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MEADOWS MUSEUM TO HOST WORLD PREMIERE OF *SPECTACLES OF POWER AND FAITH: COLONIAL SOUTH AMERICAN ART FROM THE THOMA FOUNDATION* AUG. 23, 2026-JAN. 24, 2027

From striking devotional images to grand portraits, more than 60 rarely or never-before-seen paintings – collected by Dallas arts patrons Carl and Marilyn Thoma – depict centuries-old stories of faith, family, creativity and community that continue to resonate today

DALLAS (June XX, 2026) – Making its world premiere at the Meadows Museum, SMU, *Spectacles of Power and Faith: Colonial South American Art from the Thoma Foundation* brings together 63 extraordinary paintings that reveal the visual richness and cultural complexity of colonial South America. Many of the works – from large devotional canvases and portraits to finely rendered paintings on copper – are recent acquisitions that will be displayed, studied and published for the first time. Drawn from the Thoma Foundation’s Art of the Spanish Americas collection developed by Dallas arts patrons Carl and Marilyn Thoma, the exhibition will be on view Aug. 23, 2026, through Jan. 24, 2027.

The artworks, created between 1600 and 1850 in present-day Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador, testify to the political power of the Spanish Empire and the central role of the Catholic Church in the region. They also reflect the experimental creativity of Indigenous American, European and African artists working in South America’s cosmopolitan capitals, resulting in some of the most striking images produced in the early modern world.

“This exhibition brings the visually rich and intellectually compelling artistic tradition of early modern South America to an institution known for its unparalleled holdings of Peninsular Spanish art,” said Amanda W. Dotseth, the Linda P. and William A. Custard Director of the Meadows Museum and Centennial Chair in the Meadows School of the Arts, SMU. “The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation is truly exceptional; we are grateful it now forms part of the vibrant Dallas arts community. The Meadows Museum is honored to premiere the Spanish Americas collection to SMU and North Texas.”

While many of the paintings were created for churches and devotional spaces – including iconic depictions of the Virgin Mary, popular saints such as Francis of Assisi, as well as biblical narratives – the exhibition also includes portraits that offer a glimpse of secular life in the colonial Americas. Among the most captivating is a small portrait of a young girl from Caracas, Venezuela, named Petronila Méndez, painted in 1763 by Diego Antonio de Landaeta, a free Black artist who enjoyed a successful career as a society portraitist.

The exhibition is organized into thematic sections – Saints; American Virgins; Spain in the Americas; Jewels; Art in Sacred Spaces (The Chapel); Daily Life at Home (The Salón); and Teaching Faith – that explore the many roles art played in colonial society, from reinforcing royal power and honoring Marian imagery to illustrating complex theological ideas. Enhanced with music and scent, an immersive chapel installation recreates the multisensory atmosphere of a place of worship, situating the artworks in an environment that evokes their original context.

“Colonial South American painting is among the most inventive and captivating artistic traditions of the early modern period,” said Adam Jasienski, co-curator of the exhibition and associate professor of art history, Meadows School of the Arts, SMU. “These works demonstrate how artists across the Americas adapted and transformed European imagery in ways that were deeply rooted in local histories, materials and devotional practices.”

Co-curated by Jasienski and Verónica Muñoz-Nájar, associate curator of Art of the Spanish Americas at the Thoma Foundation, *Spectacles of Power and Faith* will travel after its Dallas presentation to Princeton University Art Museum (Feb. 27-Aug. 1, 2027) and the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame (Aug. 24-Dec. 19, 2027).

To accompany the exhibition, a fully illustrated catalogue will be published in English and Spanish by the Meadows Museum and its publishing partner Ediciones El Viso. Serving as an important resource for researchers and students worldwide, the 300-page publication will include six essays by emerging scholars of colonial Latin American art as well as reproductions of all 63 paintings.

Public programming – from 20-minute spotlight talks and tours to gallery conversations and lectures – will feature art historians and curators exploring colonial South American art, the global reach of the Spanish Empire and evolving perspectives on the field over the last two decades.

This exhibition has been organized by the Meadows Museum, SMU, Dallas, and the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation, and is funded by a generous gift from [The Meadows Foundation](#). Promotional support is provided by the [Dallas Tourism Public Improvement District](#).

MEADOWS MUSEUM GENERAL INFORMATION

The Meadows Museum is located on the SMU campus at 5900 Bishop Blvd., Dallas, TX 75205. Hours are 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Tuesday–Saturday, with extended hours until 9 p.m. on Thursday, and 1–5 p.m. Sunday. Parking is free for museum visitors. General admission is \$12 adults, \$10 seniors 65+, \$4 non-SMU students, and free for Meadows Museum members, SMU faculty/staff/students, and youth 18 and under. For more information, go to meadowsmuseumdallas.org.

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ABOUT THE MEADOWS MUSEUM

The Meadows Museum is the leading U.S. institution focused on the study and presentation of the art of Spain. In 1962, Dallas businessman and philanthropist Algur H. Meadows donated his private collection of Spanish paintings, as well as funds to start a museum, to Southern Methodist University. The museum opened to the public in 1965, marking the first step in fulfilling Meadows's vision to create "a small Prado for Texas." Today, the Meadows is home to one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Spanish art outside of Spain. The collection spans from the 10th to the 21st centuries and includes medieval objects, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures, and major paintings by Golden Age and modern masters. For more information visit meadowsmuseumdallas.org.

ABOUT THE THOMA FOUNDATION

The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation was founded to enhance lives and communities through access to the arts and education. The Foundation makes art collection-related grants to institutions and individuals and lends and exhibits its collection to museums and galleries worldwide. The public can also experience works from the Foundation's collection firsthand at its Dallas headquarters and exhibition space, as well as at Thoma Collection, its public art space in Santa Fe. For more information visit thomafoundation.org.

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