

SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM of ART

HIGHEST HEAVEN FEATURING MORE THAN 100 PAINTINGS, SCULPTURE, FURNITURE, IVORIES, AND SILVERWORKS OPENS TO PUBLIC ON SATURDAY

EXHIBITION EXPLORES DIVERSITY, INTRICACY, AND FUNCTION OF ARTWORKS FROM THE ALTIPLANO IN SOUTH AMERICA

San Antonio, TX—June 7, 2016—This weekend, the San Antonio Museum of Art will open *Highest Heaven*, an expansive exhibition of paintings, sculpture, furniture, ivories, and silverworks that explores the art of the Altiplano, or high plains, of South America in the 18th century. With more than 100 works, *Highest Heaven* introduces visitors to the incredible diversity and intricacy of objects created during this period, and highlights the distinct visual language that arose from the cultural exchange within the Spanish Empire. The exhibition further examines the important role of art in the establishment of new city centers and propagation of the Christian faith among indigenous peoples in the Spanish colonies. Drawn exclusively from the distinguished collection of Roberta and Richard Huber, the exhibition will be on view from June 11 through September 4, 2016, before traveling to the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, California in October, and to the Worcester Art Museum in Worcester, Massachusetts the following March.

The Altiplano stretches from northern Argentina to the flatlands of Peru, and much of the exhibition focuses on works produced by workshops in the major cities of Cuzco and Lima in modern day Peru and Potosi in modern day Bolivia, where both European and native artists practiced. Paintings and sculpture served primarily to disseminate Christian images and faith to the New World, while works in ivory and silver underscored the wealth and prosperity of the growing Empire. Paintings also frequently depicted major colonial cities to both capture their urban fabric and educate those back home on the appearance and existence of the colonies.

With the extensive growth of trade across the Spanish 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 directly. In others, European saints, idols, and figures took on the appearance of native populations, enhancing their relevance and influence. Yet, in other work, Christian symbols were incorporated into scenes of local rural and urban life. Together, these distinct yet interrelated approaches, created a new visual culture that represented the incredible growth of the Empire, and spoke to the integration of a diversity of peoples into a single faith.

“In contrast to other areas of Spanish colonial scholarship, such as New Spain (present-day Southwestern United States, Mexico, and Central America), much less is known about the artists, workshop practices, and even the names of South American artists,” said Katherine Luber, the Kelso Director of San Antonio Museum of Art. “Collectors are often the first to blaze the trail of discovery, and then the scholarship follows. A show like *Highest Heaven* opens up avenues of investigation, and we are grateful to Roberta and Richard for the chance to share this incredible collection with our audiences. In addition to the exhibition, we are producing a catalogue that we hope will spur continued excitement and additional scholarship on the subject.”

Unlike many previous exhibitions of Colonial Art, which have arranged objects by media, *Highest Heaven* will be organized according to iconography. After an introductory section that explores a group of objects made for secular life, the exhibition considers the art works religiously, from the angels and archangels that foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, through imagery dealing with the life of Christ and

spread of the gospel, to the importance of the Virgin Mary and the saints. Each section of the exhibition contains a mixture of works of art in all media, from religious paintings to carved and gilded wooden sculptures to intimate ivories and silverwork. The exhibition is 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.

“A central component of our mission is to examine and communicate the historic and cultural contexts of artworks, along with the objects themselves. *Highest Heaven* is an opportunity to not only investigate the aesthetic beauty of this art, but also the significant role that it played in the cultural, religious, and social lives of these peoples,” added Luber. “San Antonio is a city rich in history and diversity, and we look forward to engaging our community with this work, which we think will have a particular meaning here.”

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 dramatically shows a heroic Christ redeeming the souls of humanity—and one of the Hubers’ recent acquisitions;
- *A portrait of the Countess of Monteblanco and Miranar*, attributed to the 18th-Century Peruvian painter Cristobal Lozano. A splendid portrait of one of the wealthiest women in the Viceroyalty of Peru, the painting shows how the Colonial elite of the New World displayed their status through elaborate representations that enumerated 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, while recognizably South American flora and fauna populate the background;
- *Christ Child as Salvator Mundi*, 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.

Exhibition Organization, Tour, and Catalogue:

Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art from 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.

San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX: June 11, 2016 – September 4, 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 Harvard University. The catalogue will also include texts by Roberta and Richard Huber, Katherine Luber, and William Keyse Rudolph and Marion J. Oettinger Jr.

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. His and Roberta's 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 Altiplano during Spanish rule through exhibitions such as *Highest Heaven: Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art from the Roberta and Richard Huber Collection*.

About San Antonio Museum of Art:

The San Antonio Museum of Art serves as a vibrant forum to explore and connect with art that spans the world's geographies, artistic periods, genres, and cultures. An encyclopedic institution, its collection contains nearly 30,000 works representing 5,000 years of history. Housed in the historic Lone Star Brewery on the Museum Reach of San Antonio's famed Riverwalk, the San Antonio Museum of Art is committed to promoting the rich cultural heritage and life of the city. The Museum hosts hundreds of events and public programs each year, including concerts, performances, tours, lectures, symposia, and interactive experiences. As an active civic leader, the Museum is dedicated to enriching the cultural life of the city and the region, and to supporting its creative community.

###

For additional information, please contact:

Local/Regional Media

Tatiana Herrera-Schneider
Communication Manager, San Antonio Museum of Art
210.978.8107
tatiana.herrera-schneider@samuseum.org

National Media

Sascha Freudenheim or Alina Sumajin
PAVE Communications & Consulting
sascha@paveconsult.com / alina@paveconsult.com
917-544-6057 / 646-369-2050