

Editorial Introduction

As a colonial Andean specialist, I was not surprised to find an announcement in my inbox in early 2019 announcing the Thoma Congreso de Arte Virreinal to be held in Lima, Peru. From July 18 through 20 of that year, Katherine Moore McAllen and Verónica Muñoz-Nájar oversaw an impressive lineup of international scholars whose presentations addressed the theme “El futuro del arte del pasado.”¹ Luisa Elena Alcalá, Hiroshige Okada, and Thomas B. F. Cummins gave keynote addresses over the course of the three-day conference. Impressed by the scope and quality, I reached out to Katherine and Verónica to inquire about their project. After several conversations, we concluded that *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* was positioned to facilitate a publication that would build on the initial work of the Thoma Congreso de Arte Virreinal.

As its title indicates, the gathering was supported by the Thoma Foundation.² I use the word *supported* here in lieu of *sponsored* because the Thoma Foundation’s assistance went beyond financial support for this and many other scholarly initiatives related to the arts of the early modern Spanish American world. Since they began collecting viceregal art in the late twentieth century, Marilynn and Carl Thoma have been pioneers in North America. They were drawn to the aesthetic intersection of Andean and European cultural production, which resulted in unique forms of material culture from the early sixteenth-century conquest period through the mid-nineteenth-century post-independence era. As Marilynn Thoma herself stated in the first catalog of the collection, published in 2006 on the occasion of the Cantor Center

for Visual Arts exhibition *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels: South American Paintings 1600–1825 from the Thoma Collection*, “with exposure to experienced dealers, collectors, and art historians, I came increasingly to appreciate the value of focused collecting, research and documentation, conservation, and framing of the artwork as part of the collecting discipline.”³ The Thomases are invested in presenting their art collection as a pedagogical resource in the education of scholars, their students, and the general public alike. In 2016, the Thomases partnered with the University of Texas at Austin when their foundation established the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Associate Curatorship of Spanish Colonial Art at the Blanton Museum.⁴ The position is connected with the long-term loan of Spanish American viceregal artworks to the Blanton, where they are conserved, studied, exhibited, and published in the pursuit of interdisciplinary higher learning.

The pedagogical mission and generosity of the Thoma Art Foundation are reflected in the current issue of *LALVC*. Presented entirely in Spanish (with English translation of all texts provided as supplemental material), the Dialogues section in this issue was underwritten by the foundation in collaboration with University of California Press. By publishing all of the content in Spanish for the first time, this Dialogues sets an important precedent in the field. Not only does this decision make the content more accessible to Latin American readers, it embodies an open approach to the transmission of

1. See the conference program at www.utrgv.edu/claa/_files/documents/programacongresoartevirreinalperu.pdf.

2. “Symposium on Viceregal Art Organized by 2019–20 Marilynn Thoma Fellows,” press release, May 15, 2019, accessed March 17, 2021, <https://thomafoundation.org/news-press/foundation-news/symposium-on-viceregal-art-organized-by-2019-20-marilynn-thoma-fellows/>.

3. Marilynn Thoma, “Collector’s Introduction,” in *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels: South American Paintings 1600–1825 from the Thoma Collection*, ed. Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt (Milan: Skira, in association with Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, 2006), 10.

4. “Blanton Announces Curator of Spanish Colonial Art Underwritten by Thoma Foundation, Long-term Loan of Works from Thoma Collection,” press release, November 30, 2016, accessed March 17, 2021, https://blantonmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Spanish-Colonial-Release_FINAL.pdf.

knowledge across national, linguistic, and economic boundaries. Although *LALVC* is published in North America, the content included in this Dialogues reflects the global state of the field, designed to be accessible to the largest possible audience around the world. In fact, UC Press is providing free and open access to this Dialogues for one year after its publication.

This Dialogues, organized by Katherine Moore McAllen and Verónica Muñoz-Nájar Luque, reprises the 2019 *limeño congreso*. Presented in two parts published across issues 3 and 4 of volume 3, this Dialogues focuses on the current state of the field of colonial Latin American visual culture. This platform provides the participant authors with the opportunity to reflect on the work they presented at the 2019 gathering, expanding upon their findings and methodological approaches in relation to the work conducted by their peers. Luisa Elena Alcalá (an *LALVC* editorial board member), Lucila Iglesias, Leslie Todd, Hugo Armando Félix Rocha, Emily Floyd, and Sara Garzón contribute a range of scholarship focused on material culture drawn from across the viceregal Spanish American world. Their collective work raises important questions regarding the relationship between the viceregal visual arts and conquest, identity, regional expression, race, and contemporary reverberations.

This is not a thematic issue—*LALVC* does not focus on single themes, preferring to organically reflect the current scope of the field. However, the “future of the art of the past” is an apropos place to begin thinking about the content presented in these pages. In addition to the Dialogues, the issue begins with “The Tira of Don Martín: A Living Nahua Chronicle” by Alanna Radlo-Dzur and Mackenzie Cooley. This essay is the culmination of a collaborative, multiphase, international research project that investigated the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian *Tira of don Martín* or Codex Saville, as the object is also known. This illustrated manuscript is one of a class of illustrated viceregal documents that record geographical histories. Radlo-Dzur, Cooley, and their partners trace what they term the “cultural biography” of the manuscript as it accumulated over generations of use, transfer, and manipulation. Using material, archival, and linguistic analysis, the authors argue that the manuscript is an artifact of continuity in the face of profound sociocultural disruption that was precipitated by violent conquest, colonization, and evangelization.

Ana Paula Garcia Boscatti’s essay focuses on bodily representation in Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s. Garcia Boscatti considers how visual representations of the female buttocks became touchstones for the configuration of national Brazilian identity at that time and continuing into the present day. This interdisciplinary visual culture study addresses a range of visual material from popular culture to canonical modernist architecture. Through the publication of body images in magazines like *Revista Manchete*, the female body became an agent of Brazilian national identity under the military dictatorship. Garcia Boscatti argues that these images were part of a visual economy undergirded by hierarchical power relations that produced what she describes as “the global commercialization of national bioesthetics.” This provocative essay pushes through historical limitations of patriarchy, decorum, and constraint to reveal how the female body became the national body both at home in Brazil and abroad.

Finally, Tatiana Flores reflects on how to reconcile racism and *latinidad* in the context of visual culture studies. Also drawing on artists who use the female body to confront the constraints placed on individuals in national contexts and transnational migrations, Flores highlights the work of Latina artists Elia Alba, Juana Valdés, and Wanda Raimundi-Ortiz with her signature Chuelta performance work. Following in the methodological footsteps of Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, Flores demonstrates how the labeling of visual culture as “Latin American” or “Latinx” stems from a history of colonialism that erased Black lives for hundreds of years. Visual artists and public intellectuals across the Western Hemisphere have laid bare how “the frameworks that contain history and structure knowledge are insufficient to grapple with the complexities of our contemporary condition.” They embrace the idea of *latinidad* as a decolonizing intellectual space where racism, sexism, violence, white supremacy, segregation, suppression, and erasure can be replaced with more inclusive, vocal, visible communities.

What is the future of the art of the past? The content presented in this issue of *LALVC* only begins to put forward the promise and possibilities of this important question for the fields of Latin American and Latinx visual culture studies. As we go forward in our collective scholarly pursuits, this question among many others will motivate innovative research across the field. It is our hope that this issue, and the journal overall, will have a broad reach around the world.