

LACMA FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION: CONTESTED VISIONS IN THE SPANISH COLONIAL WORLD
ON VIEW: NOVEMBER 6, 2011–JANUARY 29, 2012
LOCATION: RESNICK PAVILION

LACMA PRESENTS A GROUNDBREAKING EXHIBITION OF SPANISH COLONIAL ART AND ITS PRE-COLUMBIAN ORIGINS



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 5)

(Los Angeles, September 14, 2011)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), in partnership with the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH), Mexico, presents *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, the first exhibition in the United States to examine the significance of indigenous peoples and cultures within the complex social and artistic landscape of colonial Latin America.

On view from November 6, 2011 through January 29, 2012, the exhibition offers a comparative view of Mexico and Peru, the two principal viceroyalties of Spanish America, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and includes a selection of approximately 200 works of art, including paintings, sculptures, codices, manuscripts, queros (ceremonial drinking vessels), featherworks, and other extraordinary objects.

"This exhibition, which brings together a remarkable group of artworks from Mexico and Peru (two areas which were much larger than the countries known by those names today), provides a unique opportunity to examine the

connection between ancient and colonial artistic traditions," said Ilona Katzew, exhibition curator and department head of Latin American art.

"By taking into consideration the pre-Columbian (Inca and Aztec) origins of these two regions and their continuities and ruptures over time, *Contested Visions* greatly enriches our understanding of how art and power intersected in the Spanish colonial world."

Exhibition Background

Following his conquest of the Mexica (commonly known as the Aztecs) in 1521, Hernán Cortés took possession of the heart of what would become the Viceroyalty of New Spain in the name of the Spanish king. Spain soon established a network of civil and religious authority that would effectively govern the immense territory, which encompassed present-day Mexico plus much of Central America and the Spanish borderlands that are now part of the United States. The viceroyalty's capital, Mexico City, was built atop the ruins of Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire.

The Viceroyalty of Peru was established in 1548 after Francisco Pizarro and his cohort, Diego de Almagro, invaded the Inca Empire in 1532 and violently defeated its last Inca ruler, Atahualpa. Unlike New Spain, where the capital was established atop the ruins of the Aztec Empire, the new capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru was built in Lima instead of Cuzco, the center of Inca authority, and the viceroyalty encompassed present-day Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile.

At first, the Spaniards, in their efforts to extract the mineral and agricultural wealth of the viceroyalties, instituted enforced labor that imperiled the indigenous populations, which were also devastated by disease and social and cultural disruption. Efforts to convert the native populations set in motion a complex historical dynamic involving the contestation and negotiation of power, which affected the art of Mexico and Peru in profound ways.

There has been—and to a certain degree there still is—a tendency to romanticize the Aztec and Inca empires as formidable entities that were vanquished by the Spaniards. The relationship between the indigenous peoples and nonnatives (Spanish invaders and other groups), however,

was much more complex. Although the Spaniards referred to the native peoples of the Americas generically as "Indians," (the Americas were called "las Indias" because Columbus initially thought that he had sailed to the Indian Subcontinent), these groups were not unified and did not share a common identity but instead identified with their ethnic states and ancestral roots. Their relationship to the conquerors cannot be reduced to one of victors and vanquished; it entailed a delicate process of cultural negotiation, mutual accommodation, and exchange, a dynamic that gave rise to vital works of art, rich in interpretative possibilities.

Exhibition Organization

The exhibition is organized into six broad sections. The first section, *Tenochtitlan and Cuzco: Pre-Columbian Antecedents*, brings together monumental sculpture for the Aztecs and textiles, feather and metalwork for the Inca, and presents key concepts integral to each society's political and ideological structure that lays the foundation for understanding the role that indigenous artistic traditions played in colonial times.

The second section, *Ancient Styles in the New Era*, shows how pre-Hispanic styles and materials (e.g., textiles in Peru and featherworks in Mexico) continued in colonial times and were adapted to the creation of exquisite Christian objects.

The third section, *Conquest and New World Orders*, explores the depiction of the Spanish conquest in codices, paintings, and folding screens, and offers a three-fold perspective of this pivotal moment by Spaniards, Creoles (Spaniards born in the Americas), and Amerindians, showing the different and competing memories of this event.

The fourth section, *The Devotional Landscape and the Indian as Good Christian*, investigates the role of converted Indians in the creation of a uniquely Mexican and Andean religious pantheon, and their role in the invention of new devotions. Among the most noteworthy is the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico, but there is a host of lesser-known images that are also included.

The fifth section is titled *Indian Festivals and Sacred Rituals*. To sustain its power, the Spanish monarchy allowed the continuation of ancient traditions—such as dances and other festive rites—whenever they were incorporated into Christian rituals, and native groups resorted to their past to proclaim their rights as a polity. Depictions of Indian weddings, with all their festive paraphernalia, offer a brilliant glimpse into the topic.

The last section addresses the subject of *Memory, Genealogy, and Land*. During the conquest of Mexico, for example, indigenous groups formed alliances with the Spaniards to overthrow the Aztecs, which led to the concession of certain privileges. A series of paintings and illustrated manuscripts (e.g., *techialoyans* and *lienzos*), shows the need of the native communities to generate genealogies to retain their power. In Peru the indigenous elite also commissioned lavish pictorial genealogies of the Inca rulers to preserve their memory and stake out their place under Spanish rule and during the Republican period.

Publication

The companion book, edited by Ilona Katzew, includes contributions by a distinguished group of scholars, including Cecelia F. Klein, Thomas B. F. Cummins, Diana Magaloni Kerpel, Kevin Terraciano, and Luis Eduardo Wuffarden among others. The book is produced by LACMA and distributed by the prestigious publisher Yale University Press.

Exhibition Schedule

After the exhibition closes at LACMA in late January, it will travel to the Museo Nacional de Historia (Castillo de Chapultepec), Mexico City, from July 6, 2012 through October 7, 2012.

Related Public Programming

Symposium: Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World

December 2-4, Bing Theater

Free, tickets required and available on the day of the event

LACMA and UCLA are co-sponsoring a major three-day international symposium in conjunction with the special *exhibition Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, which will bring together thirty of the most distinguished scholars in the field from Mexico, South America, Europe, and the United States. This will be an unprecedented event, which will present the most cutting-edge scholarship in the field. For the full program, please visit:

http://www.lacma.org/sites/default/files/CV_Symposium_Program.pdf

Special Film Program

January 21 & 22, 1 pm, Bing Theater
Free, no reservations required

Hosted by Edward James Olmos, actor, producer, director and community activist, and curated by Marlene Dermer, co-director of the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival (LALIFF), this two-day film program, explores themes from the exhibition through cinema. The program includes feature films, shorts and documentaries, followed by roundtable discussions and conversations with some of the directors and actors.

Credit

The exhibition was co-organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico. It was made possible in part by Camilla Chandler Frost, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Additional support was provided by Alice and Nahum Lainer; Betty and Brack Duker; Ambassador Frank and Kathy Baxter; Carl and Marilyn Thoma Foundation; Derek Johns, Ltd., London; Coll & Cortés, Madrid; and Janet Dreisen Rappaport.



About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing Transformation project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

Location and Contact: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: noon-8 pm; Friday: noon-9 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 11 am-8 pm; closed Wednesday

General Admission: Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 5 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

Images (page 1)

(Left) *Mask*, Mexico, Aztec-Mixtec, 15th-16th century, Museo Nazionale Preistorico-Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini", Florence.

(Center) *Folding Screen with Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* (detail), Mexico, c. 1690, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

(Right) *Man's Ceremonial Tunic (Uncu) with Q'asana Design*, Peru, Southern Highlands, mid- to late 16th century, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Press Contact: For additional information, contact LACMA Communications at press@lacma.org or 323 857-6522.

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