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SPANISH COLONIAL
ARTS

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MICHAEL BENANAV

A SEASON TO SAVOR

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STAYCATION AT LA FONDA ON THE PLAZA, A PICNIC AT THE BECK AND BULOW RANCH, FALL COCKTAILS TO MAKE AT HOME, APPLES AND PEARS WITH CHERYL ALTERS JAMISON, BALLOON FIESTA IS ABOUT TO TAKE FLIGHT, LOCAL GRAINS RISE AT LOS POBLANOS, SHOPPING LOCAL, AN EXTRAORDINARY CULTURAL CALENDAR, AND MORE!

STORY BY JULIA PLATT LEONARD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIRA HOWARD

Treasure Trove

The Spanish Colonial Arts Society's Nuevo Mexicano Heritage Arts Museum is home to a staggering collection of art dating back to the 16th century, a voluminous library, and an archive. Almost half of their collection is comprised of pieces collected from Spanish Market artists from the 1920s to the present day. It's the only John Gaw Meem-designed residential building that is open to the public in Santa Fe. They kindly opened their doors and guided us on a fascinating tour of their vaults. We're eager to share with you some of their many treasures.



M.A. Chavez
Santiago
1974

A diminutive Santiago or St. James sits firmly astride his horse, reins clasped securely in his left hand. Victories in many seemingly unwinnable battles were attributed to the miraculous appearance of Santiago, patron saint of Spain and Galicia. "Artist M.A. Chavez was one of the original Spanish Market artists," says curator Jana Gottshalk of this piece. "This tiny Santiago is uncharacteristic of his usual work which is usually unpainted bultos."

The tradition of creating bultos—three dimensional religious sculptures—continues in the work of contemporary *santeros* who combine expert carving, and often bold colors, to depict Catholic saints. St. Rafael (on the left), one of the seven Archangels and the patron saint of travelers, the blind, medical workers, and happy meetings, is typically depicted holding a staff and a fish, as he is in this work by Luis Tapia. Next to him (on the right), is Anita Romero Jones' Our Lady of the Rosary from the 1980s. Both draw on the rich history of early Hispano settlers, in ways that are thoroughly modern.

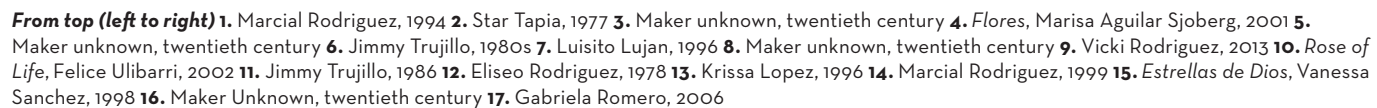


From left to right:
Luis Tapia
San Rafael
1990

Anita Romero Jones
Our Lady of the Rosary
1980s



Special thanks to the Spanish Colonial Art Society's Nuevo Mexicano Heritage Arts Museum and Curator Jana Gottshalk



First Row, far left (from top to bottom) 1. Maker unknown, Engraved sterling peineta, nineteenth century **2.** Maker unknown, Peineta, Early twentieth century **Second Row, middle (from top to bottom)** **3.** Lawrence Baca, Peineta, 1995 **4.** Lawrence Baca & Arlene Cisneros Sena, Shell Peineta, 1999 **Third Row, far right (from top to bottom)** **5.** Maker unknown, Mexico, c. Nineteenth century, Filigree eyeglasses case with glasses **6.** Gabriel Duran, Peineta, 2018 **7.** Juan Lopez, Filigree dagger, c. 2000

Opposite page
Early Spanish artisans arriving to New Mexico were expert improvisers. Lacking the materials they needed—wood, ivory, and shell—to make traditional marquetry crosses, they looked locally for substitutes. Straw and cornhusk were readily available and in the hands of skilled craftspeople, provided the effect of shimmering gold, captured in the candlelight of churches and chapels.

Opposite Page

Retablos is two-dimensional art practiced by santeros, aka "saint makers", which are usually small paintings or wooden altarpieces or other found materials that hold spiritual value for those who make them. The Spanish Colonial Arts Society is home to hundreds of these devotional objects made by artists including Pedro Antonio Fresquí, known as the Truchas Master. "One of the best tools for identifying the New Mexico retablo and bulto artists are how the artist executes the eyes and hands," says curator Jana Gottshalk, "However, Fresquí is a bit of a rebel. His work is often unique looking, veering away from the traditional composition and adding more decorative elements and less of a single-figure focus."



Throughout the colonial period, decorative tinwork made its way from Mexico to New Mexico. Sometimes called "poor man's silver," these pieces could be elaborate Rococo-esque confections with elaborate, hand-stamped patterns and intricate shapes. Contemporary artist Justin Gallegos Mayrant pays tribute to the artisans who worked in Rio Arriba County with these two ornate sconces, purchased by SCAS in 2017.



Top Row (from left to right) 1. Pedro Antonio Fresquí, Saint Inez, Late eighteenth century - early nineteenth century 2. José Rafael Aragón, Our Lady of Refuge, Nineteenth century 3. Maker unknown, Heart (metal), Twentieth century 4. Maker Unknown, Sagrado Corazon 5. José Benito Ortega, Guadalupe, Late nineteenth - early twentieth century 6. Pedro Antonio Fresquí, Saint Barbara, Late eighteenth - early nineteenth century **Bottom Row (from left to right)** 7. Maker unknown, Salvador Mundi Locket, Eighteenth century 8. José Benito Ortega, St. Ignatius of Loyola, Late nineteenth - early twentieth century 9. Antonio Molleno, San Miguel, Mid-nineteenth century 10. Pedro Antonio Fresquí, Flight to Egypt, Late eighteenth - early nineteenth century 11. Maker unknown, Sacred Heart, Early nineteenth century 12. Pedro Antonio Fresquí, St. Jerome, Late eighteenth - early nineteenth century