entirety of the museum, which had moved by then to its current location on 53rd Street.¹¹⁰ The first floor and part of the garden were set

¹⁰⁷ Barnet-Sanchez, "The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art in the United States," 183.

¹⁰⁸ Jean Charlot, "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art," *The Magazine of Art* 33, no. 7 (July 1940): 443.

¹⁰⁹ Museum of Modern Art, "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art Being Assembled for the Museum of Modern Art."

¹¹⁰ Museum of Modern Art.

aside for the display of Autonomous art. Colonial art shared space with Folk art on the second floor. The third floor was reserved for National art, Children's art, and more Folk art, which also spilled out into the garden.

There were five-to-six thousand individual objects in the exhibit: an enormous amount by present-day standards.¹¹¹ Most of the Autonomous and Colonial material was on loan from Mexican museums, while much of the Folk art had been purchased in Mexican markets just a few months prior to the exhibit's opening. The sources of National art were interestingly diverse, including museums, galleries, private collectors, and the artists themselves. Some of the more notable collectors were one of the museum's founders and Nelson Rockefeller's mother, Abby Rockefeller; one of the show's curators, Miguel Covarrubias; the estate of composer George Gershwin; and actors Vincent Price and Dolores del Rio.

In general, reviews of the exhibition were positive. Edward Alden Jewell, the art critic at the *New York Times* explained that "No exhibition, however thorough (and the show at the Museum of Modern Art is indeed excellent, as far as it goes) could tell the whole story."¹¹² He then goes on to reinvest in the condescending stereotype of Mexico's "colorfulness" and simplicity.

Most consistently satisfying, most vividly enlightening, is the section devoted to Mexican "popular arts." Here we come at once into direct contact with the homely, spontaneous expression of a people.

¹¹¹ "3 Box Cars Bring Mexican Art for Exhibit That Will Open May 15 at Modern Museum."

¹¹² Edward Alden Jewell, "Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art Spreads Before Us Pre-Spanish, Colonial and Modern Work of 2,000 Years," *New York Times*, May 19, 1940, Sunday edition, sec. Art.

For all their exuberant and naïve freshness, these objects associated with common daily life, these blithe or macabre badges of carnival, publish the persistence of a tradition that through the centuries had never died.¹¹³

While the objects shown in the museum were purchased in Mexican markets and did represent in some sense the continuation of tradition and expressions of daily life, Jewell's observations miss, as they were intended to, the contemporary experience of most urban Mexicans who were as likely to dance in ceremonial masks as contemporary Americans.

Time was much more barbed in its interpretation of Mexican culture as presented by *Twenty Centuries*.

Two common denominators linked Mexico's three periods (pre-Spanish, Spanish colonial, modern): 1) the folk art of the peons who, in 1910, were still making artistic mud pies, as they had 2,000 years ago; 2) a love of blood and entrails that showed in the sacrificial chopping blocks of the Aztecs and the gory Crucifixions of colonial times, the sluggings and bayoneting of Orozco's frescoes.¹¹⁴

These were likely not the links the curators envisioned to combine the disparate parts of the exhibition, but they do seem in keeping with how MoMA presented the material. Jean Charlot also made note of the thread of violence running through the exhibition in his review for *The Magazine of Art*.

Through the course of Mexican esthetics, a subjective *leit-motiv* recurs, linking together the three great epochs, Pre-Spanish, Colonial, and Modern, in spite of outward differences. Totally unrelated to the cult of physical beauty which is the mainspring of our own tradition in

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ "Mexican Show," *Time* 35, no. 22 (May 27, 1940): 59.

art, it deals with physical pain and death. The skull *motiv* is equally dear to Aztec theogony, to the Christian hermit who fondles it lovingly in his cell, and it still runs riot today in those bitter penny sheets sold in the streets of Mexico on the Day of the Dead. It is, however, but the outward sign of a mood of deeper significance.¹¹⁵

Interestingly, few of the critics commented on the overall design of the exhibit, and then only briefly. *New York Times* art critic Edward Alden Jewell called the show “systematically and often very attractively arranged” and “so delightfully and so imaginatively staged.”¹¹⁶ It was installed by John McAndrew, who was inspired by Barr’s white cube technique and department store windows. In the displays of Autonomous and Folk art, McAndrew placed a few scraggly houseplants around to evoke an “exotic jungle” (Fig. 3). Considering the era in which this exhibit was mounted, the little time MoMA staff had to complete their work, and the goals of the show, such contrivances and gimmicks in installation are understandable; however they reinforced the idea of Mexican art and Mexicans themselves as “primitive.”

This impression of primitivism, supported by Rockefeller’s announcement speech, the exhibit catalog, the installation of the show, and the reviews in the press, was also buoyed by the exhibition’s content. As the United States’ first and most influential museum of contemporary art, MoMA was naturally the most invested in

¹¹⁵ Charlot, “Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art.”

¹¹⁶ Edward Alden Jewell, “Mexican Art Show Spans 2000 Years,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1940; Jewell, “Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art Spreads Before Us Pre-Spanish, Colonial and Modern Work of 2,000 Years.”

the National art portion of *Twenty Centuries*, where Primitivism was understood as a conscious artistic choice used to evoke authenticity, as in the works of Diego Rivera. However, the staff were also fascinated by the Autonomous works, which in their forms were believed to be the precursors to National art. In fact, MoMA had already explored this theme in an earlier exhibit: *American Sources of Modern Art* (1933). Yet this reading of primitivism leaves Folk art in a precarious position. Made by “people that some well-to-do critics would not enjoy meeting socially,” Folk art was not viewed as intentionally referencing the past: merely as the most recent expression of a long, unbroken tradition.¹¹⁷ Considering the enormous social, political, economic, and religious upheavals in Mexico’s history, it seems unlikely that any tradition was passed down wholly intact over the course of two thousand or more years, yet this was the implication embedded in the concept of Folk art as the staff at MoMA approached it in 1940. Though contemporary with National artists, Folk artists were relegated to the past through the conceit of primitivism, and not granted the same intellectual ability to engage with their cultural past.

Despite having no key figure to pull the disparate parts of the exhibition together, *Twenty Centuries* did contain a fairly straightforward narrative of progress: primitive Autonomous art influenced the later production of National and Folk art. Though the truth of this theme is debatable, it was nevertheless a clear takeaway message for the visitors and critics. In this context, then, the Colonial art section must

¹¹⁷ Charlot, “Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art.”

have seemed irrelevant and inconsistent with the rest of the show. It was included, of course, because MoMA could not claim to be presenting a record of the arts of Mexico over the past two millennia without including the three centuries of Spanish repression, but its relationship with the primitive is more complicated.

In contrast to Autonomous art, National art, and Folk art, Colonial art is almost the definition of what has traditionally been considered “civilization” in the West. Using European techniques and materials, Mexican Colonial artists made highly naturalistic paintings and sculptures that usually depicted Catholic holy figures. Though many fine portraits of wealthy individuals and other genre scenes exist, the vast majority of art production in Mexico during the colonial period was religious in nature, which is one reason why many Americans may have found it disconcerting; the United States is a largely Protestant nation. Despite the “civilized” trappings of method and style, Catholic imagery was viewed as old-fashioned and superstitious. Additionally, when Mexican Colonial art is examined with the art of Spain from the same period of time, many scholars and critics have felt that it suffers in comparison. Charlot wrote, “Those who consider the Colonial section of the show Spanish have probably never been to Spain.”¹¹⁸

In many ways, the Mexican expression and performance of Western European culture was considered to be a lesser, more “primitive” position in relation to the United States. In 1940, then, visitors to *Twenty Centuries* were discomfited by the

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 401.

alien forms of Autonomous art, the Catholic fervor of Colonial art, and the revolutionary nature of National art in Mexico. By rejecting foreignness, excessive emotion, “ugliness,” indigeneity, and socialism, Americans fortified their own identities as arbiters of taste, rationality, whiteness, capitalism, and democracy. By then embracing Folk art, with its simplistic forms, bright colors, and lack of overt political or religious content, Americans could reinforce their paternalistic and condescending stereotypes of what Mexicans were “really” like, entertaining notions of their own superiority and complexity in comparison.

It is no coincidence that this approach perfectly aligns with the goals of the Good Neighbor Policy, itself a tool of Pan-Americanism. An offshoot of the Monroe Doctrine, Pan-Americanism asserted that the countries of the American hemisphere, should band together for mutual protection and economic support, with the corollary that while all the republics would be equal within the ideal realization of this theory, the United States would hold the dominant position among equals.¹¹⁹ In this way, the *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* exhibit at MoMA was not merely an art show, but an articulation of the intent of American imperialist foreign policy and a potent symbol of inter-American diplomacy.

¹¹⁹ Sadler, *Americans All*, 15–16.

South of U.S.

In December 1941, a year and a half after *Twenty Centuries* opened at MoMA, the United States entered World War II. This affected every aspect of daily life, but major cultural institutions on both coasts were especially aware that they were likely targets for enemy forces. According to *New York Times* art critic Edward Alden Jewell, the Metropolitan Museum of Art had by that point been working on its emergency preparations for fifteen months, making plans to remove its collections and considering the safety of its thousands of visitors.¹²⁰ The enormous glass windows at MoMA were carefully taped in the event of air raids, and museums began closing at dusk in accordance with nighttime blackout policies.¹²¹ However, “the museums unanimously agree that in so far as may seem wise they must continue to operate as if conditions were normal.”¹²²

One museum that was operating as if conditions were normal was the Brooklyn Museum of Art. In late 1940, they had received funds from Rockefeller’s OIAA to send Dr. Herbert J. Spinden, their curator of American Indian Art and Primitive Cultures, on a good will tour of South America.¹²³ For six months, Spinden traveled around the continent, giving art history lectures and buying objects for his

¹²⁰ Edward Alden Jewell, “Museums: A Survey of Their 1941 Activities,” *New York Times*, December 28, 1941.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Nancy B. Rosoff, “As Revealed By Art: Herbert Spinden and the Brooklyn Museum,” *Museum Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (2005): 52.

next exhibition: *America South of U.S.* He also organized several traveling exhibitions around the same time and sent them around the United States to promote the Good Neighbor Policy.¹²⁴

America South of U.S. opened on November 13, 1941. According to the museum's press release for that day, the show was significant because it was "the first showing of Colonial Latin-American objects and art to be seen in this country."¹²⁵ This was not true, of course. One year prior and just ten miles away, Colonial Mexican art was included as part of the *Twenty Centuries* exhibition. *America South of U.S.* did not even mark the first time an exhibit had been dedicated exclusively to Colonial Latin American art in the country. Perhaps it had been lost to institutional memory, but a decade earlier, the Brooklyn Museum itself had displayed Colonial decorative arts from Peru. As part of the Freyer collection, that show will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

While it may not have been the first exhibit in the United States to display Colonial Latin American material, *America South of U.S.* may have been the first to assign any real value to it. In the booklet Spinden produced in association with the show, he wrote, "This exhibition of the Colonial and Popular Arts of Latin America

¹²⁴ Ibid., 53; Brooklyn Museum, "Records: Exhibitions," *Records, 1926-2001*, n.d.; Fane, "From Precolumbian to Modern," 17. Rosoff suggests that six exhibitions were produced that traveled from 1941-1942; the Brooklyn Museum Library and Archives counts four exhibitions that traveled from 1941-1951, including *America South of U.S.*; and Fane asserts that three Autonomous exhibits and three Colonial/Popular art exhibits "toured schools and public institutions throughout the United States for more than a decade, starting in 1942."

¹²⁵ Brooklyn Museum of Art, "No Title [Press Release]," *Press Releases, 1939-1941*, November 13, 1941.

has a purpose: it aims to trace the social evolution of the nations south of us through artistic documents which cover the last two or three centuries.”¹²⁶ He was quick to point out that there would be no display of fully Spanish or Portuguese art, nor any attempt to show the products of strictly Indigenous communities, past or present. Rather than compare Colonial art to its European or Autonomous predecessors, the stated focus, as it was with all OIAA shows, was to promote international understanding; Spinden wanted “to let Anglo-Americans judge Latin-Americans in their own esthetic ambient.”¹²⁷ For Spinden, the Colonial period of Latin American art was the most “civilized” and where he saw the most overlap with U.S. culture. He implied as much in an impromptu discussion with a journalist from the *Brooklyn Eagle* who cornered him in a storeroom one day after he had ignored all her requests for an interview. “The emphasis in this exhibit will be on the sympathetic phases of South American folk art,” he said, suggesting that he found the other phases less sympathetic.¹²⁸

Though Spinden was passionate about Colonial Latin American art and relatively well educated on the subject, he did fall prey to some of the same misconceptions as the MoMA team. Although the exhibition showcased art objects from nearly every country in Central and South America, the gallery was “arranged

¹²⁶ Herbert J. Spinden, *As Revealed By Art* (Brooklyn Museum Press, 1941), 3.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Jane Corby, “South America Drops a ‘Bombilla’ at Museum for Boro to Figure Out,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, October 16, 1941.

for visual effect rather than close adherence to the country of origin.”¹²⁹ This had the effect of again homogenizing all Colonial Latin American cultures rather than offering context. Additionally, the museum’s press release points out that this arrangement “bears out the popular impression that Latin-American arts are highly colorful.”¹³⁰ As discussed earlier, this is a distancing and infantilizing move, and especially suspect when an American has been the one to select and install the work. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy if Spinden buys the most “colorful” art objects available, in order to prove that the arts of Latin America are colorful.

Finally, Spinden was incorrect about the availability of Colonial art from Latin America. He believed that it was disappearing fast and that “in two years it will be impossible to acquire examples of this period except in rare instances.”¹³¹ Fortunately, he was wrong, but it implies a salvage anthropology mindset. Perhaps this can be attributed to Spinden’s background as a Maya scholar, or his difficulty in acquiring Colonial art. Certainly other collectors have made the same argument, which will be addressed in later chapters, but this demonstrates a pattern of thinking that seemed to justify the removal of a great deal of Colonial material from its country of origin.

¹²⁹ Brooklyn Museum of Art, “No Title [Press Release],” November 13, 1941.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

After the War (I Went Back to New York)

By the time the Second World War ended in 1945, the United States had been enamored with Latin American culture for more than a quarter-century. However, as the political climate changed, U.S. foreign policy also had to change. Globalism, the rise of the United States as a superpower, and the start of the Cold War with the U.S.S.R. meant that regional movements like Pan-Americanism and the Good Neighbor Policy began to seem quaint and quickly fell by the wayside. The OIAA was disbanded and its one and only leader, Nelson Rockefeller, returned to corporate life for a while. Without the government constantly promoting international understanding, interest in Latin American culture plummeted. Evidence of this can be seen in the museum world. While two major museum exhibits and dozens of traveling shows had been produced in the 1940s, the 1950s supported only two much more modest exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art, both in the first part of the decade.

One of these exhibits followed in the footsteps of its predecessors. *Art in Colonial Mexico* was put together in 1951 by a coalition of American and Mexican museums with tacit approval from the U.S. government in the form of the U.S. Cultural Attaché to Mexico, The Honorable Philip Raine, who was on the American Advisory Committee for the exhibit along with Rene d'Harnoncourt and Herbert Spinden's successor at the Brooklyn Museum, Frederick Pleasants. The show traveled the Midwest to four institutions of modest size from 1951-1952: the John Herron Art Museum in Indianapolis; the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts and the Dayton Art Institute, both in Ohio; and the Davenport Municipal Art Gallery in Iowa.

Even six years after the end of the OIAA and the urgent need for international cooperation, the aims of *Art in Colonial Mexico* will sound familiar. On the acknowledgements page of the forty-eight page catalog that was produced in association with the exhibit, the Directors of the four museums write,

We Americans of the North, whose own country has been blessed in so many ways, can especially afford to look wide-eyed across our frontier and consider some of the advantages of this different civilization that has providentially flourished so near to us. Both countries have great gifts to bring one another toward the forming of a spirit of mutual understanding and, since the arts are most effective spiritual agents, speaking directly to the heart through all barriers of race or language, it is to be expected that this exhibition may foster a deeper appreciation of one of Mexico's most radiant gifts, the art of her colonial period.¹³²

Again, one hears echoes of Pan-Americanism in every line: the subtle confidence of superiority, the consideration of advantages that the United States might enjoy because of Mexico's proximity, the idea that art can speak to the heart of the viewer without any need for mediation, and the expectation of gifts: mentioned twice in a single sentence. Those gifts likely include the rhetorical construction of a shared American heritage that was, in reality, appropriation on the part of the United States, who could not, for reasons of race, economics, and history, acknowledge its own Indigenous past, but was happy to borrow from Mexico's. Refusing to deal with the unpleasant realities of colonialism, the catalog defends the Spanish invasion as if it were entirely altruistic and inevitable.

¹³² Lee H. B. Malone et al., *Art in Colonial Mexico*, 1951, 6.

It was a period in which Spain gave all her strength to an unprecedented effort, sending her people, her knowledge, art and faith to unknown millions; an effort that may well have taken too much toll and been the cause of her eventual decline... On the other hand, the original Mexicans gave all their craftsmanship, and their great capacity for sacrifice.¹³³

The exhibit examined the categories of architecture, sculpture, and painting during the Colonial era, breaking each category into four temporal periods: Gothic (1521-1600), Renaissance (1600-1700), Baroque (1700-1781), and Neo-Classical (1781-1830). The first major art academy in Mexico City was founded in 1781, and it emphasized classical European training, which appears to be the author's reasoning for ending the Mexican Baroque in that year. He does not hesitate to apply the titles of traditional European art historical periods to the arts of Colonial Mexico, which adds to the impression of a backward nation sequentially copying, but lagging far behind, the progressive orders of European style. All-in-all, *Art in Colonial Mexico* seems to have been a remnant of curatorial practice from a decade earlier.

On the other hand, *Arts of Peru*, held at the Pan American Union in Washington D.C. in the early summer of 1951, better represented the shape of things to come. Little is known of the exhibit and the catalog contains only nine typewritten pages, but it is clear that rather than working with governmental agencies, the Pan American Union assembled the show with art objects available from local collectors. These artworks included paintings, retablos, masks, textiles, silverwork, pottery, alabaster, engraved gourds, wood carvings, stirrups, apparel, feather work, and dolls,

¹³³ Ibid., 7.

from the Autonomous, Colonial, and National periods. Although the goal of the exhibition was superficially similar to those that came before it, “to promote the understanding and appreciation of Peruvian artistic expression,” the wording is less aggressive and imperial, focusing on the appreciation of Peruvian artistry more than mutual understanding or the possibilities for appropriation.¹³⁴ As will become evident in the next chapter, small exhibits of Colonial Latin American art like this one, that were drawn from the collections of private individuals, would become the standard in the 1960s and 1970s.

¹³⁴ Pan American Union, *Arts of Peru* (Washington, D.C., 1951).

1960-1979: SMUGGLING, STRUGGLING, AND ONIONS

“Buying art is the same thing as falling in love.”

- Nohra Haime, Art Dealer (1952-)

As related in the last chapter, the primary motivation for exhibiting Latin American art in the United States in the 1930s and '40s was to achieve economic and political advantages. The U.S. was attempting to court its southern neighbors through displays of cultural understanding in order to bolster support for U.S. enterprise and the Allied position in the Second World War. These early exhibits were government-sponsored or sanctioned, and generally included objects from national museum collections in the countries of interest (primarily Mexico). However, the war's conclusion demonstrated the shallowness of U.S. interest in Latin American culture. By the end of 1945, most Good Neighbor programs were abruptly halted as the government's priorities shifted from gaining allies through regional Pan-Americanism to opposing enemies in the global Cold War. New treaties and policies evaded Latin American requests for post-war cooperation and actively suppressed economic development in the region.¹

The sudden withdrawal of government support and public interest meant that for the next fifteen years or so, museums in the United States offered very little in the way of Latin American content. When they did begin exhibiting Latin American art

¹ Barnet-Sanchez, “The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art,” 46.

again in the 1960s, the impetus stemmed from very different sources, as was appropriate for a culture that was rapidly changing. As the United States began wrestling with civil rights and the issues inherent in having an increasingly diverse population, museums needed to find a way to stay relevant by engaging new audiences. In general, this shift began at the local level, with small museums that relied on nearby supporters with modest collections to provide the material for their exhibitions. Although individual American collectors had been quietly purchasing Latin American art since the late nineteenth century, it was not until the 1960s and '70s that museums, freed from wartime political restrictions, lacking funds, and inspired by changing demographics and potential public interest, began courting donors to exhibit their private art collections in exclusive shows. More than institutions or academics, these collectors had a huge impact on the field for decades.

Of the twenty-one known exhibits of Colonial Latin American art that were mounted across the United States from 1960 to 1979, more than forty percent of them showcased single collections rather than borrowing from multiple sources like most earlier exhibits. Millicent A. Rogers' collection of "Spanish Colonial" and southwestern "Indian" art was exhibited in Taos, New Mexico (1960). Peru's Ambassador to the United States, Celso Pastor, had his personal collection of Colonial art exhibited at the Pan-American Union in Washington D.C. (1965). A third exhibit in Flint, Michigan was loaned by Fenton R. McCreery, a collector of Colonial Mexican paintings (1971). However, two collectors in particular, with almost completely opposite personalities and approaches, dominate these decades: Mrs.

Frank Barrows Freyer and Dr. James Frederick Adams, with a couple of dozen exhibitions between them. For nearly twenty years, these two private collectors exercised great influence over the images of Colonial Mexico and Peru that were seen north of the Rio Grande. While political and economic interests were still important considerations during this time, as will be seen at the chapter's end, nothing surpassed the hands, eyes, and wallets of the individuals who collected and then shared their clearly vested interests in art from Colonial Latin America.

Mrs. Freyer Goes to Peru

Francis (Frank) Barrows Freyer was born in Marietta, Georgia, 1878, to German immigrant parents.² After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1902, Ensign Freyer joined the USS *Olympia* and quickly began to move up the ranks.³ On June 22, 1908, in “one of the most brilliant military weddings of the season,” the 30-year old then-Lieutenant Freyer married Maria Engracia Critcher, a San Francisco socialite ten years his junior who was descended from a long line of Spanish Californians.⁴ The two met when the young women of San Francisco's upper classes were asked to entertain American naval officers from Teddy Roosevelt's “Great

² “U.S. Census,” 1930, enumeration district 80, sheet 4A, line 46, family 80, NARA microfilm publication T626, roll 294; FHL microfilm 2,340,029., National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

³ *The George Washington University Bulletin* (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1913), 284. *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the Navy of the United States and of the Marine Corps to January 1, 1903* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 188.

⁴ “The Smart Set,” *The San Francisco Call*, June 23, 1908, 6.

White Fleet,” which had docked in San Francisco Bay for two months. Charged with circumnavigating the globe, the fleet was ostensibly sent to participate in a global goodwill mission, but was mostly intended to distract U.S. citizens from an economic depression and to display the United States’ naval power during a period of Anti-Japanese fervor.⁵ When Freyer left after his wedding to continue this mission, his bride spent the next six months with her new in-laws in Georgia before rejoining her husband on the island of Guam.⁶ While the now Captain Freyer served briefly as the acting Naval Governor of the island, the Freyers’ daughter Engracia was born (1910), followed later by sons Frank Jr. (1915) and John (1923).⁷ After a short stint in Guam, the Freyers seem to have spent the rest of the decade moving between Washington D.C. and San Francisco, but by 1920, the promoted Commander Freyer was selected to reorganize the Peruvian Navy, so the young family moved to South America.⁸

Thus it was between 1920 and 1923 that Mrs. Freyer was able to assemble her collection of Colonial Peruvian furniture and paintings.⁹ Her reasons for collecting

⁵ Lester C. Walker, Jr., *The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection of Spanish Peruvian Paintings in the Denver Art Museum: The High Museum of Art, December 7-29, 1969* (Atlanta, GA: The High Museum of Art, 1969), 3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Naval Era Governors of Guam,” *Guampedia*, April 15, 2016, <http://www.guampedia.com/naval-era-governors-of-guam/>; U.S. Census, 1930.

⁸ “Social Notes,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1920, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9C01E3DC1031E433A25750C0A9619C946195D6CF>.

⁹ Mrs. Freyer is always referred to by her formal title in articles and interviews. She seems to have preferred this and was something of a traditionalist in this aspect of her life, so I will continue to refer to her as Mrs. Freyer out of respect. It also prevents confusion as to whether I am writing about Mrs. Freyer or her husband Captain Freyer.

are not entirely clear, but some have speculated that as a devout Catholic, Mrs. Freyer was drawn to the religious themes of colonial paintings.¹⁰ Others have argued that she was “doubtless inspired by a genuine love for the art and the cultural associations it brought forth from [her] own Spanish background.”¹¹ Equally undocumented is how Mrs. Freyer found artworks for her collection, although it is evident that the vast majority of them come from Lima, the location of her primary residence, and Cusco, the location of a few extended visits.¹² On one memorable occasion, Mrs. Freyer accompanied the new American ambassador and his staff to Cusco to show off the delights of the city.¹³ While shopping in an open air market, she spotted a vegetable merchant sitting on a brightly colored cushion. She struck up a conversation, bought some onions, then asked to see the seat on which he had been resting. It turned out to be an exquisite colonial painting, more than six feet tall, of the *Adoration of the Magi*, which she promptly purchased for her collection, though she never was able to determine how it came to be used as a chair in a farmer’s market (Fig. 4). One supposes it cannot have been overly comfortable.

In addition to collecting art in Peru, Mrs. Freyer worked to advance human and

¹⁰ Stephanie Innes, “Christmas-Stamp Art Has Ties to Tucson,” *Arizona Daily Star*, December 4, 2006, http://tucson.com/lifestyles/faith-and-values/christmas-stamp-art-has-ties-to-tucson/article_24b102c5-4dcd-5694-8051-75f60673a363.amp.html.

¹¹ Walker, Jr., *The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection of Spanish Peruvian Paintings in the Denver Art Museum: The High Museum of Art, December 7-29, 1969*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3–4.

¹³ Robert J. Stroessner and Teddy Dewalt, “Uplifting Discoveries for Colonial Art,” *Americas* 42, no. 6 (December 1990): 58.

animal rights in the country.¹⁴ For these efforts, she was honored as the first non-Peruvian woman to earn The Order of the Sun, the highest civil honor in the country.¹⁵ Although the precise details of Mrs. Freyer's efforts on behalf of Peru are not available, it is evident that the government held both her and her husband in high regard. This was made manifest when she was granted a special waiver from President Augusto Leguía to bring her art collection to the United States; though Peru's laws forbade the export of cultural material, they made an exception for Mrs. Freyer.¹⁶ The upshot of all this was that when the Freyers returned to the United States, they were in possession of an unrivalled collection of Colonial Andean art, the likes of which had never been seen in the U.S. before.

Well aware of the importance of their collection, the Freyers began lending it out for exhibitions almost immediately. In 1925, part of their collection was used to put together a Peruvian room at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, which had opened in San Francisco just a year earlier.¹⁷ Five years after that, the collection went on display at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, under the title *Paintings & Decorative Art of XVI and XVII-Century Peru Collected by Mrs. Frank Freyer*, where it afforded "one of the first opportunities for the people of Greater New York to see

¹⁴ Innes, "Christmas-Stamp Art Has Ties to Tucson."

¹⁵ Ibid.; Captain Freyer was also awarded the Order of the Sun, in gratitude for his work on rebuilding the Peruvian navy after it had suffered devastating losses in a war against Chile in the 1880s.

¹⁶ Ibid.; Walker, Jr., *The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection of Spanish Peruvian Paintings in the Denver Art Museum: The High Museum of Art, December 7-29, 1969*, 4.

¹⁷ C.B.S.Q., "Art in California," *The American Magazine of Art* 17, no. 1 (January 1926): 39–40.

the remarkable state of civilization and artistic development to which Peru arose in its early days as a colony of Spain.”¹⁸ By 1931, the collection was at the Toledo Museum of Art in a show called *Decorative Arts of Spain and Spanish America*, which was meant to compare and contrast the arts of Spain with those of its American colonies.¹⁹ The dates for these latter exhibitions correspond with the period of time that *Mexican Arts* was also traversing the United States, and much of what was covered in the first chapter regarding the fetishization of Latin American culture in the 1930s was as true for exhibitions of Andean art as for Mexican art. However, there were some differences in their presentation. *Mexican Arts* combined Colonial art with more recent National art, and differentiated between the Fine and Applied Arts, whereas the Freyers’ exhibits usually focused solely on Colonial material, and did not make a point of separating the so-called “arts” and “crafts.” Additionally, the works for the *Mexican Arts* exhibition were loaned by Mexican museums on behalf of the Mexican government, but lenders to the San Francisco, Brooklyn, and Toledo exhibits of Andean art were nearly all private American collectors.

In the late ‘30s, the Freyer family settled in Denver, buying a gray stone mansion at 933 Pennsylvania Street, which has since been demolished.²⁰ Built in 1897 by Henry Wise Hobson, an attorney who had made his fortune specializing in

¹⁸ Brooklyn Museum of Art, “Paintings & Decorative Art of XVI and XVII-Century Peru Collected by Mrs. Frank Freyer [Press Release],” December 21, 1930, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/exhibition_printable/1427/tab/press_releases.

¹⁹ “The Toledo Museum,” *The American Magazine of Art* 22, no. 1 (January 1931): 57–58.

²⁰ James Bretz, *The Mansions of Denver: The Vintage Years* (Boulder: Pruett Pub. Co, 2005), 52.

mining law, the house was first sold to Junius Brown, the founder of the Denver Gas and Electric Company, in 1903.²¹ An avid art collector himself, Brown constructed a 2,000-square foot addition to the north side of the building to display his collection of paintings and sculpture.²² This gallery must have made the house irresistible to the Freyers, who purchased it after the death of Brown's widow in 1937.²³

Despite purchasing their own in-home art gallery, it was not long before the Freyers' art collection was again on the move. In 1941, the Newark Museum in New Jersey opened an exhibit titled *Three Southern Neighbors: Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia*. The typewritten catalog lists the objects borrowed from Mrs. Freyer for the show, including "thirty religious paintings, as well as many interesting examples of furniture, wood carving and tooled leather made by Peruvian craftsmen during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries."²⁴ Like the Toledo exhibit, visitors were encouraged to compare and contrast Colonial Peruvian art with a few Spanish paintings, also from Mrs. Freyer's collection.²⁵ However, the Newark show also included a section of "contemporary" art (defined in the catalog as art from 1915-1940) from the countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. The inclusion of Ecuadoran and Bolivian art in this early exhibition is somewhat surprising given how

²¹ Ibid.

²² Innes, "Christmas-Stamp Art Has Ties to Tucson."

²³ Bretz, *The Mansions of Denver*, 52.

²⁴ Newark Museum, *Latin American Exhibit: Three Southern Neighbors: Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia: Spanish Colonial Period, Including the Collection of Frank Barrows Freyer* (Newark, NJ: Newark Museum, 1941), 1.

²⁵ Ibid., 7.

underrepresented it was, and still is, in a field dominated by Mexico and Peru.

However, it is possible, and even likely, that this unusual focus was the result of the kind of commercial forces that museums are generally supposed to avoid.

Just two weeks after the Newark exhibition closed on December 31, 1941, the Freyer collection moved to the Gimbel Brothers department store in New York City. As is typical for the war years, the exhibit was part of the Good Neighbor machine, “designed to promote better understanding between this country and South America.”²⁶ What makes this show unique, however, was that the works on display were also available for purchase through the Hammer Galleries, including a thousand pieces of “Hispano-Peruvian” art that had been collected by Mrs. Freyer.²⁷ The unsigned New York Times article about the exhibition reads like a press release and proclaims that the collection was exhibited at several museums and at Mrs. Freyer’s home in Washington before being offered for sale.²⁸ As inclusion in museum exhibits is often seen as shorthand code for proving the authenticity and high worth of an art object, these details were probably included to increase the sale price.

Although some of the collection must have been sold at Gimbel Brothers, it is unclear what happened to the rest of the collection over the next twenty years. This is possibly because of Captain Freyer’s death in 1947, which would certainly have eclipsed any concerns about art for a time. However, one of Mrs. Freyer’s ten

²⁶ “Show Stresses Art of South America,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1942, 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

grandchildren, John Freyer II, remembers visiting “Madam” at the gray stone house in Denver during the mid ‘50s, and seeing her paintings on display in her private gallery there.²⁹ His recollections align with information available in the second edition of the *Handbook of Hispanic Source Materials and Research Organizations in the United States*, published in 1956.³⁰ According to that book, Mrs. Freyer’s collection was open to the public on certain days of the week when the lady herself was in residence. Otherwise, it could be found at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.

Regardless, at some point near the end of that decade, what remained of the collection was divided amongst Mrs. Freyer’s children. Mrs. Freyer kept some of it for herself, but gave the rest to her daughter Engracia, and sons Frank II and John. This much is clear because the children are credited as lenders for an exhibition at the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery at the University of Miami, Coral Gables in 1961. The show was titled *The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection of Spanish-Peruvian Paintings*, despite the fact that the collection was assembled and researched by Mrs. Freyer, and it was intended to complement to the Samuel H. Kress Collection of fourteenth to eighteenth century European paintings that was also on display at the time.³¹ Although the catalog is just eight pages long, it is unusual for having the

²⁹ Innes, “Christmas-Stamp Art Has Ties to Tucson.”

³⁰ Ronald Hilton, ed., *Handbook of Hispanic Source Materials and Research Organizations in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1956).

³¹ The Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery, University of Miami, *The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection of Spanish-Peruvian Paintings* (Coral Gables, FL, 1961).

descriptions of the paintings written by Mrs. Freyer herself, revealing her expertise on the subject. For example, when describing a painting titled *The Assumption of the Virgin* from the late seventeenth century, she writes, “This is a later work, as indicated by the modeling of the figures and handling of drapery. It shows marked influence of Murillo, whose son, Gabriel Esteban, was ordained in 1630 in Spain, came to Peru, and taught at the Fine Arts Academy at Cusco.”³² With the finest collection of Colonial Peruvian art in the United States, Mrs. Freyer may also have been among the country’s experts on the subject, given how few academics were interested in this material at the start of the 1960s.

In 1967-68, a very similar exhibition entitled *Treasures from Peru: Spanish Colonial Paintings from the School of Cuzco, the Frank Barrows Freyer Collection* opened in Columbus, Ohio. Like the 1961 show, this was assembled from the collections of all the Freyer family, but did not necessarily include all of the same paintings. Louise Bruner, the Art Editor of the *Toledo Blade*, reviewed the exhibit when it opened, noting that “From the point of view of an art museum, this is an off-beat exhibition that will probably not set turnstile records.”³³ It seems to have been the brainchild of Mrs. Freyer’s daughter, Engracia, who lived in Columbus and was a patron of the Columbus Gallery of Art, but her motivations are not recorded in the show’s catalog acknowledgements. The catalog itself is more robust than that of the

³² *Ibid.*, 6.

³³ Louise Bruner, “Columbus Show Depicts Blending of Cultures,” *The Blade*, January 7, 1968, sec. G, 4.

short pamphlet issued by the Lowe Gallery, and the informational image captions are significantly longer and better researched.³⁴ The author of these is not credited, but it was probably not Mrs. Freyer's work, as she was eighty years old by this point and near the end of her life.

After Mrs. Freyer's death in October 1969, the Freyer collection appeared in two more exhibitions. The first of these was called *The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection of Spanish-Peruvian Paintings in the Denver Art Museum*, which opened at the High Museum in December 1969. Like the Columbus show, the Atlanta exhibit was arranged because a member of the extended Freyer family, Fred R. Freyer, Jr, lived locally. Of the twenty-two paintings on display, two belonged to Mrs. Freyer's daughter Engracia, three were still under the control of the Maria Engracia C. Freyer Trust, and the rest were already part of the collection of the Denver Art Museum. The exhibition catalog is just four pages long, but contains excellent information about the individual works, as well as the Freyer collection as a whole: how it was collected and where it was exhibited. In fact, it lists several exhibitions that I have no reason to doubt did happen, but can find no other trace of in the archives, including shows at the Pan-American Union in Washington, D.C. (1939), the Denver Art Museum (1940 and 1962), the Taylor Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs (1945, 1950, 1952, and 1954), and the Joselyn Center of Fine Arts in Omaha, Nebraska (1962-1963). In total,

³⁴ The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, *Treasures from Peru: Spanish Colonial Paintings from the School of Cuzco, The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection* (Columbus, OH, 1967). While the catalog is generally well designed, the choice of alternating lines of red and black text that stretch across a wide two page spread is rather bizarre. This may have been in keeping with a funky 1960s aesthetic, but it is also incredibly difficult to read.

the Freyer collection seems to have been a part of at least fifteen significant exhibitions of Colonial Peruvian art from 1925-1970; this is an astounding figure and makes up almost twenty percent of all the known exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art in the United States.

The collection's last temporary stop was at the Taylor Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs in 1970 for an exhibit titled *Reflections of Spain II: A Comparative View of Spanish Colonial Painting*. The first *Reflections of Spain* exhibit had been held a couple of years prior and was focused entirely on sculpture; it also featured the Freyer collection extensively. According to the *Reflections of Spain II* catalog, Mrs. Freyer's death in 1969 necessitated a decision on the fate of the collection. Ultimately, her children decided to reunite the collection and presented the vast majority of it to the Denver Art Museum (DAM) where it would be permanently available to the public.³⁵ At the time, the DAM was in the process of constructing a new museum building and had just founded their New World Department to collect, interpret, and exhibit the arts of the Americas.³⁶ The Freyer gift was a remarkable addition to the brand new department and became a featured part of the third floor galleries when the museum opened to the public in October 1971.

This was the narrative presented to the press, anyway: that Mrs. Freyer's children donated her collection as a memorial to their mother. However, the reality is slightly more nuanced. First, the collection is known as the Frank Barrows Freyer

³⁵ Robert L. Shalkop, *Reflections of Spain II: A Comparative View of Spanish Colonial Painting* (Colorado Springs, CO: The Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1970), 4.

³⁶ "Denver's New Art Museum," *Design* 73, no. 1 (1971): 13.

Memorial Collection, without any reference to the woman who actually assembled it. Yet Mrs. Freyer was known as a formal and traditionally-minded lady, so perhaps this was her preference. She exhibited the collection for decades under her husband's name, which she may have considered as a tribute to him, just as her children might have considered the actual donation of the already named collection as a tribute to her. Though the general public may not understand that Mrs. Freyer was the driving force behind the creation of the collection, given its name, the staff of the Denver Art Museum certainly did and do.

Additionally, the gifting process was not so simple. By 1969, much of the collection had been distributed among the extended family. Donating it to the Denver Art Museum required coordination and time. Donna Pierce, the DAM's former Frederick and Jan Mayer Curator of Spanish Colonial Art, explains that in 1969, the majority of the collection was put on loan to the museum with about fifty pieces being gifted that year.³⁷ Each year after that, and well into the 1980s, more and more pieces were added to the donation from various members of the large Freyer family. While some family members chose to keep a few pieces, the bulk of the collection is now fully owned by the DAM. It forms the core of the museum's Colonial Andean holdings and is likely the most significant collection of Colonial Peruvian art in the United States.

In many ways, the Freyer collection is a product of its time and the family's unique circumstances. Even in the 1920s, collectors could not simply walk off with a

³⁷ Donna Pierce, "Dissertation," E-mail, March 18, 2017.

large collection of Colonial Peruvian heritage without special dispensation from a grateful nation. While the amassing of such a collection does reflect the United States' colonizing mindset in the interwar years, especially in regards to Latin America, the Freyer collection was also ahead of its time: being exhibited not for political gain (although the "goodwill" rhetoric was still imposed in the late 1930s and '40s), but as a display of personal enlightenment and genuine appreciation for another culture. In this way, the collection serves not only as a souvenir of the collector's time in Latin America, but subtly suggests that the collector is able to understand the country's cultural heritage better than its own inhabitants. After all, they had been willing to sell their art treasures to an outsider, or let them slowly decay under the weight of an onion merchant. The Freyer exhibitions were meant to speak to the collector's taste, discernment, and religious devotion, and offered elevated status in the supposedly egalitarian United States.

This theme of personal enlightenment as evidenced through art collections is really what separates the collectors of the earlier era with those of the 1960s and '70s. As Americans were beginning to wrestle with issues of race, ethnicity, civil rights, and personal identity, collectors became less motivated by displays of personal wealth and political influence, and more motivated by displays of apparent cultural insight and intellectual prowess. This is what generally separates the Freyer collection from the trends of the 1920s and makes it more relevant in the 1960s when it was in high demand and exhibited widely. The Adams collection was to fulfill the same role in the 1970s, but it took a decidedly different path.

Art Therapy

On December 27, 1927, James Frederick Adams was born in Korea to American missionary parents.³⁸ The family soon returned to the United States and settled in the Midwest where his father worked as a Presbyterian minister.³⁹ A driven young man, Adams married Sarah (Sally) York McCutcheon while he was working on his bachelor's degree in Psychology at UC Berkeley.⁴⁰ He graduated in 1950, the same year his eldest son, James Edward, was born.⁴¹ In 1951, Adams earned a master's degree from Temple University.⁴² A year after that, his daughter Dorothy Lee (Dotty) was born, and then another son in 1953, Robert Benjamin.⁴³ By then, Adams was working on his doctoral degree in Experimental Psychology at Washington State University, which he completed in 1959.⁴⁴ Immediately hired into a tenure track position at his old alma mater, Temple University, the psychologist seemed to have his life in careful order.⁴⁵

James Adams spent more than a decade systematically investing in the

³⁸ American Consular Service, "Birth Certificate of James Frederick Adams," January 13, 1928, Ancestry.com.

³⁹ Dotty Vanderhorst (daughter of James F. Adams), in discussion with the author, September 15, 2016.

⁴⁰ Ibid.; James F. Adams, "Curriculum Vitae," 1980.

⁴¹ Vanderhorst, interview; Adams, "Curriculum Vitae."

⁴² Adams, "Curriculum Vitae."

⁴³ Vanderhorst, interview.

⁴⁴ Adams, "Curriculum Vitae."

⁴⁵ Ibid.

American Dream; he had a prestigious academic career and the perfect family. So it came a surprise to everyone when he suddenly divorced his wife and married Lois McClarin in 1961.⁴⁶ Adams was thirty-three at the time, and his daughter attributes this act to a mid-life crisis.⁴⁷ The marriage did not last long, and he divorced again a year later. In 1963, Adams took a position as a visiting professor at the University of Puerto Rico.⁴⁸ There he met and married his third wife, a woman named Maria Miranda.⁴⁹ In celebration of this event, Adams' aunt sent him a wedding gift of one hundred dollars, which he was instructed to spend foolishly.⁵⁰ Taking the suggestion to heart, the newlyweds "ran around to antique shops looking for something suitably foolish... and ended up buying a badly damaged painting."⁵¹ This moment marked his entrance into the art collecting world.

Because the painting was in poor shape, Dr. Adams brought it to Norman Adler, an art restorer in Philadelphia, to be repaired. According to Adams, Adler was a procrastinator who would only work on the painting when Adams was present and forcing him to work.⁵² Thus, Adams spent a good deal of time with Adler and gained

⁴⁶ Vanderhorst, interview.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Adams, "Curriculum Vitae."

⁴⁹ William Penn Memorial Museum, *Colonial Spanish Art of the Americas* (Harrisburg, PA, 1974), 1.

⁵⁰ Julia Cass, "'Psst! Señor, Feelthy Religious Pictures, Cheap?,'" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 30, 1974, sec. Today Magazine.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

what he claimed was “a part-time two-year course on restoration.”⁵³ Enamored with his newfound hobby, Adams began buying more damaged paintings in order to practice his amateur restorations; he felt that working with his hands was good therapy for a psychologist. In addition to painting restoration, Adams took up wood carving and gold leafing as well, to produce appropriate frames for his works.⁵⁴ By 1979, he claimed to have worked on well over a hundred paintings.⁵⁵

This interest in damaged paintings seems to be what led Dr. Adams to collect Colonial Latin American art in particular. On a vacation to Guatemala one summer in the late 1960s, he began to notice “all sorts of damaged, unhappy-looking paintings that nobody seemed to care about.”⁵⁶ Feeling that the art was in danger of disappearing for good, just like Harold Spinden in Brooklyn thirty years earlier, he began to assemble representative works of the period “in the hope that one day an appreciation for the Colonial period would develop.”⁵⁷ In general, one cannot fault him for these sentiments, but the fact remains that it has long been illegal to export cultural and artistic objects from most Latin American countries. The laws differ from nation to nation, of course, and are often vaguely worded, but export of cultural

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ William Penn Memorial Museum, *Colonial Spanish Art of the Americas*, 1.

⁵⁵ James F. Adams, “Colonial Spanish Art: A Collector’s View,” *Americas* 31, no. 8 (August 1979): 49.

⁵⁶ Cass, ““Psst! Señor, Feelthy Religious Pictures, Cheap?””

⁵⁷ James F. Adams, “Collecting Colonial Spanish Art of the Americas,” *The Clarion: America’s Folk Art Magazine*, Summer 1978, 53.

heritage has clearly been a concern since the nineteenth century for countries like Mexico and Peru. Adams, however, argued that he was not necessarily breaking the law in smuggling works out of Latin America as much as he was fulfilling the law's basic intent.

The purpose of these laws is to preserve the countries' artistic heritage, and I can appreciate that, but what they're actually doing is condemning the art to destruction... I may be taking paintings out of their native countries, but at least they'll still exist... they can always buy their art back from me if they start caring about it.⁵⁸

Yet, one wonders how much of Dr. Adams' impressions of the state of Colonial art in Latin America is accurate. He believed that ninety percent of it had already decayed and disappeared, and that much of the rest would be gone by the end of the twentieth century.⁵⁹ It is impossible to know how much has been lost, but a vast amount of Colonial art remains intact in Latin America today. While Colonial art available for purchase may be limited, thousands of pieces can still be seen in churches and private homes throughout the Americas.

Adams also justified his actions on the basis that "Most of these countries don't even have a single art museum."⁶⁰ Even in 1974, this was demonstrably false. Dr. Adams' collection contained forty works from Guatemala, a country who built their Museo de Arte Colonial in 1936; twenty-six works from Peru where the Museo de

⁵⁸ Cass, "Psst! Señor, Feelthy Religious Pictures, Cheap?"

⁵⁹ J. Daniel Selig, *Colonial Spanish Art of the Americas* (Reading Public Museum and Art Gallery, 1975), 10.

⁶⁰ Cass, "Psst! Señor, Feelthy Religious Pictures, Cheap?"

Arte de Lima opened in 1961; four works from Bolivia whose El Museo Nacional de Arte was constructed in 1966; and one work from Columbia, a country whose Museo Nacional de Colombia was one hundred and fifty years old by the time Dr. Adams arrived. He may have collected two works of art from Venezuela prior to the opening of their National Gallery of Art in 1976, and seven works from Ecuador whose major national art museum did not open until 2003, but La Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana did exist as far back as 1944 and concerned itself with preserving Ecuador's artistic heritage. Interestingly, in his interview, Dr. Adams said that he would make an exception for Mexico. "They're concerned about their art. I wouldn't take anything from them."⁶¹ Yet there were twenty-nine works in his collection that did originally come from Mexico, although Adams probably purchased those through dealers. In the end, artworks from Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru made up more than eighty percent of his collection of Colonial Latin American art, yet these three countries have long been the most engaged in protecting their cultural rights. The argument that these three nations were uninterested in their Colonial artistic heritage or unable to care for them because they did not have museums, just does not hold water.

Still, the idea of preserving culture for future generations is a common enough justification for collectors. What is less common is a collector telling a journalist about his smuggling practices in detail. Adams apparently had three primary methods to move artworks from Latin American countries to the United States. For paintings

⁶¹ Ibid.

without frames, he would roll the canvases up inside the kinds of ponchos and blankets that tourists often buy and simply put them in his suitcase. The paintings that were still in their frames passed through customs via bribery. “Every customs man has a price,” he said.

You pretend you're not offering a bribe. You say you'd like 'special attention' given to your package and how much would this 'special attention' cost. They all know what you're talking about, but it's much more effective to put the request in terms of a personal favor, which is very acceptable in Latin culture, rather, than insulting the guy by offering a bribe directly.⁶²

In the most difficult cases, Adams asked art dealers to handle the transaction for him. “They’re very good at it. Most art dealers are accomplished smugglers.”⁶³

Although these practices seem to have been common at the time, no other collector of Colonial Latin American art has admitted it so candidly.⁶⁴

This all seems in line with Dr. Adams’ personality; despite his career as a psychologist, one gets the impression that he did not understand other people very well. For instance, in 1977, he argued publicly (and somewhat ironically) that anyone who commits a crime of any sort should immediately lose their rights as a human being and be in danger of losing their life as well. People are only motivated by fear and pain, he suggested, so violence must be met with violence. He also firmly

⁶² Ibid.; Adams’ generalizations about what is acceptable in “Latin culture” are very much a product of his time.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ This is not to suggest that I know of any other specific person or institution who has engaged in smuggling with regards to their collections of Colonial Latin American art. The museums and collectors with whom I spoke over the course of this project all care deeply about provenance and were careful to grow their collections within the confines of the law.

believed that, despite the possibility of the occasional “tragic mistake,” police officers should always shoot to kill.⁶⁵ Nor was Adams always respectful of others’ religious traditions. In one instance, he lied to a Catholic air freight employee about an altarpiece having been consecrated by the Pope in the seventeenth century in order to ensure its safe passage from Miami to Philadelphia. More upset at the thought that his property might get damaged in transit than he was about manipulating a person’s beliefs for his own gain, Adams eventually used the altarpiece to store several bottles of liquor.⁶⁶ Furthermore, he seems to have thought very little of art historians or museum curators. “They didn’t know what they were talking about.”⁶⁷ Nor did he show much respect for the government, as he liked to use the IRS to subsidize the growth of his collection. “I buy up damaged paintings that I can get for little money and that I don’t want for my collection. I then restore them, donate them to some museum, and write it off on my income tax.”⁶⁸

To a serious scholar, this criminally casual approach to art restoration is perhaps the most chilling of Adams’ eccentricities. Adams was never formally trained as an art restorer or conservator; his “apprenticeship” involved watching a professional restorer, Norman Adler, work on a single painting over the course of two years. However, Adler was quick to offer praise to his student. According to him, Adams

⁶⁵ “Psychologist Comes Down Hard on Crime,” *The Southeast Missourian*, May 11, 1977, 18.

⁶⁶ Cass, ““Psst! Señor, Feelthy Religious Pictures, Cheap?””

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

had become, “one of the best restorers in this part of the world... I’ve never seen anyone learn anything so quickly.”⁶⁹ Adler further explained that, “He’s bought paintings so butchered up – almost in rags – that other restorers wouldn’t even touch them and he’s fixed them up beautifully.”⁷⁰ One must wonder about the educational or monetary value of such damaged works when experts refused to work on them. Did Dr. Adams restore these artworks or recreate them?

One clue comes from his own writings. Adams was unhappy that only a few of the paintings in his collection showed any traces of varnish or signs of restoration.⁷¹ He attributes this to neglect. Because of these concerns, Adams may have subjected all of his paintings to a protective cleaning and varnishing process. While this was clearly done with the intent of preservation, most contemporary conservators would hesitate to add additional layers to a painting that did not have them to begin with; they tend to simply conserve what remains of the work rather than restore it to its original (or what they assume to be its original) state.⁷² Ultimately, Adams was an amateur art restorer who doctored very badly damaged paintings and donated them to museums despite their dubious educational purpose after such heavy restoration, or sold them at auction. The fact that he also seemed to have borne a minor grudge against the art establishment for dismissing him, likely raises several red flags to

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Adams, “Colonial Spanish Art: A Collector’s View,” 49.

⁷² The debate between restoration and conservation is well covered in museum literature. I will not be addressing the matter further in this dissertation.

anyone familiar with museum or collecting practice.

For various reasons which will be discussed later in this chapter, I have been unable to view in person any of the paintings that were once in Dr. Adams' collection of Colonial Latin American art. One work in particular, however, makes one question Dr. Adams' ethics in restoration, if not his technical abilities. The work in question, reproduced in a Sotheby's auction catalog, is titled "Portrait of the Marquez de Valleumbroso" from the Cusco School, and is dated to the early seventeenth century (Fig. 5). The painting depicts a full-length portrait of a very young Spanish nobleman, wearing the voluminous garments and lace of the Baroque period. He carries a slender walking stick, and wears silk stockings and a hat festooned with what appear to be ostrich feathers. In the top left corner of the painting is a coat of arms, and in the top right is the inscription "Marqves de Ballemprojo," making the figure's identity seemingly unassailable. What is odd about the painting, however, are the white, triangular masses hovering over the figure's shoulders. These objects are highly reminiscent of wingtips, calling to mind an *ángel arcabucero* (an angel depicted with a long, muzzle-loaded firearm, and wearing the clothes of an Andean nobleman): a subject that was exceptionally common in the Cusco School of paintings of the mid- to late seventeenth century. Since portraits of individual historic figures were unusual in the Cusco School, is it possible that Dr. Adams repainted an *ángel arcabucero* into a well-known nobleman, changing an unremarkable painting into a much more valuable one?

The painting's estimated date of completion in the early seventeenth century is

not possible if the subject is indeed Diego de Esquivel y Jaraba, the first Marquis de Valle Umbroso. The title itself was not created until 1687 and its bearer would have been nearly fifty years old at the time, not the teenager depicted in the painting. Also, the Marquis' registered coat of arms has two fleur-de-lis symbols in the upper left quadrant and a dog or wolf in front of a tree in the lower right (Fig. 6). The coat of arms in the Adams painting is completely different, with a Castilian tower in the upper left quadrant and what appear to be crossed swords or pikes in the lower right. This crest may be entirely fabricated.

These details, in addition to the shapes reminiscent of wings, seem to suggest that someone did alter this painting significantly. However, unless the painting can be located and examined, there is no way to know whether the painting was modified, when, or by whom. Dr. Adams' daughter believes that it may have been bought by a dentist of Latin American descent who lived in the Philadelphia area in 1980.⁷³ With no further public record, it is likely that the painting remains in private hands. At any rate, given the circumstances of this particular work, and Adams' history as an art smuggler and restorer, one must suspect the authenticity of the entire collection, especially when at least one other Adams artwork has been documented as altered: an *Adoration of the Cross* that had purportedly been signed by an R. Berneno in 1679, but whose inscription was lost after a cleaning.⁷⁴ Because of Adams, more than a hundred Colonial Latin American paintings and sculptures are now disbursed in

⁷³ Vanderhorst, interview.

⁷⁴ Bantel and Burke, *Spain and New Spain: Mexican Colonial Arts in Their European Context*, 93.

private collections and museums throughout the country with shady provenances and amateur restoration work. This state of affairs is likely possible because of the stabilizing power of a series of exhibitions in the 1970s.

From 1973 to 1980, the Adams collection, called “one of the finest and most diversified collections in existence,” and the “best private collection of colonial Latin American art in the country,” was exhibited a remarkable six times.⁷⁵ Five of those were solo shows featuring the Adams collection alone. Not even the Freyers could approach this record for speed; they averaged six shows in eighteen years. To be fair, however, the Adams collection tended to show in smaller venues than the Freyer collection. Rather than medium-sized art museums in major urban centers, Adams shared his collection with small university art galleries and eclectic regional institutions, including the Woodmere Gallery (now the Woodmere Art Museum) in Chestnut Hill, PA (1973); the William Penn Memorial Museum in Harrisburg, PA (1974); the Reading Public Museum in Reading, PA (1975); the Widener College Museum of Art in Chester, PA (1978); the Art Museum of South Texas in Corpus Christi, TX (1979); and the Lehigh University Art Museum in Bethlehem, PA (1980). The odd exhibition in this grouping is the Art Museum of South Texas’ *Spain and New Spain* (1979). While this exhibit will be discussed later in the chapter, it is important to note that this was the only exhibit Adams participated in that was outside the state of Pennsylvania, and he had only seven pieces in that show.

⁷⁵ William Penn Memorial Museum, *Colonial Spanish Art of the Americas*, 1; Cass, “Psst! Señor, Feelthy Religious Pictures, Cheap?”

In addition to being exhibited extensively during the decade, the Adams collection was widely published. Two-thirds of the collection was featured in a seventy-page catalog for the Reading Public Museum that was mostly written by Adams himself and which clearly served as the template for journal articles that he later wrote for *The Clarion* and *Americas*, which themselves included photographic highlights of the collection. A newspaper article from 1974 also featured several works and a photo of Dr. Adams at home with his art (Fig. 7). A few paintings were even used as illustrations in one of the first books written in English on the subject of Colonial Latin American art: the pessimistically named *Vanishing Art of the Americas* by Pál Kelemen.⁷⁶

Adams' motivations for exhibiting and publishing his collection so frequently throughout the 1970s is unclear. Part of it may have stemmed from his personality type, not trusting anyone to do things properly other than himself. This certainly extended to art historians who "have largely overlooked the treasury of Colonial Spanish art."⁷⁷ It is also important to remember that Adams was an educator for decades. He may have believed he was fulfilling an educational function by putting his collection on view. This argument seems to be supported by the fact that he often exhibited in university art museums. On several occasions, he offered variations on the idea that art belongs to the people and that he was only the temporary caretaker of it. Yet he floated a few different plans for his collection over the years, including

⁷⁶ Pál Kelemen, *Vanishing Art of the Americas* (Walker & Co., 1978).

⁷⁷ Selig, *Colonial Spanish Art of the Americas*, 11.

selling the pieces back to the countries of origin when they showed an appropriate commitment to it, selling it to an art museum to share with the public, and continuing to collect but more selectively.

What Adams eventually did do with his collection was sell it piecemeal at auction. In November 1980, a few months after its final exhibition, Dr. Adams put the vast majority of his collection up for auction at Sotheby's New York. The auction world was experiencing something of a spike in terms of sales of Latin American art in the late 1970s and early 1980s, so Sotheby's must have been pleased to dedicate an entire session to the Adams collection. A full catalog was produced, and every artwork was carefully labeled with the exhibitions and publications in which it had featured.⁷⁸ This was largely given in lieu of any provenance information, and served to provide some level of credibility to the sale. The few works with a known provenance include American art dealers, Guatemalan art galleries, and the Grace Steamship Line, a now defunct passenger cruise and shipping firm based out of Lima, Peru. The catalog also lists a certain "anonymous source," which I traced to an antique shop in Minneapolis. Around the year 1900, the shop owner's uncle bought nine enormous paintings by well-known Colonial Mexican artists and eventually gifted them to his nephew. However, the antique dealer did not know the value of these substantive works, some ten feet high, and Adams took advantage of his ignorance. Although Adams estimated their total worth at around \$200,000, he

⁷⁸ Sotheby's New York, *The Collection of James F. Adams: Colonial Paintings and Sculpture of Latin America*, 1980.

bought them all for just \$100 apiece.⁷⁹ Thus, Adams may have insisted that his sources remain anonymous either to avoid word getting back to the antique dealer he swindled, or to hide his smuggling efforts, since he “got most of his stuff by scouting around village barns and houses (and even bars),” and then snuck it into U.S.⁸⁰

One reason for the auction might have been that Adams was getting tired of the responsibility involved in restoring, proselytizing, and sharing old works of art in a genre that no one else seemed to care for very much. Another, perhaps more likely reason, is that in 1980, Adams divorced his third wife, Maria, with whom he had built the collection, and married his fourth wife, Carol.⁸¹ Adams moved across the country with his new bride, and took a job as the Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.⁸² Considering the scale of these major life changes, it is entirely possible that Adams decided to sell his collection because of the memories it held or because he was in need of money, as divorces and cross-country moves are expensive propositions.

In the end, Dr. Adams put one hundred and eighteen paintings and small sculptures up for sale with an estimated total sales price between \$289,100 and \$430,200. Unfortunately, the late ‘70s craze for Latin American art did not seem to apply to Colonial art and only six lots met the minimum price to sell. These included

⁷⁹ Cass, ““Psst! Señor, Feelthy Religious Pictures, Cheap?””

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Vanderhorst, interview.

⁸² Adams, “Curriculum Vitae.”

an early eighteenth century *Birth of the Virgin* by Mexican painter Francisco de Leon; a late seventeenth century *Education of the Virgin* attributed to the Columbian painter Gregorio Vasquez de Arce y Ceballos which included a certificate of authenticity from the Venezuelan dealer from whom Adams bought the painting; an *Ecce Homo*, circa 1700, from the Circle of Sanchez de Medina, a painter who was active in Spain and Cusco; an eighteenth century *Saint Nicholas of Myra* from the Cusco school; and two paintings from Bolivia: *The Coronation of the Virgin* from the early eighteenth century and a late seventeenth century *Archangel Arcabucero* by the Master of Calamarca. Ultimately, Adams grossed only \$39,100 at auction from a collection he certainly believed was worth a great deal more.

In some ways, this may actually have been an example of the art market working properly. Considering the lack of any real provenance and Adams' unsupervised restoration work, no museum or knowledgeable collector would have been comfortable purchasing any of the works from the Adams collection. Yet despite the poor performance at auction, Adams did eventually manage to sell off the majority of his collection. According to Adams' daughter, the auction catalog itself proved to be an excellent advertisement, and many private individuals approached him after the sale to inquire about buying specific works of art. For this reason, the collection has been essentially untraceable since 1980.

Dotty Vanderhorst, Adams' daughter, says that he has kept just a couple of low-value but favored pieces with him over the years, and they remain in his retirement home. When I spoke with her in 2016, Dr. Adams was in his late 80s and dealing with

the effects of age-related dementia, so Vanderhorst felt it best that I not talk to him or his wife directly. The family has slides of his collection, however, and trunks of related materials, so perhaps one day a few of the pieces might be reunited or better studied. Despite the somewhat unfortunate ways in which Dr. Adams went about collecting Colonial Latin American art and preserving it, his collection was the most prominent of its kind in the 1970s. Adams championed Colonial Latin American art at a time when people throughout the Americas were ignoring it completely, and he made it as widely available as possible through publications, exhibitions, and auction. Without agreeing with every one of Adams' actions or decisions, one cannot escape the fact that his efforts played a significant role in the history of this type of art in U.S. museums.

Civil Rights and Civil Wars

For the majority of this chapter, I have focused on the two individual collectors who made the largest impact on exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. However, there were also significant political and economic forces at play in these decades that affected the collection and display of Latin American art objects. African Americans, Mexican Americans (Chicanos), Native Americans, and women were among the larger groups who struggled for visibility and increased civil rights during these decades. Galvanized by the pressures of a long and unpopular war in Vietnam, a rapidly diversifying population, an increase of women in the workforce, the introduction of various ethnic studies

programs in universities, and an enormous surge of young people (the post-WWII “Baby Boom”), more American citizens became interested in foreign cultures and their cultural production than ever before. Though this still often took the form of exoticism and appropriation, scholars were beginning to see the value in examining periods of history that had long been ignored, like Latin America’s Colonial epoch. Additionally, international groups like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) began to pay more attention to cultural heritage, which in their case cumulated with the “Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970,” a treaty meant to fight the illegal trafficking of cultural objects. The United States government gave its consent to ratify this treaty in 1972, but did not take action until 1983, when Congress adopted just two articles of the original UNESCO document.⁸³ Still, the new law was enough of a deterrent to make some museums and collectors hesitant to add to their collections of Autonomous Mesoamerican and Andean artifacts (in addition to antiquities from other lands). Consequently, the less expensive and less restricted Colonial arts of Latin America became more popular, as evidenced by the increase in the number of auctions of this material held in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Additionally, although American society was rapidly changing, the demographic and social pressures within the country took a back seat to powerful

⁸³ Archaeological Institute of America, “United States Implementation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention: The Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act,” accessed July 29, 2017, https://www.archaeological.org/pdfs/sitepreservation/CPAC_OverviewAIA.pdf.

external political and economic forces. As explained earlier, when the United States rapidly and somewhat abruptly switched its foreign policy from combatting far-right fascism to fighting far-left communism in the mid-1940s, the Good Neighbor policy – with its relatively sincere interest in promoting hemispheric unity – fell off the national radar. Thus, the U.S. left Latin America more or less to its own devices throughout the 1950s as it commenced the Cold War with Soviet Russia. The conflict with the U.S.S.R. and the rise of McCarthyism ensured that many Americans were rabidly anti-communist by the end of this decade. The issue was exacerbated by the Cuban Revolution of 1959, when, for the first time, there was an explicitly communist government in the American Hemisphere, and one that was frighteningly close to the United States. This led, of course, to the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and a couple of very close calls with regards to mutual nuclear annihilation. Wary of further communist incursions into the Americas, president John F. Kennedy said “Every resource at our command [must be used] to prevent the establishment of another Cuba in this hemisphere.”⁸⁴ By this, he meant that the United States would use any means necessary, legal or illegal, to prevent communism from becoming the dominant political practice in any other Latin American nation. What this looked like in practice, was that any country that demonstrated left-leaning policies – even relatively mild and popular social support programs such as promoting education or distributing food – would suddenly find itself faced with

⁸⁴ Brian Loveman, *No Higher Law: American Foreign Policy and the Western Hemisphere Since 1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 294.

right-wing, guerilla rebels who were backed and armed by the United States government. In just four years, nine Latin American countries were overthrown by U.S.-supported coups and saw their governments replaced by military dictators: El Salvador and Ecuador (1961), Argentina and Peru (1962), Guatemala, Ecuador [again], Dominican Republic, and Honduras (1963), and Brazil and Bolivia (1964).

As is usually the case, however, this U.S. interference was not simply a matter of clashing ideologies. Although the United States claimed self-defense against communism as its rationale for acting in this way (as well as for entering into conflicts in Korea and Southeast Asia), there were also capitalistic motivations, mostly in regards to oil.

More Problems with Petrol

In October 1973, Egypt and Syria invaded Israel in a surprise attack called the Yom Kippur war, which was an extension of the larger Arab-Israeli conflict. The United States supported Israel in the hostilities by supplying weapons and supplies, while the Soviet Union backed the Arab nations. Although the skirmish lasted only three weeks, with Israel the victor, the repercussions were severe. The Arab members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) placed an embargo on sending oil to the United States or any other nation that sided with Israel during the war, including Great Britain, Canada, Japan, and the Netherlands. This action was also meant as punishment to the West for artificially suppressing the price of imported crude oil, yet charging exorbitant amounts for basic exports to the Middle

East, like wheat and sugar.⁸⁵ Additionally, in 1971, the United States and Great Britain changed their respective currencies to “float” rather than adhere to the gold standard. This caused a depreciation of the dollar, and therefore of oil prices, because the price of oil was tied to the dollar. All of these concerns helped contribute to Arab anger toward the West generally, but largely toward the United States.

The U.S. government, facing plummeting reserves of oil and an embargo from the Middle East, as well as recession and an irate populace, turned its eyes once more to Latin America. Venezuela and Ecuador were member nations of OPEC and therefore not particularly inclined to aid the United States, but in 1974, large new deposits of petroleum were discovered in Mexico.⁸⁶ At the time, Mexico was itself suffering from economic recession, a devalued *peso*, and massive foreign debt, much of which it owed to the United States.⁸⁷ The discovery of oil in Mexico therefore seemed to solve the problems of both nations; if Mexico could be convinced to sell its oil below OPEC’s prices, then the United States could bypass the embargo and break the monopoly that kept oil prices “high,” and Mexico could use the foreign investments and income to stabilize its troubled economy.⁸⁸ The Mexican government

⁸⁵ William D. Smith, “Price Quadruples for Iran Crude Oil,” *The New York Times*, December 12, 1973, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/12/12/archives/price-quadruples-for-iran-crude-oil-dismayed-purchasers-fear-a-new.html>.

⁸⁶ Shifra M. Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 270.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Here, I do not purport that oil was overpriced by OPEC, only that the U.S. government, backed by American oil and automotive corporations, believed that it was.

was torn on the issue.

In order to prod them into cooperating, the U.S. pulled from its successful strategies of the 1930s and 1940s and initiated a series of cultural events, the most visible being the *Mexico Today* symposium of 1978. It consisted of lectures and seminars held in major cities like Washington D.C. and New York, and its sponsors included various manifestations of the U.S. and Mexican governments, such as the Smithsonian Institute, the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York, and the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities on the American side, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno on the Mexican side.⁸⁹ Following the design of earlier Good Neighbor efforts, the *Mexico Today* symposium generated associated art exhibits, which opened in New York, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta in September/October 1978.⁹⁰ Over the course of a year, they also traveled to Detroit, San Antonio, and throughout California. These exhibits included costumes, Autonomous art, “folk” art, textiles, Colonial art, prints and posters of National art, and architectural photographs. Like so many other exhibitions of Mexican art, these shows purported to show an encapsulated version of all of Mexican history.

However, what is most interesting is not necessarily what was included in these exhibitions, but what was excluded. None of the *Mexico Today* exhibits contained

⁸⁹ Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas*, 272. The Center for Inter-American Relations of New York was itself sponsored by David Rockefeller, Nelson’s younger brother. A controversial and fairly short-lived institution founded in 1965, it was absorbed into the Americas Society in 1985.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

works by *Los Tres Grandes* (Rivera, Siqueiros, and Orozco), the most popular and famous twentieth-century artists from either side of the border, all of whom were communists or socialists. Art historian Shifra Goldman argues that the reason for this exclusion was the “laundering” of modern Mexican art from its Nationalist and Nativist roots. By including mostly abstract Universalist works in the exhibition, she suggests that the American public’s view of Mexican art was unfairly distorted on behalf of the petroleum industry and anti-communist ideology.⁹¹ Taking Goldman’s argument to its next logical conclusion, one must assume that the inclusion of Autonomous and Colonial Mexican art in these exhibits must have served to support the status quo of empire and capitalism or else it, too, would have been excluded. As she writes, “dead cultures are always ‘safer’ than living ones; even Porfirio Diaz exalted the ancient Indian cultures to the detriment of living Indians.”⁹²

The inroads of Mexican oil into the art world continued in 1978 with the *Treasures of Mexico* show. Armand Hammer, an oil magnate who headed the Occidental Petroleum Corporation and acted as a trustee for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), decided to enter the realm of “cultural diplomacy” by bringing an exhibition of art treasures from Mexico to the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum, his own Hammer Galleries in New York, and LACMA.⁹³ In his introduction to the exhibit catalog, though Hammer was quick to point out “how

⁹¹ Ibid., 273–74.

⁹² Ibid., 274.

⁹³ Ibid.

useful the new Mexican gas and oil discoveries could prove to the United States,” the rationale he gave for his support was not to bolster the Mexican oil industry, but to share Mexican culture. “Never before have the American people been able to see an exhibition surveying the art of Mexico from its beginnings in Prehistory to the monumental work of *Los Tres Grandes* – Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros – gathered from the National Museums of Mexico.”⁹⁴ Although not rejected from this exhibition as they had been from *Mexico Today*, and in fact representing almost all of the works in the exhibit from the twentieth century, the three muralists were forcibly divorced from their communist beliefs in the catalog which speaks of their social activism more as a joint project for discovering Mexico’s national identity.⁹⁵ One imagines their inclusion in the show is due to their famous names and the likelihood that the objects were chosen by curators at the Mexican museums which lent the artworks to Hammer.

At any rate, Hammer was obviously quite wrong about the American people never having seen a comprehensive exhibition of Mexican art prior to 1978. Apart from the enormous *Twenty Centuries* exhibit in New York City in 1940, there had been another comprehensive exhibition of Mexican art at LACMA in 1963, just fifteen years prior to *Treasures of Mexico*. That show was entitled *Master Works of Mexican Art From Pre-Columbian Times to the Present* and Los Angeles was its final stop after a five-year tour of the European capitals. Like its predecessor and its

⁹⁴ Ibid., 274; Olga Hammer and Jeanne D’Andrea, eds., *Treasures of Mexico from the Mexican National Museums* (Los Angeles, CA: The Armand Hammer Foundation, 1978), 7.

⁹⁵ Hammer and D’Andrea, *Treasures of Mexico from the Mexican National Museums*, 168–69.

successor, *Master Works of Mexican Art* surveyed the three major eras of Mexican art history, included works from *Los Tres Grandes*, and borrowed extensively from Mexico's National Museums with its government's permission. Amusingly, Richard F. Brown, the Director of LACMA in 1963 writes in his Foreword to the show's catalog that "it would be the first big and truly *complete* survey of the arts of Mexico, covering all periods, ever seen in the United States."⁹⁶ [emphasis in original] Actor Vincent Price who narrated the show's audio guide agreed, claiming it was "the greatest single show of Mexican art that would ever be seen," despite having loaned part of his own collection to MoMA for *Twenty Centuries* a couple of decades earlier.⁹⁷ Although a pattern begins to emerge of a major comprehensive Mexican art show in the U.S. once every generation or so (there would be another in 1990), each exhibit proclaimed itself the first of its kind or uniquely complete.

Another thing all three exhibits (*Twenty Centuries*, *Master Works*, and *Treasures of Mexico*) have in common is that they were each assembled in approximately six months. While most museum exhibitions take years of planning and research, major shows featuring Mexican art tended to be thrown together quickly. One must assume the reason for this is that they were largely being used as political and economic propaganda rather than undergoing the usual rigorous academic processes involved in more traditional museum fare. As Megan O'Neil, an

⁹⁶ Fernando Gamboa, *Master Works of Mexican Art From Pre-Columbian Times to the Present* (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1963).

⁹⁷ Megan O'Neil, "Master Works of Mexican Art in Los Angeles, 1963–1964 | Unframed," *LACMA Unframed*, October 11, 2017, <https://unframed.lacma.org/2017/10/11/master-works-mexican-art-los-angeles-1963%E2%80%931964>.

Associate Curator in the Art of the Ancient Americas at LACMA writes, “The fact that both presidents planned to visit the exhibition indicates it was seen as noteworthy for U.S.-Mexico diplomacy.”⁹⁸ This emphasis on politics does the art no favors, of course, and hasty planning limits the amount of interpretation possible. All of the catalogs are riddled with typos and filled with black-and-white photos to take up space. The catalog for *Master Works of Mexican Art* comes off a little better as it toured Europe for several years, so presumably there was more material to work with, but there is a marked difference between the two hundred and seventeen pages of the book dedicated to the various Autonomous civilizations of Mexico, with detailed descriptions of each object, and the fourteen pages of Colonial art or twenty-three pages of National art that list nothing but the most basic information about each work.

While *Master Works of Mexican Art* and *Treasures of Mexico* were both organized into roughly the same four categories as *Twenty Centuries* (Autonomous, Colonial, National, and Folk Art), they did not have separate curators for each section. This meant that these shows were marginally more cohesive than *Twenty Centuries*, but also much more unbalanced in terms of their offerings. Both of the LACMA exhibitions contained substantially more Autonomous art than anything else, leading Los Angeles Times art critic William Wilson to write, “We suffer both culture shock and the unfortunate circumstance of an exhibition where the *finale*

⁹⁸ Ibid.

comes first.”⁹⁹ [emphasis in original] Nor were the greater ramifications of *Treasures of Mexico* lost on Wilson.

[The show] arrived here freighted with cultural significance since this geography contains the largest concentration of Mexican-inherited people outside Mexico City. The exhibition’s political overtones are so weighty that Gov. Jerry Brown and his parents attended the opening along with the mother and two sisters of Mexico’s President, López Portillo. The air was heavy with implications, ranging from the importance of the Mexican-American vote to international negotiations over Mexican oil.¹⁰⁰

Although this chapter ends arbitrarily in 1979, the issues of Mexican oil and the incursions of major international conglomerates into art museums continue in earnest into the 1980s and ‘90s.

A New Professionalism

When one removes the single-collector vanity exhibits and political propaganda shows from the list of Colonial Latin American art exhibitions of the 1960s and ‘70s, only a handful remain. Most of these were quite small, drawing from local collectors and established institutional collections in the United States, and producing catalogs of just a few pages. The show that remains is *Spain and New Spain*, which ran from February 15 - April 30, 1979 at the Art Museum of South Texas in Corpus Christi. The brainchild of the museum’s Director, Cathleen Gallander, in 1976, the exhibition was guest curated by Marcus Burke and Linda Bantel, graduate students and

⁹⁹ William Wilson, “Mexico ‘Treasures’: A Panoramic Southern Exposure,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1978.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

colleagues who had been working at the Met on Spanish art, and National (Modern) American and Latin American art respectively.¹⁰¹ Bantel and Burke traveled the country looking for collections of Colonial Latin American art and finding them in the now well established centers: Philadelphia, Davenport, New Mexico, Denver, and Colorado Springs. They borrowed Spanish art from the Met, Hartford, and Texas.¹⁰² Gallander's concept for the exhibition was not "to denigrate the indigenous elements in Mexican art," but to examine the Spanish sources of Mexican painting.¹⁰³ It was designed as a major part of the institution's U.S. bicentennial efforts, because, "In an area where over half of the population is of Spanish origin, AMST felt a special calling to explore and expose the cultural heritage of our region."¹⁰⁴ One might debate the idea that half of the population of southern Texas is of "Spanish" origin, as "Mexican" or "Latin American" might be more technically correct. The overtly religious language surrounding "a special calling," and the latent threat in the phrasing of "expose the cultural heritage of our region," are also both uncomfortable when viewed through a twenty-first century lens.

Burke is proud of the exhibition for several reasons. He believes it was the first show to overtly compare Colonial Latin American art to its European models. It was

¹⁰¹ Marcus Burke, "Re: Exhibits of Colonial Latin American Art," Email. September 19, 2016.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Taylor, "Wonderful Things," 140–41.

¹⁰⁴ "Spain and New Spain > Art Museum of South Texas," accessed September 23, 2017, <http://www.artmuseumofsouthtexas.org/View/ExhibitDetails/tabid/164/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/606/Spain-and-New-Spain.aspx>.

not, as several shows, including the Freyer exhibits and an exhibit titled *Imágenes Hispanoamericanas* that was produced in Tucson in 1976 did the same, but at the time that information would have been quite difficult to attain. More important was the central thesis to the exhibition, namely that the Colonial Latin American schools of art “were parallel developments and not simply derivative.”¹⁰⁵ In this, Burke and Bantel were anticipating and initiating the scholarship in the field. Unfortunately, in July of 1979, southern Texas was hit by Tropical Storm Claudette. Although it was a relatively minor storm, it brought record amounts of rain, up to an astonishing forty-two inches in twenty-four hours in some places along the southeast Texas coast. The warehouse that contained all of the remaining copies of the *Spain and New Spain* catalog was hit by the storm and much of the edition was destroyed.¹⁰⁶ For this reason, the book had a narrower distribution than had been originally planned. In a personal email, Marcus Burke wrote, “I think this set back the good effect it might have had on art history in the US [sic] had it been more widely read,” and it is entirely possible that he is correct. In 1941, Elizabeth Wilder Weismann called for pioneers in the field of Colonial Latin American art history.¹⁰⁷ By 1975, so few scholars had taken her up on the challenge that she had to issue it again.¹⁰⁸ This would change in the next two decades, but the *Spain and New Spain* catalog might

¹⁰⁵ Burke, “Re: Exhibits of Colonial Latin American Art.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth Wilder, “Call for Pioneers,” *College Art Journal* 1, no. 1 (1941): 6–9.

¹⁰⁸ Bantel and Burke, *Spain and New Spain: Mexican Colonial Arts in Their European Context*, 16.

have jump-started the process a little bit had it been more widely distributed.

Still, as Burke says, “we did some good.”¹⁰⁹ He tells a story of training several docents to lead tours of the exhibition. It was a mixed group of Anglo and Latina women, all of whom were fairly wealthy. While discussing the *Adoration of the Magi* by Baltasar de Echave Rioja, Burke went over its iconography and its relationship to Peter Paul Rubens’ Baroque style before talking about Echave Rioja’s studio in Mexico City. At this point, one of the Anglo women reportedly blurted, “You mean a *Mexican* painted that?!”¹¹⁰ The painting caused the woman to confront her inherited racist ideas and according to Burke she went on to become a well-informed admirer of Mexican art.

This is the comforting idea; that regardless of the exhibit’s ulterior motives or agenda, its behind-the-scenes negotiations and input from a wide variety of players, it still has the power to reach people and educate them. Goldman writes of the *Mexico Today* exhibits that, “There is no question that thousands of persons in the United States... benefitted on a very human and pleasurable level from the national exhibitions of modern and contemporary Mexican art.”¹¹¹ The downside occurs when an audience receives a “distorted view of Mexican cultural reality,” and when Mexican cultural production becomes a type of exotica presented once every fifteen or twenty years, but not comparable to the steady and well-produced exhibitions of

¹⁰⁹ Burke, “Re: Exhibits of Colonial Latin American Art.”

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas*, 281.

North American or European art.¹¹² The scene shifts, however, in the following decades. Although there is more corporate involvement in Colonial Latin American art exhibitions than ever before, the exhibits themselves become more nuanced, more professional, and much more controversial.

¹¹² Ibid.

1980-1999: CULTURE FOR SALE

“Multinational corporations do control. They control the politicians. They control the media. They control the pattern of consumption, entertainment, thinking.”

- Jerry Brown, Governor of California (1938-)

After almost two decades of lackluster American leaders, the charismatic Ronald Regan was elected President of the United States in 1980, signaling a change in U.S. politics. He held the position for two full terms and was succeeded by his Vice-President, George H. W. Bush. This means that for more than a decade, the government was controlled by conservatives who implemented widespread tax cuts, increased spending on the military, decreased spending on social services, and deregulated the marketplace in order to control the excessive inflation of the late '70s. Reganomics was largely based on trickle-down theory, which held that decreasing taxes and regulations, especially on corporations, was the best way to stimulate economic growth, since the increased profits would supposedly “trickle down” to other sectors, resulting in greater employment, home ownership, and other domestic spending, which would itself lead to further corporate growth in a feedback loop that would run ad infinitum. Of course, the economy is too complex to function infinitely in this way, and subject to global forces that are outside of U.S. control, but in the decade of excess, no one benefitted more than corporations.

With great wealth comes great power, which multinationals were quick to abuse. Freed from most government oversight, companies had implicit permission to exploit the environment, their employees, and consumers. Wages stagnated (and, in

fact, have yet to recover), labor standards fell, and air pollution became severe enough to punch a hole in the Earth's ozone layer. It did not take long for corporations to realize that in addition to their record earnings, they were accruing public relations nightmares, as well. To clean up their image, many companies turned to charity work, and many of the targets of their *generosity* were museums. Exhibitions were highly visible, not generally controversial, did not require long-term financial support, and most people agreed that they were important. The rise of corporate funding for exhibitions at a time when government spending on museums was falling, partially led to the development of blockbuster exhibitions: huge traveling shows with mass appeal. At the same time, many multinationals began building their own museums, including tech giant IBM and banking conglomerate Wells Fargo. The Disney company took this a step further by building EPCOT Center: an entire theme park of museums. By blending the lines between reality and fantasy, Disney discovered that it had the power to create and capitalize on culture.

The "greed is good" era eventually gave way to the political correctness and multiculturalism of the 1990s. The decade began in a neon-colored haze of recession, debates over the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a contentious presidential race, and the widespread rejection of a national holiday devoted to Christopher Columbus. It ended with a strong economy, nationwide environmental protection efforts, and a stable political system. In the academy, there was an increased interest in cultural difference, and greater numbers of professional scholars being produced who embraced the epistemological shift to postmodernity and

indigeneity. Colonial Latin American art history was no exception, and scholarship in the field largely turned toward Indigenous contributions to Colonial art. By the dawn of the new millennium, all of these trends started to merge, and corporations and scholars learned to work together. However, the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s was not so seamless. The transition from individual collector shows to exhibitions bankrolled by major international corporations with specific agendas begins somewhat abruptly in 1980 with the Mexican bank, Banamex.

Banking on Art

Founded in 1884, when Banco Nacional Mexicano and Banco Mercantil Mexicano merged, Banamex is now the second largest bank in Mexico.¹ In 1971 they formed a non-profit subsidiary, Fomento Cultural Banamex (FCB), to take over the conservation and administration of Banamex's corporate collection of Mexican art.² For much of the '70s, FCB focused its efforts on conserving Colonial buildings; purchasing Colonial, National, and "folk" art; and organizing exhibitions of its growing collection. Then, in 1979, FCB put together *Images of Mexico*, a travelling exhibit of paintings and drawings from their collection, sending it to New York. Purporting to offer an "artistic perspective" on Mexican art from the Autonomous era to the contemporary moment, the show featured 148 paintings and drawings from the

¹ Short for the **Banco Nacional de México**; it has used many variations of this name over the years.

² Mary K. Coffey, "Marketing Mexico's Great Masters," in *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters*, ed. Andrew Grant Wood and Dina Berger, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2010), 277.

eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, and fifteen Autonomous objects lent by painter José Chávez Morado and his wife Olga Costa. This was a far cry from the five thousand objects that the *Twenty Centuries* show brought to New York in 1940.

Banamex had been the first Latin American bank to open a branch in New York City, so ostensibly the 1979 exhibit was meant “as a token of... appreciation for fifty years of exceptional and warm hospitality extended by New York to the Banamex Group.”³ However, the bank seems to have had other motives as well. In the catalog, FCB co-opts the language and purpose of government-sponsored exhibitions from decades earlier, claiming that *Images of Mexico* was intended to “bring about a deeper perception of Mexico’s artistic wealth, and consequently of the sensitivity of its people,” thus engendering a “transcendental – i.e., spiritual – relationship” between the two nations.⁴ Using rhetoric that might easily have come from a Good Neighbor exhibition (though updated for the hippie generation), this statement suggests that Banamex was intent on taking over the reins of cultural diplomacy from the Mexican government while it expanded its reach in the United States.

By June 1980, Banamex acquired a controlling interest in two banks in California: the Mexican American Bank and the Community Bank of San Jose, both of which served Spanish-speaking populations.⁵ The two banks were merged to form

³ Fomento Cultural Banamex, *Images of Mexico: An Artistic Perspective from the Pre-Columbian Era to Modernism* (New York: Fomento Cultural Banamex, 1979), 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas*, 277.

the California Commerce Bank under the Banamex umbrella.⁶ To celebrate their further expansion into the United States, the company moved *Images of Mexico* from New York City to California, touring it in San Diego, San Jose, and Los Angeles, where it was not particularly well received.⁷ Suzanne Muchnic, a critic with the Los Angeles Times, said she would have been less skeptical of Banamex's motives if the exhibition period had not coincided with the bank's expansion in California.⁸ She also complained that the show was too ambitious, and padded with weak examples and tenuous links.

The 20th-Century section is laden with poor works by lesser artists and disappointing efforts by some major ones. (Diego Rivera never looked worse.) The pre-Columbian portion, poorly displayed in a distant room, contains token coverage of early sculpture in 15 pieces borrowed from another collection. All of which tends to detract from an abundant selection of eighteenth- and 19th-Century paintings. Like an aging gentleman addicted to rich desserts, the show is fat around the middle and stringy at the ends.⁹

Clearly, Americans were less willing to accept art exhibitions as cultural diplomacy when they were obvious attempts to progress capital interests rather than political interests. This did not mean that corporations stopped trying, however; it only meant that they began to use subtler means. The Disney corporation, for example, combined massive investments in amusement park attractions, World's Fair displays, television,

⁶ California Commerce Bank was later renamed Banamex USA, but after money laundering allegations and a buyout of Banamex by Citigroup, the bank was essentially dissolved. Its branches now operate under the Citibank brand.

⁷ Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas*, 277.

⁸ Suzanne Muchnic, "Plus, Minus in Mexican Exhibition," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1980.

⁹ *Ibid.*

film, and museum-style exhibitions in order to influence American conceptions of foreign cultures. All of these elements must be explored in order to illuminate Disney's attempts to showcase Mexican art and culture for profit, and the outsized effects the company has had on American perceptions of Latin America.

Mickey Mouse's Mexico

Disney has always been notoriously reticent about discussing its business dealings, and its corporate archives are completely off-limits to scholars. Thus it has been left to scores of interested amateur historians to crowd-source and document the company's history on blogs like Yesterland and Progress City U.S.A.¹⁰ One such Disneyphile is R.A. Pedersen, who wrote *The EPCOT Explorer's Encyclopedia: A Guide to Walt Disney's Greatest Theme Park* in 2012. Although the book does not adhere to the usual academic standards that one would expect of a scholarly work, it is as well sourced as possible, given Disney's archival policies, and relies on the recollections of many individuals. With few alternatives, much of what follows in this section relies on Pedersen's research, my own memories of visits to the park in the 1990s, and vacationers' home movies from the period that have been archived on YouTube.

That said, scholars have devoted rivers of ink to analyses of the Walt Disney Corporation's unique and all-encompassing brand of faux authenticity, but nowhere is

¹⁰ "Yesterland - Disneyland History & Other Disney Park History," accessed March 18, 2018, <http://www.yesterland.com/>; "Progress City, U.S.A.," *Progress City, U.S.A.*, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://progresscityusa.com/>.

it more obvious than in the Disney theme parks, which were originally designed to capture a sanitized version of the small-town America that never was.¹¹ Given the wild success of Disneyland in Anaheim, California, which opened in 1955, Walt Disney felt the next logical step was not just to reflect what he saw as the ideal version of the American heartland, but to actually construct the perfect town with all of the modern amenities that science was promising the post-war American public. The town was to be called EPCOT, an acronym for the Experimental Prototype Community (or City) of Tomorrow, and it was intended to be a constantly evolving showcase of American ingenuity. From its massive infrastructure to the smallest kitchen appliance, every amenity was to be designed and integrated into daily life for the carefully vetted few allowed to live there. Seen through contemporary eyes, this utopian vision of the modernized company town blurs into Orwellian distrust and suspicion, but at the time, many would have welcomed a seemingly safe refuge from the pressures of the Cold War and the upsets of the Civil Rights movements: a curated, convenient, middle-class, white paradise.

Instead, with the death of Walt Disney in 1966, this vision was shelved and the Disney corporation focused on opening the Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Florida (1971). Eleven years later, EPCOT opened next door, but in a radically different form to the one that Walt Disney imagined. Rather than a living community, EPCOT was

¹¹ See especially Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*, Critical Perspectives on the Past (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Steve Nelson, "Walt Disney's EPCOT and the World's Fair Performance Tradition," *The Drama Review: TDR* 30, no. 4 (1986): 106–46; Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*, Institutional Structures of Feeling (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); Corinne A. Kratz and Ivan Karp, "Wonder and Worth: Disney Museums in World Showcase," *Museum Anthropology* 17, no. 3 (1993): 32–42.

reimagined as a permanent World's Fair with two major sections: Future World and the World Showcase. Future World, which Ramona Fernandez calls a "teaching machine for corporate capitalism," occupies the front half of the park.¹² The pavilions here, sponsored by international corporate giants like Exxon, Kraft, Nestle, Kodak, Motorola, GE, Chevrolet, Coca-Cola, and dozens of others, feature "new" and interactive technologies in telecommunications, energy, agriculture, transportation, waste management, robotics, and more. Many of these concepts are presented in the form of an "educational" dark ride, an indoor adventure that takes place on slow-moving track vehicles that carry visitors through a specific series of environments and experiences, and supposedly teaches them something about history or humanity's potential.

The rear portion of EPCOT houses the World Showcase with pavilions representing eleven nations (Canada, England, France, Germany, Norway, Italy, the United States, China, Japan, Mexico, and Morocco) spread around the perimeter of an artificial lagoon. Each country is delineated by unique architecture, dining options, and specific entertainments: mostly live shows and travelogue films meant to encourage tourism. As an additional nod to authenticity, attractive young people from each nation are hired every year on Q1 visas to dress in the Disney version of their national costume and work in the retail shops and shows. Despite their apparent differences, the World Showcase and Future World pavilions at EPCOT both stem

¹² Ramona Fernandez, "Pachuco Mickey," in *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* (Indiana University Press, 1995), 237.

directly from the World's Fair tradition, the aim of which was to package foreign cultures and new technologies as entertainment for a middle-class American audience, and reinforce ideas of American superiority and exceptionalism.¹³

The Mexico pavilion in the World Showcase opened with the park in 1982. When one approaches the entrance to the World Showcase, Mexico is the first country that visitors encounter if they choose to go left around the lagoon in a clockwise fashion, as roughly two-thirds of guests do.¹⁴ The walk to the pavilion features a number of tropical flowers and plants that are meant to evoke a wild, exotic jungle, in stark contrast to the carefully manicured gardens that dominate the rest of EPCOT. In the midst of this lush growth is a pastiche Mesoamerican pyramidal structure. Its general form is vaguely similar to one of the steep, narrow pyramids of the Maya city of Uxmal from the Classic period, if it were being used as a façade for a boxy department store. Its external decorations come from other periods and locations, however, including Chac masks from the Post-Classic cities of northern Yucatan, feathered serpent heads like those at Teotihuacan in central Mexico, and a painted stele of the Maya ruler known as Bird Jaguar from Yaxchilan (Figs. 8, 9, 10). This odd mixture foreshadows the even greater confusion of Autonomous Mesoamerican cultures inside the building, but there is a bit of method to the madness. The placement of the stele prevents guests from climbing the pyramid, and

¹³ Nelson, "Walt Disney's EPCOT and the World's Fair Performance Tradition," 106.

¹⁴ R.A. Pedersen, *The EPCOT Explorer's Encyclopedia: A Guide to Walt Disney World's Greatest Theme Park* (Epcyclopedia Press, 2012), Kindle edition. Chapter 16. Canada, the United States' other neighbor, is first if one travels in a counter-clockwise direction.

the larger than average “temple” on top of the pyramid houses equipment for running the daily fireworks extravaganza over the lagoon.

Mexico is one of the more popular pavilions in the World Showcase for a couple of reasons. First, while most of the other national pavilions are arranged in courtyard style formations with an open area surrounded by a variety of small shops and restaurants, the Mexico experience takes place entirely within its 85,000 square foot building. This is not a minor consideration when one is walking for miles on a hot, humid Florida afternoon. Second, Mexico is one of only two countries in the World Showcase that contains a ride: a major attraction for amusement park fun-seekers. The ride is in the back of the building, requiring guests to walk through a few significant features before they can embark.

Guests enter the pyramid through doorways on either side of the Bird Jaguar stele and are funneled through a dimly lit art gallery, down sets of curving stairs meant to evoke a Colonial mayoral palace, past the Fuente de la Vida (Fountain of Life), and into the Plaza de los Amigos. It is perpetual twilight inside the pyramid. According to early promotional materials, there were plans for a regular light and sound show that was to tell the story of how the gods stole the gift of music from the sun, but those effects never materialized, leaving the interior dark and architecturally disorienting.¹⁵ Despite being inside a building that is shaped like an Autonomous Maya pyramid, the plaza’s architecture evokes a Colonial market town with ironwork

¹⁵ Ibid. This is not a Mesoamerican myth with which I am familiar and research turns up nothing. It is likely that EPCOT designers invented the tale.

balconies and Spanish tile roofs. However, the visitor's progress through the space is intentionally impeded by carts and kiosks selling inordinately reductive and stereotypical souvenirs, including sombreros, piñatas, maracas, silver jewelry, and taco sauce (Fig. 11). At the far end of the plaza is a restaurant called the San Ángel Inn, an offshoot of a restaurant of the same name that is located in the southwest part of Mexico City. The restaurant's tables are set up adjacent to El Rio del Tiempo (the River of Time) so that diners can enjoy the ambiance of the faux natural setting and watch the ride boats passing by. Additionally, a smaller temple pyramid set in front of a mural of an active volcano serves as a backdrop to both diners and riders (Fig. 12).

Adjacent to the San Ángel Inn is La Cava del Tequila, a bar featuring more than a hundred examples of Mexico's national beverage.¹⁶ The inclusion of a bar featuring hard liquor may seem antithetical to Disney's squeaky clean image, but two of the earliest sponsors of the Mexico pavilion were alcohol producers Cervecería Cuahtémoc-Moctezuma and Tequila Cuervo.¹⁷ The bar was undoubtedly a means of pleasing these sponsors, and the arrangement must have worked well since all eleven World Showcase pavilions sell alcohol: a practice that was otherwise discouraged at Disney World prior to 2017.

The details of any particular sponsorship deal between Disney and the

¹⁶ In Spanish, *cava* means wine cellar and *cueva* means cave. As La Cava del Tequila is primarily a tequila bar and not a wine cellar, this may be a translation error or an attempt at language play.

¹⁷ Pedersen, *The EPCOT Explorer's Encyclopedia: A Guide to Walt Disney World's Greatest Theme Park*. Cervecería Cuahtémoc-Moctezuma also established the now defunct Museo de Monterrey in 1977, one of the few private art museums in Mexico.

corporations and governments that paid for the World Showcase pavilions will likely never be known. However, some facts about other pavilions have since become public knowledge, and they may suggest similar arrangements for the Mexico pavilion. First, the Morocco area, which opened two years after the original nine pavilions, is the only pavilion that is directly sponsored by its government.¹⁸ There are rumors that Disney designers originally intended for all of the pavilions to be funded by their respective nations, as they would likely be during a World's Fair, which may be why most of the original pavilions represent wealthy countries. Yet the countries they contacted were not interested in investing roughly \$10-30 million dollars with Disney when there was no evidence of returns. Later, India (1986), Turkey (1988), and South Korea (2002) approached the Disney corporation to request the addition of their nations to the World Showcase, but they were turned away.¹⁹ Disney told Turkey that they were not looking to grow the World Showcase in 1988 and informed South Korea that they did not believe their pavilion would be popular enough to justify its expense; there is no indication as to why India was rejected.²⁰

Regardless, when the chosen countries were disinclined to fund their World Showcase counterparts, EPCOT designers turned to the only other sector with sufficient capital: corporations. The arrangements were not as straightforward, though. The only pavilion for which many of the funding arrangements were made

¹⁸ Ibid., chapter 23.

¹⁹ Ibid., chapter 27.

²⁰ Ibid., chapter 27.

public is Norway, which opened in 1988. In that case, the pavilion was originally designed to represent Scandinavia in general, but Denmark and Sweden pulled out of the project.²¹ There were still interested Norwegian investors, however, so they formed a funding entity known as NorShow (the Norwegian Showcase USA A/S), which consisted of eleven Norwegian companies and the Norwegian state.²² It seems that the state offered \$2 million in support plus an additional \$8 million in loan financing, while the remaining \$22 million came from corporate sponsors and Disney itself. The contract stated that the first \$3.2 million in profits from the pavilion were to be the property of NorShow while Disney would take the next \$400,000. After that, profits were to be split 60/40 respectively. It is unclear how profitable the venture was, but in 1992, the investors sold their stake back to the Disney Corporation, so it may not have met their expectations. However, the Norwegian government continued sending \$200,000 every year because they believed that a pavilion which received more annual visitors than the total population of Norway itself was good for promoting tourism. After ten years of this, they stopped their support and full ownership of the pavilion reverted to the Disney corporation in 2002. Given this funding arrangement for the Norway pavilion, indications that the Mexican pavilion was partially supported by at least two alcohol producers, and the evidence offered in earlier chapters that the Mexican state often funded projects in the United

²¹ However, the Scandinavia pavilion got far enough along in the process that one Danish building was actually constructed. It was later converted into restrooms.

²² Pedersen, *The EPCOT Explorer's Encyclopedia: A Guide to Walt Disney World's Greatest Theme Park.*, chapter 17.

States that were designed to put the country in a good light, it is probable that a similar arrangement of corporate and limited state support was assembled to fund the Mexico pavilion. Thus one might assume that the Mexican government had some input regarding the contents of the pavilion's main attraction: the ride.

Once visitors made their way past the shopping opportunities of the plaza, they were able to join the ride queue located in the far corner of the building. When the pavilion opened in 1982, the ride was called *El Rio del Tiempo* and it was designed to take guests on an eight minute boat tour through the three primary eras of Mexican history: Autonomous, Colonial, and "Modern." After boarding the vehicle, riders glide past the aforementioned temple-pyramid and volcano backdrop to their left and restaurant diners to their right. The pyramid, surrounded by jungle vegetation, obviously plays with the "mysterious" and "exotic" trope that is so common to portrayals of Mexico in the U.S. The last visual in this room is a scale replica of an Olmec colossal head which decorates the entrance to a cave. The visitors' boat enters the cave, floating past dull and worn images that resemble the murals of the Maya city of Bonampak. As the ride progresses, the mural's colors become brighter and they appear whole and freshly painted, giving the guest a sense that they have traveled back in time to the Autonomous period. At this point, a "Maya high priest" appears and offers a friendly welcome in both English and a dialect of Mayan. Three additional screens set into the walls feature one minute loops of interpretive dance by Ballet Folklórico performers in Mesoamerican costumes. The first video is meant to evoke a theme of the Mesoamerican understanding of nature and science, the second

of mathematics and astronomy, and the third is a metaphorical battle between Quetzalcoatl (the feathered serpent deity) and Tezcatlipoca (a trickster/magician deity), who were central Mexican gods. However, because of the nature of the ride's moving vehicle, it is impossible to watch these videos in their entirety or to interpret their themes with any degree of comprehension. There is an audio track, which tries to explain what the rider is witnessing, but many extant video recordings of the ride prove that the music was much louder than the narration, so it was easily ignored as ambient noise. Surrounding the rear projection screens are replicas of well-known artifacts from various Mesoamerican cultures, including a reclining Toltec chac-mool figure, the Tlaloc vessel from Teotihuacan, and the famous Mexica-Aztec "calendar" stone, which is more properly described as a sun stone. The boat then passes another video featuring "Aztec warriors" and people going about their daily lives in a bustling marketplace. Finally, the Autonomous area ends with a screen over an archway that is difficult for the average viewer to either see properly or understand: an image of Moteuczoma II, the last Autonomous ruler of the Mexica-Aztecs, watching a comet that supposedly portends the imminent end of his empire.²³

Passing under the archway, the ride erases the horrors of the Spanish invasion and colonization to portray the Colonial era as a lovely fiesta. Child-sized animatronic dolls, reminiscent of those in the *It's a Small World!* ride in Disney's Magic Kingdom, are shown singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, and

²³ This leader's name has been spelled in various ways, including Montezuma and Moctezoma. As of early 2018, Moteuczoma is generally agreed to be the most orthographically correct.

batting at a piñata. An unexplained quartet of mariachi skeletons wearing wide sombreros stand on an arched bridge, evoking day of the dead celebrations, but the room is known as the Festival of Children, not Dia de los Muertos. The room is colorful, cheerful, and quickly traversed.

Again erasing any historical unpleasantness that occurred during Mexican Independence or the Mexican Revolution, the third area of the ride intends to express the delights of “modern” Mexico. More rear projection video screens offer scenes of water skiing, cliff diving, swim-up hotel bars, beaches, palm trees, snorkeling, and the *danza de los voladores*, a spectacle of men spinning through the air while tied by their ankles to a tall central pole.²⁴ The multi-media sequence is a tourist board’s dream come to life, which is perplexingly shattered when the final scene of the area features street vendors begging visitors to buy their souvenirs. As the ride vehicle moves forward, the vendors run to the next subsequent monitor to continue offering goods to guests. In one iteration, a man is frustrated when no one will buy his maracas or serapes, so at last he holds up an Autonomous Maya figurine for sale. Thus the third area ends with harassing behavior and illegal black market dealings. It is telling that Disney, a major American corporation, cannot build what is supposed to be a celebration of Mexican culture and heritage without portraying the ordinary people of Mexico as aggressive, annoying, and avaricious.

²⁴ There is a long history of *voladores* as quaint ethnic markers, and a “survival motif” without content. For more information, see Ilona Katzew, “‘Remedo De La Ya Muerta America’: The Construction of Festive Rites in Colonial Mexico,” in *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World* (Los Angeles; New Haven [Conn.]: Los Angeles County Museum of Art ; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011), 151–75.

The final area of the ride takes guests to “Mexico City” and features a carousel of animatronic marionettes in what appear to be early twentieth-century costumes while fireworks sparkle overhead. These figures are full-sized, not the child-sized dolls found earlier in the ride, and many visitors find them disconcerting, describing “nightmarish puppets that scared the be-Jesus [sic] out of many a rider.”²⁵ Beyond the celebratory final room, a corridor displays an enormous map of Mexico with cartoonish drawings of Indigenous peoples in different costumes located in various locations on the map. Curiously, in the Gulf of Mexico is a depiction of a white man’s head that dwarfs the other figures in size. The head is bearded and crowned but it is unclear who or what he is supposed to represent. In this context it feels like a last imperial dig before riders disembark.

El Rio del Tiempo operated for twenty-five years, though its vision of Mexican modernity felt dated long before its major thematic change in 2007. Far from updating the ride, however, it was further entrenched in the past when the ride was revamped as the *Gran Fiesta Tour* featuring The Three Caballeros, animated birds from Disney’s 1944 Good Neighbor film of the same name. The movie is a series of short films meant to showcase Latin America (mostly Mexico and Brazil), linked through the flimsy narrative of Donald Duck receiving gifts for his birthday. In the latter half of the film, Donald Duck, Panchito Pistoles (a rooster dressed as a Mexican Revolutionary), and José Carioca (a Brazilian parrot with a straw hat and cigar) ride a

²⁵ Christian, “El Rio Del Tiempo 1982-2007,” *Crpeoplemover*, May 4, 2007, <http://crpeoplemover.blogspot.com/2007/05/el-rio-del-tiempo-1982-2007.html>.

flying serape around Mexico to take in the sights. However their sightseeing is often disrupted by Donald's libido, as he literally chases down "pretty girls," including dancers in Veracruz and beach bathers in Acapulco. He frequently calls the women "Toots" and attempts to kiss them against their will, reflecting the casual sexism and harassment of the 1940s. Perhaps that was an understandable approach at the time, but to deliberately reuse that trope in a ride attraction in 2007 was not.

The narrative of the revised ride involves a concert in Mexico City where the Three Caballeros are scheduled to perform. However the performance is jeopardized when Donald disappears and his friends must locate him in time for the concert. The rear projection monitors in the ride that had originally been used to showcase interpretive Mesoamerican dances and the touristic sights of Mexico were co-opted to depict Donald Duck attending cultural activities and harassing women while Panchito and José follow behind on the flying serape. Eventually, they must physically drag Donald away from the "girls" at a fiesta and the final room houses a scene of the three birds in animatronic form singing their eponymous tune at the concert.

Apart from the video monitors and the removal of the marionette carousel, the ride is not drastically different from its earlier iteration. It is more brightly lit and the audio track reflects the new narrative, but guests still float through a Mesoamerican themed area, the fiesta of dolls in the "Colonial" area, and through scenes of contemporary Mexico, although some of the original sequences, like the cliff divers, have been reused with new animation placed on top of them. The offensive merchant sequence was fortunately axed and in its place is the fiesta from which the resistant

Donald is forcibly removed. The map was also repainted to eliminate any human figures and includes depictions of the Three Caballeros instead. Ultimately, the ride overhaul feels even less respectful in terms of cultural and gender politics than the already coarse original, and appears more like a practical work-around. The designers were clearly asking themselves how they could “update” the ride inexpensively and decided to use the only animated Disney property to date that even remotely dealt with Mexican culture.

Ten years later, in late 2017, the Disney-owned Pixar Studios released *Coco*, a film centered around Mexico’s Dia de los Muertos celebrations. A tie-in exhibition *‘Remember Me!’ La Celebración del Día de Muertos* opened in the Mexico pavilion’s art gallery at the same time, which was somewhat ironic, as the film’s concept and some of its significant characters were actually inspired by (and for sale in) the same gallery years earlier.²⁶ The director of the film, Lee Unkrich, admits that he got the idea to do the film while viewing the *Animales Fantásticos: Spirits in Wood* exhibit that was on display in the Mexico pavilion from 2000 to 2017. The exhibition featured *alebrijes*, carved and brightly painted wooden figures of animals and animal hybrids from the Oaxaca region of Mexico. Although these “folk art” figures take inspiration from Autonomous forms, they are a very recent practice, dating to the 1930s when a sick piñata maker was inspired by his feverish nightmares. However, it is implied in Unkrich’s film that *alebrijes* are part of an ancient tradition and a crucial

²⁶ Alex Reif, “Without Epcot, There Would Be No ‘Coco,’” *Laughing Place*, August 28, 2017, <https://www.laughingplace.com/w/articles/2017/08/28/without-epcot-no-coco/>.

part of Dia de los Muertos celebrations; they play a critical role in the movie as “spirit guides” for the dead. Though it is possible the director just liked the way they looked, the fact that the Disney corporation has a long-standing agreement with the families involved in *alebrije* production, and sells their figures in Disney theme parks, suggests a much more commercial motivation. Given Disney’s global reach and their omnipresence in the lives of nearly all American families with children, I would not be at all surprised if *alebrijes* do become an important part of Dia de los Muertos celebrations in the near future. Thanks to the Mandela effect (the collective misremembering of a fact or event), people will soon deceive themselves that *alebrijes* have long been a part of their own family traditions, using the film as evidence to invent new memories.

With all this evidence of the Disney Corporation’s dismissive attitudes toward Mexican culture, its early insistence on designing museum-style exhibitions of authentic art objects for the Mexico pavilion’s gallery may seem surprising, but it is actually quite characteristic. “The deliberate blurring of boundaries between reproduction and fake, fiction and fact, fantasy and history is central to Disney World’s experience and appeal.”²⁷ Mike Wallace calls this phenomenon “Disney Realism” and it relies on a veneer of authenticity to prop up its nostalgic fantasies.²⁸ If, in their simulacra of the world, Disney wants to offer experiences that evoke genuine and thus profitable emotions, they need real cultural artifacts as set dressing.

²⁷ Kratz and Karp, “Wonder and Worth: Disney Museums in World Showcase,” 32.

²⁸ Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*.

In the case of EPCOT Center, plans were underway early in the design process to source the authenticity they needed, but only for those pavilions that Americans would find the most foreign: Morocco, China, Japan, Norway, and Mexico.

During EPCOT's design process, Disney sent some of their executives to Mexico City to visit the national museums and discuss the possibility of long-term lending arrangements.²⁹ However, it was evident that the Disney staff people had no knowledge, experience, or particular interest in Autonomous Mexican art, so the National Museum of Anthropology, which had loaned parts of its collection to many U.S. exhibitions over the years, declined the offer, and Mexico's other institutions followed suit. Stymied, Disney executives realized that they would need to hire scholars and museum experts if they wanted to be taken seriously by lenders. So, in 1980, Marty Sklar, head of the Imagineering Department that developed the Disney theme parks and attractions after Walt Disney's death, hired Van Romans, a young professor at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California, who taught exhibition design and museum management. In his twenty-four year career at Disney, Romans eventually became the Vice President for Cultural Affairs, in charge of building relationships between world cultural entities and the Disney Company.³⁰

Around the same time, Sklar read a newspaper article about Reilly Rhodes, the Executive Director of the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, California, who was leaving

²⁹ Reilly Rhodes, "EPCOT CENTER Re. MEXICO," Email. December 20, 2017.

³⁰ Jocelyn Tatum, "Van Romans: A Sense of the Imagination," *Fort Worth Business Press*, February 25, 2015, http://www.fortworthbusiness.com/announcements/van-romans-a-sense-of-the-imagination/article_a4490ef2-bd04-11e4-9030-9f0cf4229a18.html.

to take a position at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA). Aware of the Bowers Museum's strong holdings in Autonomous art, Sklar contacted Rhodes to offer him a job designing the initial exhibition for the Mexico pavilion at EPCOT.³¹ According to Rhodes, he reviewed the extant proposal and told Sklar that they would need to start afresh with a collection that would draw attention and interest.³² He had access to several important collections in the Los Angeles area and eventually suggested that Disney borrow Natalie Wood's collection of Chupicuaro ceramics from the Fowler Museum at UCLA. Not only was it an impressive collection of vessels and figures from approximately 400 BCE, but Rhodes felt that the famous actress's name recognition would make it more accessible to the American public. During the deliberations, one "old timer" from the Imagineering Department reportedly said, "I wonder if Walt would like that."³³ They must have determined that he would, since the deal went through. The exhibition opened with the pavilion in 1982 and received an additional boost in attendance due to the tragic and mysterious death of Natalie Wood the year before. Estimates place the number of people who at least passed through the gallery at about a million per month: far more than could have seen the collection in Los Angeles.

Working on weekends because of his day job at DIA, Rhodes and his team spent three years planning the next exhibition for the Mexico pavilion: *Splendors of*

³¹ Rhodes designed the initial exhibition for the China pavilion, as well.

³² Rhodes, "EPCOT CENTER Re. MEXICO." E-mail.

³³ Ibid.

the Golden Age: Three Centuries of Spanish Colonial Art. On display from 1985-1989, the exhibit contained about four dozen objects that were mostly borrowed from the Denver Art Museum and Waldo Studios, an organization owned by Elisabeth Waldo Dentzel, a musician who was instrumental in reviving Autonomous Mexican musical traditions, and her husband Carl Dentzel, the director of the Southwest Museum of the American Indian.³⁴ While Rhodes worked on securing long-term loan agreements and writing the interpretive text for the labels and catalog, his teammates Joan Adan and Doris Woodward, both Disney employees, coordinated the design and installation work.³⁵

Since Adan and Woodward worked in southern California and many of the artifacts were also coming from California, the *Splendors of the Golden Age* team took an unusual approach to installation. They would not be able to install the show as most museums do by walling off the area until their work was complete because the gallery also serves as the entryway to the rest of the pavilion. Instead, the designers installed the exhibit in a studio in Burbank where Disney filmed the movie *TRON* (1982) and tested the safety features on new park rides. When the installation had been completed to their satisfaction, the exhibition was disassembled, crated, and transported to Florida where it was reinstalled in just a few days, as the pavilion could not be closed for longer.

The show was rather domestic in scope, focusing on items from daily life

³⁴ The Southwest Museum was absorbed by the Autry Museum of the American West in 2003.

³⁵ Rhodes, "EPCOT CENTER Re. MEXICO."

(saddles, spurs, armor, furniture, etc.), and on the wealth of the upper classes. To reinforce the notion of luxury, the walls were painted a rich red, which is often the case for exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art. Jewel tone colors, such as deep reds, forest greens, and royal blues, are common for these exhibits as they draw attention to the vivid coloration of many Colonial paintings and highlight the use of silver and gold in ways that white or pastel backgrounds would not. The exhibition's catalog also reveals Rhodes' rather rosy and Eurocentric approach, with statements like "Spain gave Mexico a sense of artistic identity and personality," and referring to this period as "Mexico's noble and splendid colonial past."³⁶

The centerpiece of the exhibition was a scene beneath the show's title (picked out in gold) that featured three mannequins in reproduction clothing: one represented a sixteenth-century viceroy, another a late seventeenth-century lady, and a third was dressed as an eighteenth-century general. The figures stood in front of authentic pieces of fine furniture, portraits of Mexican generals, and a central portrait of King Carlos III of Spain (Fig. 13). In a very Disneyesque touch, the mannequins were not static, but slowly rotated on their platforms, echoing *El Rio del Tiempo*'s puppet carousel.³⁷ Corinne Kratz and Ivan Karp argue that by associating what *looked* real with what *was* real,

³⁶ Walt Disney, Co., *Splendors of the Golden Age: Three Centuries of Spanish Colonial Art*, 1987.

³⁷ Laura Stewart Dishman, "Passions Of Mexican Conquest Thrive In Epcot Exhibition," *Orlando Sentinel*, December 12, 1985, http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1985-12-12/lifestyle/0340700221_1_disney-world-epcot-epcot-center-mexican-art.

Disney Imagineers intended the audience to experience... two senses of wonder simultaneously but not equally: they had in mind a hierarchy in which the wonder associated with an object is somehow less significant than wonder at the effort and resources invested in production of the whole.³⁸

Thus the Disney Corporation deliberately arranged slippages between authentic and *authentic-looking* objects in order to appropriate the authority of museums and their reputation as purveyors of truth, while simultaneously undermining the “aura” of the genuine objects and displacing their emotional power onto replicas. Even worse, the designers likely did not even realize they were doing it. Rhodes remains proud of his team’s work saying, “The mannequins were alive in their presentation that not even the Smithsonian Institution has ever matched – this exhibition was alive and inspiring in so many ways.”³⁹

Despite any criticisms that one might make, *Splendors of the Golden Age* appears to have been well received. Rhodes believes that visitors were interested in the variety of objects available and had a better understanding of the Colonial period than the Autonomous, although this was likely because in this show, Mexico’s Colonial era was presented simply as a provincial outpouring of the European taste to which Americans are also heirs.⁴⁰ The art critic of the Orlando Sentinel, Laura

³⁸ Kratz and Karp, “Wonder and Worth: Disney Museums in World Showcase,” 41.

³⁹ Rhodes, “EPCOT CENTER Re. MEXICO.” E-mail.

⁴⁰ Rhodes believed that audiences preferred the Colonial exhibit to the earlier Autonomous exhibit, but the next three art exhibits in the Mexico pavilion were *Reign of Glory: A Celebration of Mexico’s Pre-Columbian Arts* [~70 works of art on loan from LACMA, DAM, and the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of Natural History, representing twenty Autonomous cultures from 1000 BCE-1500 CE] (1990-2000), *Animales Fantásticos: Spirits in Wood* (2000-2017), and *Remember Me! La Celebración del Día de Muertos* [a tie in with the movie *Coco*] (2017-).

Stewart Dishman, marveled at the “effective” installation, and seemed astonished by the sophistication of the painted panels and the saintly, gold-plated accessories. To be fair, though, outside of New York City and Los Angeles, few Americans had ever been exposed to Colonial Latin American art. That was to change in 1990.

Selling Out

Other than *Splendors of the Golden Age* and *Images of Mexico*, there were only a handful of other exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art in the 1980s: all of them minor exhibits of Andean material that were produced from small collections or with government assistance like earlier exhibitions. Only one, *Gloria in Excelsis: The Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia*, was in the newer mode, professionally produced, curated by expert scholars, and funded by many corporate sponsors, including two Peruvian banks, two airlines, two mining companies, two tire manufacturers, and construction, chemical manufacture, petroleum, and insurance firms, among others. The show was of moderate size (approximately seventy paintings), ran for four months at the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York, traveled to Austin and Miami, and produced a fairly modest catalog of fewer than one hundred pages that included the most recent findings in the field.⁴¹ Although it is not apparent why the vast majority of Colonial Latin American exhibitions in the 1980s focused on Andean artworks specifically, the reason why the *Gloria in Excelsis*

⁴¹ Center for Inter-American Relations, *Gloria in Excelsis: The Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia* (Center for Inter-American Relations, 1985).

exhibit, and those that followed, needed so many corporate sponsors is because of ever changing external political and economic factors.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the United States suffered a recession caused by the global oil crisis in 1979 and a contractionary monetary policy that the Federal Reserve was using to rein in rampant inflation. This led to high interest rates on borrowed funds and high unemployment. In times of financial crisis in the U.S., federal, state, and local governments tend to examine their budgets and make cuts to “unnecessary” nonprofit cultural institutions like museums. Unable to rely on the government support they had enjoyed in the past, museums at every level turned to alternate means of support: instituting or raising admission fees, opening or enlarging museum shops, and soliciting private and corporate donations. Yet while private donations generally come with significant and costly strings attached, such as keeping the donor’s personal art collection on display in perpetuity, corporations are usually more interested in public relations and branding opportunities: activities that require fewer museum resources. The corollary to that, however, is that corporations only want to fund highly visible activities. Rather than underwriting necessary but dull collections management, administration, or conservation functions, companies want to fund sexy, shiny exhibitions of the world’s “treasures” at large institutions that can guarantee thousands, or hundreds of thousands of visitors, much like the sponsorships of pavilions at EPCOT. Thus began the blockbuster era of museum exhibitions.

Although there were many large exhibits prior, most museum professionals will point to Thomas Hoving, the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as the

father of the museum blockbuster in the United States. During his tenure at the Met, he demanded huge shows like *The Treasures of Tutankhamun* (1976-1979), which saw eight million visitors in New York alone. Suddenly, massive exhibitions, largely funded by corporate sponsors, became necessary for a museum's continued survival. Curator Michael Conforti attributes this to the contrasting functions of the American art museum.⁴² The first function is "to reflect the highest esthetic and critical values of our culture through the preservation and exhibition of those objects we hold in highest esteem."⁴³ However, this is in direct conflict with the museum's "explicit purpose of public education and the implicit one of social improvement – which together can be labeled the museum's civic responsibility."⁴⁴ In other words, this is the object-based museum versus the audience-focused "new" museum debate that has been occurring in the museum field since John Cotton Dana's critique of 1917.⁴⁵ During the Civil Rights era, activists and social critics began attacking art museums as elitist institutions and there was a concomitant push toward greater social responsibility. To prove that the Met was not elitist, Hoving began to advocate for temporary exhibits that had broad popular appeal and would increase audience sizes tremendously. This populist move was not beloved by everyone, though. Many scholars felt that exhibits were losing their educational value and presenting

⁴² Michael Conforti, "Hoving's Legacy Reconsidered," *Art in America* 74, no. 6 (June 1986): 19–23.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ John Cotton Dana, "The Gloom of the Museum," in *Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. Gail Anderson, 2nd ed. (AltaMira Press, 2012), 17–33.

romanticized views of the past. It was not long before the entire enterprise became a cultural arms race; museums raised funding to support new programs, then designed bigger, flashier programs that required more funding but drew bigger crowds. While this placed museum activities that did not generate income or increased attendance in jeopardy, it also resulted in many high quality, scholarly catalogs being produced and allowed the American public to view any number of extraordinary objects that they might not have had an opportunity to see otherwise. Thus the blockbuster exhibition appears to have resulted from a series of compromises deemed necessary because of political and economic realities in the United States in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Free Trade and the Lost Decade

If recession hobbled the United States at that time, it absolutely decimated Latin America. The Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s is known colloquially as the “lost decade.”⁴⁶ According to Peter Smith, a leading historian on U.S. and Latin American relations, the oil shock of the late ‘70s caused oil-producing nations like Mexico and Venezuela to take on significant debt to improve infrastructure with the expectation of huge future profits, while oil-importing countries had to take on debt to be able to afford oil at its highest cost. Since the Iranian Revolution (1979) and the invasion of Iran by Iraq (1980) halted most oil production in the Middle East, non-OPEC nations saw an opportunity to develop their own reserves. Companies flooded

⁴⁶ Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, Fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 211.

the market with cheap oil from the Soviet Union, Alaska, the North Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico in order to meet the perceived demand, but it soon produced a glut.

Supplies were too high, demand dropped, and prices tanked. Suddenly, the expectations of Mexico and Venezuela for stable future income had plummeted.

At the same time, the U.S. had been pursuing a neoliberal/free-market economic policy, encouraging privatization of services and reducing or removing governmental regulations in several industries. American banks found themselves saddled with accounts containing enormous oil profits that they needed to lend out in order to afford the interest payments. U.S. moneylenders targeted Latin American countries and companies to accept massive loans, just as the banks were privatized and deregulated, allowing bankers more control over loan conditions. In the meantime, the Fed continued to increase interest rates in order to curb inflation in the United States. The combination of these factors with a strong U.S. dollar relative to Latin American currencies meant that in just a few years most Latin American countries found themselves unable to repay their substantial debts. Mexico was the first country to default in 1982, causing international lenders to significantly reduce or freeze lending to all of Latin America. In return, Mexico was forced to devalue the *peso* and nationalize all of its private banks, including Banamex, as they had nationalized their oil industry in the 1930s to save it from American machinations (See Chapter 1).

The social fallout of this situation was dire. Social protection programs and infrastructure were slashed in favor of sheer national survival. Widespread unemployment and inflation meant that people had to migrate to the big cities or the

United States in order to find work. In Central America especially, dissatisfaction and desperation turned to civil war in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. The United States, which was still ideologically fighting the Cold War against the specter of communism, was concerned about left-wing guerilla groups challenging the right-wing dictatorships and military governments that the U.S. had helped install in the 1950s and '60s, or in the case of Nicaragua, of the socialist Sandinistas who had taken control of the government in 1979. Therefore, members of the U.S. government decided to sell weapons to Iran (which was under an arms embargo after the 1979 Revolution and the taking of American hostages), using Israel as a go-between. The proceeds of the sales were then redirected to support the right-wing Nicaraguan Contras who were fighting against the Sandinista government; this illegal and immoral action was known as the Iran-Contra Affair (1985-1987).⁴⁷ The conflict was ultimately resolved by a “democratic” election in 1990 that was won by a centrist group because the United States swore to continue economic sanctions if Nicaraguans elected another socialist government.

The point here is that during the 1980s, the United States government used its strong military, political, and economic power to secure its economy against inflation and support its corporations by compromising the politics and economies of Latin American countries, causing a great deal of suffering as a result. Capitalism, as a system, tends not to care about the welfare of human beings. In fact, if one desires to maximize profits at the expense of anything else, it is actually necessary to ensure

⁴⁷ Ibid., 168–75.

widespread human suffering with a large, poor, laboring class, and with the rise of globalism, that class does not even have to live within the country in question. It is an outsourcing of poverty to developing nations where Americans are not likely to see it, or can blame local governments rather than abstract economic processes initiated by international corporations: especially when that means that they get access to inexpensive and high quality goods and services.

By 1990, this inequality had become increasingly obvious. The population of Latin America was then seventy-five percent greater than that of the United States, but the U.S. gross domestic product was five times that of all of Latin America combined.⁴⁸ The United States was the single largest trading partner for every country in Latin America individually, with more than half of U.S. trade to the region conducted with Mexico alone, yet U.S. investments in Latin America had dropped from more than thirty-three percent of all investment abroad in 1950 to less than ten percent in 1990.⁴⁹ At the same time, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 meant that European investors were pulling away from Latin America to reinvest in Eastern Europe and the former U.S.S.R. became more concerned with domestic issues. Additionally, Japan was reluctant to get involved with Latin America because of its own economic difficulties and its relationship with the United States, while China was not yet ready to pursue aggressive investments in the region.⁵⁰ What this all

⁴⁸ Ibid., 207.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 208.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

means is that when Latin America had the most at stake regarding its economic dealings with the United States, the U.S. had the least at stake in return, giving the U.S. a great deal of leverage over the region. Peter Smith calls this “hegemony by default,” and it eventually led to a contentious piece of legislation known as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).⁵¹

On paper, the idea of NAFTA was to remove duties, tariffs, and trade barriers between the three major North American countries (Canada, Mexico, and the United States), thus creating a trading bloc large enough to rival the European Union. In reality, there were few trading barriers between the three countries anyway, so NAFTA was really more of a political move. The United States had four primary goals to accomplish with NAFTA: stabilizing the country’s southern border and reducing the number of undocumented workers (a concern since the 1910 Mexican Revolution) by stimulating economic growth in Mexico, which would ease social pressures and support the ruling regime; providing the U.S. with a stronger bargaining position in relation to European and Asian trade groups; ensuring further access to Mexican petroleum; and guaranteeing Mexico’s cooperation on U.S. foreign policy.⁵² In exchange, Mexico had similar goals: preserving social peace through economic growth; entrenching the policies of neoliberal capitalism in an international treaty so they could not be reversed by the next Mexican president; legitimizing Mexico’s not-exactly-democratic government; and positioning Mexico as the bridge between the

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 215–16.

developed and developing worlds.⁵³

Of course, the plan had its detractors. While Republican President George H.W. Bush and Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton supported NAFTA, arguing that it would stimulate U.S. exports and enhance global competition, critics like U.S. labor unions and Ross Perot (the Independent presidential candidate in 1992) insisted it would lead to job losses for millions of American workers when industries could use Mexican labor at a fraction of the cost with little in the way of regulations or worker protection. Additionally, there were major concerns about environmental impacts. Many of these debates took place in the public sphere, coinciding with a U.S. presidential election, but there were subtler methods to sway the American public's opinion. One of these was another massive exhibition of Mexican art.

The Miseries of Thirsty Centuries

Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in October 1990. The spiritual successor to *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, which opened in the same city fifty years earlier, the show was wildly complex, reflecting the sometimes conflicting desires of its many stakeholders. It was at once a cry for a stable, sanitized Mexican identity; a covert advertisement for NAFTA; a ploy to increase Latinx visitorship and membership at art museums; an anti-modernist statement; a grandiose spectacle; and the last of the great Mexican art blockbusters.

⁵³ Ibid., 216–17.

Anthropologist Roger Bartra summed up the show as a “disagreeable paradox: behind the 'splendors of thirty centuries' we discover the 'misereries of thirsty centuries.’”⁵⁴

The exhibition was the brainchild of Emilio Azcarraga, a vain, arrogant, autocratic, Mexican billionaire. Nicknamed “El Tigre,” Azcarraga was a media mogul with a near monopoly on television in Mexico and the power to shape popular culture.⁵⁵ As an example, the Mexican government began promoting birth control in the 1970s, but family planning did not catch on among the strongly Catholic population until Azcarraga’s company, Televisa, debuted a telenovela titled “Acompañame (Accompany Me).” Contraceptive sales increased dramatically during the show’s nine month run.⁵⁶ Azcarraga also had near complete control over the news media and wielded it in support of PRI, the corrupt, center-right, state party that held power in Mexico for most of the twentieth century.⁵⁷ In fact, Azcarraga had such close ties to the President that Televisa was sometimes sarcastically known as the Ministry of Communications.⁵⁸

According to all accounts, it was Azcarraga who approached Met Director Philippe de Montebello in 1987 to propose a comprehensive exhibition of Mexican

⁵⁴ Roger Bartra, “Mexican Oficio: The Misereries and Splendors of Culture,” *Third Text* 5, no. 14 (March 1991): 15.

⁵⁵ Marjorie Miller and Juanita Darling, “El Tigre Broadcasting Baron Emilio Azcarraga Monopolizes Mexican Culture and Controls the News. Now He’s Stalking the U.S.,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 1991, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/281594548>.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ PRI - *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, or the Institutional Revolutionary Party

⁵⁸ Miller and Darling, “El Tigre Broadcasting Baron.”

art.⁵⁹ His stated purpose was “once again to share with Americans the cultural and historical wealth of the Mexican people,” but of course it was not that simple.⁶⁰ Just the year before, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had forced Azcarraga to sell the twelve-station Spanish-language network he had built up in the United States because he had violated ownership laws.⁶¹ As a foreigner, Azcarraga was limited to a twenty percent interest in any U.S. television or radio station, but he had circumvented these laws by using *prestanombres*, or borrowed names. Azcarraga would lend the purchase money to an American associate who would buy a share and control it in name only. Yet after the sale, he was adamant about rebuilding his U.S. Spanish-language television programming empire and felt that free-trade agreements between the two nations would help him accomplish his goal.

Ultimately, Azcarraga put his money where his mouth was, funding a nonprofit institution known as the Friends of the Arts of Mexico that would sponsor the multimillion dollar *Splendors* exhibition. Naturally, critics like George Black and Mark Stevens were suspicious of Azcarraga’s motives, and alleged that the show was

⁵⁹ John Phillip Santos, “3000 Years of Mexican Art Landmark Exhibit of World Ranging from Pre-Columbian to Mid-20th Century Opens Next Week at New York’s Metropolitan Museum and Comes to L.A. in 1991,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1990, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/281285818>.

⁶⁰ Miguel Angel Corzo, “The Art Came First, Not the Politics; Mexico: The Sweeping, Exquisite Show Opening at the County Museum Is Battered by Unfounded Accusations,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 1991, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/281473680>.

⁶¹ Miller and Darling, “El Tigre Broadcasting Baron.”

a political tool of the Mexican government to further their free trade ambitions.⁶²

However, Bartra's critique was a little more pointed.

In order to hide its nakedness in times of scarcity, the jewels and treasures of Mexican 'official culture' have been sent to New York, the northern metropolis. Its proponents dream of flaunting their artistic splendors before the stunned eyes of savage millionaires, thus warming the cold heart of the United States. And, as always, they try to affirm its identity through a confrontation with Anglo-American culture and, in doing so, strengthen the waning legitimacy of the Mexican political system.⁶³

In response to these allegations, Miguel Angel Corzo, the president of the Friends of the Arts of Mexico, wrote a disingenuous article in the L.A. Times that was meant to silence the critics. He argued that since Azcarraga, a private businessman, had proposed the exhibit in early 1987 and President Carlos Salinas de Gortari – the supposed beneficiary of Azcarraga's benevolence – was not elected until mid-1988, there was no way the Mexican government could have been involved in the exhibition and therefore it could have no ulterior political motives.⁶⁴ Clearly this is nonsense, as Salinas and the prior president Miguel de la Madrid were both members of the same PRI party that Azcarraga had long publicly supported with his media empire, and both were in favor of opening Mexico to free trade in order to improve its

⁶² Suzanne Muchnic, "Unmasking Mexico's Many Faces: 'Splendors of Thirty Centuries' Arrives in L.A. Next Week; Not Just an Art Show, the Exhibit Is a National Search for Identity," *Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-09-29/entertainment/ca-4830_1_mexican-art-history/2; Shifra M. Goldman, "Metropolitan Splendors," in *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 331.

⁶³ Bartra, "Mexican Oficio," 7.

⁶⁴ Corzo, "The Art Came First, Not the Politics."

economy, so in a very real sense it did not matter who the actual president was at the time. Corzo offered further “proof” by explaining that not every loaned object in the exhibition came from Mexico (although about three-quarters did, to the point where Mexican people were criticizing their government for ripping pulpits right out of Colonial churches).⁶⁵ He also suggested that since all the work for the show was done by American museum staff, there was no opportunity for Mexican politics to influence the exhibit. Finally, Corzo presented a misleading statement: “The exhibition was coordinated and funded by Friends of the Arts of Mexico - a California-based nonprofit organization whose funds come from Mexican corporations and American friends. The Mexican government was never involved in any of these aspects.”⁶⁶ Perhaps the Mexican government was not directly involved in *Splendors*, but its wealthy and devoted friends certainly were, as were the government-controlled national museums. The Mexican government did also directly sponsor dozens of subsidiary programs at each venue, which will be discussed later.

Despite the discussion over the show’s diplomatic overtones and behind-the-scenes machinations that was playing out in the press, the exhibit’s curators were blasé about its political agenda as they got down to the business of producing a blockbuster. “So what else is new?” quipped Marion Oettinger, the curator of Latin

⁶⁵ Benjamin Epstein, “Q&A with Shifra M. Goldman; Taking ‘Artistic Gems’ Out in Public: ‘Modern Mexican Art’ Curator Sees Plenty of Jewels in a Show She Admits Isn’t Flawless,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1994, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/282249116>; Judd Tully, “Splendors of Blood, Gilt and Stone: At New York’s Metropolitan Museum, 3,000 Years of Mexican Culture,” *The Washington Post*, November 11, 1990.

⁶⁶ Corzo, “The Art Came First, Not the Politics.”

American art at the San Antonio Museum of Art, the second stop on the *Splendors* tour.⁶⁷

What do you think the (United States Information Agency) is doing when it sends exhibitions to foreign countries? When there's a World's Fair and we have a pavilion, the art shown there is a statement of how we want the rest of the world to see us. It's not an issue. You take the good with the bad. This exhibition is not the only face of Mexico, but it is *a* face and it's important.⁶⁸

Oettinger is correct, of course. The United States has long used traveling exhibitions to forward its own sociopolitical aims, as I discussed in the first chapter. Virginia Fields, Oettinger's counterpart at LACMA, agreed. She went on to explain that all exhibitions have not just one agenda, but several, and it is a curator's job to balance those needs. "I've thought about all the purposes the exhibition is supposed to serve-- educational, social, political. If there are many reasons for the exhibition, it certainly can accommodate all those reasons."⁶⁹ Marcus Burke, one of the curators of *Spain and New Spain* (1979), worked as a consultant for the Colonial portion of *Splendors* at the Met and contributed a paper to the substantial seven hundred page catalog. His response to the role of politics on the exhibition was a little more blunt.

When we later did 30 Centuries they [the Met] were more cooperative, because Mr. Ascarraga (sic) beat them up and it was the Met. Force majeure (sic) and needing to hype the North American Free Trade Agreement, which by the way we all knew was part of the motive and we all accepted it.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Muchnic, "Unmasking Mexico's Many Faces."

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Burke, "Re: Exhibits of Colonial Latin American Art."

This is the museum's conundrum. What does one do when a foreign billionaire approaches your institution to suggest a fully-funded blockbuster exhibition? On the one hand, it was obvious that the show would be used as a political and economic tool to win over the hearts and minds of Americans. Although NAFTA has since proven to be generally beneficial to both the United States and Mexico, its ultimate success was not so evident in the late 1980s and early 1990s, nor is anyone certain of its long-term effects. On the other hand, the exhibit was practically guaranteed to make money for the hosting institutions (through increased memberships and attendance, catalog and gift shop sales, etc.), inspired a great deal of free press, offered representation and validation for Mexicans in the United States (and, to a lesser extent, other Latin Americans), and forwarded institutional missions of education, art appreciation, and cultural literacy. Given these myriad benefits, any museum would be foolish not to accept when the only stipulations were minor: make the show as apolitical as possible and include no works of art that date to later than 1950. Though this willingness to work with sponsors and lenders is what makes new exhibitions possible, it leaves museums and their messages open to manipulation by the wealthy and powerful.

Splendors of Thirty Centuries traveled to five different cities in all: New York, San Antonio, Los Angeles, Monterrey in northern Mexico, and Mexico City. Naturally the show's layout, collection of art objects, and response differed in every location. At the Met in New York, more than half a million people (585,000) saw the exhibition over its three month run, placing the show on par with the museum's

popular Van Gogh retrospective of 1984.⁷¹ About half that number (265,000) saw it in San Antonio over four months.⁷² This number is impressive for several reasons: it was more than five times the museum's typical annual attendance; the museum limited entrance to only one hundred visitors per hour (compared to the six hundred per hour in Los Angeles); and the population of New York City was about seven times greater than San Antonio in 1990-1991 with far more tourists, but San Antonio received nearly half the number of visitors of the Met, possibly because of the city's large Latinx population.⁷³

Splendors had more mixed success in Los Angeles. The museum's director estimated the total attendance would be around 400,000 over three months but the final number was close to 350,000.⁷⁴ Despite the lower than expected numbers, the exhibit was the third most attended to that date and earned more money than anyone had anticipated: \$620,000 overall, instead of the projected \$500,000.⁷⁵ Despite the unforeseen windfall, LACMA ended the show's run with a \$250,000 deficit, which Ron Bratton, the museum's Chief Deputy Director, blamed on the mild economic

⁷¹ Muchnic, "Unmasking Mexico's Many Faces."

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Barry Zwick, "Lots of Laughs and Plenty to Eat in the New, Improved San Antonio: [Home Edition]," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1991, sec. Travel, Part-L; Shauna Snow, "Museum's 'Mexico'-Color It Red Art: Despite Attendance of More Than 350,000, 'Splendors of Thirty Centuries' Leaves LACMA with a \$250,000 Debt," *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1991, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/281526731>.

⁷⁴ Snow, "Museum's 'Mexico.'"

⁷⁵ Ibid.

recession (1990-1991), the lack of a national corporate sponsor, and soaring insurance costs after the start of the Persian Gulf War.⁷⁶ Bratton said that if LACMA could not raise the necessary funds with audiotape tours and sales in the museum shop and café, they would have to make up the difference by delaying hiring, freezing vacant positions, and deferring repairs to the plumbing and HVAC systems, both of which had been heavily taxed by the large crowds that had come to see the show.⁷⁷

So, the exhibition was a bit of a bust for LACMA financially, but if one considers different metrics, another story unfolds. Of the 350,000 visitors, approximately 21,000 were local schoolchildren who were able to attend for free.⁷⁸ Also, somewhere between thirty to forty percent of all visitors were of Latin American descent, an extraordinarily high percentage for an art museum.⁷⁹ Visitors purchased 6,000 new museum memberships during the show's run, "a substantial amount" of which were from Latinx families, according to Bratton, although he had hoped for yet more.⁸⁰ Finally, while most blockbuster exhibitions see their attendance numbers begin to level off and dip partway through its run, the number of visitors to *Splendors* remained steady, and attendance in the final few days actually increased,

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Shauna Snow, "Temporary Splendors?: LACMA's 'Mexico' Exhibit Has Struck a Chord but Art Leaders Wonder If Interest Will Remain," *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-03/entertainment/ca-518_1_chicano-art.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Snow, "Museum's 'Mexico.'"

exceeding the opening.⁸¹ Though the exhibition lost money, it was clearly meaningful to the greater Los Angeles community and it brought thousands of visitors to the institution who may not have otherwise attended.

After leaving Los Angeles, *Splendors* traveled to the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo (MARCO) in Monterrey, Mexico, where Azcarraga and his cronies had built their business empires.⁸² However, in the process, the show lost about twenty percent of its art works.⁸³ In 1972, Mexico passed a cultural patrimony law declaring all Autonomous and most Colonial works of art as the property of the nation; it also allowed National art to be appended by decree if the works were considered to be national treasures.⁸⁴ Thus, any art objects that left the United States and went to Mexico could be subject to seizure if they were not officially registered with government authorities. Wanting to avoid bureaucracy, Fernando Trevino Lozano, the Director of MARCO, simply decided not to request any artwork that they were not entirely certain would pass inspection.⁸⁵ This mostly affected the nineteenth- and twentieth-century portions of the show, as the Autonomous and Colonial material was largely on loan from Mexican museums in the first place. Eventually the altered

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Goldman, "Metropolitan Splendors," 329.

⁸³ Dick Reavis, "Same Show, Different Splendors: 'Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries' Arrives in the Land Whose Art It Celebrates Minus, for Legal Reasons, About 20% of the Artworks Seen in U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-07-19/entertainment/ca-4390_1_arts-museum.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

exhibition moved to Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts and after a few months there, closed for good.

Like its predecessor, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, the spectacle of *Splendors of Thirty Centuries* was not confined to a single exhibition; it sprawled out into a huge network of associated events. In New York City and San Antonio, these events were all part of the “Mexico: A Work of Art” festival, which was sponsored by the Mexican government.⁸⁶ Advertising for the festival consisted of huge banners and print ads featuring a cropped version of Frida Khalo’s *Self-Portrait with Monkeys* (1943) with the text “Manhattan will be more Exotic this fall,” or “San Antonio will be more Exotic this season.”⁸⁷ There is no evidence that anyone objected to this terminology in New York or San Antonio, but the Chicax community in Los Angeles was highly attuned to primitivizing language and took exception to the tagline. The community offered to work with the organizers of the “Mexico: A Work of Art” festival, assuming they had similar goals for showcasing Mexican culture, but representatives of the Mexican government seemed resistant to working with Mexican-Americans.⁸⁸ In the end, the local Chicax community organized a parallel Mexican arts festival called “Artes de México.” Though this sounds like a petty territory dispute, these two festivals planned hundreds of separate art exhibitions and

⁸⁶ Snow, “Temporary Splendors?”

⁸⁷ Shifra M. Goldman, “Mexican Splendor: The Official and Unofficial Stories,” *Visions* 6, no. 2 (1992): 8.

⁸⁸ Goldman, “Mexican Splendor: The Official and Unofficial Stories.”

events between themselves in the Los Angeles area over a three month period while competing for funding and media attention.⁸⁹ While “Artes de México,” funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, was sponsoring exhibitions of political art and art that was created after 1950, filling in obvious gaps in the *Splendors* show and providing context, the Mexican arts and culture officials of “Mexico: A Work of Art” largely maintained their apolitical stance, bringing in Mexican entertainers, promoting cooking classes, and opening pop-up retail shops rather than challenging the primary exhibit.⁹⁰ These dueling festivals illustrate a clear divide between the positions of the “official” Mexican government and the “unofficial” Mexican-American community in Los Angeles, who believed they had the same goals of cultural visibility but found themselves rejected by their ancestral homeland for complicating the national identity that Mexico was attempting to amalgamate and sell to the United States.⁹¹

The exhibition itself seems to have been as equally divisive as its corollary events. Divided into three parts instead of the four of *Twenty Centuries*, one-third of the exhibit featured Autonomous art, one-third was Colonial, and final third was split between nineteenth-century and twentieth-century art, although in reality this translated to only the first half of the twentieth century as there were no artworks

⁸⁹ Snow, “Temporary Splendors?”; Goldman, “Mexican Splendor: The Official and Unofficial Stories.” The exact number is unknown as news account vary, but the estimates range from 200-400.

⁹⁰ Margarita Nieto, “New Image for Mexico Is a Goal of Art Show,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1991, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/281493877>; Suzanne Muchnic, “‘Splendors’ Splits L.A., Mexico Art Supporters Art: Upcoming County Museum Extravaganza Pits Volunteer Organizers of Artes de Mexico Festival Against Competing Event Backed by Mexican Government,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1991, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/281340225>.

⁹¹ Goldman, “Mexican Splendor: The Official and Unofficial Stories.”

postdating 1950. *Splendors* did not feature a section of “folk” art like many of the exhibits that had come before because Azcarraga was trying to showcase Mexican sophistication and “colorful folk art” did not evoke that response in the United States.

The Autonomous art section was comprised of eight separate rooms, each featuring objects from a specific Mesoamerican city-state, including the Olmec city of La Venta, the Maya city of Palenque, and Teotihuacan. In his review of the exhibition at the Met, Michael Coe was disappointed, feeling that the objects had been selected more for their availability than their aesthetic or educational qualities, and that “there is little continuity between one room and the next as one jumps from civilization to civilization.”⁹² He was equally unimpressed by the exhibit’s design and presentation; “All the rooms and display mounts are painted a uniform, drab beige, and the objects are scattered around the walls in a centrifugal fashion.”⁹³ The LACMA designers seem to have taken this criticism to heart, and used the opportunity to one-up their colleagues in New York. Thomas Lentz, LACMA’s curator of ancient Islamic art and the coordinator for *Splendors* said, “We feel this will be the strongest installation of the show. We’ve taken much more care in terms of architectural treatments – our carpenters and painters have been working 16-hour shifts... to create special entrances that relate to each of the sections.”⁹⁴ Such efforts might have improved the

⁹² Michael Coe, “Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries. An Exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *American Anthropologist* 93, no. 2 (June 1991): 526.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Shauna Snow, “Massive Mexican ‘Splendors’ to Take Over LACMA,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1991, sec. Calendar, 45.

appearance of the show, but could not do much about the underlying organization.

Where most critics were surprised was in the middle portion of *Splendors*, which was labeled Viceregal rather than Colonial. Critic Christopher Knight felt that the choice of terminology “identifies the courtly nature of the art, but it also betrays a certain nervousness. It replaces what everyone else calls Colonial - and colonialism is a highly charged subject today.”⁹⁵ Given this sensitivity, it becomes all the more noticeable when the word “colonial” is actually used in relation to the exhibit, such as when Corzo, the head of the Friends of the Arts of Mexico and defender of Azcarraga, told the Los Angeles Times that “We made a determined effort to represent the colonial period because it's very important in Mexico's development and it hasn't been given its due.”⁹⁶ Here Corzo is claiming some agency over high level decisions that affected the show, which may indicate how much control the sponsoring entity did actually have over the final product. He goes on to explain that the variety of colonial arts included in the exhibition showed “the ability of Mexican craftsmen and artists not only to learn unfamiliar forms and to excel, but to give them a different twist and maintain their great sense of color.”⁹⁷ In this simple statement, Corzo revealed several biases; he not only listed craftsmen before artists in an unconscious betrayal of who he truly believed were the creators of objects in the

⁹⁵ Christopher Knight, “Illuminating History’s Dark Corners Art: `Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries’ Lives Up to Its Publicity in Unexpected Ways. The Show Opens Sunday,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1991, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/281525533>.

⁹⁶ Muchnic, “Unmasking Mexico’s Many Faces.”

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Colonial period, but he indicated surprise at their ability to adapt and excel. Additionally he relied on the primitivizing trope of color that is usually applied to “folk art.” Though his goal was to promote Mexican art and culture as evidence of his country’s civilized history, there was evidently class prejudice at play here, as well. Corzo’s colleagues were the Mexican leaders of industry, not the ordinary artisans in the markets. Catering to upper class taste is likely the reason for the sheer spectacle of the Colonial portion of the *Splendors* exhibit.

William Wilson describes his experience of moving from the Autonomous part of the exhibit to the Colonial thusly:

The pre-Columbian section offers a panoply of mind-boggling evidence attesting to the magnificence and ferocious power of Olmec, Aztec and Mayan (sic) civilizations. It is awesome. But nothing in it is perhaps as dramatic as the point where one simply walks from one gallery to another and the whole thing just stops.

Suddenly gone are the implacable stone wrestlers, feathered serpents and regal rulers. Instead, we see carvings of Christian saints, paintings of the Virgin Mary, pious monks, embroidered costumes and comfortable armchairs. It's as if an invader from outer space appeared and liquefied an entire people.⁹⁸

This transition appears to have been the highlight of the exhibition for many: a visceral shock at the appreciable cultural break and the sudden loss of Indigenous people from the visible record, with few exceptions. Visually, the gallery design heightened this effect at the Met when one moved from boring beige rooms to dark, jewel-toned rooms that glittered with precious metals and gemstones. The installation

⁹⁸ William Wilson, “‘1492’ and ‘Mexico’ Paint a Global Panorama: The Perfection of Cultural Values in Two Exhibits Is More than Refinement of Form,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-23/entertainment/ca-787_1_human-history/2.

seems to have been less effective at LACMA, however, as Christopher Knight laments the loss of “what should be – and was, in the New York debut – a tour de force.”⁹⁹ That the nineteenth- and twentieth-century portions of the exhibition were housed in an entirely different building over two floors did not add to the coherence of LACMA’s presentation of *Splendors*.

More than any inclusive show before it, *Splendors of Thirty Centuries* featured Colonial artwork: not just in a token way to fill a three hundred year gap in Mexican history, but as the vital bridge linking Mexico’s Autonomous past with its National present. Shifra Goldman believed the clue was in the exhibition’s name.¹⁰⁰ The word “splendor” is synonymous with brilliance, brightness, resplendence, treasure, and gloriousness, terms that do not really describe monumental stonework or the bold forms of Mesoamerican ceramics, nor do they apply to Posada’s morbid but humorous monochrome prints or Diego Rivera’s plastic forms. To the Western mind, “splendors” evokes the oily gleam of gold, the sparkling, brilliant colors of precious gemstones, and the subtle luminescence of silk, all characteristics one finds in abundance in the church-dominated artworks of the Colonial period. Goldman suspected that the strong Colonial emphasis of the *Splendors* show was intended in homage to the Columbus Quincentenary of 1992.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Knight, “Illuminating History’s Dark Corners.”

¹⁰⁰ Shifra M. Goldman, “Three Thousand Years of Mexican Art,” in *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 335–36.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 336.

Columbus Lost the Culture Wars

The mythos of the United States derives largely from the events of the late eighteenth century when the American colonies banded together to demand their independence from Great Britain. Proud of their unlikely victory in what they envisioned as a David and Goliath scenario, early Americans eagerly sought historical and religious proofs that their new nation was uniquely blessed and owed little allegiance to Europe. In 1792, this manifested in the celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of Cristoforo Colombo's arrival in the American hemisphere. Little was known about the Italian explorer, so mythmakers and poets had free reign to imagine him as they liked: a proto-Protestant outsider of ordinary birth whose obstinate belief in himself and alienation from Europe foreshadowed a new "race" of independent people on a new continent who could accomplish equally great things. Additionally, his role as the "discoverer" of the country made for a neat parallel with George Washington as the nation's founder.¹⁰² Colombo's Latinized name, Columbus, and feminized name, Columbia, were given to cities, regions, ships, and natural landmarks all over the United States, and Columbus himself became an integral part of the American story.

A hundred years later, Columbus had become the figurehead of the Irish-American Catholic movement. Since Columbus was a Catholic whose heroic reputation was already enshrined, he provided evidence that the immigrant Catholics,

¹⁰² Stephen J. Summerhill and John Alexander Williams, *Sinking Columbus: Contested History, Cultural Politics, and Mythmaking During the Quincentenary* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 13–14.

who were being discriminated against, could contribute to social life in the United States as full citizens.¹⁰³ At the same time, Italians were immigrating to the U.S. in large numbers. While first-generation immigrants tended to identify themselves by region of origin, their children began looking for ways to unify the Italian-American community, and having an Italian already enshrined in U.S. history seemed like a good place to start.¹⁰⁴ In 1892, Columbus was no longer needed for the national origin myth; instead, he became a symbol of the “melting pot” of immigrant cultures that made up the United States. The World’s Columbian Exposition of 1892 held in Chicago, and arguably the greatest of all the World’s Fairs hosted in the United States, further supported this reading of Columbus as the man who could bring all the world together.

Given these successful celebrations of the centennial anniversaries of Columbus’s arrival to the American Hemisphere, no one was particularly concerned about the success of the 1992 Quincentenary when planning began in the early 1980s. The world had changed, however, and the United States was in the middle of what James Davison Hunter termed the “culture wars,” an ideological division in the United States between orthodoxy and progressivism.¹⁰⁵ The way this played out in the public sphere was through the notion of political correctness. For progressives, “political correctness” demanded that attention be paid to language and behavior that

¹⁰³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰⁵ James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991).

might be seen as discriminatory or hurtful to people who had been historically disadvantaged in terms of their race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, age, or any other exclusionary factor. Those who favored orthodoxy tended to use “political correctness” more as a derogatory term, implying that the aforementioned groups were receiving “special privileges” by playing the victim.

The Columbian Quincentenary was one of the early skirmishes of the culture wars. People of a more orthodox bent wanted to celebrate Columbus the explorer and hero who discovered America, while people of a more progressive nature began to question the history they’d been taught. They did not want to celebrate, but to mark the anniversary of an “invasion” rather than a “discovery.” In this way, they hoped to bring attention to the Indigenous people who not only had lived in the Americas long before the arrival of Europeans, but who continued to eke out an existence on the margins of society throughout the hemisphere.

This disparity of views, punctuated by protests and counter-events, ensured that the official Quincentenary was an unpopular failure. Sponsors fled from the bad publicity and Indigenous people were chastised as spoilsports. Celebrations of Columbus proved to be anachronisms, out-of-touch with contemporary thought, and their organizers were accused of sweeping a great deal of dark history under the rug. However, Stephen Summerhill and John Alexander Williams argue that the Quincentenary’s failure was itself a success of “popular versus elite culture, diversity and tolerance versus uniformity and blindness, local versus central government, myth

versus history, and many more.”¹⁰⁶ The conversations around colonialism, nature, Native peoples, and human rights that were triggered by the Columbian Quincentenary were long overdue, but have yet to be completed.

Museums, as generally conservative and orthodox institutions, were not immune to the controversy. A large number of Quincentenary-related exhibitions opened around the country and were generally well received, but some of the exhibits on the more progressive coasts were a little less successful than those in the Heartland. Many curators, aware of the national feeling, decided to offer no comprehensive narrative around the “discovery” of the Americas. The National Gallery, for instance, mounted *Circa 1492*, a show that displayed objects from around the globe that had been made around the time of Columbus’s arrival, marking the date simply as a transition to the modern world. Curators juxtaposed the teenaged Michelangelo’s stunning bas relief “Madonna of the Stairs” with an imposing Mexica-Aztec sculpture of an eagle warrior and Shen Zhou’s masterful Chinese landscape “Lofty Mount Lu,” deftly avoiding any suggestion of European superiority.¹⁰⁷ Next door at the National Gallery of Natural History, *Seeds of Change* focused on the biological exchanges that took place when Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous Americans met. The show focused on five primary “seeds” (potatoes, maize, sugar, diseases, and horses) and how they affected people on both sides of the

¹⁰⁶ Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*, 182.

¹⁰⁷ Wilson, “‘1492’ and ‘Mexico’ Paint a Global Panorama.”

Atlantic.¹⁰⁸ Another Smithsonian institution, the National Museum of American Art, did not fare so well with its exhibit, *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier*. It was perhaps well-intentioned, as curators attempted to explain the racist and imperialist implications of much of the late eighteenth- to early twentieth-century art of the western United States, but by tying the exhibit to the Quincentenary, it became more of a “triumphalist narrative of conquest” that began with Columbus and ended with Manifest Destiny.¹⁰⁹ When critics suggested the addition of historical papers, letters, photographs, textiles, Indigenous art, and decorative items to complicate the story and depict the true multiculturalism of the West, curator William H. Truettner was horrified by the thought of such a “confusing” multimedia display.¹¹⁰

These debates were not exclusive to museums in Washington, D.C. Organizations from Sweden to Spain and all across Latin America were struggling with the best ways to accurately represent the past. In California, the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana found itself with a dilemma. After a four-year remodeling process, the museum was set to reopen in October 1992. Then they were approached by the Orange County American Italian Renaissance Foundation, a group affiliated with the Catholic Knights of Columbus organization, who offered the museum \$250,000 and a

¹⁰⁸ Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*, 183–85.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

bronze bust of Christopher Columbus.¹¹¹ The generous donation was certainly appealing, but the museum's mission was focused on the Indigenous arts of the Americas, Africa, and Oceania. How could they reconcile this purpose with a gift representing European conquest and colonialism? Internally, it seems there was very little debate. The money and bust were accepted. In return, the Bowers offered space for Foundation to meet regularly and gave them the naming rights for three galleries of Autonomous art, as well as for the hall of Spanish exploration.¹¹² Paul Apodaca, the curator of Native American and Folk art at the Bowers, whose heritage is Navajo-Mexican, argued that the museum had not shifted its position in regards to its mission but that the job of a cultural arts institution was to bring peoples of all cultures together.¹¹³

The larger local Indigenous community had a less conciliatory reaction to the news. Dwight Howell, of the Ponca and Omaha Nations said, "Anything that encompasses Columbus is not something to celebrate. I've got mixed emotions on it, but I do believe we should all work together toward healing."¹¹⁴ Others were more cynical. The director of the Southern California Indian Center, John Castillo of the Apache Nation noted, "When it comes to money, people's values and missions

¹¹¹ Rose Apodaca, "Gift to Bowers Presents a Problem: An Italian-American Group Donates \$250,000 and a Statue of Columbus to Museum Specializing in Culture of Americas' Indigenous Peoples.," *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-09-25/entertainment/ca-970_1_bowers-museum-of-cultural-art.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

change. Our only hope is that Bowers continues to provide a balance of information of what happened to the Indian people."¹¹⁵ David Belardes, tribal chief chairman of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians (Acjachamen Nation), agreed. "Those that have money get what they want."¹¹⁶ A spokesperson for the Bowers, Brian Langston, eventually concluded, "this Italian group is supporting Native American art. If they're going to fund anything, what better than that?"¹¹⁷ While that may be true, naming galleries of Autonomous art after the people who later decimated them seems insensitive at the very least. It was a difficult position for the museum and one that should have triggered discussions with its community at a time when the narrative around Christopher Columbus and his legacy was so charged. Yet while the Bowers may have dropped the ball, these kinds of public conversations around political correctness and indigeneity eventually led to a groundbreaking exhibition of Colonial Latin American art.

Converging in Brooklyn

Many contemporary art historians, when asked about the first exhibit of Colonial Latin American art, will point to the Brooklyn Museum's *Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America* (1996). Though it is obviously not the first exhibition of Colonial material in the United States, the show's scholarly

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

approach and focus on Indigenous contributions to Colonial art made a significant and memorable impact on the field at large. It was designed by three curators: Kevin Stayton, Curator of Decorative Arts, Costumes, and Textiles; Diana Fane, Chair of the Department of the Arts of Africa, the Pacific and the Americas; and Sarah Faunce, Curator of European Painting and Sculpture, over the course of ten years.¹¹⁸ This collaboration was necessary because the collection assembled by Herbert Spinden for his 1941 exhibition had long since been disbursed between their various departments.

Just as *Splendors of Thirty Centuries* (1990) at the Met had been a successor to MoMA's *Twenty Centuries* (1940), *Converging Cultures* was the descendent of the Brooklyn Museum's earlier exhibition *America South of U.S.* (1941). According to its curators, who were clearly aware of the zeitgeist of the 1990s, the show's purpose was to "examine the native contribution to the development of colonial society as well as the impact of imported European culture, focusing on the ways in which these two distinct populations influenced one another and the creative results of their interaction."¹¹⁹ In many ways, this was the reverse approach of the *Spain and New Spain* exhibit of 1979. The exhibit attempted to address issues of identity through self-representation, patronage and reception, artistic strategies of resistance, and anachronism and revival. This thematic approach was one of the exhibition's strengths, according to Charlene Villaseñor Black, since *Converging Cultures* was able to challenge conceptions of "fine" versus "folk" art, which has always been a

¹¹⁸ Brooklyn Museum of Art, "No Title [Press Release]," July 1995.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

problematic dichotomy in art history.¹²⁰

Some reports claimed that the exhibit consisted of two hundred objects, while others said two hundred and fifty.¹²¹ Regardless, it was a fraction of the museum's collection of over a thousand objects of Colonial Latin American art.¹²² Due to Spinden's collection process in the early 1940s, the collection was rather heavier on Andean objects than Mexican, so the final exhibit had approximately twice as many artworks from the Andes on display. The distribution of attention on each geographic area is a little more balanced in the catalog.

Fortunately, Lonn Taylor, a curator at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History described the exhibition in great detail in his lengthy review.¹²³ Installed on the fourth floor of the Brooklyn Museum, *Converging Cultures* began with an introductory gallery explaining the purpose of the exhibit. The room included Autonomous artworks from the Mexica-Aztecs, the Maya, and the Inka to provide evidence of some of the sophisticated cultures that the Spanish would encounter in their travels through the Americas. Under the heading "First Impressions" were four sixteenth-century illustrations. Two of the images were drawn by Indigenous artists (one Tlaxcalan and one who claimed mixed-Andean descent), and both depicted

¹²⁰ Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Book Review: Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America," *Sixteenth Century Journal* XXIX, no. 1 (1998): 82–84.

¹²¹ Holland Cotter, "ART REVIEW; Colonial Latin America: Sleeping Beauty Awakes," *The New York Times*, March 1, 1996, sec. Arts; Black, "Book Review."

¹²² Brooklyn Museum of Art, "No Title [Press Release]," July 1995.

¹²³ Taylor, "Wonderful Things."

Indigenes as strong, successful, and clothed warriors. The other two images by European artists pictured the Mexica-Aztec and Inka people as naked savages and cannibals. It was an effective reminder that visitors were dealing with biased sources on both sides.

The next room contained five cases that laid out the themes that visitors would encounter throughout the exhibition: Convergence of Christian and Native Religious Traditions, Parallel Expressions of Social Status in New Spain, Artistic Strategies of Accommodation and Resistance in the Andes, the Preservation and Transmission of Knowledge, and Cloth and Cultural Memory in the Andes.¹²⁴ The textile tradition was more culturally entrenched in the Andes, so that level of specificity makes sense, but it is unclear why the Artistic Strategies of Accommodation and Resistance were limited to the Andes, when Indigenous artists in New Spain were also accommodating and resisting the Spanish, or why Parallel Expressions of Social Status were only identified in New Spain.

Beyond this somewhat complex introduction to the exhibit, the visitor finally stepped into the first of the two primary galleries, which was painted in light tan and deep red shades meant to evoke the deserts of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Religious objects were aligned along one wall and secular objects were placed opposite them in an arrangement that would not have made sense to a Colonial Mexican. The second gallery was painted in cool gray and blue tones, which Taylor believed was meant to reflect the Andean climate, and indicated that Peru was

¹²⁴ Ibid., 143.

a very different place from New Spain. That room was dominated by fourteen eighteenth-century portraits of Inka rulers which the museum had acquired at auction for about \$334,000 the year before.¹²⁵ A small adjacent area off to one side of the gallery was prepared by the museum's conservation department to demonstrate some of the materials and techniques that had been used to create the objects found in the primary galleries. At the far end was a "visual grand finale," containing an "extremely compelling" arrangement of church furnishings and décor.¹²⁶ However, the exhibit did not end there. A small final room, intended as a kind of coda to the show, held objects that illustrated the use of Indigenous arts to reinforce national identity in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries. Taylor disliked this inclusion, feeling that the last room was trivial in comparison to the main galleries; he would have preferred that the exhibition end with the church display.¹²⁷ Despite not having viewed the show myself, I would have to disagree. Ending any exhibition of Colonial Latin American art with a grandiose tribute to the Catholic church would suggest that the Europeans had ultimately gained total control over Indigenous Americans. The coda room, though it may have seemed trivial, was vital to the exhibit's story of Indigenous survival.

As with the *Splendors* show, the reviewers of *Converging Cultures* described it using terminology meant to conjure brilliant, reflected light. Holland Cotter of the

¹²⁵ Brooklyn Museum of Art, "No Title [Press Release]," February 6, 1995.

¹²⁶ Taylor, "Wonderful Things," 156.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 157.

New York Times said that the objects were an “exhilarating jumble” that “pulsate and shine;” the show “catches fire” and the catalog is a “jewel.”¹²⁸ Both he and Taylor called the exhibition “dazzling.” Again, this seems to be fairly unique to exhibits of Colonial Latin American art or those that contain high quantities of materials that contemporary Americans would consider precious. One piece of vocabulary that Villaseñor Black did take issue with is the term “convergence,” meaning “to come together.” She argued that “phrases such as this are antiseptic euphemisms that unnecessarily downplay the violence of the ‘convergence’ of European conquerors and native peoples. Forced conversions, murder, rape, torture, and enslavement are not the markers of cultures ‘coming together.’”¹²⁹ While I tend to agree, I also think it would be difficult to market an exhibit called *The Rape, Torture, and Enslavement of the Americas*.

Though generally lauded, *Converging Cultures* did have a few flaws, according to its critics. For Cotter, it is the fact that the version of history that the show presents was too often framed in the colonizer’s voice.¹³⁰ He makes a fair point, but given the scarcity of primary sources in this field with Indigenous voices, this is somewhat unavoidable. Taylor’s critique was that the exhibition largely omitted the role of creoles (people of Spanish descent born in the Americas) in the course of colonial

¹²⁸ Cotter, “ART REVIEW; Colonial Latin America: Sleeping Beauty Awakes.”

¹²⁹ Black, “Book Review,” 83.

¹³⁰ Cotter, “ART REVIEW; Colonial Latin America: Sleeping Beauty Awakes.”

history.¹³¹ However, since this exhibit was meant to focus on Indigenes as much as possible, I cannot agree that this was *Converging Culture*'s greatest weakness. Villaseñor Black's criticism was more conceptual. She felt that the major problem indicated by the catalog specifically but the show more generally, was its lack of a model for analyzing cultural production; for her, the exhibit was insufficiently theorized.¹³² Taylor agreed in terms of the catalog. He was surprised to find no summary or explanation of the show's thesis and disappointed that the fifteen percent of objects in the exhibit that were not owned by the Brooklyn Museum had not been included in the book.¹³³ Still, in comparison to the patronizing and imperialist exhibitions of the past, *Converging Cultures* was a progressive, somewhat focused, and thoughtful exhibit that foreshadowed the increasingly specific and scholarly shows of the twenty-first century.

The unique cultural, political, and economic situation of the 1980s had significant consequences for museums. While the injection of corporate funding was appreciated, the rush of blockbuster exhibitions also came with an influx of corporate agendas designed to improve the public image of multinational companies and direct public opinion in profitable ways. By the '90s, however, people began to push back where they could, rejecting the implicit colonialism of Columbus Day and turning their attention to Indigenous contributions to art and history. Unfortunately, this

¹³¹ Taylor, "Wonderful Things," 146.

¹³² Black, "Book Review," 82.

¹³³ Taylor, "Wonderful Things," 148.

newfound stability would be short-lived, because of two occurrences that no one could predict: the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the start of the Information Age.

2000-2020: THE SCHOLARLY SHOWS

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”

- William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Thus far in the narrative of Colonial Latin American art exhibitions in the United States over the course of the past century, the years 1920 to 1959 were more-or-less concerned with international politics and overseen by governmental agencies; the 1960s and ‘70s were decades of social strife as people began to address complex issues of identity, and museums were influenced by individual art collectors; and the 1980s and ‘90s were dominated by corporate and economic forces which both dueled with and profited from multiculturalism. While not every exhibit produced in the United States during these years fits neatly into these general trends, enough did to make the shape of them visible. Governments, individuals, and corporations co-opted museum exhibitions for their own purposes to influence the American public in specific ways.

Yet priorities shift over time and technologies change. The internet, which was introduced in the United States in 1991 and was considered mainstream by the late ‘90s, transformed American culture forever. In some ways, it shattered standard conceptions of identity and community. Online anonymity gave people the option to perform the racial, cultural, and gender presentations of their choice. Rather than being constrained by one’s ethnicity, age, or any other marker, people could form communities centered around shared interests. After 2006, with the rise of Facebook

and social media sites predicated on one's "real" identity, this has become somewhat more difficult, but American society has also begun to be more tolerant of individuals' rights to select their own identities both online and off.

At the same time, people have been exposed to vastly greater quantities of media than have ever been available before. All the music, movies, television shows, fashion, sporting events, and popular culture of the past century and more are available to nearly anyone in mere seconds. This unprecedented access to the world's accumulated knowledge is certainly beneficial, but it further fractures American culture. It is no longer possible to assume that everyone has seen the same movie or listens to the same music, as they did in decades past. Since the turn of the century, pop culture has entered a "remix" phase, where most new media seems to be focused on reworking popular media of the past for increasingly specific audiences: either recreating or adding to media franchises for which the public has feelings of nostalgia, or recombining past elements in new ways, as in music and fashion. Trends come and go with increasing rapidity, spread by viral memes and retweets. Corporations were unsure how to capitalize on all of this early on, but are now finding ways to monetize the internet by hiding quality content behind paywalls, attempting to provide a better user experience for wealthier customers by dismantling the government's net neutrality regulations, and building cult-like "lifestyle" brands.

In deference to a twenty-first century culture that increasingly resists categorization, I have decided to now abandon the relatively strict chronological structure of the first three chapters. There is no longer a primary force propelling the

creation of specific types of museum exhibitions, and arranging exhibits by date yields no more useful insights. Additionally, these shows have all been professionally designed, are not particularly controversial, and meet scholarly standards, so in some ways there is little that differentiates them. Instead, like many contemporary curators, I have identified four general themes to pursue: the continuation of the blockbuster, the major collectors, the museum as collector, and shows of increasing specificity, with the understanding that these divisions are somewhat arbitrary and not mutually exclusive.

Blockbuster Remix (Feat. Media Corporations and National Governments)

Although short-term blockbuster exhibitions designed to regularly entice people back to the museum with exotic splendors did become standard practice at some institutions for a couple of decades, that model needed to change with the times. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 by Islamic extremists, people in the United States became more cautious about congregating in public spaces, especially if they were in an enclosed area with some of the world's greatest artistic and cultural treasures. Along with sports stadiums and crowded theme parks, museums seemed like obvious targets after the Taliban's destruction of the colossal Buddhist statues in Afghanistan in 2001 and the continuing devastation of cultural objects across the Middle East, western Asia, and North Africa by Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Attendance at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, just five miles north of the destroyed World Trade Center, dropped by a million visitors in the year after the attacks and it

took almost ten years to return to their earlier numbers.¹

A few years later, the Great Recession of 2007 left corporations reeling as the speculative housing bubble burst and consumer spending plummeted. Government bailouts saved the companies that were “too big to fail,” but none of that relief money was earmarked for museums to maintain good public relations or branding opportunities. Charitable donations also fell off dramatically as millions of people lost their jobs, or their homes to foreclosure. With government, individual, and corporate giving down, museums had to tighten their belts and institute hiring freezes, which left insufficient staff to design or plan as many major exhibits. That does not mean there were none, however. Large exhibitions may take years of planning and museums must honor their obligations regardless of external sociopolitical concerns, so the shows that were already scheduled went ahead, but future exhibits were put on hold. This is evident when one looks at the list of Colonial Latin American art exhibitions that were installed from 2000-2020 (see Appendix B). The early 2000s have several shows, but there are just two in the five year period from 2007 to 2012, at least one of which had already been in the planning stages in 2007. In 2013, the frequency of exhibitions picks up sharply again.

The twenty-first century blockbuster, then, is a different beast to that which came before. Its creation is limited to the largest institutions that have sufficient staff and space, and is usually sponsored by a constellation of governmental departments,

¹ Dave Itzkoff, “Despite Recession, the Met and MoMA Have a Year of Increased Attendance,” *The New York Times*, July 2, 2010, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A0CE3DD103FF931A35754C0A9669D8B63>.

individual donors, media corporations, and cultural foundations. For instance, *Tesoros/Treasures/Tesouros: The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820*, which was installed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2006, lists dozens of supporters including Fundación Televisa (the charitable arm of Azcarraga's Mexican media empire), the Mexico Tourism Board, NBC, Amtrak, the Getty Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, Popular Financial Holdings, the National Endowment for the Arts, Marilyn and Carl Thoma, the Huber Family Foundation, and many, many others. It is a complex web of funding, expectations, and obligations even before one adds in the various lending agreements for borrowing art objects, or the significant support from several sectors of the Mexican government to allow the show to travel to the Antigua Colegio de San Ildefonso in Mexico City.

Though the details of these agreements are not public knowledge, one can extrapolate the more important players from the catalog. The section entitled "Sponsor's Statement" contains boilerplate language from Fundación Televisa's president, Claudio X. González, regarding their mission "to help share our culture with the world."² He mentions several major exhibitions of Autonomous-period art that the Foundation sponsored in previous years and describes *The Arts of Latin America* as:

² Joseph J. Rishel and Suzanne L. Stratton(-Pruitt), eds., *Tesoros/Treasures/Tesouros: The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820* (Philadelphia, PA : Mexico City : [Los Angeles] : New Haven: Philadelphia Museum of Art ; Antigua Colegio de San Ildefonso ; Los Angeles County Museum of Art ; Yale University Press, 2006), vi.

...the first comprehensive exhibition to explore the convergences of indigenous American, European, African, and Asian culture and the creation of new identities and art forms in Latin America from the years of the initial European encounters in the late fifteenth century to the formation of modern nations in the early nineteenth centuries.³

One sees here again the almost compulsory need to describe an exhibition as the first of its kind, even when that is not remotely true. Additionally, the use of the word “encounters” in place of “conquest” or “invasion” betrays a certain anxiousness to avoid causing offense. In my unpublished master’s thesis, I argued that the word “syncretism” was inappropriate to use in the Colonial context because it implied an equal and voluntary blending of two religious traditions rather than a deliberate and violent attempt to eradicate an existing tradition with some deep-rooted survivals.⁴ The term “encounters” plays the same role in a secular context, suggesting a casual meeting rather than literal and cultural genocide. At any rate, despite González’s illuminating phrasing, it is evident that Televisa was the primary sponsor of *The Arts in Latin America*.

Two years prior, the Metropolitan Museum put together an exhibition called *The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830* (2004), which was sponsored by Univision, a Spanish-language media group in the United States that often runs programming produced by Televisa. The Sponsor’s Statement for *Colonial Andes*, written by Robert V. Cahill, the Vice Chairman of Univision, is even more tepid than the one penned by González. Cahill only says that “Community service,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Aubrey Wilder (Hobart), “San Miguel Del Milagro: Cross-Currents of Devotion in Colonial Tlaxcala” (Master’s Thesis, University of Colorado, 2010), 42.

education, and outreach are major initiatives of Univision Communications Inc. It is our responsibility and pleasure to support scholarly and artistic endeavors such as this exhibition as an extension of our commitment to the community.”⁵ Though two exhibits hardly demonstrates a trend, it is interesting that both exhibits were sponsored by Spanish-language media corporations with no apparent agenda other than promoting good public relations. The other exhibitions from this time period that I would consider blockbusters were funded by groups with more pointed designs.

Sacred Spain: Art and Belief in the Spanish World (2009) is one of the two exhibitions that opened during the recession years, but the Acknowledgments page admits it was the result of years of research and planning.⁶ It was produced by the Indianapolis Museum of Art, an institution that has very few pieces of Colonial Latin American art in their collection, and designed by Ronda Kasl, their then Senior Curator of European Art before 1800, whose field was Spanish art, though she later moved to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and became a curator of Latin American art. *Sacred Spain* seems almost shockingly Eurocentric after the interventions of *Converging Cultures* and the multicultural turn of the 1990s that shifted Colonial Latin American studies to a greater interest in Indigenous contributions. Maxwell Anderson, the museum’s director, even expresses a desire to “strip away the

⁵ Elena Phipps et al., *The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830* (New York : New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art ; Yale University Press, 2004), xvi.

⁶ Ronda Kasl and Indianapolis Museum of Art, eds., *Sacred Spain: Art and Belief in the Spanish World* (Indianapolis : New Haven: Indianapolis Museum of Art ; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2009), 6.

‘otherness’ of Mexican, Peruvian, Colombian, and Bolivian artistry.’⁷ But is it not “otherness” that marks this artistry as a product of complex cultural interactions and choices? If one were to remove the “otherness,” what would be left? This is not to say that exhibits comparing Spanish art with that of its colonies are not making valid interpretations, but to reduce Colonial Latin American art to “the peculiarly Spanish alloy of fierceness, tenderness, and immediacy in sacred artworks,” as if Spain had a monopoly on these characteristics, and focus solely on its “evangelistic intent” was a bit tone-deaf and out of touch with the field.⁸ One could argue that this was not so much a comparison show as an exhibition of seventeenth-century Spanish art with a few “peripheral” inclusions to demonstrate continuity, but even so, a celebration of religious domination and colonialism is ill-suited to the twenty-first century zeitgeist.

The reason that the Indianapolis Museum of Art adopted this approach is readily discernable; the show was sponsored by the government of Spain under the guise of the State Corporation for Spanish Cultural Action Abroad (SEACEX). Likely, to avoid alienating their “Collaborator,” the museum was compelled to identify a theme that would tie Spain to its former colonies without any obvious reminders of an inconvenient, messy, and violent history. They chose “the lens of belief and its lived experience” as the thread that would cut across social strata and cultural heritage, casting Spain as “a secular and ecclesiastic power, eager for spiritual resources and methods of communication to reinforce and spread its

⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁸ Ibid.

legitimation,” as if they were not also eager for material resources, and ignoring the methods by which Indigenous peoples were coerced into the faith.⁹ More specifically, Kasl chose to emphasize “the participation of individual artists and worshipers in a complex discourse on sacred images that was shaped by religious aspirations as well as creative ones.”¹⁰ In other words, she intended to focus on unique artistic interpretations of religious themes while avoiding their sociopolitical context. This approach makes a certain amount of sense. Most Colonial art was produced in the service of the church, so it is relatively simple to find good examples for an art exhibit, and faith is a fairly non-controversial choice in terms of theme. Americans have long been suspicious of the apparent excesses of Catholic visual culture, but as more than eighty percent of the U.S. population considers themselves Christians of some denomination, few will protest seeing depictions of Jesus in a museum. Thus, *Sacred Spain’s* curator, perhaps not being especially well-versed in Colonial material at the time and needing to please the Spanish government, made a safe and easy choice to focus the show’s content on religion. It was a choice many other curators would embrace as well.

The next exhibit is somewhat beyond the scope of this project as it was produced by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) in Canada, although it did travel to Seattle. Yet while the context of Latin American art in Canadian museums must tell a different story to the one I have outlined in the United States, the exhibit

⁹ Kasl and Indianapolis Museum of Art, 10, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

still merits mention. *Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and the Moon* (2013) was the first large-scale, comprehensive exhibition of Peruvian art from the Autonomous to the National periods on the order of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (1940) or *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* (1990). On the one hand it seems a shame that it took seventy-three years after the first major exhibition of Mexican art that museums finally got around to a comprehensive show about Peru, especially since Peru was equally influential in the Autonomous and Colonial periods. That may be a matter of geographic proximity and the United States needing good relations with its southern neighbor. On the other hand, the concept of a comprehensive exhibition is actually quite odd. While placing an Etruscan sarcophagus, Renaissance paintings, and Futurist sculpture together to represent “Italian” art of the past two millennia would surely raise a few eyebrows, nobody questioned an exhibit that contained three thousand years of “Peruvian” history. Why do we accept this kind of approach when it comes to the Americas?

In the show’s catalog, Nathalie Bondil, the museum’s director, says that *Peru* “explores for the first time the founding images of modern Peru through the representation and reinterpretation of myths, rituals, and other primordial identity symbols, which have survived through the centuries in contrasting artistic traditions.”¹¹ She goes on to explain that the exhibit tracks the “three stages in the development of a living cultural identity,” describing the Autonomous period as the

¹¹ Victor Pimentel, ed., *Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and the Moon* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2013), 18.

source of cultural symbols that are concealed and “hybridized” during the Colonial period (called the Viceroyalty), and affirmed and transformed in the National period as a sign of resistance and independence.¹² After nearly a century, the pattern of this approach to Latin American art is standard, but it is hardly progressive to exoticize the “ancient” and “primordial” past as a place where mysterious symbols arise out of unknown myths and rituals, nor to cast the history of a Latin American country as a tale of civilizing developments. However, this view is evident in both the French and English-language commercials produced by MMFA to entice guests to visit.¹³ The videos exclusively depict Autonomous metalwork objects, mostly made by the Mochica, with the inclusion of one Mochica head ceramic vessel. Mochica work tends to be the most representational art that was produced in Autonomous Peru and for that reason the detailed and lively depictions of people and animals are often preferred by Westerners. Although the narrators mention Colonial paintings and “Modern Folk Art” in these ads, all the viewer actually sees are dramatically lit, exotic, and precious *objets d’art*. The English-language commercial has a musical backing track of percussion instruments playing something that is vaguely “tribal” but not identifiable, whereas the French-language commercial is backed with flutes, rattles, chimes, and the brushing of a cymbal, probably meant to suggest Indigenous culture. No doubt the ads were effective at gaining a potential guest’s interest, but the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “SAM - Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and the Moon,” accessed February 14, 2018, <http://www1.seattleartmuseum.org/peru/>; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, *Peru : Kingdoms of the Sun and the Moon*, accessed February 14, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5E_v-N4FNM.

commercials still perpetuate the trope of the “mysterious” Indigenous past. However, one blogger who saw the show in Seattle seemed to hardly notice the highlighted Autonomous goldwork: “It [the show] starts with ancient material, **hits the Spanish colonial period hard in a room that will blow your eyes out**, and stretches all the way to the 20th-century *indigenismo* movement” (emphasis in original).¹⁴

This exhibition came about through a combination of different factors. First, 2011 was the centennial anniversary of the “rediscovery” of Machu Picchu by Hiram Bingham, which sparked celebrations in Peru, and initiated the return of approximately 46,000 archaeological artifacts that Bingham had spirited back to Yale University. Therefore Peru and its “wonder of the modern world” was much in the news at the time. The show’s curator, Victor Pimentel, was partially influenced by the increased nationalistic feelings of his homeland of Peru, but the exhibit was also part of a continuing Latin American art initiative at an institution which had installed the largest known exhibition of Cuban art just five years prior.¹⁵ Although the Peruvian government was heavily involved with *Peru*, lending a hundred pieces that had never been seen outside the country before, the exhibit seems to have been largely paid for by the Volunteer Association of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts who donate over

¹⁴ Jen Graves, “Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and Moon Is About as Big as Art Exhibitions Get,” Blog, *The Stranger*, (November 16, 2013), <http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2013/11/16/peru-kingdoms-of-the-sun-and-moon-is-about-as-big-as-art-exhibitions-get-get-there-early-and-get-in-for-free>.

¹⁵ Like *Mexico* and *Peru*, that show was predictably entitled *¡Cuba!*

a million dollars to the museum each year.¹⁶ The Seattle Art Museum also listed Microsoft as a sponsor for their leg of the show. Given the various needs and interests of all these players, one cannot be surprised by the conservative tone of this exhibit or that of the other blockbuster shows. A confusion of purpose and an attempt to please far too many stakeholders seems to be the hallmark of the twenty-first blockbuster exhibition.

Ten years earlier, the Guggenheim Museum in New York put together its own comprehensive blockbuster exhibition centered around a single Latin American country. In this case it was *Brazil: Body and Soul*, which opened in New York in 2001 and traveled to the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain in 2002. The show was envisioned and sponsored by BrasilConnects, “an independent, not-for-profit organization that celebrates, preserves, and supports Brazil’s most treasured cultural and ecological assets.”¹⁷ Like Friends of the Arts of Mexico, the nonprofit organization created by Emilio Azcárraga Milmo to finance *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*, BrasilConnects was founded to fund the Brazil exhibit, however its ulterior purpose is less clear. The organization’s chairman was Edemar Cid Ferreira, a wealthy Brazilian banker, who in 2006 was convicted of crimes against the national financial system and of using his impressive personal art collection to launder

¹⁶ Pimentel, *Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and the Moon*, 11.

¹⁷ Edward J. Sullivan, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, eds., *Brazil: Body & Soul* (New York, N.Y: Guggenheim Museum : Distributed by Abrams, 2001), vii.

money.¹⁸ As of 2017, he was appealing a prison sentence of twenty-one years.

Similar to *Splendors* (1990) and *Peru* (2013), the exhibit was organized chronologically with sections on “The Encounter,” “Baroque Art,” Afro-Brazilian culture, Modern Brazil, Contemporary Brazil, Architecture, and Cinema: essentially the typical categorization of Autonomous, Colonial, and National required by comprehensive exhibitions of this type. The terms pre-Hispanic and pre-Columbian do not really function in Brazil since it was colonized by the Portuguese, so the curators of *Brazil: Body and Soul* tried to avoid the whole nomenclature issue by calling the small section of Autonomous art “The Encounter.” I have already noted my objection to the term “encounter,” but in this case, the pitifully few pieces of feather work that were intended to stand in for the entire Autonomous history of Brazil were paired with a couple dozen European paintings of Indigenous Brazilians, making “The Encounter,” a relatively accurate description of this portion of the exhibit, even as it seems far too mild.

The terms “colonial” and “viceregal” were also side-stepped; curators chose to use European periodization instead. While Affonso Ávila is quick to remind readers that “Baroque” originally meant an “arcane form of scholarly reasoning or was suggested by a similarly named, irregularly shaped pearl,” and so therefore the term must be given a certain amount of flexibility, there are few who would accept the Baroque period as extending into the nineteenth century as was suggested in this

¹⁸ Henri Neuendorf, “US Repatriates 95 Artworks Linked to Disgraced Brazilian Financier,” *Artnet News*, October 11, 2017, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/95-smuggled-works-returned-brazil-1111004>.

exhibition.¹⁹ Of the remaining sections, only the segregation of Afro-Brazilian art holds any interest. Though this categorization seems unnecessarily essentializing, and was likely overlooked by visitors in the exhibit itself, the commonalities of the slave trade in the United States and Brazil (called “the involuntary migration and servitude of Africans” in the enormous catalog) and the resulting multiethnic societies that still struggle with their histories and present day treatment of people of African descent, might have made for a more tightly focused and meaningful exhibit.²⁰ Instead, *Brazil* comes across as yet another blockbuster proposed and funded by a wealthy man to serve his own purposes, whatever those might have been.

Collectors: The Next Generation

In chapter two I discussed in detail the relatively large number of middle-class Americans with moderate collections of Colonial Latin American art that they lent to museums and galleries for small exhibitions in the 1960s and ‘70s. Although I focused more attention on the two collectors with the largest number of exhibitions, there were many others. However, the subsequent generation of collectors was wealthier, better informed, more concerned about provenance, owned more objects, and was significantly reduced in number. In fact, there are only four couples in the country who had a collection of note in the twenty-first century. Of those, the Mayers

¹⁹ Sullivan, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, *Brazil: Body & Soul*, 114.

²⁰ Sullivan, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, *Brazil: Body & Soul*, x.

have a long-term association with the Denver Art Museum which has already received much of their collection, and the Thomas, Hubers, and Cisneros appear to be shopping their collections around to various institutions to determine where they will eventually land. The era of the individual collectors seems to be ending, but it has produced some interesting exhibitions over the last twenty years.

The first exhibit of this type was *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels: South American Paintings 1600-1825 from the Thoma Collection*, which opened at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University in 2006.²¹ Afterward, it traveled to Tucson, Puerto Rico, Toronto, and Austin. The exhibit consisted of approximately sixty paintings, the vast majority of which were religious in nature. The remaining handful were portraits of upper-class individuals. As is often the case with exhibitions that are dependent on a single collection, the possible themes of the exhibit were limited by the collector's taste and vision. While a creative curator can often work within these limitations, Bernard Barryte at the Cantor Arts Center chose "collector show" as the organizing principle for *Virgins, Saints, and Angels*, meaning that the art was exhibited simply as a collection of religious paintings that the Thomas owned rather than trying to find any particular message or theme within the works themselves.²²

²¹ Carl Thoma received his MBA from Stanford University in the 1970s and is known to offer financial support to his alma mater. Marilyn Thoma also joined the Cantor Arts Center Director's Advisory Board in 2006, the year of the exhibition.

²² That there were other possible approaches to the material is made clear by *Doctrine and Devotion: Art of the Religious Orders in the Spanish Andes*, a mini exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago (2017-2018) that was designed around thirteen paintings in the Thoma collection. Instead of hanging a collector show, the curator at the AIC used the paintings as a lens to investigate the distinct politics and iconologies of different missionary orders and the effects they had on Peruvian history.

This approach puts the emphasis on the collector rather than the collection, which may be necessary to flatter and entice donors, but also ensures that the general public is only exposed to those works of art selected by privileged and wealthy collectors, rather than trained scholars. Ironically, Marilyn Thoma's express intent for this exhibition was educational, as she wanted to introduce Americans to the "relatively unfamiliar field of painting from Spanish South America" and to serve as a catalyst to generate new knowledge about "pictorial traditions in the former Viceroyalty of Peru."²³ Of course, these are the implied intentions of nearly all museum exhibitions, adjusted for the area of study. Asking scholars to submit articles for a catalog is not a groundbreaking method of generating new knowledge, just as shipping exhibits around is not a novel way to encourage Americans (and Canadians) to view the unfamiliar products of a foreign culture. Still, it was a noble goal.

In her Introduction to the catalog, Thoma elaborates on her intentions. "Since independence, viceregal art from South America has been largely ignored—especially by scholars—as governments have distanced themselves from their Spanish-dominated pasts and new generations of artists have created their own vigorous artistic identities."²⁴ While I do not necessarily disagree, it was perhaps more true when James Adams made this point in the 1970s or when Elizabeth Wilder first suggested it in the 1940s. Thoma goes on to say that published resources in the field

²³ Suzanne L. Stratton(-Pruitt), ed., *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels: South American Paintings 1600-1825, from the Thoma Collection* (Milan, Italy : Stanford, Calif: Skira ; In association with Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, 2006), 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

have been limited in scope, with disappointing reproductions, or have only been produced in Spanish. The solution, she suggests, is the catalog of the Thoma show, “the first of its kind available in English.”²⁵ It was her wish that the catalog’s essays “serve as a foundation for future art historical studies” and that the catalog itself would “stimulate a new generation of scholars.”²⁶ Yet while the essays are generally good, they act more to summarize the field than to reveal new discoveries, and the frequent references to the Thoma collection sometimes come across as pandering.

The Thomas began collecting art in the late 1970s. Their primary collections include Digital and Electronic Art, Japanese Bamboo, Post War Painting & Sculpture, and Spanish Colonial.²⁷ Carl Thoma seems to be the partner more interested in digital and electronic art, and post-war geometric abstraction, whereas Marilynn is more interested in Japanese bamboo and Colonial South American painting, which they began collecting in the late ‘90s after a chance glimpse of five Colonial works in the window of a Santa Fe gallery early one morning. The Thomas appear to have largely purchased their works from dealers and auction houses in the United States and Spain rather than buying in South America.

After establishing the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Art Foundation in 2014, with offices in their two home towns of Chicago and Santa Fe, and arranging for long-term

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 11.

²⁷ “Carl and Marilynn Thoma,” *Inside Philanthropy*, accessed February 16, 2018, <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/wall-street-donors/carl-and-marilynn-thoma>.

loans to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Blanton Museum at UT Austin, Marilyn Thoma fell severely ill. Consequently, the future of the collection remains uncertain. According to the *Virgin, Saints, and Angels* catalog, it was always the Thomas' intent to eventually donate their collection to a museum, but if the decision as to which one has been made, it is not yet publicly known.²⁸ Certainly a number of museums in recent years have been vying for the couple's attention, and exhibiting their paintings in collector shows is one way to do that. Colonial Latin American art is finally being recognized as a crucial part of the history of the Americas and encyclopedic museums are realizing that they should have some works in their collection, so the institutional desire is there. However, as art dealer Valery Taylor Brown explains, "the material isn't plentiful."²⁹ Suzanne Stratton (who now goes by Stratton-Pruitt), compiled the catalog of the Thoma collection. "It's often murky where these things come from and countries are being more careful about letting pieces go."³⁰ Since it is much easier to receive a complete collection than to put one together piecemeal in a small and legally complicated market, museums are offering what they can to entice the Thomas to give to their organization.

As of the start of 2018, another couple is in a very similar situation. Richard and Roberta Huber, having made their fortunes in finance and wine like the Thomas, have

²⁸ Stratton(-Pruitt), *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels*, 11.

²⁹ Laura Beach, "South America's Epic Past Unfolds in a New York City Town House," *The Magazine Antiques*, November 13, 2012, <http://www.themagazineantiques.com/article/lwa-art-and-devotion/>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

been essentially shopping their collection of Colonial Latin American art around to museums for a few years. Given Roberta's current health concerns and the fact that their sons are not particularly interested in inheriting the art collection, the Hubers are looking at selling parts of their collection to add to their children's inheritance, and donating the rest to a museum.³¹ They have already given four paintings to the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) and have promised nine more, but the final fate of the rest of the collection is undecided.³²

The PMA agreement seems to have come about because of a good relationship between the Hubers, Joseph Rishel (the Curator Emeritus of European art at PMA), and his late wife Anne d'Harnoncourt (the former Director of the PMA and coincidentally the only child of Rene d'Harnoncourt who had organized *Mexican Arts* in 1930). The couples seem to have met socially at a birthday party in Hartford, but soon afterward Rishel borrowed a few of the Hubers' works for *The Arts in Latin America* in 2006. When he and d'Harnoncourt later visited the Hubers' home in 2008, it cemented an idea to put together another exhibition. Rishel suggested that it would be a follow-up to the more comprehensive *Arts in Latin America* show, and a response to an exhibition of art from the Portuguese colonies at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery titled *Encompassing the Globe: Portugal and the World in the 16th and 17th*

³¹ Richard Huber, February 18, 2017.

³² Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt et al., eds., *Journeys to New Worlds: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art in the Roberta and Richard Huber Collection* (Philadelphia, PA: New Haven; London: Philadelphia Museum of Art; In association with Yale University Press, 2013), xiii-xiv.

Centuries (2007).³³ Unlike the Thomas, the Hubers collected from Portuguese South America in addition to Spanish South America, and from Iberian colonies like Goa and the Philippines. Rishel thought this gave them a unique perspective, and so in 2013, *Journeys to New Words: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art in the Roberta and Richard Huber Collection* opened at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The personal approach and collector's show paid off for the PMA with a gift of thirteen paintings. Richard Huber had decided that he liked the institution and the people who worked there, and felt that the museum had a serious interest in building their collection.³⁴ In fact, the PMA was one of the first museums in the United States to have a collection of Colonial Latin American art, as Robert Lamborn loaned them seventy-five paintings in 1888 which became a permanent gift in 1903, but the museum does not seem to have done much with that gift until relatively recently.

Although the Huber collection contains many paintings, it also includes sculpture and the so-called "decorative arts." In theory, this should give curators more opportunity to decide on a direction for the exhibition. In actuality, however, it seems to have confused Rishel and Mark A. Castro, the Exhibition Coordinator. To their credit, they did not simply assemble a collector show and leave it at that, but the organizing principle was almost as simplistic. Rather than determining a scholarly theme, *Journeys to New Words* was sorted by material: paintings, sculpture, ivories, silver, and furniture. Yet while differentiating by media can be a useful approach,

³³ Stratton-Pruitt et al, viii.

³⁴ Huber, interview.

providing evidence of vast trade networks, incorporating Indigenous perspectives, or suggesting details of daily life, there is no evidence that Rishel and Castro tried to make these connections in *Journeys to New Worlds*. The result was more like five small collector shows grouped together.

A few years later, Marion Oettinger and William Keyse Rudolph took a different approach to the same material. This second exhibition, called *Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art from the Collection of Roberta and Richard Huber* (2016), was conceived when the Hubers approached Katherine Luber, the director of the San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMA), whom they had met when she was a curator at PMA, about doing an expanded version of the *Journeys to New Worlds* exhibit.³⁵ According to Luber, “A trip to Philadelphia with a group of trustees from the San Antonio Museum of Art inspired the Hubers to consider an exhibition in San Antonio.”³⁶ Luber agreed, handing the project to SAMA’s Curator of Latin American Art, Marion Oettinger. Busy with another major exhibition of colonial Latin American art that would mark San Antonio’s tercentenary in 2018, Oettinger went through the Hubers’ collection and came up with a “simple, yet wonderful idea.”³⁷ Specifically, Oettinger put together an exhibition checklist of roughly one hundred items, or about sixty percent of the collection, that basically included all of

³⁵ Elda Silva, “Religious Art of the ‘Highest Heaven’; Collection Comes from High Plains of Bolivia, Peru,” *San Antonio Express-News*, June 5, 2016, State edition, sec. mySA, J13.

³⁶ Erin Kathleen Murphy and William Keyse Rudolph, eds., *Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Art from the Collection of Roberta and Richard Huber* (San Antonio Museum of Art, 2016), 7.

³⁷ Silva, “Religious Art of the ‘Highest Heaven.’”

the Hubers' eighteenth-century art from the Andean Altiplano, and sorted it by depictions of angels, Jesus Christ, and the Virgin Mary, with a few secular objects included for context. This approach was, again, far from original, but Oettinger appears to have done admirably, given his time restraints. He focused the exhibition on a particular time and place, and attempted to provide a scholarly framework, investigating the didactic nature of religious painting and sculpture in Colonial South America, and displaying the silver and ivory pieces to underscore the wealth and trade networks of the colonies. Using subject matter as the organizing principle felt fresh to Luber, at least: "Unlike many previous exhibitions of colonial art, which have arranged objects by media, *Highest Heaven* is organized according to iconography."³⁸ The gentle dig at PMA aside, this exhibit probably was a better show than *Journeys to New Worlds* because of Oettinger's narrower scope. Its catalog is weaker, though, with just one academic essay and none of the detailed analyses of each individual work of art that filled out the *Journeys to New Worlds* catalog.

Unable to follow through with the exhibition planning, Oettinger turned the checklist and reins of the project over to SAMA's Chief Curator and Curator of American art, William Rudolph, who seems to have had his own agenda for the show. Despite the theme of the exhibit, the Hubers do not collect Colonial art for its Christian subject matter. "When we have visitors to our home in New York, particularly people we don't know very well, we almost feel obliged to explain to

³⁸ Murphy and Rudolph, *Highest Heaven*, 6.

them: 'No, we're not religious fanatics,'" Richard Huber told Elda Silva of the *San Antonio Express-News*.³⁹ However, Rudolph was far more interested in Oettinger's idea to "bring the religion back into the story."⁴⁰ He explains that this type of art in particular had "work to do" as a tool for religious instruction and conversion, and a focus for devotion.⁴¹ Yet it seems that for Rudolph, that work is not finished; he trusted that the art objects in the show would continue to provoke religious fervor. "I want this exhibition to make people want to go immediately to Mass. This is like a revival meeting. We want to bring them back."⁴² This desire is perhaps most evident in the catalog's section on the life of Jesus Christ. Rudolph's introductory essay describes Christ as "the personification of the love of God... who lived thirty-three years before giving His life to absolve the sins of humanity," which is not the neutral description one would normally find in a secular institution like a public museum.⁴³ Cate McQuaid of the *Boston Globe* commented on Rudolph's pointed approach in her review, critiquing the show for its focus on religion.

In its emphasis on proselytizing, however, the exhibition leaves part of the story out: the havoc colonization wreaked, and how indigenous beliefs melded with and shaped South American Catholicism... a show about colonial art ought to consider, in the catalog and in the wall text, the impact of colonialism on the colonized. "Highest Heaven" does not... the show is so carefully constructed around

³⁹ Silva, "Religious Art of the 'Highest Heaven.'"

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Murphy and Rudolph, *Highest Heaven*, 66.

religious instruction, with galleries devoted to Mary, to saints, and to the life of Christ, that it merely nods at cultural hybridity — the very thing that makes much of this art riveting.⁴⁴

Highest Heaven eventually traveled to the Crocker Art Museum (CAM) in Sacramento and the Worcester Art Museum (WAM) in Massachusetts. The latter was involved because Rudolph had worked there prior to moving to San Antonio and kept in touch with Jon Seydl, WAM's Director of Curatorial Affairs. Seydl, wanting "something very big and impressive" to fill the exhibition space at his institution after a long-term armory show closed, wholeheartedly embraced Rudolph's vision, taking partial credit: "In the interpretation, we really focused on Catholicism, which is, interestingly, something that had not been explored in a lot in exhibitions of this material up to this point."⁴⁵ Although *Gloria in Excelsis* (1985) comes to mind as an earlier exhibition that took a similar approach, there is no reason to think that Seydl, a European art specialist, would have known about an exhibition of Colonial South American art that was installed thirty years earlier. Regardless, Seydl took the news of the show to his local community, eventually finding a sponsor in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester. This connection to the Catholic community was present at all three versions of the exhibition, at differing levels of engagement.

⁴⁴ Cate McQuaid, "Artistic Worlds Collide in 'Highest Heaven,'" *BostonGlobe.Com*, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/art/2017/03/29/artistic-worlds-collide-highest-heaven/6f447G1mQS7zOfq15bgVsJ/story.html>.

⁴⁵ Nancy Sheehan, "'Heaven' Can't Wait: New Worcester Art Museum Exhibit Highlights Spanish, Portuguese Colonial Art," *Telegram.Com*, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.telegram.com/entertainmentlife/20170309/heaven-cant-wait-new-worcester-art-museum-exhibit-highlights-spanish-portuguese-colonial-art>.

Before the exhibition traveled to Worcester, it was installed at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, where I had the chance to see it for a second time and to hear Richard Huber give a collector's talk.⁴⁶ In addition, Michelle Maghari, CAM's Director of Visitor Services, gave me permission to perform a visitor survey to determine what people thought about the show. It was my first opportunity to learn how the average American museum visitor reacts to Colonial Latin American art in a museum setting. The final survey (Appendix B) was something of a compromise between my research needs and those of the Crocker Art Museum. For instance, I had wanted to ask visitors about their religious orientation, feeling that their beliefs would affect how they approached the art. However, CAM was concerned that it might offend a guest, so I removed the question. Maghari also requested that I request demographic information on my survey that was not particularly valuable to me, such as visitor income levels and membership status, but would assist the museum with their work. Once the survey was approved, I spend a weekend in January 2017 speaking with visitors at the Crocker and finished with a reasonable one hundred and seven responses.

As is fairly typical for art museums, the respondents skewed toward white, reasonably wealthy, and well educated people, although the age range was lower than expected, with forty-four respondents under the age of forty. Seventy-five percent of respondents indicated their race as "White/Caucasian," ten percent as "Latino/Hispanic," five percent as "Black/African American," nine percent as

⁴⁶ Unfortunately, photos were not permitted in either venue.

“Asian,” two percent as “American Indian or Alaskan Native,” and six percent as “Other,” including write-in responses of “Portuguese & Sioux,” “Iranian American,” and “Pakistani.” Seven percent of respondents marked two or more answers, indicating multiple racial identities. In terms of household income levels, the response was a nearly perfect bell curve with the majority making between \$75,000 and \$150,000 per year and then tapering off to either extreme. Thirty-eight percent of respondents had a graduate degree and twenty-seven percent had a bachelor’s degree. The only respondents who did not have at least a high school level of education were four teenagers who had not yet completed their schooling. Interestingly, while the majority of respondents did not visit the museum that weekend specifically to see *Highest Heaven*, thirty percent of visitors did, which seems like a reasonably good draw for a quiet, rainy weekend in early January. I suspect that number would be a bit lower in San Antonio and Worcester, however, as those institutions charged an additional fee to see the exhibit whereas the Crocker did not.

More pertinent to this study, I asked three basic questions. The first was “How important is it for you to see Latin American art when you go to a museum?” Seventeen percent of respondents said it was “extremely important,” thirty percent said “very important,” forty-one percent said “moderately important,” eight percent said “slightly important,” and just five percent said it was “not at all important.” Overall, eighty-eight percent of respondents felt it was at least moderately important to see Latin American art when they go to a museum. I followed this question by asking “What kinds of Latin American art would you like to see in a museum?” Folk

art was the most popular response, very closely followed by Modern art.⁴⁷ About sixty-one percent of respondents were interested in each. Autonomous art (called “Prehispanic” on the survey) was next with fifty-one percent, followed by Colonial art with forty-eight percent, and Decorative art with forty-three percent. I was somewhat surprised to find such a high interest in Colonial art, but given the fact that thirty percent of visitors had come to the museum primarily to see an exhibition on Colonial Latin American art, and that I administered the survey as they left the *Highest Heaven* gallery, the number was likely higher than it would have been otherwise. If I were to do a similar survey in the future, I would design it differently so that I could speak with guests both before and after they had viewed the exhibition, and perhaps poll people in a museum without Colonial Latin American art on display, to act as a control group. In that way, I would likely get a better sense of who in the museum-going public has knowledge of or interest in Colonial Latin American art and whether an exhibition such as *Highest Heaven* can change that interest either in the short or long term.

The third question I asked was open-ended and encouraged visitors to write in an answer: “What do you think about *Highest Heaven*’s focus on the colonial period of Latin American history?” The most common response (thirty visitors) was that the art was “interesting.” However, the show’s focus on Catholicism was the most polarizing issue.

⁴⁷ I was unaware of the issues surrounding the term “folk art” when I created and administered this survey. That said, it would be difficult to come up with an alternative that would be easily understood by the general public.

Some were in favor:

- “I appreciated the fact that the museum was willing to show all the religious art of the colonial Latin American history.”
- “I think it was a good way to show how important religion is on Latin America”
- “I liked it, I also liked the religious themes!”

Others were more hesitant:

- “It focuses a lot on religious things”
- “Very religious collection but very interesting”
- “I really was surprized to enjoy this style of art. Im usually not a fan of relegious art so in a way this opened my eyes to understand it a bit more” (sic)
- “enjoyed it but religious art has thematic limitations obviously”
- “It is interesting but religious - prefer the objects to the paintings”

Some were more hostile or offensive:

- “dislike extremely religious art”
- “Surprised - it brings out the high civilization they were becoming”

And several questioned the show’s emphasis:

- “It's too bad they didn’t do more art about the world around them”
- “it would be cool to have it juxtaposed with native/folk art or something to show the reality of that impact”
- “Interesting and appropriate for an exhibit, but I'd be interested in more information/exhibits of art from that period not by or for the Spanish/

Portuguese colonizers”

- “I would like more context; what events inspired the pieces? Why still relevant, particularly in an increasingly secular world?”

Yet while many respondents were uncomfortable with the exhibit’s religious bent, I also observed a number of visitors bowing their heads and murmuring prayers in front of the works. It was a good reminder that exhibitions serve multiple functions: what may be an interesting cultural artifact or a symbol of oppression to one person, is an object of faith for another. I suspect that there is value in designing exhibits to address as many of these scenarios as possible, even if that complicates the planning process and requires curators to have a certain flexibility of thought.

In addition to the survey, *Highest Heaven* was unique in that I had the opportunity to interview the collector personally. In February 2017, I visited the Hubers’ townhouse on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Although beautifully furnished, the house was largely bare, with most of its décor still on display in Sacramento, although there was one beautiful and enormous painting hanging in the two story dining area that one of the Hubers’ sons had recently purchased for his parents as a gift. I did not have the opportunity to speak with Roberta Huber, but Richard was very welcoming. First, I asked how he would account for the increasing interest in Colonial art in the United States and when he thought that began. Unlike the other major collectors of the early twenty-first century, the Hubers began their collection back in the 1960s and 70s when Richard was, like so many other collectors of that generation, working in South America as a banker, first in Argentina and then

in Brazil, although they traveled extensively through other countries, as well. Although the Hubers never exhibited in that earlier period, not really realizing they had a collection forming, this put Richard in a unique position to comment on the state of collecting Colonial art over the last fifty years. He thinks that the increased interest is a combination of factors, but pointed primarily to the rapid growth of the Latinx population in the United States and a kind of peer pressure amongst museums. The awareness and support of collectors sparked museum exhibits, Huber explained, and as a few museums began to assemble collections from collector donations and put together higher profile exhibitions, others began to realize that their own collections were lacking. Huber says his acquisitions have fallen off in the last five or six years, because now when he goes to auctions he is having to compete against bidders from the Met or LACMA. He thinks that the prices for Colonial art are still pretty modest compared to European or American art, but they are definitely higher than they were fifteen years ago. Fortunately, the lower value means that forgers are less tempted to produce Colonial style works, but the field is certainly not immune. In the planning for *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels*, Marilyn Thoma had one of her paintings sent for testing when several scholars had concerns about its authenticity. Sure enough, it contained chemical compounds only formulated in the twentieth century.⁴⁸ Her purchase was refunded by the dealer.

The bigger issue with Colonial Latin American art is not forgery, but smuggling. However, contemporary collectors are much more concerned with the

⁴⁸ Stratton(-Pruitt), *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels*, 10.

legality of their actions than those decades earlier. According to Huber, Peru has long had export restrictions on their Colonial art, but other South American countries did not until the mid- to late-1990s. Thus it was simple to take their declared purchases through customs: “If it’s not drugs or a bomb, they don’t care,” he said. Additionally, the restrictions were more geared toward preventing the art from entering the United States; officials were much less concerned about it crossing borders in South America. Therefore collectors could skirt the law by moving art from a protected country like Peru into a less protected country like Argentina, and then importing it to the U.S. from there. The Hubers did not do this directly, but they did purchase art from dealers in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, who were themselves selling art from the Peruvian and Bolivian Altiplano (high plains). This became a problem during the planning process of *Journeys to New Worlds* when the Hubers discovered that three of their paintings, which they’d paid to have restored by experts at the Brooklyn Museum, had been stolen from a Bolivian church in 2002 and were on the Interpol list.⁴⁹ They returned the works in 2015, receiving a commendation from Bolivia’s President, Evo Morales.⁵⁰ Although what the Hubers were doing was perfectly legal, they decided to stop buying in South America in the mid-2000s because of these sorts of issues. It was also a concern for Marilyn Thoma.

⁴⁹ Richard Huber. “Collectors Talk: Roberta and Richard Huber in Conversation.” Crocker Museum of Art Lecture Series, Sacramento, October 28, 2016.

⁵⁰ Agencia EFE, “Bolivia Recovers Stolen Art Thanks to Help from U.S. Couple,” April 9, 2015, <https://www.efe.com/efe/english/life/bolivia-recovers-stolen-art-thanks-to-help-from-u-s-couple/50000263-2582190>.

Where I have suspected that an item from Peru or Bolivia looked too good to be true or recognized it from the literature on paintings in South America, I have rejected it and shared my concerns with the dealer. As a matter of course, I routinely submit the image and details on each painting to the Art Loss Registry and Interpol to determine if it has been reported as missing or stolen. Responsible dealers do the same whenever there may be a question of patrimony.⁵¹

Despite the higher prices, the increased difficulty of purchase, and the potential of forgeries and stolen objects, the Hubers still occasionally add to their collection. They are not actively looking for art, but sometimes receive it as a gift or will be contacted directly by one of their trusted dealers. Collecting Colonial art has become something of a legal minefield, but more complicated still is the Hubers' recent interest in collecting Colonial ivories from Asia and the Americas. A statewide ban in New York (2015) and a federal law passed in 2016 meant to protect endangered animals have made it nearly impossible to trade in ivory, even when it was carved centuries ago and poses no risk to living animals. On the plus side, Huber has found that the prices for antique ivory dropped significantly after these laws were enacted. On the minus side, Huber jokes that he cannot even move his sculptures across the dining room because it is illegal to transport ivory in the state of New York.

Ultimately, it is clear that contemporary collectors are more conscientious than the collectors of decades past, but it seems equally clear that large private collections of Colonial Latin American art will not long remain separate from the museum world. Both the Thomas and Hubers intend on giving the bulk of their collections to museums. Jan and Frederick Mayer, who played a significant role in making the

⁵¹ Stratton(-Pruitt), *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels*, 10.

Denver Art Museum a primary center of Colonial Latin American art studies have already donated most of their Autonomous and Colonial art collections to that institution along with a great deal of funding. The last collector of note is Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, who mostly collects abstract geometric works from Latin America. However, a show consisting of fifty-seven of her pieces of Colonial Latin American art has been on tour since 2016 and is expected to travel through 2020. Called *Power and Piety: Spanish Colonial Art*, the exhibit focuses on religious practice and commercial exchange in Latin America, much like *Highest Heaven* and *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels*. Cisneros has begun to give her geometric art away, with a major gift to MoMA in 2016 and donations to six international museums in early 2018, so it seems likely that she will eventually donate her Colonial art collection, as well, although not in total. Some pieces are already laid aside for the Denver Art Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Blanton Art Museum.⁵²

The Collector Show Remastered

With collectors stepping away from their roles in this field, museums have inherited their acquisitions and become the primary collectors of Colonial Latin American art in the United States. Some are wanting to fill out an existing collection, while others are realizing that they cannot be a comprehensive museum without

⁵² “Power and Piety: Spanish Colonial Art,” *Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros*, February 18, 2016, <http://www.coleccioncisneros.org/collections/exhibitions/power-and-piety-spanish-colonial-art>.

touching on this period, so they are starting to buy what is available from auctions and dealers. This led to a period when a few museums had significant enough collections to put together exhibitions on their own. The benefit of such shows is an opportunity to show off the museum's holdings and recent acquisitions with fewer loans, meaning lower insurance costs. The demand for novelty prevents museums from doing exhibitions like this too frequently, but when an institution has amassed a large enough collection in a single area, it is quite common.

Like a regular collector's show, the theme for a museum collection show is often just that these are objects from a particular time and place that the museum has acquired. Two exhibitions of this type were *Latin American Colonial Art from the Collections* in Philadelphia in 2006 (which was a corollary to the blockbuster *Arts in Latin America*), and the *Arts of the Spanish Americas, 1550-1850* at the Met in 2002. Both exhibitions seem to have been relatively small and neither had a corresponding catalog. Johanna Hecht, a curator in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Met summarizes this approach neatly:

The colonial art of Latin America has always been a component of the Museum's collection. The works shown [in the exhibition], drawn from the collections of several departments, provide a striking profile of the broad range of artistic activity in that portion of the New World once ruled by the Spanish crown.⁵³

The key phrase here is "the broad range of artistic activity," which indicates that there was no real attempt to narrow down that range or present some kind of cohesive

⁵³ Johanna Hecht, "Arts of the Spanish Americas, 1550–1850," *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, accessed March 2, 2018, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/spam/hd_spam.htm.

thesis. Showing off a museum's collection is a perfectly valid reason to have an exhibition, but to my mind not a particularly interesting one.

A long-term exhibit at the Denver Art Museum entitled *Glitterati: Portraits & Jewelry from Colonial Latin America* was somewhat similar, but it was on display for nearly three years (2014-2017) and had a more specific focus on luxurious personal objects, jewelry, and portraiture. Jewelry shows are often popular with contemporary audiences because of their glamorous materials and relatable forms, but it was a clever choice to pair the ornaments with portraits. This provided context for the jewelry and lent freshness to the portraits. *Glitterati* did not have a full catalog, but did produce a small companion guide with more educational material than was available for the Met or Philadelphia shows.

Another exhibition that falls into the category of a museum collector show is somewhat outside the scope of this project, although it was produced in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and toured the United States, stopping in Houston, San Diego, and Wilmington, Delaware. The exhibit was called *The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico: Treasures from the Museo Franz Mayer* (2002), and it contained a significant part of a collection of Colonial Mexican art and domestic furnishings from a museum located in Mexico City.⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, the show purported to be the first of its kind: “For audiences in the United States, this exhibition provides, for the first time, exposure to the rich texture and fabric that is

⁵⁴ Franz Mayer was a German financier living in Mexico whose collection of Colonial art was turned into a museum after his death in 1975. There is no indication that he was related to collectors Frederick and Jan Mayer of Denver.

Mexico's culture as it is manifested in the arts of the colonial era," whereas Mexican audiences were only expected to be familiarized with the resources available at the Museo Franz Mayer.⁵⁵ The other stated goals of the exhibition were to "select objects that together would convey the historical and cultural story line of Mexico during the Viceregal period," and to choose objects of "inherent aesthetic importance."⁵⁶

However the "story line" is not visible in the exhibition catalog, which has essays on the life of Franz Mayer, a brief history of colonial Mexico, elite goods available in Viceregal Mexico, the artistic styles of the eighteenth century, and the legacies of three founders whose collections shaped the institutions where the exhibit toured, two of whom collected Americana rather than Colonial art from Latin America. It is a disjointed series of writings with no obvious link. Like *Journeys to New Worlds*, the catalog is organized by material with separate sections for paintings, sculpture, furniture, ceramics, gold and silver, iron, textiles, featherworks, lacquer, and choirbooks, with the latter sections containing just a few items each. Again, it seems to have been successful enough as an indication of the scope of the Museo Franz Mayer's collection, but with no further message, it appears to have had little lasting impact.

Fortunately, this category of museum collector shows contains a couple of exhibitions designed by curators who actually specialize in the arts of Colonial Latin America. Donna Pierce at the Denver Art Museum held the first curatorial position in

⁵⁵ Héctor Rivero Borrell M., ed., *The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico: Treasures from the Museo Franz Mayer* (Houston, Tex. : Mexico: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston ; Museo Franz Mayer, 2002), vii-viii.

⁵⁶ Borrell M, viii.

the country that was dedicated to “Spanish Colonial” art and Ilona Katzew, who was LACMA’s first curator of Latin American art and works mostly with Colonial and National art, both developed excellent exhibits with a distinct concentration. The first was *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life, 1521-1821* (2004). Rather than assembling all of DAM’s Colonial objects, Pierce narrowed the scope materially and geographically, borrowing some works from other institutions as necessary to fulfill her vision, but drawing primarily from DAM’s sizeable collection. By bringing attention specifically to paintings made in Mexico during the Colonial period, she was able to investigate artistic trends and developments in a single country over time without other distractions. This provided a lens for the contributing scholars, and the resulting catalog is tightly focused, with three essays making new contributions to the field by examining different aspects of Colonial Mexican painting. In addition to guest scholars Rogelio Ruiz Gomar and Clara Bargellini who wrote essays for the volume, Pierce recruited twenty-six academics from the United States, Mexico, and Europe to analyze each work of art that appeared in the exhibition in detail, further adding to the knowledge of the field. Refreshingly, no one in the catalog ever asserts that this exhibition was the first of its kind, although it does claim to be the *largest* exhibition of colonial Mexican paintings outside of Mexico, which may be true; I have not counted.

Although the exhibit seems to have had a generally good reception, at least one critic offered mixed praise. Michael Paglia of *Westword*, a weekly Denver newspaper, felt it was risky of DAM to mount a “blockbuster” without any famous artists, though

he noted that the financial risks were somewhat mitigated as he understood that the Mayers essentially underwrote the show.⁵⁷ Paglia then complained about the way the show was hung. In his opinion, an exhibition like this one should be displayed chronologically to allow visitors to understand changes over time, but *Painting a New World* was installed in such a way that related objects were placed together in order to demonstrate distinct themes or communicate specific ideas, which is fairly standard museum practice.

What makes this so very irksome to me is that I don't think it helps attract viewers, which is ostensibly why these blockbusters are done. Art history is seen as a turnoff by focus groups. But you know what? I don't think they represent the people who actually see shows like this. I think those who do see them want to know their history and therefore their meaning. It's perverse, but the DAM persists in pitching shows to the people who don't go to see them while ignoring the ones who do. One thing I'm sure of is that this was out of Pierce's control.⁵⁸

I am not as convinced that this particular matter was out of Pierce's control. Rather, I believe she made a deliberate choice to hang the exhibition thematically in order to point out certain parallels. For example, at the entrance to the exhibit were portraits of Moteuczoma and a Spanish Viceroy. By hanging them as a pair, Pierce was able to point out the ways in which creole populations appropriated Mexico's Indigenous past (in this case by showing a supposedly peaceful and inevitable transition of power from one group to the other) as a means to differentiate themselves from the

⁵⁷ Michael Paglia, "Mexican Heritage," *Westword*, April 29, 2004, <http://www.westword.com/content/printView/5079137>; Paglia was incorrect in this assertion. Rather the show was funded through a mix of corporate grants (Western Union, First Data, Wells Fargo), public grants (NEA, City of Denver, and Gay and Lesbian Fund), and a few small private donations.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

European powers. Additionally, contrasting Moteuczoma's minimal clothing and spear with the Viceroy's eighteenth-century attire and powdered wig might call to mind more familiar figures from our own history, such as George Washington and the Native Americans with whom he interacted, perhaps causing visitors to wonder how similar the colonial situations were in Mexico and the United States.⁵⁹ Neither of these deeper interpretations would have been possible had the paintings been arranged chronologically. In the end, Paglia was generally impressed by the exhibit, but one other aspect drew his ire. The last gallery contained a painting depicting the interior of an artist's cupboard. "In one of those cutesy moments brought to you by the education department at the DAM, the cupboard has been re-created and holds actual objects that we're meant to handle. Sheesh."⁶⁰ He may not have appreciated this "cutesy" moment, but I am sure many children did.

After *Painting a New World* left Denver, it traveled to another venue: the Meadows Museum at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. It was an interesting choice given that the museum only collects Spanish art and has the nickname of the "Prado of the Prairie." While the comparison of Spanish and Colonial Mexican art is relevant and can be interesting, reviews were mixed about the Meadows' installation.

⁵⁹ The relationship between George Washington and Native Americans was complicated. Though he fought with the Seneca against the French prior to the Revolutionary War and viewed the murder of individual Indigenes as "villainy," he also sent five thousand troops to destroy forty Seneca, Onondaga, and Cayuga villages in 1779 because they had supposedly given aid to the British, and compared Indigenous people to wolves, saying they were both "beasts of prey" and doomed to extinction. For more information, see <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/george-washington-letter-describes-killing-of-natives-as-villainy/>

⁶⁰ Paglia, "Mexican Heritage."

Kelley Swarthout, writing in the *Colonial Latin American Review*, explains that the Meadows had a concurrent exhibition entitled *Mapping New Spain* which seems to have been awkwardly inserted into *Painting a New World* between the religious paintings and the secular paintings.⁶¹ Swarthout argues that the organizers failed to incorporate the two spacious galleries of maps into the themes of the show, diverting attention to European perspectives rather than the Indigenous viewpoints depicted in the Map of Tezontepec and Acatitlan and the Map of Quechiltenango, Colotlipa, and Chilapa, which were already part of the *Painting a New World*, but not placed on view near the European maps in *Mapping New Spain*. Additionally, she feels that *Mapping New Spain* did nothing to provoke further discussion about the relationships between cartography and colonialism, and added nothing significant to the DAM exhibition. After leaving Dallas, a condensed version of *Painting a New World* traveled to Exeter, Tucson, Santa Fe, and the Museo de las Americas in Denver. Unlike the primary exhibition at DAM, these traveling shows were funded by the Mayers.

The other notable exhibition of this type was *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World* at LACMA in 2011. Curator Ilona Katzew maintained the broad geographic and temporal focus of most earlier exhibitions, but instead narrowed the concept, choosing to investigate “the significance of indigenous peoples and culture

⁶¹ Kelley Swarthout, “Exhibition Review,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 14, no. 1 (June 2005): 137–42.

within the complex social matrix of colonial Spanish America.”⁶² This idea builds on what the Brooklyn Museum began with *Converging Cultures* in 1996, but uses LACMA’s greater resources and reach. Unfortunately, the catalog for *Contested Visions* also claims that it was “the first exhibition to offer a comparative view of the two principal Viceroyalties of Spanish America: Mexico and Peru,” and that it “breaks new ground by considering the pre-Columbian antecedents of these two vast sociopolitical regions and their continuities and ruptures over time.”⁶³ Both of these statements, by LACMA Director Michael Govan, are patently false, but may be considered exaggeration by a non-specialist for advertising purposes; Katzew herself never makes the same assertions. Instead she explains that the project “explores the significance of indigenous peoples and cultures in Mexico and Peru... considering the multiple roles played by the arts in negotiating a sense of place in the often fractured worlds of late pre-Columbian and colonial Latin America.”⁶⁴ Katzew suggests that the show was born out of a need to break away from her training, which consisted of looking at Colonial art through a European lens, and “make sense” of what was to her a less understood aspect of Colonial art: the Indigenous component.

The catalog for *Contested Visions* reflects Katzew’s confusion, containing a wide array of essays, including a comparative look at the empires of the Inka and the Triple Alliance (Aztec), two studies of the conquest of Mexico, a paper on heraldry in

⁶² Ilona Katzew et al., *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World* (Los Angeles; New Haven [Conn.]: Los Angeles County Museum of Art ; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011), 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

Spain and its colonies, another on genealogies used to make land claims, two studies on festivals and rituals in Colonial Mexico and Peru, the use of European prints in the production of art in the Americas, local understandings of the Christian concept of Hell, the role of Christianized Indigenes in the creation of a “syncretized” pantheon, and the dangers of equating ethnic identity with pictorial style in the Cuzco school of Colonial Andean painting. Although all of these essays are roughly organized around the Indigenous role in Colonial art and do make interesting contributions to the field, their inclusion in this catalog is puzzling until one realizes that the book is not a catalog at all. While each essay is illustrated with images, it is unclear which of these works were included in the show; there is no exhibition checklist, separate section of the book, or so much as an asterisk to indicate what was and was not on view. As an addition to the scholarship, the book functions well, but it cannot truly be said to be an exhibition catalog. Katzew did something similar with her earlier exhibition *Inventing Race: Casta Painting and Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (2004). Although there was a short twenty-page companion guide produced for that exhibit, the associated book was printed under a slightly different title, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*, and makes no mention of the show from the same year. Neither works as a catalog documenting the exhibit. Ultimately, I would argue that *Painting a New World* is a better model of what a museum collector show (and catalog) can be. With more and more museums building and inheriting collections of Colonial Latin American art, this is a type of exhibition I would expect to see more frequently in the coming years.

The New Exhibitions

Of the four types of museum exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art in the twenty-first century that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, three of them are continuations from earlier decades: blockbusters, collector shows, and museum collector shows (on a very small scale). However, after nearly a century of exhibitions, museum collections have grown large enough and scholarship has grown sophisticated enough to allow for a new type of exhibition: the focused show. The descendent of exhibits like *Painting a New World*, the focused show eschews the earlier tradition of grouping all Colonial Latin American art together and instead narrows the scope of the show by limiting it to a certain subject matter, geographic region, temporal period, and/or artist. These have become increasingly common in the past five years and there is no reason to think this trend will end any time soon. Part of the reason for this is because curators are coming to understand that epics like *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* do not make a great deal of sense if one is attempting to make a scholarly argument; their purpose is more political and economic than educational. The other part is that scholarship in the field continues to improve. Rather than laying out the broad strokes of historical art production, academics are increasingly able to investigate smaller issues in greater depth.

Three of the six exhibitions I have placed in this category limited their scope by subject matter. This includes the aforementioned *Inventing Race: Casta Painting and Eighteenth-Century* at LACMA in 2004, which focused specifically on *casta* paintings, images of different racial mixtures that were mostly made in eighteenth-

century Mexico. Another was *Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia*, which opened at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 2015. This show could genuinely be called the first of its kind, as it was the first exhibit to explore the influence of Asia on the arts of the Colonial Americas, including the United States, which more accurately reflects the strengths of Boston's collection. Yet the idea had been percolating in scholarly circles for some time. The Denver Art Museum had a symposium on this subject in 2006.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the *Made in the Americas* "companion book" follows the *Contested Visions* formula and tells the reader nothing about the exhibit, though it does contribute to the literature of this flourishing sub-field of intercontinental exchange in the Colonial period. Finally, the third subject-based show was *La Virgen de Guadalupe: Empress of the Americas* which opened at the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) in 2016. This special exhibition was entirely dedicated to depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe from the Colonial period to the present. It had no associated catalog and I was never able to determine who curated the show, although they seem to have borrowed from collections around the country, including six works from the Denver Art Museum. While this may seem an odd subject for a museum of Natural Science, it is in keeping with many other exhibits at HMNS, which have included everything from medieval armory, Fabergé jewelry, artifacts from the Titanic, Chinese Terra Cotta warriors, and historical documents like the American Bill of Rights and the Magna Carta, none of which

⁶⁵ Donna Pierce et al., eds., *Asia & Spanish America: Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500-1850*, Symposium Series / Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art 2006 (Denver, Colo: Denver Art Museum, 2009).

could really be considered Natural Science. More likely, these are traveling blockbuster exhibits meant to keep visitors returning to the museum on a regular basis, though there is no indication that *La Virgin de Guadalupe* ever traveled to another museum. Still, it was an interesting take on the ever evolving uses of this Colonial icon and it is a shame that it was not documented.

In addition to the subject-matter shows, another type of focused show is limited by time and space, such as *Painted in Mexico, 1700–1790: Pinxit Mexici* (2017). Like *Painting a New World* at the DAM, *Painted in Mexico* exclusively exhibited paintings produced in Mexico, but it had a shorter temporal span. Instead of the full three centuries of colonial occupation, *Painted in Mexico* only looked at work produced in the eighteenth century: Katzew's specialty. The accompanying catalog, nearly as massive as the one for *Splendors*, is better than Katzew's previous exhibitions, but the volume is still unwieldy and confusing with plates of the included artworks grouped together, followed by sections of analysis of the works illustrated earlier. Large catalog numbers are meant to aid the reader in connecting the two, but they mostly look unsightly.

Painted in Mexico was just one of more than seventy exhibitions featured in the Getty Foundation's *Pacific Standard Time: Latin America/Los Angeles (PST:LA/LA)* initiative. The third initiative in the Pacific Standard Time series, the Getty provided over sixteen million dollars in funding and aid to museums and other institutions in and around Los Angeles to mount exhibits exploring their connection to Latin

American art.⁶⁶ Running from September 2017 through January 2018, the initiative featured a week-long performance festival, concerts, film festivals, and countless hours of other programming, as well. Of the more than seventy exhibits put together for the initiative, only two of them featured Autonomous era artwork, and another six were nominally related to Colonial art, although I would not consider a show on urban growth in Latin America from 1830 to 1930, or an exhibit on the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural movement in southern California as “Colonial.” Two other exhibitions looked at the California Missions in the Colonial period, and a show at the Huntington Gardens displayed botanical prints, which were of the correct period and depicted flora and fauna of Latin America, but in their style and purpose were wholly European. Only *Golden Kingdoms: Luxury and Legacy in the Ancient Americas* at the Getty, which was mostly a blockbuster of Autonomous luxury items but featured a small but excellent selection of well-known Colonial works, and the aforementioned *Painted in Mexico* at LACMA truly showcased Colonial Latin American art in the United States. The remaining seventy exhibits were mostly invested in the arts of Latin America from the twentieth century, or the arts of the Latinx/Chicanx diaspora in the U.S., and especially in the Los Angeles area. Though the shows brought new attention to understudied subjects, like Afro-Brazilian art, Cuban art, Latin American video art, and the Chinese Caribbean connection, among other things, the comparative shortage of “historical” exhibits is disappointing.

⁶⁶ Maximiliano Durón, “Getty Foundation Releases List of Traveling PST: LA/LA Exhibitions,” *ARTnews*, January 24, 2018, <http://www.artnews.com/2018/01/24/getty-foundation-releases-list-traveling-pst-la-la-exhibitions/>.

Is *PST: LA/LA* the future of the museum blockbuster? I tend to think not. For one, this artistic effusion of coordinated events was also present for both *Twenty Centuries* in 1940 and *Splendors* in 1990, so this is not a new phenomenon. In both of those cases, the cities in question, whether New York, San Antonio, or Los Angeles, were inundated with Latin American cultural events for several months, but when the exhibitions closed and the entertainments stopped, nothing much seemed to have changed in the overall cultural expression of the city. Many people of my acquaintance expressed exhaustion with the PST initiative rather than elation, aware that it was impossible to see all of the exhibits in such a short time frame. Others believed that the initiative was a good example of tokenism, meaning that now that all these institutions have had their “Latin America show,” they will not need to revisit the subject again for some time. It is a wildly expensive proposition, only made possible by the funding of an organization with deep pockets, and does not seem any more profitable than a normal slate of exhibitions, so I doubt that the Getty is starting a new trend here.

At any rate, aside from *Painted in Mexico*, the other geographic specialty show I would like to mention is *San Antonio 1718: Art from Viceregal Mexico*, which opened at the San Antonio Museum of Art in February 2018. Curated by Marion Oettinger, the show commemorates the city’s founding three hundred years ago as a missionary outpost in northern New Spain. Like *Painted in Mexico*, the San Antonio show is also an exhibit of eighteenth-century Mexican art, and it is astonishing to have two major exhibitions on basically the same subject open at the same time. This

is only possible because more than ninety-five percent of the art in the San Antonio exhibit is on loan from Mexican museums.⁶⁷ Unusually, however, the show's funders appear to be Americans: regular sponsors of the San Antonio Museum of Art. I can think of no other exhibition that was initiated by a curator, paid for by local supporters, featured art objects on loan from Mexico, and had no visible political aims.

The last focused exhibit that I wish to discuss is neither subject-based nor regionally and temporally specific except by circumstance. Instead, it is a show dedicated to a single Colonial Mexican painter of Spanish descent: Cristóbal de Villalpando (1649-1714). Opening at the Met in 2017, *Cristóbal de Villalpando: Mexican Painter of the Baroque* was a necessarily small exhibit looking at just eleven works of a Mexican master painter who was strongly influenced by European techniques and subjects. The show's centerpiece, a twenty-eight foot tall painting, depicts two scenes that had probably never been juxtaposed on a single canvas before: Moses and the brazen serpent at the bottom, with the Transfiguration of Jesus at the top.⁶⁸ It was painted for a chapel in the Puebla Cathedral in Puebla, Mexico and the Met's exhibition is the first time it has left that space since it was painted in 1683. Sponsored by Banamex, the show did produce a catalog, but it is no longer available for purchase in the museum's shop just five months after the close of the exhibition,

⁶⁷ Marion Oettinger, ed., *San Antonio 1718: Art from Mexico* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2018), 177–78.

⁶⁸ "Cristóbal de Villalpando: Mexican Painter of the Baroque," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, i.e. The Met Museum*, accessed March 5, 2018, <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2017/cristobal-de-villalpando>.

nor does it seem to be available in bookstores or libraries. Curated by Ronda Kasl, who had earlier designed the Eurocentric *Sacred Spain* in Indianapolis; Jonathan Brown at NYU, who also works mostly on Spanish art; and Clara Bargellini, a professor at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, a great deal of scholarly and political resources went into this small show, giving it a reverence not unlike a retrospective of a better-known artist like Rubens or Van Gogh. Although European art has long been held in a place of esteem in museums in the United States, this exhibition either indicates that Colonial Latin American art is finally starting to interest the staff at one of the largest and most influential museums in the country, or that some Colonial Latin American art is being seen as “European enough” to be worthy of further investigation.

What the Future Holds

Looking at the trends of the past twenty years, it is relatively simple to make some predictions for exhibitions of Colonial Latin American art in the United States. Future shows will continue the movement toward specificity rather than the big, generalized exhibits of the past, although every couple of decades or as politically expedient, those larger blockbusters may still materialize. Directions of growth will include new geographic areas. Beyond Mexico and Peru, shows in ten or twenty years will be looking at the Colonial art of less well studied areas like Central America (Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama), the Caribbean Islands (especially Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic), the non-Andean parts of South

America (Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, and Chile), and New Mexico and the rest of the southwest U.S. that once was part of New Spain. Temporal periods will also shrink, as curators look at the arts of specific centuries or even decades instead of the Colonial period as a whole. Additionally, in the mold of the Cristóbal de Villalpando show, there will be exhibits of specific schools and particular artists. The most likely of these are the most well-known: Miguel Cabrera and Juan Correa in Mexico, and the Cuzco school in the Andes. Finally, following the developments in scholarship outside the museum, I suspect that exhibitions will take a material turn away from painting, incorporating more sculpture and decorative objects, such as metalwork, textiles, furniture, ceramics, the Andean drinking vessels known as *keros*, etc. None of these will be crowd-pleasing blockbusters drawing enormous audiences, but they will quietly add to our knowledge of the field while educating many diverse Americans about the treasures and splendors of Colonial Latin American art.

CONCLUSION

On February 17, 2017, LACMA curator Ilona Katzew convened a panel at the CAA annual conference in New York City on the subject of “The Evolving Canon: Collecting and Displaying Spanish Colonial Art.”¹ Two of the speakers, Michael Brown from the San Diego Museum of Art (SDMA) and Marcus Burke of The Hispanic Society of America, used their time to discuss the growth of the Colonial Latin American art collections at their own institutions in recent years. During the question and answer session that followed the presentations, the panel began discussing the appropriate placement of Colonial Latin American art within the institution, as it tends to fall between disciplinary cracks. Michael Brown (like his mentor at NYU, Jonathan Brown), specializes in the art of “Spain and the Hispanic Americas,” and is the Associate Curator of European Art before 1850 at SDMA, so it was not surprising when he began to argue that museums should house Colonial Latin American art within European Art departments. He based this suggestion both on stylistic considerations and from a desire to see Colonial Latin American art offered the same serious scholarly attention as European work of the same time period, rather than being treated like the poor, provincial cousin. Katzew and Burke, who also came to study Colonial Latin American art through Spanish art, generally agreed, though Katzew later clarified her position to say that she does not really care which

¹ For the sake of full disclosure, I submitted an application to participate in this panel session, but my proposed paper based on the second chapter of this dissertation was not accepted.

department is in control of specific artworks, as long as she can easily gain access to them as needed.

Although I understand their position, I wholeheartedly disagree with it. Perhaps my dislike for this solution stems from my own scholastic background. I did not come to Colonial Latin American art through Spanish art; I first encountered it whole cloth as its own field and as a blend of various Indigenous and European traditions. For this reason, I have made an effort to study both Autonomous American and European art extensively in order to appreciate the nuances of Colonial art, many of which are not visible without an Indigenous conception of time, materiality, and space. Armed with this knowledge, I understand that placing Colonial Latin American art within the purview of European art in American museums means that it will be further neglected and denigrated in comparison, rather than elevated, as Brown believes. What, to an average American museum goer, will look “primitive” in comparison to “sophisticated” European works, which they are more accustomed to seeing in their own visual culture, is often evidence of an entirely different system of thoughts and values. Placing Colonial works within the domain of Europe suggests implicitly that the visual culture of the colonies ought to be—or even can be—evaluated using the same criteria as that used to judge the merits of the colonizer’s artwork. If it were up to me, Colonial Latin American art, as well as Colonial art from North America, would instead be housed in Arts of the Americas departments. While stylistic, cultural, and religious influences stand out among the factors influencing the appearance of an artwork, so too does its geographical origins. Art from across the

American colonies, while an interesting side note in European history, is a crucial piece of American (in the most inclusive sense) history. As I suggested in the Introduction, if there is no need to hang on to Eurocentric descriptions of periods of time like pre-Columbian or pre-Hispanic, then there is certainly no need to re-center Europe as the *primary* source of Colonial art and culture. What happened in the Americas is uniquely American, regardless of how much influence the Spanish court had on settlers of Spanish ancestry, let alone how much effect the visual cultures of Spanish aggressors had on Indigenous populations.

So, to return to the first aim of this dissertation, which is to rethink the terminology and categorization used in the field, I would recommend that museum departments be organized primarily by geography, since the system that is currently in place fails to pass muster in terms of its own internal logic. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has seventeen curatorial departments with no clear organizational principle:

- The American Wing
- Ancient Near Eastern Art
- Arms and Armor
- Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas
- Asian Art
- The Costume Institute
- Drawings and Prints
- Egyptian Art
- European Paintings
- European Sculpture and Decorative Arts
- Greek and Roman Art
- Islamic Art
- The Robert Lehman Collection
- Medieval Art and The Cloisters
- Modern and Contemporary Art

- Musical Instruments
- Photographs

Some departments are organized by date (Medieval Art, Modern and Contemporary Art), some by place (Asian Art), some by subject matter (Arms and Armor, Musical Instruments), some by ethnicity (Egyptian Art), some by religion (Islamic Art), some by collector (The Robert Lehman Collection), and some by material (Drawings and Prints, Photographs). Where in this schema does Colonial Latin American art go?

One might imagine with the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, but this department only oversees pre-contact Autonomous art and Native American art up to 1970, which is its own thorny issue. Nor is Colonial art included in European Painting or European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, as Brown would have it. Instead, their small collection of Colonial Latin American art appears to be included in The American Wing, buried beneath twenty thousand objects of fine and decorative arts from North America, in a department that seems to be largely focused on domestic architecture and furnishings in the United States, as illustrated by twenty period rooms.

Of course the Metropolitan is too large and entrenched to change its departmental structure now, but imagine an encyclopedic museum with the following departments:

- Arts of Africa
- Arts of the Americas
 - North America (the United States and Canada)
 - Latin America (including Mexico and the Caribbean Islands)

- Arts of Asia
 - East Asia
 - West Asia (Near East/Middle East)
 - South/Southeast Asia
- Arts of Europe
- Arts of Oceania/Pacific Islands

Depending on the size of the museum, it could have just five geographic departments, or it could drill down still further, dividing Latin America into its three general temporal periods, for instance, or partitioning European art by material, as they have done at the Met – whatever makes the most sense for the existing collections. This schema is flexible and does not preclude the creation of interdepartmental initiatives. The Costume Institute or Arms and Armor might sit happily between departments with holdings technically residing in each of the five main departments, but specialty staff and collection housing that keeps desired material together. This approach provides an immediately evident place for any object in the collection based on the location in which it was made, offers clarity to the public and museum staff, and avoids the hierarchy that inevitably occurs when one has six departments of European art and one department that lumps together the once colonized continents of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas.

In the same way that Colonial creoles appropriated Autonomous art and culture to divorce themselves from European control, North Americans of the past few centuries have used museums to emphasize their European heritage. However, according to the Brookings Institute, the United States will be a minority majority

nation in just about twenty-five years.² This means that by the early 2040s, white people of European descent will make up less than fifty percent of the U.S. population. If museums want to stay relevant to the public, they will need to showcase everyone's heritage. Obviously, systems of white privilege, power, and wealth that were built over centuries cannot be dismantled overnight, but museums, despite their deeply imperial origins, are uniquely poised to stand at the forefront of this change.

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) has funded several studies on American perceptions of museums.³ In 2008, they found that there are approximately 850 million visits each year to American museums, which is nearly twice the attendance to all major league sporting events and theme parks combined.⁴ With a current U.S. population of approximately 325 million citizens, and a significant percentage of people who do not visit museums at all, these numbers suggest that those who do go to museums will go several times in a year. A report from 2017 states that public support for museums hovers around ninety-six percent, regardless of political persuasion.⁵ This is astonishing in a world where everything from vaccinations to school lunch programs have been politicized. Even more astonishing

² William H. Frey, "New Projections Point to a Majority Minority Nation in 2044," *Brookings*, November 30, 2001, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2014/12/12/new-projections-point-to-a-majority-minority-nation-in-2044/>.

³ American Alliance of Museums, "Museum Facts," accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.aam-us.org/about-museums/museum-facts>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

are the results of two surveys from 1998 and 2001 which collectively found that eighty-seven percent of respondents viewed museums as “one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information.”⁶ This placed museums above newspapers, television news media, the U.S. government, academic researchers, books, teachers, and even personal accounts by relatives. A great number of things have changed in the intervening seventeen years, so that figure may no longer be accurate, but it does show a remarkable willingness to trust museums as a source of information. While museum staff members nationwide cheered the news, Jim Gardner of the National Archives interpreted this fact in a more skeptical way. The reason the public trusts museums, he argues, is because they do not even realize that museums present a particular point-of-view in their exhibitions.⁷ Although curators juxtapose and arrange objects to suggest certain ideas, and write labels and catalogs to tell specific stories, visitors often believe they are receiving an unmediated encounter with an authentic object that speaks entirely for itself. This is both beneficial and detrimental. Perhaps it is not particularly problematic when the intended behavioral change is generally agreed to be a positive one, like encouraging the public to recycle, to stop smoking, or to value the artistry of Native American baskets, but it could become an issue if the manipulator’s motives are less than pure.

⁶ Elizabeth Merritt, “Trust Me, I’m a Museum,” *Center for the Future of Museums*, accessed March 22, 2018, http://futureofmuseums.aam-us.org/2015/02/trust-me-im-museum_3.html.

⁷ Ibid.

This idea is known as “norms engineering,” and though the concept has been around for a long time, psychologists are just beginning to understand it. According to Betsy Levy Paluck, a psychologist at Princeton University who was interviewed on the NPR podcast *Invisibilia*, it is very difficult to change someone’s core beliefs by challenging them with facts and arguments, but relatively easy to get someone to change their *behavior* based on what they think other people believe.⁸ As a highly social species that has always relied on group behavior for survival, human beings are essentially programmed to act in the ways that they think the others around them expect, so this type of societal pressure is hard to ignore. The example given on the program was an *American Idol*-style reality program called “Inspire Somalia” that was funded by the United Nations and was meant to convince ordinary Somalians that things like democratic voting and public singing were normal and acceptable after they had spent years under the repressive control of the extremist group al-Shabab who banned music in 2009. Of course, when it is in favor of things that Americans support, like democracy and music, this kind of manipulative norms engineering sounds like an excellent idea. However, it can be used against us, as well. During the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Russian hackers spammed American social media with endless messages implying that interracial violence was on the rise in the United States, that Jewish people controlled the media, or that Hillary Clinton was a criminal. Seeing these claims liked, discussed, and reblogged repeatedly made

⁸ Hanna Rosin and Alix Spiegel, "The Other Real World," *Invisibilia*, Podcast, March 16, 2008, <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510307/invisibilia>.

Americans think that their friends and family believed these things, so enough of them overrode their own beliefs and changed their behaviors to match what they thought the group wanted and voted Donald Trump into office. This is a president whose popularity numbers have always been below his election percentage, suggesting that there are a significant number of Americans who do not necessarily like him, but voted for him anyway.

Norms engineering is a powerful force even when it is used unconsciously, but all the more so when it is used deliberately. When one combines that with the trust that the American public has in museums, their lack of understanding that they are being provided a carefully thought out narrative about history and human behavior, and the number of museum visits that take place each year, then we begin to see the immense power that museums have to shape the behaviors, if not necessarily the beliefs, of average Americans: even those who do not visit museums. As I believe I have demonstrated in this dissertation, museums, governments, and corporations have intentionally used this power in exhibitions like *Twenty Centuries* (1940) to shift public opinion toward supporting the Good Neighbor program and learning to cooperate with Latin America for the sake of national security, or *Splendors* (1990) to promote NAFTA and protect corporate agendas.

However, less well-known exhibitions have been just as influential, subtly moving the needle of what is considered “normal” in our society. Every time a museum displays Colonial Latin American art (or anything else), it is insinuating that intelligent and worldly people find value in those objects, thus signaling that the

average visitor should, too. Exhibitions like *Spain and New Spain* (1979) implied that Colonial Mexican painters were equally skilled as their Spanish counterparts. When a docent publicly betrayed her ignorance of that fact, perhaps feeling that she was behind the curve on knowledge that everyone else in her immediate vicinity seemed to have already obtained, she quickly changed her behavior, becoming an ardent fan of Colonial Mexican painting (see page 128). *Converging Cultures* (1996) similarly marked a change when it indicated that scholars might consider looking more to the Indigenous contributions to Colonial art than European models. In that way, it altered the norm in the field. It did not do so randomly – it was itself following trends in the scholarship of the time – but it was the most visible expression of those trends and reached a much larger audience. In fact, it reached me. I never saw the exhibit, but would I have referred to the post-*Converging Cultures* show *Sacred Spain* (2009) as “shockingly Eurocentric” if I had not been influenced by my academic advisors to always consider the Indigenous contribution to Colonial Latin American art? I have no doubt they themselves were affected by *Converging Cultures*, even if it only acted as a confirmation of the normalcy of their scholarly approach and methodologies, since one worked at the Brooklyn Museum for a time and the other contributed an article to the catalog. Clearly, the normalization process is subtle, complex, and constant, but it is powerful, and museums need to be very aware of how they wield that power and to whom they lend it.

As I explained in the Introduction, this project had four ambitious aims. The first was to document the historiography of the field of Colonial Latin American art in

general, and the history of its being exhibited in U.S. museums over the last century, specifically. I have done that, researching approximately seventy-five known exhibits and discussing a great number of them in some detail. My second aim was to challenge the terminology and categorization of the field, interrogating the use of terms like “pre-Columbian” and “pre-Hispanic,” “Viceregal,” “encounter,” and others, as well as critiquing the conceptual boxes we use in museums, professional organizations, universities, and conferences to group cultures together. For this reason, I have offered new vocabulary, such as “Autonomous,” to the field, and have proposed changes to CAA categories and museum departments, that I believe could forward a more equitable mindset in our approach to the arts of the world (see Appendix A and page 247). The third and fourth aims of this project were more intertwined. I wanted to examine the collective effect of exhibitions on the American public and investigate how museums have been used by outside forces over the past century. By detailing the scope of each show, its goals and approaches, and its sponsors and stakeholders, I have begun to consolidate the list of people and organizations that intervened in the exhibit process to make particular statements. Then, by looking at the effect these exhibits had on audiences, critics, and the general public, I have been able to demonstrate some of their impact. There is still a great deal of research and work that must be done, and we may never fully understand the multiple levels on which museum exhibitions have influenced American society, but I can conclude with a fair degree of certainty that their influence is greater than anyone

expected. With this in mind, I urge museum professionals and scholars to arm themselves with this knowledge when designing the exhibits of the future.

FIGURES



Fig. 1. A “white cube” installation, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*.
Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, 1940.
<https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2985?locale=en#installation-images>
(accessed December 28, 2016).



Fig. 2. A presentation of objects inspired by department store window displays,
Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art.
Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, 1940.
<https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2985?locale=en#installation-images>
(accessed December 28, 2016).



Fig. 3. A row of houseplants attempting to give the exhibit a “jungle” feel,
Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art.

Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, 1940.

<https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2985?locale=en#installation-images>
(accessed December 28, 2016).



Fig. 4. Marcos Zapata and Cipriano Toledo y Gutierrez, Cusco School. *Adoration of the Magi*, circa 1760. 74" x 50" oil paint and gold on canvas. Denver Art Museum. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Barrows Freyer II for Frank Barrows Freyer Collection.



Fig. 5. Unknown Artist, Cusco School. *Portrait of the Marquis de Valleumbroso*, attributed to the early 17th century. 46" x 30" oil on canvas. Reproduced in *The Collection of James F. Adams: Colonial Paintings and Sculpture of Latin America*, Sotheby's New York, image 37. 1980.



Fig. 6. Coat of Arms, Marquis de Valle Umbroso, 1687, licensed under the Creative Commons Universal Public Domain Dedication [CC0 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CR-MSLVU.png> (accessed June 26, 2017).



Fig. 7. Dr. Adams at home with his collection, 1974.
Photograph courtesy of Dorothy Vanderhorst.



Fig. 8. “Jungle” setting of the Mexico Pavilion at EPCOT Center, Walt Disney World Florida, 2006, by Codyshive, released into the public domain.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mexico_at_EPCOT.jpg (accessed March 12, 2018).



Fig. 9. Exterior of the Mexico Pavilion at EPCOT Center, Walt Disney World Florida, 2005, by Benjamin D. Esham / Wikimedia Commons, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike [CC BY 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexico_Pavilion_at_Epcot#/media/File:Mexico_pavilion_at_Epcot.jpg (accessed March 12, 2018).



Fig. 10. Detail of Maya-style stele and feathered serpent heads at the Mexico Pavilion, EPCOT Center, Walt Disney World Florida, 2013, by Jeff Krause, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic ([CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/)) <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jeffkrause/8634018116> (accessed March 12, 2018).



Fig. 11. Goods for sale in the Mexico Pavilion, EPCOT Center, Walt Disney World Florida, 2010, by Loren Javier, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic ([CC BY-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/))
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lorenjavier/5022503163> (accessed March 12, 2018).
The top of the photograph has been cropped.



Fig. 12. San Ángel Restaurant with faux pyramid and volcano in the background, Mexico Pavilion at EPCOT Center, Walt Disney World Florida, 2005, by Codyshive, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike [CC BY 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inside_EPCOT_Mexico.jpg
(accessed March 12, 2018).



Fig. 13. Installation view with rotating mannequins, Walt Disney, Co., *Splendors of the Golden Age: Three Centuries of Spanish Colonial Art*, 1987, pgs. 4-5.

APPENDIX A: CAA CATEGORIES

Existing Categories

Chronology

- Before 1500 BCE
- 1500 BCE to 500 BCE
- 500 BCE to 500 CE
- Sixth to Tenth Century
- Eleventh to Fourteenth Century
- Fifteenth Century
- Sixteenth Century
- Seventeenth Century
- Eighteenth Century
- Nineteenth Century
- Twentieth Century
- Twenty-first Century

Geographic Area

- Africa
- Caribbean
- Central America
- Central and North Asia
- East Asia
- North America
- Northern Europe
- Oceania/Australia
- South America
- South Asia/South East Asia
- Southern Europe and Mediterranean
- West Asia

Subject, Genre, Media, Artistic Practice

- Aesthetics
- African American/African Diaspora
- Ancient Egyptian/Near Eastern Art
- Ancient Greek/Roman Art
- Architectural History/Urbanism/Historic Preservation
- Art Education/Pedagogy/Art Therapy
- Art of the Ancient Americas
- Artistic Practice/Creativity
- Asian American/Asian Diaspora

- Ceramics/Metals/Fiber Arts/Glass
- Colonial and Modern Latin America
- Comparative
- Conceptual Art
- Decorative Arts
- Design History
- Digital Media/New Media/Web-Based Media
- Digital Scholarship/History
- Drawings/Prints/Work on Paper/Artistic Practice
- Fiber Arts and Textiles
- Film/Video/Animation
- Folk Art/Vernacular Art
- Genders/Sexualities/Feminisms
- Graphic/Industrial/Object Design
- Indigenous Peoples
- Installation/Environmental Art
- Islamic Art
- Latinx
- Material Culture
- Multimedia/Intermedia
- Museum Practice/Museum Studies/Curatorial Studies/Arts Administration
- Native American/First Nations
- Painting
- Patronage, Art Collecting
- Performance Art/Performance Studies/Public Practice
- Photography
- Politics/Economics
- Queer/Gay Art
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion/Cosmology/Spirituality
- Sculpture
- Sound Art
- Survey
- Theory/Historiography/Methodology
- Visual Studies

Possible Alternate Categories

In these possible alternate categories, I have left the Chronology section as is, but changed the Geography and Subject Matter categories extensively, adding sub-categories. Scholars would remain able to choose up to three categories that describe their project (metadata tags, essentially) but they could choose from either the

overarching category or a sub-category: whichever best fits the level of specificity in their work. This offers flexibility and equality across disciplines while still allowing those in particular subfields to discover one another's work.

Chronology

- Before 1500 BCE
- 1500 BCE to 500 BCE
- 500 BCE to 500 CE
- Sixth to Tenth Century
- Eleventh to Fourteenth Century
- Fifteenth Century
- Sixteenth Century
- Seventeenth Century
- Eighteenth Century
- Nineteenth Century
- Twentieth Century
- Twenty-first Century

Geographic Area

- Africa
 - Central Africa
 - East Africa
 - North Africa
 - South Africa
 - West Africa
- Asia
 - Central Asia
 - East Asia
 - South Asia/Southeast Asia
 - West Asia/Middle East/Near East
- Europe
 - Eastern Europe
 - Northern Europe
 - Southern Europe/Mediterranean
 - Western Europe
- Latin America
 - Caribbean
 - Central America/Mesoamerica
 - South America
- North America (the U.S. and Canada)
- Oceania/Pacific Islands
 - Australia/New Zealand/Tasmania
 - Melanesia

- Micronesia
- Polynesia

Subject Matter

- American Art
 - African American/African Diaspora
 - Anglo American
 - Asian American/Asian Diaspora
 - Latin American American/Latinx/Chicanx (Mexican American)
 - Native American/American Indian/First Nations
 - Pacific Islander American
- Architecture
 - Architectural History
 - Historic Preservation
 - Urbanism
- Art Education/Pedagogy
- Art Therapy
- Genre
 - Conceptual Art
 - Decorative Arts
 - Environmental Art
 - Folk Art/Vernacular Art
 - Installation Art
 - Performance Art/Performance Studies/Public Practice
- Identity
 - Genders/Sexualities/Feminisms
 - Indigenous Peoples (inclusive)
 - Queer/Gay/LGBTQIA Art
 - Race/Ethnicity
- Medium
 - Ceramics
 - Drawings/Prints/Work on Paper
 - Fiber Arts and Textiles
 - Glass
 - Metalwork
 - Painting
 - Photography
 - Sculpture
- Multimedia/Intermedia
 - Digital Media/New Media/Web-Based Media
 - Digital Scholarship/History
 - Film/Video/Animation
 - Graphic/Industrial/Object Design

- Sound Art
- Museums
 - Arts Administration
 - Curatorial Studies/Exhibitions
 - Museum Practice/Museum Studies
- Patronage/Art Collecting
- Religion/Cosmology/Spirituality
 - Arts of Other Religious Practices
 - Buddhist Art
 - Christian Art
 - Hindu Art
 - Islamic Art
 - Jewish Art
- Theory/Historiography/Methodology
 - Aesthetics
 - Artistic Practice/Creativity
 - Comparative
 - Design History
 - Material Culture
 - Politics/Economics
 - Survey
 - Visual Studies

APPENDIX B: COLONIAL LATIN AMERICAN ART EXHIBITS, 1920-2020

DATE	TITLE OF EXHIBITION	LOCATION
1921-1922	Las Artes Populares en Mexico	Los Angeles, CA Washington, D.C. Traveling
1930-1931	Mexican Arts	Boston, MA Philadelphia, PA Cleveland, OH Washington, D.C. Milwaukee, WI Louisville, KY San Antonio, TX
1930	Paintings & Decorative Art of XVI and XVII-Century Peru Collected by Mrs. Frank Freyer	New York, NY
1931	Decorative Arts of Spain and Spanish America	Toledo, OH
1940	Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art	New York, NY
1941	America South of U.S.	New York, NY
1941	Three Southern Neighbors: Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia: Spanish Colonial Period, Including the Collection of Frank Barrows Freyer	Newark, NJ
1951-1952	Art in Colonial Mexico	Indianapolis, IN Columbus, OH Dayton, OH Davenport, IA
1951	Arts of Peru	Washington, D.C.
1960	Spanish Colonial and Indian Art	Taos, NM
1961-1962	The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection of Spanish-Peruvian Paintings	Coral Gables, FL
1963-1964	Master Works of Mexican Art from Pre-Columbian Times to the Present	Europe Los Angeles, CA
1965	Colonial Art of Peru	Washington, D.C.
1965-1966	Spanish Colonial Religious Art	Oshkosh, WI
1967-1968	Treasures from Peru: Spanish Colonial Paintings from the School of Cuzco, the Frank Barrows Freyer Collection	Columbus, OH

DATE	TITLE OF EXHIBITION	LOCATION
1968	Reflections of Spain I: A Comparative View of Spanish Colonial Sculpture	Colorado Springs, CO
1968	The Art of Ancient and Modern Latin America	New Orleans, LA
1968	Colonial Art of Ecuador	Washington, D.C.
1968-1969	Colonial Art of Mexico	Albuquerque, NM
1969	The Frank Barrows Freyer Collection of Spanish-Peruvian Paintings in the Denver Art Museum	Atlanta, GA
1969	Treasures of Mexican Colonial Art/ Mexican Colonial Art Treasures	Phoenix, AZ/ San Diego, CA
1969	Sun Gods and Saints: Art of Pre-Columbian and Colonial Peru	New York, NY
1970	Reflections of Spain II: A Comparative View of Spanish Colonial Painting	Colorado Springs, CO
1971	The Fenton R. McCreery Collection of Mexican Colonial Paintings	Flint, MI
1971	Peruvian Colonial Painting	Brooklyn, NY Austin, TX New Orleans, LA
1974	Colonial Spanish Art of the Americas: The Adams Collection	Harrisburg, PA
1975	Colonial Spanish Art of the Americas	West Reading, PA
1976	Imágenes Hispanoamericanas	Tucson, AZ
1976	The Cuzco Circle	New York, NY
1976	Americas: The Decorative Arts in Latin America in the Era of the Revolution	Washington, D.C.
1978	Spanish Colonial Art from the James F. Adams Collection	Chester, PA
1978	Treasures of Mexico	Washington, D.C. New York, NY Los Angeles, CA
1978	Artistic Traditions of Peru	Los Angeles, CA
1979	Spain and New Spain: Mexican Colonial Arts in Their European Context	Corpus Christi, TX

DATE	TITLE OF EXHIBITION	LOCATION
1979-1981	Images of Mexico	New York, NY San Diego, CA San Jose, CA Los Angeles, CA
1980	Colonial Art of Peru: A Selection of Works from the Collection of Marshall B. Coyne	Washington, D.C.
1983	Cuzco and Before	Gainesville, FL
1984	Spanish Colonial Arts of the Andes	New York, NY
1985-1986	Colonial Art of Ecuador	Washington, D.C.
1985-1986	Gloria in Excelsis: The Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia	New York, NY Austin, TX Miami, FL
1985-1989	Splendors of the Golden Age: Three Centuries of Spanish Colonial Art	Orlando, FL
1989	Viceregal Peruvian Art: Barbosa-Stern Collection	Washington, D.C.
1990-1992	Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries	New York, NY San Antonio, TX Los Angeles, CA Monterrey, MX Mexico City, MX
1991	Temples of Gold, Crowns of Silver: Reflections of Majesty in the Viceregal Americas	Washington, D.C.
1992	Cambios: The Spirit of Transformation in Spanish Colonial Art	Santa Barbara, CA
1992	To Weave for the Sun: Andean Textiles in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	Boston, MA
1992	Splendors of the New World: Spanish Colonial Masterworks from the Viceroyalty of Peru	Charlotte, NC
1996	Converging Cultures: Art & Identity in Spanish America	New York, NY Phoenix, AZ Los Angeles, CA

DATE	TITLE OF EXHIBITION	LOCATION
1996	The Holy Family as Prototype of the Civilization of Love: Images from the Viceregal Americas	Philadelphia, PA
1996	New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America	New York, NY
1997	Potosí: Colonial Treasures and the Bolivian City of Silver	New York, NY
2001-2002	Brazil: Body and Soul	New York, NY Bilbao, Spain
2002-2003	The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico: Treasures from the Museo Franz Mayer	Houston, TX Wilmington, DE San Diego, CA
2002-2003	The Arts of the Spanish Americas, 1550–1850: Works from the Museum's Collection	New York, NY
2004	Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life 1521-1821	Denver, CO Dallas, TX
2004	Inventing Race: Casta Painting and Eighteenth-Century Mexico	Los Angeles, CA
2004	The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830	New York, NY
2006-2008	The Virgin, Saints, and Angels: South American Paintings 1600-1825 from the Thoma Collection	Palo Alto, CA Tucson, AZ San Juan, PR Toronto, ON Austin, TX
2006	Latin American Colonial Art from the Collections	Philadelphia, PA
2006-2007	Tesoros/Treasures/Tesouros: The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820	Philadelphia, PA Mexico City, MX Los Angeles, CA
2009	Reverence Renewed: Colonial Andean Art from the Thoma Collection	Chicago, IL
2009-2010	Sacred Spain: Art and Belief in the Spanish World	Indianapolis, IN

DATE	TITLE OF EXHIBITION	LOCATION
2011-2012	Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World	Los Angeles, CA Mexico City, MX
2013	Journeys to New Words: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art	Philadelphia, PA
2013-2014	Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and the Moon	Montreal, QC Seattle, WA
2013-2015	Behind Closed Doors: Art in the Spanish American Home	New York, NY Albuquerque, NM New Orleans, LA Sarasota, FL
2014-2016	Painting the Divine: Images of Mary in the New World	Santa Fe, NM
2014-2017	Glitterati: Portraits and Jewelry from Colonial Latin America	Denver, CO
2015-2018	Power & Piety: Spanish Colonial Art	Palm Beach, FL Chicago, IL Ocala, FL Memphis, TN Davenport, IA Middlebury, VT
2015-2016	Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia	Boston, MA
2016	Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art From the Collection of Roberta and Richard Huber	San Antonio, TX Sacramento, CA Worcester, MA
2016	La Virgen de Guadalupe: Empress of the Americas	Houston, TX
2017	Cristóbal de Villalpando: Mexican Painter of the Baroque	New York, NY
2017-2018	Painted in Mexico, 1700-1790: Pinxit Mexici	Los Angeles, CA New York, NY
2017-2018	Doctrine and Devotion: Art of the Religious Orders in the Spanish Andes	Chicago, IL
2018	San Antonio 1718: Art from Viceregal Mexico	San Antonio, TX

APPENDIX C: CROCKER ART MUSEUM SURVEY, JANUARY 2017

*This brief survey about Latin American art will take about five minutes to complete.
Thank you for your feedback!*

1. How important is it for you to see Latin American art when you go to a museum?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

2. What kinds of Latin American art would you like to see in a museum?

(check all that apply)

- Prehispanic/Precolonian art
- Colonial art
- Modern/Contemporary art
- Folk art
- Decorative art (like furniture, dishes, or jewelry)
- Art from a specific country or place/area/region: _____
- None of the above

3. Did you decide to visit the Museum today specifically to see Highest Heaven?

- Yes
- No

4. What do you think about Highest Heaven's focus on the colonial period of Latin American history?

5. How many times have you been to the Crocker Art Museum in the last year, not including today?

- 2 or more times
- 1 time
- None – I have been to the Crocker before, but it was more than a year ago
- Never – this is my first time at the Crocker

6. With whom did you visit the Museum today?

(check all that apply)

- With no one
- With other adult(s)
- With child(ren) ages 0-5 years old
- With child(ren) ages 6-11 years old
- With child(ren) ages 12-17 years old

7. Do you have children living at home in any of the following age ranges?
(check all that apply)

- 0-5 years old
- 6-11 years old
- 12-17 years old
- I do not have children living at home in any of those age ranges

8. Are you currently a member of the Crocker Art Museum?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

9. What is your zip code? _____

If you do not currently live in the United States, please write your country of residence.

10. In what year were you born? _____

11. Which racial or ethnic group(s) best describes you?

(check all that apply)

- White/Caucasian
- Latino/Hispanic
- Black/African American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Other _____

12. In which of the following categories is your household's approximate annual income?

- Less than \$35,000
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 to \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more

13. Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed so far.

- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate work
- Postgraduate degree

Results:

	TOTAL	%
How important is it for you to see Latin American art when you go to a museum?		
Extremely important	18	16.8%
Very important	32	29.9%
Moderately important	44	41.1%
Slightly important	8	7.5%
Not at all important	5	4.7%
What kinds of Latin American art would you like to see in a museum?		
Prehispanic	55	51.4%
Colonial	51	47.7%
Modern	66	61.7%
Folk	67	62.6%
Decorative	46	43.0%
Art from a specific place	17	15.9%
<i>Write-ins for specific place included: Italy/Ireland, Peru (2), Portuguese pottery, Alaska, Mexico/Spain, Ecuador/Colombia, and Mexico/Chicano experience</i>		
None of the above	1	0.9%

	TOTAL	%
Did you decide to visit the Museum today specifically to see <i>Highest Heaven</i>?		
Yes	32	29.9%
No	75	70.1%
How many times have you been to the Crocker Art Museum in the last year, not including today?		
2 or more times	34	31.8%
1 time	13	12.1%
None -- I have been to the Crocker before, but it was more than a year ago	20	18.7%
Never -- this is my first time at the Crocker	40	37.4%
With whom did you visit the museum today?		
With no one	9	8.4%
With other adult(s)	92	86.0%
With child(ren) ages 0-5 years old	3	2.8%
With child(ren) ages 6-11 years old	7	6.5%
With child(ren) ages 12-17 years old	12	11.2%
Do you have children living at home in any of the following age ranges?		
0-5 years old	5	4.7%
6-11 years old	10	9.3%
12-17 years old	15	14.0%
I do not have children living at home in any of the following age ranges	81	75.7%

	TOTAL	%
Are you currently a member of the Crocker Art Museum?		
Yes	19	17.8%
No	87	81.3%
Not sure	1	0.9%
Age range		
10-19	5	4.7%
20-29	20	18.7%
30-39	19	17.8%
40-49	15	14.0%
50-59	19	17.8%
60-69	16	15.0%
70-79	10	9.3%
80-89	1	0.9%
No answer	2	1.9%
Which racial or ethnic group(s) best describes you?		
White/Caucasian	80	74.8%
Latino/Hispanic	11	10.3%
Black/African American	5	4.7%
Asian	10	9.3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	1.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Other: <i>answers included Portuguese & Sioux, Iranian American, Biracial, Pakistani</i>	6	5.6%
Two or more answers	7	6.5%

	TOTAL	%
In which of the following categories is your household's approximate annual income?		
Less than \$35,000	9	8.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	8	7.5%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	11	10.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	20	18.7%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	24	22.4%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	12	11.2%
\$200,000 or more	12	11.2%
No answer	11	10.3%
Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed so far.		
Some high school	4	3.7%
High school graduate	6	5.6%
Some college	16	15.0%
Associate's degree	5	4.7%
Bachelor's degree	29	27.1%
Some graduate work	6	5.6%
Postgraduate degree	41	38.3%

Answers to Question #4

- Not exactly my taste. Prefer to see rustic views of humanity or nature scenes.
- It was very interesting.
- Interesting connection of Spanish Colonization in Latin America
- I am not well versed enough to have an opinion. It is a stunning collection. I am richer as I leave the museum for having seen it. Thank you
- Having been to both Latin America & Europe, was very impressive. Many thanks to all the people who have made this possible.
- I enjoyed learning about the European influences
- It was interesting to view

- Interesting but it didn't stand out too much one way or the other
- Interesting enjoyed
- Amazing. Very good variety of items and very interesting to see the similar items or outside influences that arrived in the area
- Interested in learning more about the subject
- It is nice to see a variety represented
- Not really that interested in that type of art
- It showed a lot of history
- Interesting. A well collected assort of pieces
- I think it focuses a lot on the religious importance that was taken during this period
- I think it was a good way to show how important religion is on Latin America
- Lovely
- I would have liked to see other periods as well
- It was great!
- It was excellent, very interesting, beautiful work
- Very interesting guide helped to put it into focus for us historically
- Very interesting, informative
- Very different from European art. Very interesting
- More varied than I expected
- I really liked the program and how the art and colonial culture were presented together. Very interesting and honest presentation
- Very beautiful. :)
- Moderately interesting, but not a draw
- Interesting
- I think it was well done and I think its something that museums should have more often
- To be honest, I didn't know Highest Heaven's focus was on this. It is good to know this now though.
- It's too bad they didn't do more art about the world around them
- I think it had a good variety of work and I liked learning more about the colonial period.
- Very interesting
- I really was surprized to enjoy this style of art. Im usually not a fan of relegious art so in a way this opened my eyes to understand it a bit more
- I liked it, I also liked the religious themes!
- It is very insightful
- It is very interesting
- It is interesting but I'd be more interested in art driven by indigenous culture
- Beautiful and a part of history but I'd love to see more precolonial art too.
- it would be cool to have it juxtaposed with native/folk art or something to show the reality of that impact

- Beautiful. Great descriptions
- I like it a lot
- Interesting detail to see European influences in South & Central America; most often see folk art or local art for this region
- It was fortunate that I visited while the presentation was going on (though I did not intend to), while the exhibit is wonderful, a couple notes on the indigenous peoples led to, I think, a much fuller picture
- Interesting. Liked the reading on Saturday 1/7/17 cool to listen as we walked around the gallery
- My comment was it is a cool representation of a kind of 'American Holocaust'
- I liked the focus - I haven't seen this era of work before
- We enjoyed the art very much and the history we learned from it
- Interesting and appropriate for an exhibit, but I'd be interested in more information/exhibits of art from that period not by or for the Spanish/ Portuguese colonizers
- New info for me
- Wonderful especially the use of the spoken word - great history!
- Love the collection, the write ups give detail to the art and its significance
- enjoyed it but religious art has thematic limitations obviously I really enjoyed 18-20th century Latin Am art with more varied themes as well as American/ CA art
- Very interesting - gave us new insight of that period. Didn't understand the placement of art at times.
- Very cool - impressed with their quality of work and vivacity (?) exhibited
- It impresses me how they kept such good care of it
- Surprised - it brings out the high civilization they were becoming
- I like because I have been in museums in Bolivia and Ecuador
- It focuses a lot on religious things
- It is important to show the work of the past to show their (?) way of life and what they believe (?)
- Very interesting. Good history lesson. Also nice to see works/ techniques from Latin America
- I don't know much about this history - nice explanations with each piece though!
- Educational
- Very religious collection but very interesting
- It is interesting but religious - prefer the objects to the paintings
- dislike extremely religious art
- Colonial art exists in a lot of museums in the southwest that focus on latin american history. It's important but doesn't attract museum goers specifically from the southwestern states
- wonderful

- important. Slightly cluttered
- Beautiful, very detailed and story telling visually
- It was interesting
- We loved it - don't see this kind of art this often
- exquisite
- Great. Reminds me of my daily church visits in Mexico
- I would like more context; what events inspired the pieces? Why still relevant, particularly in an increasingly secular world?
- Wonderful. The skill and portrait of the ??? was fantastic
- I enjoyed it and enjoyed the history in the art
- Very interesting
- Very interesting - we spent a lot of time in Spain last year. Loved the Latin American interpretation.
- That was the period of the collection. I came to see the pieces (regardless of the focus)
- I appreciated the fact that the museum was willing to show all the religious art of the colonial Latin American history.
- Good examples of genre
- I enjoyed the era and representation of different countries and cultures
- Beautiful
- Very interesting
- Had no preconception; very beautiful; very talented artists
- The colors are vibrant and there is great emphasis on the Christ story
- Being Hispanic it was really refreshing to dig deeper in this Art

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