

## Book Review

Luisa Elena Alcalá and Benito Navarreto Prieto (eds.), *América en Madrid: cultura material, arte e imágenes*, Ars Iberica et Americana 23. Madrid and Frankfurt am Main, Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2023. ISBN 978-84-9192-395-4 (hardback), 978-3-96869-512-9 (E-book). 357 pp., 74 col. ills. €54,00.

In 2008 the historian James Amelang published an article, 'The New World in the Old? The absence of empire in early modern Madrid'. To anyone interested in the presence of items from America in European collections, this challenge was bound to encourage further research on the extent of holdings of *americana* in Spain, and particularly in the capital, Madrid.

The volume under review includes a reprint of Amelang's seminal article and consists of a brief prologue by him, an introduction by the editors, and thirteen other contributions. It presents the results of that new research, much of it facilitated by the publication of various inventories in the interval since Amelang's article appeared. In what follows, I have selected those essays with a focus on collections that will be of most interest to readers of this journal, though in some cases the term 'repositories' might be more appropriate. For example, in her discussion of the libraries and possibly American possessions of Diego Velázquez and Vicente Carducho, Marta Cacho Casal records the presence of only a few books about the New World in Carducho's library, though he was very much interested in opening up a commercial exchange with Lima and other Spanish markets there; and in Velázquez's case, the books on America were intended to demonstrate his social standing, in the same way as the filigree gold chain that may have come from America but could be from the East. Moreover, while attention has been drawn to the American *búcaro* in *Las Meninas* (though not all *búcaros* came from America), this fashionable ceramic vessel that diffused a delicate scent was well represented in the still life genre and may not have particularly evoked the American continent in a painting set in an elite Spanish interior.

Another elite setting was the entourage of the foreign ambassadors who spent some time in the capital, to whom the contribution by Jorge Fernández-Santos

is dedicated. As papal nuncio to the court of Philip IV between 1654 and 1658, the wealthy collector and patron Camillo Massimo arrived from Rome with gifts for the king, the queen and the infanta, thereby enriching the royal collections with a Guercino and a Reni. When he returned to Italy he took with him portraits of all three members of the royal family by Velázquez, and in addition watercolour portraits of the Inca rulers. Massimo was just one of the ambassadors in Madrid during the reign of Philip IV who, in acquiring American objects in the capital and taking them back home, further disseminated the image of Madrid as a new *caput mundi* at the centre of an extensive transatlantic trade network. Likewise the cargo of 736 kg of chocolate with which Cardinal Carlo Bonelli returned to Italy in early 1665 is a sign of the growing importance of the consumption of chocolate in various European capitals, while exotic items such as paintings made with iridescent featherwork also made their way further afield via Madrid.

Another highly valued American luxury item, discussed in this volume by Ronda Kasl, was the lacquerware (*maque*, from the Japanese *maki-e*) produced in Michoacán by native sculptors. The decoration of one of these pieces by José Manuel de la Cerda, a circular lacquerware tray now in the Museo de América in Madrid, combines oriental camelias and willows with scenes of interaction between indigenous élites and Europeans. The Museo de América also has a painting of the *alameda* (boulevard) of Mexico City. By carefully identifying the various buildings depicted and their respective histories, Concepción Lopezosa Aparicio is able to date it to around 1723–4. Depictions of the important urban settlements in the Viceroyalty of New Spain arrived in Spain not only in paintings but also on screens and ceramic tiles, and were to have a profound influence on the remodelling of Madrid in the second half of the eighteenth century when the Paseo del Prado emerged as a suburban substitute for the Calle Mayor in the centre of the city.

Very much centred in Madrid is the Casa de Cerralbo, whose collection is explored here by Berenice Pardo Hernández and Luis Javier Cuesta Hernández. The 3rd Marquis of Cerralbo, Rodrigo

Pacheco Osorio, who had served as an ambassador in Flanders, was appointed Viceroy of New Spain in 1624. He arrived a wealthy man, which allowed him to indulge his love of luxury and ostentation there. Among the gifts that he sent the king were an American parrot made of gold, silver and precious stones intricately fitted together to represent its feathered plumes. Thanks to the research undertaken by the two authors on the objects and documentation in the present-day Museo Cerralbo, we can now number among his American possessions a small wooden desk from Michoacán and a number of silver lamps donated to four religious institutions in the capital. And in the chapel with his funerary monument in the cathedral of Ciudad Rodrigo, there is a sculpture of Christ crucified of a type that was produced in America, the so-called *cristos de maíz*.

For some time Pablo Amador Marrero has been documenting the presence in churches and convents in the Canary Islands and in mainland Spain of these sculptures of Christ on the cross, made in Mexico with a paste of maize and paper over a light wooden armature. In this volume he and Ramón Pérez de Castro present several new additions to the corpus. In the hamlet of Martín Muñoz de las Posadas (Segovia), a copy of the Holy Shroud of Turin was kept in a box beneath the life-size crucified figure of Christ, pointing to the important role such a sculpture could play in a devotional context. Similarly, a *cristo de maíz* in the Monastery of San Lorenzo de Escorial was displayed in the Chapel of the Noviciate, where blood stains

on the floor indicate its use for contemplation by the novices as they flagellated themselves. Although for a long time these sculptures were regarded as a form of popular art, their presence in a location as close to the Spanish monarch as El Escorial points to their appreciation as works of art by the Spanish nobility; the Duke of Lerma possessed several of them, as did various other high-ranking persons in the state or ecclesiastical apparatus.

It would be impossible to conclude this selective review without mention of the by now famous painting of three mulatto gentlemen from Esmeraldas by the indigenous artist from Quito Andrés Sánchez Gallque. Although it arrived in Madrid in 1599 as a gift for Philip III, it appears to have passed unnoticed until its transfer to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid in 1857. Olga Acosta Luna describes its successive passages and labelling as well as the question of attribution for the light they throw on the reception of this unusual painting. It was shown in Quito in 2019, and in the Museo del Prado for a temporary exhibition in 2022, and is now on permanent display in the Museo de América.

James Amelang opened up a dossier in 2008 that has grown exponentially since then. This beautifully produced volume shows how much has been achieved in a field that will for ever remain open to fresh discoveries.

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