

LACMA FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INSTALLATION: LATIN AMERICAN ART GALLERIES
ON VIEW: MARCH 30, 2013—ONGOING
LOCATION: ART OF THE AMERICAS BUILDING, LEVEL 4

LACMA DEBUTS MAJOR REINSTALLATION OF ITS LATIN AMERICAN ART GALLERIES

NEW ACQUISITIONS OF COLONIAL AND MODERN ART ON VIEW



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 5)

(Los Angeles, March 20, 2013)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents a new display of its world-class collection of Latin American art. In the last decade the museum has assembled one of the most extensive holdings of Latin American art in the United States, unique in its range from ancient, Spanish colonial, modern and contemporary art.

When the museum's department of Latin American art was established in 2006, one of its missions was to build a collection of Spanish colonial art. In the past six years LACMA has acquired more than fifty important works in this area, converting the museum into one of the principal repositories of Spanish colonial art in the United States. Many of these works, including a striking depiction of the iconic Virgin of Guadalupe made with precious inlaid mother-of-pearl, are on view for the first time in the newly installed galleries.

Ilona Katzew, LACMA's curator and department head of Latin American art commented, "Six years ago there was only one significant work from Spanish America at LACMA; building the collection in this area became one of my top priorities."

New Collection Highlights

Spanish Colonial Art

Following the arrival of Europeans in the fifteenth century, complex multiracial societies developed as Amerindians, Europeans, Asians, and Africans (free and slaved) mixed. The various forms of art produced throughout Latin America attests to the rich amalgam of cultures during the colonial period and reflect the seminal changes in the development of the region's new identities.

Among the highlights of the museum's collection of colonial art are paintings by renowned masters from Mexico and elsewhere in the viceroyalties, including Juan Rodríguez Juárez (1675-1728), Luis Berrueco (active in the eighteenth century), Miguel Cabrera (c. 1715-1768), Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz (1713-1781), and José de Páez (1720-c. 1801), among others. These works brilliantly attest to the formation of local schools of painting and the invention of new iconographies. Some key acquisitions include examples of *casta* (caste) paintings, the fashionable eighteenth-century works that portray the process of racial mixing among Amerindians, Spaniards, and Africans. Also noteworthy is a group of landscape paintings by Juan Patricio Morlete Ruiz that were recently restored by LACMA conservators, yielding several discoveries about the painter's artistic methods. The findings are documented in a special video on view in the galleries narrated by actor Julian Sands.

Other works reveal the interest in Asian materials, formats, and techniques, including a stunning folding screen depicting a large flying pole (an ancient game that continued in colonial times), lacquerwork, and objects made with shimmering fragments of inlaid shell known as *enconchados*.

Modern Mexican Silver

Complementing LACMA's collection of Latin American modernism is a recent

donation comprising approximately eighty examples of modernist Mexican silver. In the twentieth century, the Mexican silver industry experienced an unprecedented resurgence. Two North Americans catalyzed this renaissance: Frederick Walter Davis (1877–1961) and William Spratling (1900–1967). In 1931 Spratling, an architect from New Orleans, established a workshop in the legendary mining town of Taxco. A brilliant marketing strategist, he reinvigorated Taxco's economy by employing hundreds of local artisans, creating a thriving local industry. Soon after, other designers followed and established successful workshops. From the 1920s to the 1960s Taxco became the epicenter for innovative silver designs, attracting artists, writers, and politicians from all over the world, including Hollywood celebrities such as John Huston, Mae West, Bette Davis, and Marilyn Monroe, among many others.

Donated by a group of distinguished collectors from across the United States, including Ron A. Belkin, the Goddard family, and Penny Morrill among other generous benefactors, Ilona Katzew noted that "this inaugural gift of Mexican silver is exciting on many levels and signals LACMA's commitment to collecting and displaying modern Latin American design."

Postwar Geometric Abstraction

Another area of expansion is Latin American postwar geometric art. Buffered from World War II, many South American countries entered an optimistic period of economic growth in the 1940s and 1950s. Abstract art, with its emphasis on clear and distilled forms, became the dominant visual language that reflected a move toward modernization and industrialization. Artists from Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Venezuela who worked in this mode are internationally recognized.

Among the new highlights are works by Julio Le Parc (b. 1928), Gego (1912–1994), Alejandro Otero (1921–1994), Raúl Lozza (1911–2008), and Sérgio de Camargo (1930–1931). Some of the works on view show how artists rejected the concept of the solitary genius and the elitism of traditional art, and instead emphasized a more collective and human way of experiencing art. Their goal was to transform the role of the viewer from a passive, contemplative observer into an active participant, which led them to experiment with a range of kinetic and optical effects.

Related Public Programming

Lecture: "Reflections in Modern Mexican Silver: Consider the Context"

Sunday, April 14, 2013 | 3 pm

Brown Auditorium | Free, no reservations

In the 1920s, many people in Mexico embraced their indigenous roots in an era of cultural revolution. The visual and performing arts and the archaeological discoveries of the period inspired silver designers to produce jewelry and objects that were emblematic of a new Mexico. Dr. Penny Morrill, professor of art history, discusses how each of these handwrought silver objects has an intriguing story to tell, which usually involves larger-than-life personalities and boldly imaginative and creative spirits. Dr. Morrill has written numerous books and articles on modern Mexican silver.

Special Film Program organized with Ambulante: Young Women Filmmakers from Mexico

Friday, May 10, 2013 | 7:00 pm

Saturday, May 11, 2013 | 5:00 pm

Bing Theater | Free, tickets required

Established by actors Gael García Bernal, Diego Luna, and Pablo Cruz, Ambulante is a non-profit organization that promotes documentaries as a tool for social transformation. The program includes a fascinating selection of award-winning films by Mexican women documentary filmmakers, and will be followed by conversations with the directors. The program is hosted by LACMA's Latin American Art department and the Mexican Consulate.

For related public programming information, please visit www.lacma.org

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, and innovative collaborations with artists, 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 | 323 857-600 | lacma.org

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 11 am-5 pm; Friday: 11 am-8 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 10am-7pm; closed Wednesday

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

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 3 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents' second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

Image captions (page 1):

(Left) Miguel González, *Virgin of Guadalupe*, c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (*enconchado*), 49 x 37 1/2 in. (124.46 x 95.25 cm), Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Purchased with funds provided by the Bernard and Edith Lewin Collection of Mexican Art Deaccession Fund, photo © 2013 Museum Associates/LACMA

(Center) *Casta Painting (From Spaniard and Morisca, Albino)*, 18th century, oil on canvas, 36 x 28 in. (91.44 x 71.12 cm), Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Purchased with funds provided by the Bernard and Edith Lewin Collection of Mexican Art Deaccession Fund, photo © 2013 Museum Associates/LACMA

(Right) Frederick Walter Davis, *Tree Brooch*, 1945, silver and Mexican opals, 3.5 X 4 in. (8.9 x 10.2 cm), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Penny Morrill, McLean, Virginia, photo © 2013 Museum Associates/LACMA

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