



RESEÑA DE | A REVIEW OF

Ramos Sosa, Rafael, *et al.*. *La madera hecha dios. Arte, fe y devoción en torno a la pasión de Cristo*. Catálogo de la exposición en la Galería Municipal de Arte Pancho Fierro. Lima: Municipalidad de Lima, 2016, 130 pp., 66 ils.

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Spanish colonial art continues to be the subject of intense scholarly attention following decades of relative neglect, but most of that focus has been on the arts of architecture and painting, so colonial polychrome sculpture calls out for attention. Rafael Ramos Sosa, Professor of the History of Spanish American Art at the University of Seville Spanish, has brought critical attention to the sculpture of the former Viceroyalty of Peru. He has traveled widely in South America, camera in hand, and has published a series of articles over the years about Spanish colonial polychrome sculpture. For the organization of this ground-breaking exhibition, Dr. Ramos Sosa teamed with his colleague Luis Martín Bogdanovich, who teaches at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in Lima and who serves as director of the Galería Municipal de Arte Pancho Fierro in that city.

The great strength of this exhibition is that the sculptures on display (and which this writer was fortunate to be able to visit) are of strictly local provenance brought together to tell the story of the devotions related to the Passion of Christ and the processions organized by Limeños over the centuries. The loans, the majority of them from Limeñan churches and convents, would not likely have been allowed to travel to another venue, which makes the published catalogue all the more valuable.

Chronologically, the sculptures begin with the 1603 “*Christo del Auxilio*” (Lima: Iglesia de N.S. de la Merced) created in the Seville workshop of Juan Martínez Montañés and here thoroughly studied by Emilio Gómez Piñol. Works by Martínez Montañés, the “Dios de la Madera,” imported to Lima include a figure of Christ Crucified now in the Capilla de San Juan Bautista in the Cathedral of Lima. Other artists who trained in Seville found their way to Lima. Bernardo de Robles, born in Salamanca spent at least two or three years in Seville before he left for Lima. An Immaculate Conception in the Cathedral of Lima is by him, and attributed to him here is a Christ Crucified in the Iglesia

de San Sebastián in Lima. Another artist who brought Sevillian styles and techniques with him to Lima was Pedro de Noguera, who carved the magnificent choirstalls in the Cathedral. A *Cristo yacente* created by Noguera in 1619, the year he arrived in Lima, is in the Colección Cofradía de N.S. de la Soledad de Lima.

Thus it is that the local artists of Lima of the following generations would be profoundly influenced by sculptural types of Sevillian origin. Typically, the names of these artists are unknown. The works in the catalogue dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries include a polychromed terracotta sculpture of the *Ecce Homo* of about 1630 that belongs to the Monasterio de N.S. del Carmen, as does a carved, polychromed Jesús Nazareno. A standing sculpture of *Cristo resucitado* belongs to the Cofradía de N.S. de la Soledad. Several small sculptures, including a “dressed” *Dolorosa* are now in the Cathedral of Lima, but may originally been in private collections.

The catalogue includes subjects related to the theme of the Passion other than the primary figure of Christ himself. Among them are a dressed sculpture called the “*Dolorosa del Prado*” in the collection of the Monasterio de N.S. del Prado with a silver crown created around 1770. Two small sculptures represent the Christ Child forecast the Passion. One, from the Monasterio de N.S. del Carmen in Lima, represents the Child carrying his cross to Calvary. This sculpture, with its *pelo postizo*, appears in a portrait of Reverend Mother María Teresa de San José, painted by an unknown Limeño painter c. 1707, enabling scholars give the sculpture a *terminus ante quem*. Another standing figure of the Christ Child, with the standard of the cross resting in his left hand, and his right perhaps originally holding the orb of the world, is transformed into a vision of the suffering to come by the Crown of Thorns that causes blood to drip down his forehead. The expression on the face of this eighteenth-century sculpture belonging to the Cathedral of Lima is perfectly serene, in full acceptance of his future Passion.

The catalogue includes not only the polychrome sculptures that gave the exhibition its title, “*La madera hecha Dios*,” a play on Martínez Montañés’s nickname, but a selection of paintings designed to enhance the viewer’s sense of time and place. The place is Lima. Two large paintings (103 x 495 cm) that still belong to the Cofradía de la Soledad in Lima were created between 1665 and 1667 to honor the confraternity’s important role in the Holy Week celebrations there. The *Procesión del Viernes Santo en la Plaza Mayor de Lima* and the *Procesión del Santo Sepulcro antes la Iglesia de la Soledad*. The paintings are marvelous in their specificity. The urban background of colonial Lima is illustrated with the buildings that the processions would in fact have passed on Holy Friday. The processional carts representing specific events in the Passion of Christ are pictured with their sculptured participants. The members of the religious orders, penitents and confraternities who took part in this Holy Week display of faith are all included and identified by Luis Eduardo Wuffarden in a very informative catalogue entry. Wuffarden suggests that the elaborate, though sober, display in these processions was intended by Limeños to “. . . reforzar la idea de una exacta equivalencia entre las grandes manifesta-

ciones religiosas a uno y otro lado del océano, situando simbólicamente en pie de igualdad a las grandes ciudades del Nuevo Mundo con relación a sus precedentes europeas.”

A nineteenth-century watercolor by the artist called Pancho Fierro, noted for his many costumbrista sketches of the people of Lima, that belongs to the Hispanic Society of America in New York could not be included in the exhibition, but is thankfully illustrated in the catalogue. It represents the *Procesión de Jueves Santo de la Cofradía del Cristo de Burgos de San Agustín* in 1832, and is as specific in its details as were the anonymously created paintings of the 1660s. Leading the procession is the cart bearing the famous *Arquero de la Muerte* by the Limeño artist Baltazar Gavilán (Convento Agustino de N.S. de Gracia).

The contributors to the catalogue mentioned above are all well-known, but the catalogue is enhanced by the welcome contributions of a number of lesser-known and younger scholars who have brought a variety of points of view as well as careful study to this valuable catalogue. The story told in this exhibition catalogue goes well beyond the study of the objects (the “*madera hecha Dios*”) to include the history and culture of Lima and its “arte, fe y devoción” in colonial times, in many ways continuing today.