

**EXHIBITION EXPLORES EXPANSION OF FAITH AND CULTURE
IN SOUTH AMERICA DURING SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE RULE**

**HIGHEST HEAVEN FEATURES MORE THAN 100 PAINTINGS, SCULPTURE, FURNITURE,
IVORIES, AND SILVER,
INCLUDING SEVERAL WORKS ON DISPLAY FOR FIRST TIME**



Worcester, MA —January 31, 2017—*Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art from the Collection of Roberta and Richard Huber*, opening at the Worcester Art Museum on March 11, explores the paintings, sculpture, furniture, ivories and silver of Spanish and Portuguese South America in the 1600s and 1700s. Through the work of both well-regarded masters and anonymous artists and artisans, *Highest Heaven* highlights the role of art in the establishment of new city centers in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, and the propagation of the Christian faith among indigenous peoples. Drawn exclusively from the distinguished collection of Roberta and Richard Huber, who have built one of the most significant collections of colonial Iberian art in private hands, the exhibition highlights the distinct visual language created by the cultural and creative exchanges that occurred between

Spain and Portugal and their South American colonies. The exhibition will remain on view through July 9, 2017.

The exhibition features more than 100 objects, including religious paintings, carved and painted wooden sculptures, intimate ivories, and silver, originally housed in ecclesiastical and private collections throughout the former colonial possessions of Spain and Portugal. The majority of these works were created for functional purposes, as articles of faith or symbols of civic order, and were displayed in a manner that conveyed Catholic principles, brought social order, and spurred conversion among colonial populations. *Highest Heaven* examines these uses, focusing in particular on the translation of Christian imagery to the colonies and the ways in which these works and objects helped establish ordered societies and were integrated into religious life. The exhibition includes approximately 20 recent acquisitions by the Hubers, most of which have never before been seen in a museum context.

"Highest Heaven is an exciting and rare opportunity to investigate both the aesthetic beauty of this exceptional art, as well as the significant cultural, religious, and social roles it has played throughout South America," said Jon L. Seydl, director of curatorial affairs and curator of European art. "A central component of our Museum's vision is to connect people, cultures, and histories with the here and now of a globalizing world. The themes reflected in these stunning works of art are part of the global history to which Worcester – an incredibly diverse city – has long contributed. We are grateful to the Hubers for

their collecting vision and the chance to share this incredible collection with audiences across New England.”

Unlike many previous exhibitions of Colonial Latin American Art, which arranged objects by media, *Highest Heaven* is organized according to subject matter. The exhibition considers the works as religious objects, from the angels and archangels that foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, through imagery dealing with the importance of the Virgin Mary, the life of Christ and spread of the gospel, and the role of the saints. A concluding section explores a group of objects made for secular elites in domestic settings.

Much of the exhibition focuses on works produced by workshops in the major cities of Cuzco and Lima in modern-day Peru and the silver-mining center of Potosí in modern-day Bolivia, where artists of European and native ancestry practiced. Paintings and sculptures served primarily to disseminate Christian faith to the New World, while works in ivory and silver underscored the wealth and prosperity of the growing Empire, including a lively trade with the Philippines, Ceylon, and Goa in Asia.

With the extensive growth of trade across the Empire, works of art took on a range of styles that represented European traditions and local idioms. In some instances, European aesthetics and subjects were replicated, if translated into a distinctly colonial visual language. In others, European saints, idols, and figures took on the appearance of native populations, enhancing their impact. Together, these distinct yet interrelated approaches, created a new visual culture that represented the expansiveness of the Empire, and spoke to the integration of a diversity of peoples into a single faith.

Highlights from the exhibition, include:

- *Our Lady of the Rosary of Pomata*, Bolivia, 17th century, a moving example of the painted portrayals of the dressed virgin, which mimicked the practice of dressing statues of the Virgin for ceremonies and festivals. This painting style was unique to the Spanish colonial world, and highlighted the incorporation of the Virgin into the experience of common life;
- *Christ Descending Into Hell*, a large 18th-century Peruvian painting that shows a heroic Christ redeeming the souls of humanity from a harrowing hellscape—and one of the Hubers’ recent acquisitions;
- *A Portrait of the Countess of Monteblanco and Miranar*, attributed to the 18th-century Peruvian painter Cristóbal Lozano. A splendid image of one of the wealthiest women in the Viceroyalty of Peru, the painting shows how the Colonial elite of the New World displayed status through elaborate representations that articulated their sophistication and power;
- *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, an 18th-century Bolivian painting that humanizes the Holy Family. It shows the Virgin Mary washing the Christ Child’s diapers in a laundry tub, while recognizably South American plants and animals populate the background;
- *Christ Child as Salvator Mundi*, 17th century, an extraordinary Indo-Portuguese ivory sculpture that communicates the humanity and lovability of the Christ Child and depicts a vision of perfect peace and the promise of salvation. These intimate, small-scale sculptures were carved by craftsmen in the Spanish and Portuguese possessions of Goa and the Philippines and exported

throughout the Colonial World as objects for devotion, testifying to the global nature of the colonial art world;

- An 18th-century Peruvian *Pax*, with a scene of Christ revealed to the people after his trial by Pontius Pilate. Made from the abundant silver deposits in the Viceroyalty of Peru, this devotional tablet was used in Mass as an object of veneration.

The Worcester Art Museum's connection with colonial Iberian art dates back to 1901, when Museum founder Stephen Salisbury III gave four oil paintings by unknown Mexican colonial painters. Later in the century the Museum acquired an exceptionally rare polychrome sculpture of an infant Christ by the Ecuadorian artist Manuel Chili, known as Caspicara. This charming sculpture, which has not been on view for many years, will be one of WAM's own contributions to the exhibition in addition to Cristóbal de Villalpando's *Return of Tobias* and Francisco de Goya's portrait of Fray Miguel Fernández Flores, a Spanish bishop appointed to Quito in the early 1800s.

The presentation of *Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art from the Collection of Roberta and Richard Huber* at the Worcester Art Museum is supported in part by the Michie Family Curatorial Fund and the John and Ruth Adam, Jr., Exhibition Fund; through sponsorship from Rand Whitney Container; media partnership with *The Boston Globe* and WGBH; and community partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester.

Related Programs

Opening Party:

The public is invited to a special *Highest Heaven* opening party on Friday, March 10 from 8 to 11pm. A members-only hour takes place from 7 to 8pm. The festivities will include food trucks, cash bar, and live entertainment. Cost is \$10 for Worcester Art Museum members, \$20 for non-members.

Third Thursday Master Series Art Talk:

On Thursday, March 16 at 6pm, Michael Schreffler, associate professor of art and architecture of Spain and Latin America in the 16th and 17th centuries at the University of Notre Dame, will explore the development and spread of the Catholic faith in South America through the creation and use of religious art for devotion and instruction. A reception in the Museum's Renaissance Court, with light refreshments, cash bar, and live music, will follow the lecture.

Exhibition Organization, Tour, and Catalogue

Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art of the Roberta and Richard Huber Collection is organized by the San Antonio Museum of Art, and co-curated by William Keyse Rudolph, Mellon chief curator and Marie and Hugh Halff curator of American Art, and Marion J. Oettinger, Jr, curator of Latin American Art. The Worcester presentation has been developed by Justin M. Brown, curatorial assistant in American Art, and Jon L. Seydl, director of curatorial affairs and curator of European Art. The exhibition tour schedule is as follows:

San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX: June 11, 2016 – September 14, 2016

Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA: October 23, 2016 – January 22, 2017

Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts: March 12, 2017 – July 9, 2017

The exhibition will be accompanied by a scholarly catalogue, which will include an essay by Thomas B.F. Cummins, a professor of pre-Columbian and colonial art at Harvard University and one of the foremost scholars of colonial art from South America, co-authored with Katherine McAllen, a scholar of colonial art at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The catalogue will also include a brief history of the collection by Roberta and Richard Huber, an introduction by Katherine Luber, the Kelso Director of the San Antonio Museum of Art, and texts by William Keyse Rudolph and Marion J. Oettinger, Jr. The catalog may be purchased in the Worcester Art Museum gift shop or by calling the Museum Shop at 508-793-4355.

About the Roberta and Richard Huber Collection:

New York-based collectors Roberta and Richard Huber developed the collection of colonial South American art over the last 40 years. The Hubers continue to discover new artists and works, building on their holdings for personal enjoyment and public education and making their collection a living and evolving one. They first discovered the art and antiquities of the Spanish Empire when Richard Huber was relocated for work to Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1962. The Hubers' love for the period grew as they traveled and lived in other areas of South America. Today, they are committed to enhancing understanding of the diversity, depth, and intricacy of art produced by artists across the Iberian colonies through exhibitions such as *Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art of the Roberta and Richard Huber Collection*.

Image caption: Peruvian, Cuzco, *Saint Michael the Archangel*, 18th century, Oil on canvas, Roberta and Richard Huber Collection, Photograph by Graydon Wood, Philadelphia Museum of Art

About the Worcester Art Museum

Founded in 1896, the Worcester Art Museum's encyclopedic 37,500 piece collection covers 51 centuries of art. Highlights include the Medieval Chapter House, Renaissance Court, and Worcester Hunt Mosaic, as well as the recently integrated John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection of arms and armor. The Museum is internationally known for its collection of European and American art. It was the first in America to acquire paintings by Monet and Gauguin and one of the first to collect photography. As the first U.S. museum to focus on collaborating with local schools, it has been at the forefront of engaging audiences and giving them a meaningful and personal experience.

The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Friday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and every third Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is \$14 for adults, \$6 for children 4-17, \$12 for seniors 65+, and \$12 for college students with ID. Members and children under four are free. Parking is free. For more information, visit worcesterart.org.

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