

# Colonial art featured in three new exhibits

Known as the Spanish Colonial Period, the 300 years spanning the 16th and 19th centuries was one of the most significant eras in the history of the New World. Spanish colonizers dominated trade in the Americas, a practice which led to their becoming some of the world's wealthiest citizens. Vast ranches and plantations provided formidable profits from the sale and trading of cattle and tropical crops such as tobacco, cocoa, sugar cane and indigo. Acquisition of this vast wealth stimulated a thriving market for religious works of art for both public and domestic use.

The El Paso Museum of Art will host a trio of outstanding exhibitions that focus on the contributions made by artists working in Central and South America beginning in the late 17th century all the way to the 1820s, when most of the colonies were liberated from Spain.

Opening Feb. 8 and running through May 5 in the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Gallery is the traveling exhibition of 56 lavish works entitled "Power and Piety" from the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. The exhibition provides viewers with insights not only into the way which wealthy Spanish families used art as a means to showcase their own power and piety, but also the role religious art played in the daily lives of the average citizen.

During this period, religious art and furnishings were traded across the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico in considerable quantities. The exhibition includes works from New Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Ecuador and most significantly the Province of Caracas, Venezuela.

Monumental oil paintings, elaborately carved and gilded chairs, and exquisitely crafted silver lamps and candelabras are among the many objects that were commissioned for cathedrals and bishops' residences as a means to overwhelm the senses and inspire devotion, while underscoring the grandeur and power of the Catholic Church. In turn, Spanish colonists also commissioned lavish works to decorate their own homes to emphasize their own power and piety. These include imported ivory sculptures with gilded wooden bases and sumptuous decorative altars with hand-carved figurines. Among the most opulent of these objects is a series of tabernacles (ornamental cabinets) created by artists from Venezuela and Mexico, the largest of which measures 51 inches in width and nearly 40 inches in height.

A second exhibition, "Saints and Sacred Stories: Devotional Objects from New Spain," is taken almost entirely from the museum's permanent collection and complemented by a significant loan from the San Angelo Museum of Fine Art. The 40 additional objects range from paintings and sculptures to personal altars and retablos, devotional objects that permeated everyday life in Mexico from the 16th through 19th centuries. Because there were only a limited number of priests available to celebrate Mass, many of the colonists created lavish altars in their own homes as a sacred place to pray. The Catholic Church also used many of these devotional objects to teach



Christianity to Spanish settlers, and also to proselytize the indigenous populations of the Americas.

A third exhibition entitled "Joy and Suffering" will be on display in the Peter and Margaret de Witter Gallery March 8 to September 1. To prepare for this exhibition, the museum's retablo collection, ranked as the second largest in the nation, has undergone an entirely re-imagined installation. This exhibition will include displays of ex-votos (works commissioned to commemorate miracles) as well as bultos (carved wooden statues).

These works — primarily focused on the image of the Christ Child, the Virgin Mary or a specific saint — were most often commissioned by those living outside the major cities in Mexico. The self-taught, rural Mexican artists used their skills to imitate the Spanish Master painters to fulfill the desire of rural residents for personal devotional imagery.

Isolated from the larger cities, these artists utilized available materials, painting on surfaces such as tin from roofs and slabs of wood. Although self-taught, they created distinctive works that were often a blend of traditional Christian imagery with folk and pagan beliefs.

## Las Cruces Arts Fair

El Paso's Hal Marcus will be the featured artist March 1-3 for the Doña Ana Arts Council's 9th annual Las Cruces Arts Fair. In addition to displaying a selection of his original paintings, Marcus' image entitled "The Queen of Diamonds" will be featured on a poster advertising the event as well as all other promotional materials.

This is the first time the Arts Council had invited an individual from El Paso as featured artist, DAAC Executive Director Kathleen Albers said. Although Las Cruces and El Paso are in two different states they are a mere 45 miles apart, she noted, explaining, "It is really one large arts community. I think it is only natural that we all support one another, and we are hoping that featuring an El Paso artist will make the bonds even stronger."

Marcus echoed these sentiments. "Of course I am very honored to have been invited to be their featured artist," adding that after visiting last year's show, "we were very impressed with the high quality of the artwork and the diversity of the artists and craftspeople who were participating."

## Pat Olchefski exhibition

Pat Olchefski Winston has chosen the evocative title, "Velvet Blue Bayou" to describe her exhibition of new paintings that will open with a reception 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 16 at Star City Studios, 120 W. Castellano. The exhibition, which will hang through April 30, encompasses a luscious selection of images inspired by recent travels, which include spending time on the island of Maui and the big island of Hawaii in October 2018; and more recently experiencing the beauty of the bayou region of New Orleans followed by a voyage up the Mississippi River.

## Home Show artists

The 19th Annual Home and Garden Show will be March 8-10 at the El Paso Convention Center, and this year will feature a special section called the Art, Gift and Gourmet area. Two dozen artists will sell their work, including Candy Mayer, Nina Eaton, Racheal Davis, Melinda Etzold, Lisa Mata and others.

*Myrna Zanetell is a freelance writer specializing in the visual arts.*

**Nayda's Gems & Stones**

Hundreds of Necklaces | Bali Silver | Custom Orders While You Wait

Semi-Precious Stones | Silver Findings

Placita Santa Fe | Nayda I. Graziani | Classes Available  
5024 Doniphan Ste | Custom Jewelry Design | (915) 204-9652

**CALL TO ARTISTS**

12th EL PASO Studio Tour

El Paso artists are invited to open their studios to the public in this 12th annual El Paso Artists Studio Tour. Join the FUN!

**Deadline: March 5, 2019**

West Side : April 27 & 28\*  
East Side : May 4 & 5\*\*

\* Includes: West Side & Upper Valley  
\*\* Includes: Eastside, N.E., Downtown & Mission Valley  
Hours: Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday noon-5pm  
Information & Entry form at: [www.pleinairpaintersofelpaso.com](http://www.pleinairpaintersofelpaso.com)

Sponsored by

**H-SUN**

Fully Loaded w/ Hardtop & Windshield | Industry Leading Warranty

**\$7,999**  
after rebates+TTL

New Lower Price

Includes:  
Wench, Trailer Hitch,  
Aluminum Wheels,  
Racing Shocks,  
Mirrors, Blinkers,  
Horn & More!

**STRIKE 1000**

FREE T-Shirt  
with this ad  
1 per customer  
while supplies last

**MOTO EL PASO**

3750 GATEWAY EAST  
(915) 566-6666 | [WWW.MOTOELPASO.COM](http://WWW.MOTOELPASO.COM)

**STRIKE 1000 CREW**