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Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life, 1521-1821

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In the spring of 2004, the Denver Art Museum opened the largest exhibition of Mexican colonial painting ever assembled outside of Mexico. It included sixty masterpieces from public and private collections in Europe, Mexico, and the United States. This catalogue of the exhibit provides a much-needed, basic, yet comprehensive text on the subject. The paintings featured in this fully illustrated volume reflect Aztec traditions, imported Asian arts, and artistic styles from various regions of Spain and its territories. They depict the rich diversity of people and cultures in Mexico during this period and have been selected to demonstrate the complexity of Mexican colonial art and society. The writers and scholars contributing to this work are the leading experts in the field today, and they bring fresh insights and concepts to these fascinating and beautiful works of art. Many of the stylistic traditions found in Mexican colonial painting have their roots in the artistic currents of the early modern era, such as the latent maniera of Michelangelo and his followers, the tenebrism of Caravaggio, the classicism of the Carracci school, and the full-blown baroque of Rubens. Many of these imported artistic traditions were creatively assimilated and altered to include distinctive American and Asian characteristics and iconography that resulted in an art of the New World. The contributors discuss these artistic innovations and also draw analogies to the contemporary colonial experience in the United States.

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