

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



The Art of Painting in Colonial Bolivia / El arte de la pintura en Bolivia colonial

Susan Verdi Webster

Volume 42, numéro 2, printemps 2019

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1065159ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065159ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Webster, S. (2019). Compte rendu de [The Art of Painting in Colonial Bolivia / El arte de la pintura en Bolivia colonial]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(2), 255–257. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065159ar>

Stratton-Pruitt, Suzanne L., ed.

The Art of Painting in Colonial Bolivia / El arte de la pintura en Bolivia colonial.

Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts Series. Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2017. Pp. 530 + 412 ill. ISBN 78-1-94502-31-9 (hardcover) US\$120.

This lavishly illustrated bilingual volume is the second in a series edited by Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt to explore colonial painting in a region of South America. This anthology offers fourteen in-depth essays on painting in colonial Bolivia written by established and emerging scholars from across the Americas, and includes a second section of twenty-one focused iconographical studies. More than four hundred high-quality colour plates—many illustrating works not previously published—display the remarkably varied, complex, and visually opulent characteristics of paintings in Bolivia (in this period, part of the Viceroyalty of Peru, and later that of La Plata) from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century.

An introductory essay by Stratton-Pruitt establishes the historical context and provides a chronological and regional overview of known painters and works created between 1600 and 1825. As a basis for the accompanying thematic studies, Stratton-Pruitt focuses on what is known about identified painters, from the Italian Mannerist Bernardo Bitti, through the well-known local seventeenth-century master, Melchor Pérez Holguín, to Gaspar Miguel del Berrío in eighteenth-century Potosí, among others. In addition to recorded artistic biographies, Stratton-Pruitt acknowledges the many anonymous indigenous and mestizo painters whose stories are yet to be recovered. The great wealth of the “rich mountain” mines of Potosí attracted painters and promoted artistic production and consumption in the region on a grand scale. Stratton-Pruitt discusses the transatlantic and regional mobility of paintings as well as artists, acknowledging that not all of the works illustrated in this volume were necessarily created by local painters in the region, yet affirming that their presence nonetheless constitutes part of the colonial history of painting in Bolivia. Given the web of territorial connections and the temporal frame of the book, “Southern Andean” colonial painting might be a more useful term to describe the region than that of the modern nation-state of Bolivia.

Paintings on canvas constitute the almost exclusive focus of the essays in this volume, with the notable exceptions of a chapter on mural painting and another on print sources for paintings. Philipp Schauer offers a brief but visually striking survey of mural paintings in churches across the region, and Almerindo Ojeda Di Ninno presents a useful overview of prints and the ways that artists adapted and transformed them in painted compositions. Ramón Mujica Pinilla's masterful study of the imperial political ideologies and imagery embedded in religious paintings, notably the defense of the Eucharist, demonstrates the intimate bond between church and empire evident in a range of works that he argues may be more prominent in the region than elsewhere in the colonial Andes. The chapter on portraiture by Jaime Mariazza F. examines secular images and religious donor portraits that highlight regional as well as Iberian formulas, and explores social issues of dress, status, and ethnicity. Carolyn C. Wilson discusses images of Saint Joseph in a series of eighteenth-century examples that explicate the saint's multiple devotional roles, and Adriana Pacheco Bustillos considers the spiritual functions of paintings housed within the often luxurious confines of cloistered convents of nuns. Agustina Rodríguez Romero addresses the surprisingly extensive, diverse, and complex paintings of Old Testament themes in the region, cogently elucidating their iconographic intricacies and their didactic roles in the conversion of native neophytes.

Four provocative essays explore the rich diversity of Marian imagery, emphasizing local and transatlantic connections and manifestations. Jeffrey Schrader examines the transference of statue paintings of the Virgin Mary from a Spanish peninsular standpoint, studying specifically Iberian advocations that, owing to their perceived orthodoxy, were welcomed and remained largely unchanged in the colonial Andes. Balancing the peninsular perspective, Maya Stanfield-Mazzi's study of localized images of the Virgin charts the many ways that statue paintings were adapted and transformed to express Andean imagery and priorities, just as Gustavo Tudisco's essay underscores the imbrication of pre-Hispanic Andean notions of the sacred with colonial paintings of the Virgin, notably the often reproduced [*Virgin of the*] *Rich Hill of Potosí*. In a similar vein, Jeanette Favrot Peterson offers a fascinating case study of the ways that Christian advocations and devotions were diffused throughout the southern Andes by tracing the journey of the Jeronymite friar Diego de Ocaña and his creation and dissemination of images of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Peterson's

nuanced consideration of competing visualities among plural ethnicities in the region engages important Andean issues of materiality and reception.

Two final essays explore the marvellously complex, monumental depictions of the *Postrimerías* (Four Last Things) at the parish churches of Carabuco and Caquiaviri in the Lake Titicaca region. Gabriela Siracusano's analysis of the seventeenth-century series at Carabuco links contemporary texts and sermons with the painted imagery to elucidate narratives that were both local and universal, while Lucía Querejazu Escobari's examination of a similar eighteenth-century series at Caquiaviri locates the paintings within the overall iconographic program of the church and evaluates their political and ideological content in terms of enduring concerns regarding the persistence of Andean "idolatry" and ancestral beliefs.

The second part of the volume offers a series of brief but informative iconographic studies penned by several of the authors that include the Passion of Christ, the Immaculate Conception and other Marian advocations, and images of saints and archangels—as well as the famed examples depicting archangels with guns. As an anthology, this volume makes no claim to trace the complete history and full spectrum of colonial painting in the region, yet it is certainly the most extensive treatment of major themes and issues to date, and reproduces in abundance the stunning visual splendor and range of painting in the region. For these reasons, the volume will appeal to students and general readers and will serve as a major scholarly reference for years to come.

SUSAN VERDI WEBSTER

College of William & Mary

Urban, David V.

Milton and the Parables of Jesus: Self-Representation and the Bible in John Milton's Writings.

University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018. Pp. xii, 316. ISBN 978-0-271-08099-4 (hardcover) \$89.95.

The parables of Jesus are a gift in religion, wisdom, and narrative. John Milton is a poet of religious topics often drawing on or inspired by the Bible. David V. Urban explores the connection between the parables and Milton, particularly