

Spanish Colonial Paintings Paired with Engraved Sources: from the C. C. Spenuzza Collection

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Spanish Colonial Paintings Paired with Engraved Sources is an illustrated introduction to the unique ways in which Latin American painters depicted European religious iconography.

Edited by Cecilia C. Spenuzza, the art book *Spanish Colonial Paintings Paired with Engraved Sources*, lets experts spotlight and analyze paintings by colonial-era Latin American artists.

When Spain colonized the Americas, they imposed their religious beliefs and artistic preferences on the Indigenous populations. Native artists were trained by Europeans to emulate prints of European paintings, and then they were commissioned by wealthy or religious patrons to create works espousing European values. These artists nevertheless found ways to inject a New World sensibility into their work, and to make it more accessible to local audiences. This book compares their paintings with the engravings from which the artists may have drawn inspiration.

To the inexperienced eye, the New World paintings may be indistinguishable from the work done in Europe. However, as the book shows, Indigenous artists left their own marks on scenes that were familiar to all Christians, from the Immaculate Conception to Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem. Though the artists were often anonymous, and though their artistic subjects were dictated to them, they did not simply copy what they were shown: they reinterpreted the source material with their own distinct touches, such as the inclusion of native fauna, and the liberal use of gold leaf on the clothing of holy figures. Such changes demonstrate the unique perspectives and styles of Latin American artists and show how Indigenous populations blended new and old religious concepts—for example, by giving Mary attributes associated with Pachamama, an important Incan goddess.

The book begins with introductory essays about Spanish colonial art and its sources in general. This excellent, fascinating background material enhances the rest of the book, which is devoted to shorter essays that analyze paintings in the C. C. Spenuzza Collection and propose possible Old World sources of artistic inspiration. The latter essays are succinct, drawing attention to points of interest within each painting. They include frequent spelling and grammatical errors, though, as well as run-on sentences and unusual and insufficient comma placements.

Many of the images are large and in full color, showing off the rich, vibrant details added by the artists. The oversized pages allow for the paintings to be displayed at bigger sizes and, therefore, to be appreciated more fully. But some images repeat to no purpose, and the images being compared are rarely shown side by side; some are very small, making comparisons more difficult.

Combining scholarly texts with frequent illustrations, *Spanish Colonial Paintings Paired with Engraved Sources* is an illustrated introduction to the unique ways in which Latin American painters depicted European religious iconography.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (October 20, 2021)

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