CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

ARTISTIC EXPERIENCES IN THE IBERIAN WORLD, SIXTEENTH-SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

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INTRODUCTION

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw extraordinary transformations in world art thanks in part to the changes brought about by Iberian voyagers. Artistic production and circulation in the Spanish and Portuguese territories in America, Asia, and Africa involved new and fascinating objects and processes. Each of the various territories where Portuguese and Spaniards established themselves had its own characteristics and in each of them the forms of settlement varied according to attending circumstances. This means, of course, that the artistic and architectural solutions developed in each location were not necessarily similar to those that emerged in other areas. Furthermore, while geography was one of the main variants, the other one was time. The solutions that were deemed valid in the early sixteenth century were no longer necessarily optimal 100 years later. The Spanish and Portuguese understanding of their imperial projects in 1550 did not necessarily survive intact and unchanged in 1680, while the nature of the local societies that had come into contact with them also changed significantly.

Despite the major differences between the contact and colonisation histories of Spain and Portugal in America, Asia, and Africa, there are strong commonalities in the nature of the processes regarding the creation of art and architecture in these territories. In the following chapter we will outline the major ways in which artistic production reflected issues of cultural negotiation in the territories of contact and even sometimes in Europe, varying according to both internal (artistic) and external (religious, political, cultural) factors.

If there is one single feature that distinguishes the Iberian expansions from those of other empires later on, it is their confessional nature. The Iberian presence in the New World, Asia, and Africa brought about the Christianisation and acculturation of very diverse peoples inhabiting these parts of the world. Iberian colonisation came with the mandate to transplant Iberian culture, including art and
artistic practice, to the new territories. However, as numerous historians have demonstrated, Latin American art is by no means Spanish art in Latin America; neither is the art of the various territories touched by the Portuguese a straightforward transfer of their European ways. European artistic practices and models had to adapt to the new territories for three basic reasons: first, because the materials and conditions that had informed artistic development in the Iberian peninsula were always different from those found elsewhere, thus thwarting straightforward imitation; second, because the artists working in colonial settings were often indigenous, *mestizos*, or of mixed race, Europeans born and raised outside of Europe, or Europeans whose life and career developed, for the most part, away from Europe; and finally because there were cases in which the artistic traditions of the colonial territories exercised some (and sometimes considerable) influence on the imported European models.

In the process of acculturation, it became evident that the indigenous cultures could and would inevitably bring something to the Iberian cultural models. The resulting negotiation was to a certain extent familiar to Iberians given their prior history of culture contact through the *Reconquista* experience in the Iberian peninsula. Nonetheless, one of the fundamental differences between this precedent and the new, early modern empires was the enormous geographical scope of Christianisation and the concomitant cultural and religious heterogeneity of their inhabitants prior to the conquest. As a result of this diversity, cultural negotiation took on many different forms and looked quite different from place to place.

The processes that have come to characterise these fascinating experiences have been described in various ways, as examples of syncretism, *mestizaje*, hybridity, acculturation, transculturation, accommodation, and cultural translation (Burke 2009; Russo 2014). Intimately connected to these terms is the issue of indigenous agency and the way to describe survivals or continuities from the pre-colonial period, as well as resistance to imposed models, new creations, and the emergence of distinct local traditions (Gruzinski 1993). By contrast to the current variety of approaches and questions raised regarding colonial art, the early twentieth century relied mostly on two extremist and opposing paradigms. The dominant interpretations were of an imperial triumphalist nature, in which the new society and its products (including art and architecture) were seen as Spanish or Portuguese transplants, with the implication that previous cultures had been effectively erased and that the artistic (and cultural) transfer had been complete. There was also a “soft” version of the triumphalist approach which saw the colonial experiences only as fruitful, peaceful, and productive encounters of different civilisations whose differences were systematically resolved in successful synthesis. A different approach saw the local context as one of indigenous resistance in which conversion was only half baked (“idols behind altars”), paradigms that were first applied to religious history (Taylor 1996, ch. 3). From the 1970s-1980s, these dominant models of study began to change as increasing research demonstrated the extent to which neither theory was entirely satisfactory. In the arena of art history, specific object (and families of objects) histories have been largely responsible for changing the earlier paradigms: the more works of art that are given their due attention, often from a multidisciplinary perspective, the more evident do the variety of responses and experiences involved in colonial art become.
ARTISTIC PROCESSES IN EARLY CONTACTS

For the Portuguese, Morocco was the first colonial stage. From 1415, Ceuta and then a series of other strongholds were conquered in order to set up a network of fortresses that secured one another. While metropolitan Portugal was mostly at peace for the entire century, major technological changes were taking place in conflict scenarios, especially in Italy, Germany, and Flanders, due to the ongoing introduction and development of fire weaponry. The Portuguese control of such military novelties, which were not yet developed outside of Europe, gave them a great competitive advantage and explains to a considerable extent the success of their early expansion. Morocco functioned as a major laboratory in which new architectural forms were tried and tested in order to adapt old medieval castles to the usage of (and resistance to) canons. Asilah and Azemmour constitute important examples of such experiments that eventually led to the final, modern fortress built in the 1540s, in Mazagon, where the triangular bastion and the principle of crossing fire organised the whole building. While the Portuguese were impressed with the luxury of Moroccan houses, the pragmatic goals of securing the cities and Christianising them made it so that cultural contacts with the proverbial Muslim enemy were almost exclusively marked by rejection. Nevertheless, the military architecture solutions attained in Morocco were exported to all other Portuguese colonies and to metropolitan Portugal itself (Moreira 1989).

Down the Atlantic coast of Africa, which the Portuguese explored throughout the fifteenth century, contacts were established with peoples who for the most part did not spark particular artistic interest (with one exception mentioned below). The same seems to have happened, from 1500, in Brazil, which formed a kind of white canvas. Pero Vaz de Caminha travelled in Cabral’s fleet, in 1500, and authored the first text on the newly found territory. In it, Caminha describes a people without any apparent political order, with no religion, and no material culture to speak of: they have no notion of shame (meaning that they walked around naked), he reported in awe (as did other chronicles about certain areas of Spanish America, especially the frontier zones). Throughout the centuries, the Portuguese had to rely on the raw materials available in the territory (though many were also imported) but were in no way influenced by local material traditions (architectural or otherwise), nor did they try to adopt or adapt any of them (Senos 2007).

The early contact history of art of the Caribbean, where the Spaniards first settled after the “discovery” of Columbus in 1492, is also spotty and, moreover, troublesome, in so far as the period was characterised by death and destruction through conquest and devastating epidemics. Testimony to the devastation in the Antilles is the fact that very little survives of these pre-Hispanic cultures and artistic traditions, such as Taíno art in Puerto Rico. However, as in the Portuguese-controlled North-African territories, it is in the architectural history of the Caribbean that one finds the earliest surviving evidence of artistic endeavours under colonial rule. Although the local population undoubtedly participated in the building projects, little is known or documented about these processes so that this history is mostly about Spanish dominance and the imposition of the Iberian tradition. As in the Portuguese outposts in Africa, the Spaniards placed great importance on erecting fortifications and soon encouraged the construction of churches, hospitals, and palaces as well: ambitious urbanisation, following European renaissance ideals, was underway. From the early
years of the sixteenth century, royal decrees were issued urging constructions of a permanent and dignified nature in Santo Domingo, the most important city of La Española and the Antilles (Angulo Íñiguez et al. 1955, Tome I, 79–83; Aguilera Rojas 1994, 137–140). Effectively, starting in the 1510–1520s, the Casa del Almirante (the

Image 22.1  Cathedral of Santo Domingo, 1521–1541
Source: Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz (Own work)/Wikimedia Commons/ CC BY-SA 4.0
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palace for Columbus’ son, don Diego Colón), a cathedral and a hospital, all of which followed Spanish models and styles closely, were begun. Although the Caribbean is often overlooked in larger histories of Latin American art and little remains of this early period, with regard to urban development and early building typologies it was a fundamental laboratory for the more extensive building history to follow in Central America.

EARLY ARTISTIC NEGOTIATIONS

For a history of early artistic negotiation in the Spanish Viceroyalties, by which one means to be able to identify active indigenous participation, the first major scenario was the missionary context of the central Valley of Mexico in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Starting in 1524 and during the first decades of colonisation, the mendicant orders, Franciscan, Augustinian, and Dominican friars, arrived to organise the territory into networks of missions. None of the early churches they built as precarious constructions survives, but by the 1550s-1560s more permanent structures were raised. Many of these still stand today as early examples of the complex and original organisation of artistic production in Latin America (Bonet Correa 2001; Sartor 1992). One of their dominant characteristics is their monumental size. Most of them were built as single nave churches, a design preferred by the missionaries—also in the Andean region in South America (see, for example, early surviving churches there, such as La Asunción in Chucuito and San Pedro in Andahuaylillas) (Gutiérrez 1983; Mesa and Gisbert 1997). The long naves offered a means to clearly and efficiently communicate the religious message from the pulpit and high altar to the entire congregation. This monumentality has been explained in various ways: as a propagandistic tool capable of impressing the local communities and thus aiding in the conversion process; and, as a practical spatial necessity given the elevated number of inhabitants in many of these communities (although the numbers quickly and tragically diminished due to epidemics). At the very least, such arguments indicate that the early churches were ambitious enterprises in which sixteenth-century concepts of magnificence met with missionary aims and aspirations.

Stylistically, the churches in New Spain (classic examples include San Miguel in Huejotzingo and San Agustín in Acolman) tend to combine various traditions, including gothic elevation and ribbed or groined vaulting, often concentrated around the apse, with Mudéjar-style woodwork ceilings in the rest of the church, sometimes replaced later by classical barrel vaults (López Guzmán et al. 1992). At the same time, some church façades followed the Spanish Isabelline or plateresque style, embroidering a classical frame with sculpted relief details such as vegetal motifs, medallions, pinnacles, and fancy cartouches. The variety of architectural styles was in part the result of adaptation. While professional architects arrived in New Spain early on, they were often itinerant, and the actual execution and supervision of projects was left to the friars and the indigenous builders. Seeking to impress, achieve height and considerable length in these churches, the friars relied on the artistic vocabulary they were most familiar with, the gothic and Spanish late medieval tradition. In addition, both professional architects and friars used prints in renaissance architectural treatises to provide the models for the more splendid parts of their projects, such as the façades (Angulo Íñiguez et al. 1955; Bonet Correa 2001;
Sartor 1992). The resulting variety of styles that come together in these churches has sometimes led to discussions of this art as anachronistic or archaic. While it is true that Latin America often fostered greater freedom in the way in which artistic forms coming from Europe could be recombined, regarding this issue it may be helpful to recall that to a certain extent, such heterogeneity was also present in Iberian Spain at this time. It may seem outdated for churches to use gothic elements in the sixteenth century, but some late Spanish cathedrals in the peninsula (Segovia, for example) were also erected with these features (Chatenet 2007).

Although the monastic buildings seem to be the most “Spanish” art of the colonial period, they were in fact built by the local population, and looking below the surface and inspecting details reveals indigenous elements. These are sometimes found in the construction materials and techniques. For example, the local masons must have informed the friars about the benefits of constructing with tezontle or volcanic rock as had been done prior to the conquest: used as filler for some walls and vaults, this light-weight stone was well-suited to the highly seismic territory of Central Mexico. There are also churches with stone inscriptions in indigenous languages, such as in the open-air chapel of the Dominican church of St. James the Apostle in Cuilapan, Oaxaca. Here, the inscription records the dates of construction and so seems directed at creating a sense of community through commemoration. Officially, missionaries were supposed to teach Spanish to the local population, but the indigenous languages did not disappear. Although one could interpret such an inscription as a sign of resistance to acculturation, its public nature and visibility suggests that it was approved by the friars. For this reason, details such as this can also be regarded as indicators of the mendicants’ flexibility. They allow one to introduce the concept of collaboration and negotiation as an operational dialectic in artistic production during this period.

If one looks further at the ways in which these churches were decorated, the number of indigenous elements increases significantly. Baptismal fonts carved in stone and atria crosses with symbols of Christ’s Passion are often described in terms of syncretism in so far as some of them included pre-Hispanic motifs which must have remained significant to the local populations (or Christian symbols and designs that could also be interpreted as such) (Reyes-Valerio 1978; Lara 2004). Despite the difficulties in interpreting these details and the lack of consensus on the matter, these are eloquent objects, and they facilitate visualising the indigenous hands at work and their successful efforts at interpreting European sources and making Christian art while also maintaining some of their traditions.

The same can be said regarding the mural painting that in the early colonial period in New Spain covered the walls of churches, chapels, and convent communal spaces, such as refectories and cloisters. Mural painting had been practiced widely in pre-Hispanic times. By opting for this kind of decoration, the friars were adapting their needs to the available local talent, materials, and to a certain extent technique, while introducing European style and subject matter. Little of this mural painting remains and much of it is damaged since, after the 1580s, it was mostly destroyed or whitewashed, and chapel decoration began to rely on the gilded wooden Spanish retablos or altarpieces. Most of the mural painting decorating the churches and convents followed European print models provided by the friars, another example of how Europe’s print culture was crucial for the development of a visual economy in Latin America. Nonetheless,
among the surviving examples, there are a few which demonstrate a willingness to innovate by introducing pre-Hispanic motifs to European iconography. In the cloister walls of the Augustinian convent of Malinalco, for example, a luscious Garden of Paradise is depicted, complete with Christian symbols such as grape vines and a serpent. However, it also includes local flora and fauna and Nahuatl words or iconographic script referring to concepts of precious things, sacrifice, and regeneration extracted from Aztec beliefs (Peterson 1993). Such convergences were only possible because of the active participation of local indigenous elites. Although impossible to reconstruct, the discussions they must have had with the friars about iconography are some of the most intriguing missing links in the art history of this era. Invoking these ghosts here is a means to incorporate the experience of production into considerations about imitation and adaptation to European sources.

The situation regarding issues of culture transfer and negotiation was somewhat different for the Portuguese in Asia. While they were the only ones to sail the waters of the South Atlantic, in the Indian Ocean they faced an already well-established commercial network mostly dominated by Muslim traders. Islam was a well-known religious enemy and as such was severely targeted: mosques were systematically destroyed, and the Muslim cult strictly forbidden. On the other hand, Hindu practices, which the Portuguese encountered in India, were not immediately perceived as a threat. Taxes on Goan Hindus were lowered, marriages between Portuguese men and Hindu women were encouraged, and even Hindu temples were spared almost without exception. In fact, some of the earliest Portuguese testimonies about the Hindu buildings they encountered in India (such as the comments by Viceroy D. João de Castro or the naturalist Garcia de Orta on the temples of Elephanta, near Mumbai) praise them in very flattering terms and even compare them with those of ancient Greece and Rome (Moreira 1995).

Such a climate of coexistence, however, did not have a direct effect on the buildings that were erected (Bethencourt and Chaudhuri 1998; Gomes 2011). While very few in number, the earliest remaining examples (such as the main portal of the Franciscan church in Goa or, in a lower latitude and a different context, the chapel of Our Lady of the Bastion, on the Island of Mozambique) show that manueline architecture was exported along with masons trained in Portugal to spread the vocabulary of the motherland in the various parts of the empire.

In Japan, on the other hand, the Portuguese presence was never one of conquest but rather one of negotiation. There, the Jesuits were given the city of Nagasaki, where Jesuit priest Giovanni Niccolò set up a painting school in 1583 (Curvelo 2009). In this specialised school, indigenous male youths, usually of elite extraction, learned the skills necessary for the production of choral books, embroidered liturgical ornaments, and musical instruments. In Niccolò’s school young converts were also trained in European oil painting and taught how to use perspective and chiaroscuro. Most resulting objects consist of small-scale oratories intended for domestic usage, composed of a frame that functions like a triptych made of lacquered wood and decorated in Japanese fashion (geometric and vegetal motives in gold and tiny fragments of mother-of-pearl) containing a painted depiction of Christ, Mary, Joseph, or some other religious figure. These works rely heavily on local Asian techniques combined with European materials and representational rules, and Catholic iconography.
As in Japan, community life around the mission churches in the Spanish American Viceroyalties included more than straightforward indoctrination. Missionary churches and monasteries were also centres of knowledge and learning, and the Franciscans were especially active in the establishment of craft schools and workshops as part of their acculturation and Christianisation project both in Central Mexico and also in Quito (Ecuador), among other locations. One of the best examples of

Image 22.2  Mass of Saint Gregory, New Spain, 1539, feather mosaic with paint and gold on wood, Musée de Jacobins, Auch (France)
how collaboration operated in these schools is Mexican feather painting (Russo, Wolf, and Fane 2015). Practiced widely before the conquest as a sumptuary Aztec art by specialised craftsmen (amantecas), feather painting is one of the best examples of the survival and reformulation of a pre-Hispanic art form after the conquest. The technique remained mostly unchanged in this early period, but it was used for the representation of Christian subject matter. The earliest surviving work of this kind is also one of its greatest masterpieces, a small painting of the *Mass of St. Gregory* dated by its inscription to 1539 and intended as a gift for Pope Paul III in order to publicise the success of the mendicant enterprise.

While early interpretations of *Mass of St. Gregory* concentrated on the documentary information provided by the inscription and its technical perfection, which framed it as a clear example of how indigenous hands were able to copy European print sources, recent analysis has turned attention to the unusual presence of pineapples posed on the right ledge of Christ’s sarcophagus and suggested that it may be a reference to a special kind of *pulque* (alcoholic beverage) used in pre-Hispanic sacrificial rituals. Gerhard Wolf (Russo, Wolf, and Fane 2015, 82–86) explores this possibility and suggests convergences of beliefs and materiality coming together in this small but magnificent piece. Seen in this light, *Mass of St. Gregory* helps understand how even under European tutelage the indigenous artists were doing more than merely translating prints into paintings and other media. As in the Japanese example from Niccolo’s school described above, while contact resulted in the establishment of schools to teach European art, both works demonstrate the extent to which sources were negotiated and hybridity was inevitable.

**OBJECTS, MATERIAL CULTURE, AND GLOBAL TRADE ROUTES**

It is perhaps in the domain of the decorative arts that the result of cultural contact becomes more apparent. The first objects to have resulted from non-European techniques put in the service of European (often though not always patently Christian) demand were the so-called Afro-Portuguese ivories (Fagg 1959; Mark 2007). Made mostly in Sierra Leone and in Congo, such ivory objects conform to a restricted number of types: saltcellars, spoons, pyxes, and oliphants. They are the result of an artistic, well-established skill that the Portuguese encountered (and recognised) in the Gulf of Guinea and that generated a series of commissions supported by prints and drawings with European iconography (both Christian and secular motifs such as coats of arms) that were incorporated in the resulting objects. The arrival of such objects in Portugal is documented from the end of the fifteenth century and by the 1530s they could be found in Florence, in the Medici collections.

In sub-Saharan Africa the Portuguese established small outposts where fortresses supported commercial activities. But Goa was a completely different endeavour since a whole city and its surrounding territory was subjugated (from 1510) and eventually functioned as the centre of an enormous commercial and political network spanning East Africa and a good part of coastal Asia all the way to Japan. With an ever-growing population that passed 200,000 inhabitants at the
beginning of the eighteenth century, Goa became the largest Portuguese city in the world. The need for objects was therefore much greater. While Afro-Portuguese ivories could have been viewed as curiosities, a city such as Goa had substantial needs for objects to sustain everyday life in all of its variety from religious practices to domestic life. Imports were available, but they could hardly meet such vast demand and therefore an incredible wealth of locally produced objects came to life resulting from a variety of processes (Távora 1983; Trnek and Silva 1991; Silva 1996; Carvalho 2008).

Asian-made objects relating to secular life and domestic practices were the most easily adopted by the Portuguese. Small caskets covered in ivory (from Goa or Ceylon/Sri Lanka), translucent tortoiseshell, or small scales of mother-of-pearl (from the Gulf of Gujarat, in Northwest India) did not require any sort of adaptation to a Portuguese taste that had already become familiar with foreign objects in Africa. In a very straightforward commercial reaction to the new demand, Asian artists often adapted their production to the taste of their new costumers by adopting

![Image 22.3](Image22.3_Gujarati_tortoiseshell_casket_India_Gujarat_Tortoiseshell_with_silver_mounts_Source_Jorge_Welsh_Works_of_Art_Lisbon_Portugal_London_UK.png)
European shapes (by using hexagonal lids for the caskets or by making multi-drawer *contadores*, for example) and iconography. Here too prints and drawings played a major role and again both religious and secular iconography can be found.

The exact same situation was found later, when the Portuguese arrived in Japan (in the 1540s) and set up in Macao, China (in the 1550s), and was further extended by the arrival of the Spanish in the Philippines and the creation of the Manila Galleon (1565), which connected the Philippines to their American Viceroyalties and eventually Iberia itself, sometimes stopping in Macao or in one of the Japanese ports (until the 1640s, when all Europeans were expelled from Japan). Much of the artistic production of China and Japan was highly valued and coveted by Europeans, often in the way it presented itself immediately, that is, without the need of any adaptation or adjustment. Chinese porcelain, imported by the hundreds of thousands, is the most obvious example but Japanese lacquered objects too were acquired directly from the local markets. In these cases, no cultural negotiation was required. Nevertheless, in China, Japan, and the Philippines, like in Africa and India before them, artists also understood the commercial potential of their new costumers and therefore adjusted part of their production for export in the exact same ways: by adopting new shapes and iconography. Porcelain is a particular case in point because of the sheer volume its trade attained towards the end of the sixteenth century and because of the many (failed) attempts Europeans made to reproduce its creation process up until the second decade of the eighteenth century.

Through such trade routes, objects such as Indian, Sri Lankan, Japanese, and Hispano-Philippine caskets found their way to European churches frequently, where they were used to keep relics or even the Holy Host during Easter celebrations. There are numerous examples in both Portugal and Spain still kept in the churches.

*Image 22.4*  Saucer dish with the armillary sphere of King Manuel I and the “IHS” monogram, China, Ming dynasty (1506–1521)
Source: Jorge Welsh Works of Art, Lisbon, Portugal/London, UK
to which they were originally gifted that show that even when transferred to religious contexts most of these objects did not require great changes. In some cases, minor silver mounts in the shape of cherubs or crosses were added to discreetly Christianise these containers; nothing more drastic seemed necessary.

Eventually, other European costumers became interested in such objects and started collecting them. Examples found in French and Central and Northern European collections tend to show the addition of complex silver mounts, precious stones, and enamelled decoration, suggesting that outside of the Iberian peninsula these objects went through a much more imposing process of Europeanisation. As far as these objects are concerned, cultural negotiation thus seems to be more apparent at the European end of the cycle than at its production and first consumption end (Senos 2015).

Religious imagery and some other liturgical implements necessarily required more adjustments. Ivory was the material of choice in India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines for carving crucifixes and other images of Christ, the Virgin, and various saints. Because of their nature, the production of such images must have been tightly controlled since they conform, almost without exception, to the dominant Catholic orthodoxy. The same can be said about the pyxes made in Africa or in Japan, or the nanbam Bible stands, all of which can also be found in Iberian churches. Each of these families of objects retained stylistic features that make their geographic origin identifiable, but they do not challenge Catholic orthodoxy and seem to result from an Iberian fascination with foreign techniques and materials put through a well-supervised production process.

One type of object resulting from Portuguese contact in India, however, stands out for the originality of its iconography: the sculptural representation of the Good Shepherd. So far, historians have not been able to fully explain or even satisfyingly date the production of this peculiar imagery. In any case, the iconography of the Good Shepherd—representing Christ as a child, wearing an animal skin, half asleep with his legs crossed and surrounded by sheep, sitting on top of a mountain that is itself composed of several horizontal layers in which one finds Mary Magdalene, prophets from the Old Testament, or the pelican feeding its own blood to its offspring, sometimes with a tree crowning the whole composition—is certainly not of European origin as it lends itself to different readings depending on the point of view of the beholder. Catholics would read it in the way just presented but Hindus (the majority of the original population of Goa) could recognise in it a depiction of Dakshinamurthy, an aspect of the god Shiva who is usually depicted in meditation, sitting under a tree with his legs crossed, surrounded by sages and sometimes wild animals. Even Buddhists (a small minority in Goa but a larger one in Sri Lanka) could recall Buddha’s second vision, which took place in semi-asleep state, under a tree (Lopes 2011). The Good Shepherd is therefore undoubtedly the result of the specific hybrid society that emerged in Goa and the product of complex cultural negotiation. It allows us to factor in the process of reception into the history of these objects and acknowledge the way any given work of art can transmit different meanings depending on the audience; while this is a universal truth, reception is particularly complicated for the history of Iberian expansion worldwide given the heterogeneity of viewers in many places. Furthermore, it shows very clearly that, contrary to what the centre-periphery model claimed for a very long time...
(and sometimes still does), original artistic creation can happen in colonial settings as well.

THE ORTHODOX TURN

Portuguese tolerance towards indigenous Hindu and Buddhist populations and their practices in India, and the kind of intense artistic collaborations that took place in Spanish America described above did not last long. By the 1560s, as the Council of Trent came to an end, a new sense of stricter orthodoxy was set in place in Goa and its dependent territories. Viceroy Constantino de Bragança captured and subsequently destroyed the relic known as the “Tooth of Buddha”, which was venerated in Sri Lanka, deciding to reject the immense ransom, the king of Pegu (in present day Myanmar) was willing to pay for it. Goa, a bishopric since 1533, was elevated to an archbishopric in 1557 and in 1563 its first archbishop authorised a Jesuit church to be built in nearby Margão on the location of a former Hindu temple, the first of several to be erected in similarly Hindu sacred grounds. As previously done during the Reconquista in Iberia, a strategy of substitution with local religions and their temples was also systematically pursued in Spanish America. Only occasionally were parts of the earlier constructions left visible, as in the Church of Santo Domingo (or Coricancha) in Cuzco, Peru. In 1567, the first Council of Goa approved a series of decrees which amounted, to a considerable extent, to a systematic attack to non-Christian beliefs and practices. Similar church councils were celebrated in Spanish America (Lima 1552 and Mexico City 1555), and new campaigns for the extirpation of idolatry took shape in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, especially in the Andean regions.

In the Portuguese territories and in architectural terms, this turn towards orthodoxy translated into the rigorous adoption of a classical, unquestionably European (and also unmistakably imperial) vocabulary in all newly built churches. The first of these was the Jesuit church of Saint Paul, in Goa, whose ruined remains are still visible, and which replaced the original church (for which we have no visual record) from 1560. Serlio’s imagery was of great importance for the stylistic definition of this church where the discourse of the classical orders was rigorously adopted, coffered barrel vaults covered the nave, and one of Serlio’s prints closely inspired the main portal; Serlio was also one of the most frequently used treatises in the construction of churches in Spanish America. While Saint Paul was the first classicising church in Goa, it was the cathedral that exerted the greatest influence. In 1562 it was decided that the old church of Saint Catherine, commissioned by Afonso de Albuquerque immediately after the conquest of Goa and functioning as its cathedral since the 1530s, was not splendid enough for the city’s newly acquired dignity of archbishopric. Thus a new, magnificent church was commissioned.

Its construction, whose chronology remains to be determined with precision, was hazardous and lasted well into the seventeenth century (it was not finished until 1652); likewise, we are uncertain as to the architects in charge or the masons involved (and to the origin of both). In any case, it stands for the newly adopted classical architectural discourse through and through: pilasters and columns abide to the classical orders and support correct entablatures, windows are topped by triangular pediments, and barrel vaults are coffered. The only visible concession to models other than those of the Italian Renaissance consists on the introduction of
two towers in the façade (one of which collapsed in the nineteenth century), a feature taken from Portuguese earlier cathedrals, almost all of which have them. In fact, the central section of the façade is directly inspired in one of Serlio’s illustrations and the towers were slightly set back in order not to disturb its balance (Bethencourt and Chaudhuri 1998; Pereira 2005; Gomes 2011).

The strict obedience to the classical discourse is a remarkable feature of this building, which has been called the most classical Portuguese building in the world, even more so than the cathedrals that were built in metropolitan Portugal at the same time. This gives one the measure of the engagement in this new orthodox vocabulary. No less important are the sheer dimensions of the church, the largest ever built by the Portuguese anywhere in the world, again indicating the authorities’ commitment to the confessional nature of the empire. Nothing, however, could be more telling than the image set in a niche at the top of the façade, showing Saint Catherine subjugating the Sabaio, the Muslim leader of the city defeated by the Portuguese in 1510. Religious tolerance belonged definitely in the past.

The construction of Goa’s cathedral continued well into the seventeenth century but the original plan and stylistic options do not seem to have been either abandoned or substantially changed. Classicism remained valid as an architectural discourse for the Portuguese in India. In fact, it had been adopted in several other churches throughout the Portuguese territories such as the Jesuit seminary of Rachol, near Goa or, further north, the church of Saint Thomas in Diu. Moreover, when the Theatines settled in Goa, under the auspices of the Propaganda Fide, and built their
church of the Divine Providence (1656–1672), it was to the church of Saint Peter, in Rome, that they turned as a model for their Indian façade.

The period of Mendicant and indigenous collaboration in New Spain (and elsewhere in Spanish America) also began to decline in the 1570s and 1580s for a number of reasons, some analogous to the situation outlined for the Portuguese territories above. These included a shift in Spanish ecclesiastic and royal policy aimed at curtailing the wealth, power, and privileges of the regular church over vast land holdings in the New World, which lead to the closing of some of the art schools described earlier. In addition, with the dramatic decline in the indigenous population and the development of more urban centres, there came a rise in the immigration of Spaniards, including many artists and craftsmen. For the indigenous artists, the European arrivals were unforeseen competition. Increasingly, art produced by the Indians under Mendicant guidance was regarded with suspicion and, by the late sixteenth century, many of the earlier mural paintings in Mexican monasteries were whitewashed to make way for Spanish-style retablos produced by the new arrivals. The latter increasingly monopolised artistic production, especially in cities and large towns, and the Spanish clients (and sometimes the indigenous ones too) preferred their work. They also organised themselves legally through the establishment of guilds, and in some craft professions they were able to block access to the highest professional level to their mixed-race and African counterparts and impede easy advancement for the indigenous artists.

Overall, the following period of the seventeenth century saw a rise in the Hispanisation and urbanisation of viceregal society with significant repercussions on artistic production. Architecture remained grounded in European forms, and the major cathedrals erected in the seventeenth century (Lima, Cuzco, Mexico, Puebla, and so forth) show cases of a shift to baroque classicism; however, each in its own way developed signature particularities which spread to the construction of imitative regional churches so that by the end of the seventeenth century, distinct local baroque styles had developed, just as they existed throughout Europe (Béchez 1992; Gutiérrez 1983; Mesa and Gisbert 1997; Mesa and Gisbert 2005).

In this process of developing local identities, it is interesting to note that the European artists arriving in America were not exclusively from Iberian Spain. The best example of this is provided by the names of three talented Italian painters who worked in the Viceroyalty of Peru towards the end of the sixteenth century: Bernardo Bitti, a Jesuit from the Marche region who arrived in 1575; Mateo Pérez de Alesio, who disembarked in Lima in 1589 and was well received especially because he had painted one of the frescos of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican; and Angelino Medoro, thought to be of Roman origin, who would start working in Santa Fe de Bogotá upon his arrival in 1586. These painters brought a reformed Italian mannerist vocabulary to the Viceroyalty of Peru and through their local followers—many of them indigenous and mestizo—they established a strong pictorial tradition unlike the more Hispano-Flemish style that had developed slightly earlier in New Spain through the arrival of other artists from Spain (Andrés de la Concha and Simón Pereyns, for example). By the 1630s, local schools of art began to emerge, and as the century transpired viceregal artistic traditions, with their own distinct characteristics, crystallised (see, for a general history of colonial painting, Alcalá and Brown 2014). Although traced here through painting, this overall trend extended to all areas of
artistic production, including architecture and the decorative arts, which although still understudied, are of impressive originality throughout Latin America.

TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF LOCAL ART HISTORIES

Local, original creation is an important analytic tool in approaching the artwork throughout the Spanish and Portuguese territories since there are aspects which were neither purely pre-contact or indigenous in nature nor solely rooted in Iberian and European tradition. In Spanish America, certain characteristics developed out of the new missionary context, its challenges, and the capacity of people (Spaniards and Indians) to invent and create from very early on. For the Mexican missionary architecture, one of these early features are the open-air chapels used for exterior ceremonies in the large enclosed atria built in front of the churches. There are only a few known precedents for such chapels in Iberian Spain while in New Spain their recurrence underlines the extent to which a new tradition was taking shape. In addition, the atria in New Spanish mission churches often included four small corner chapels: known as capillas posas, they were also not common in Europe.

In the middle Spanish colonial period, as a result of the paradoxical combination of trends described above—an orthodox turn, a willingness to accommodate, and an increasing tendency for a new local art to emerge—the kind of vocabulary and concepts necessary to describe the artistic production are quite different from those of the earlier period. Cultural negotiation still took place in a number of areas, as attested by iconographic developments which are sometimes considered syncretic, such as the emergence of a cult to the Christ Child in certain Andean locations (Cuzco and Potosí, for instance), where his representations in painting and sculpture include the attributes of the Inca (emperor), most notably the crown or mascapaycha. While originating already in the late sixteenth century, this cult is also related to the overall Incaisation of images in the Andean region which especially flourished during the second half of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century. Sometimes referred to as the “Inca renaissance” (Wuffarden 2005), this pictorial corpus includes portraits of indigenous nobility, representations of local conquest history, and even themes related to miraculous cults (Cummins 1991; Majluf 2005; Mújica Pinilla 2003). As numerous scholars have shown, the new subject matter emerged in part through collaborations between Spanish (for example, Jesuit) and Christianised Inca elites. Overall, in the Spanish Viceroyalties in Latin America, art, and especially painting and the decorative arts, increasingly became interested in the colonial “Indian” as subject matter (Cuadriello 1999; Estenssoro Fuchs 2005); although the “Indian” represented was an ideologically loaded construct, rarely true to the lived reality of most of the contemporary population. This art was no longer about “contact” situations or accommodation between the conquerors and the conquered. Rather, it was about meeting the diverse needs of a mixed-race society, including its desire for self-representation, and its growing sense of difference vis-à-vis Europe.

In this later period, syncretism is thus rarely the best lens from which to observe artistic developments (with the exception of new mission territories founded on frontier zones [Paraguay and California, for example] or territories where Christianisation met greater resistance). Hybridity is perhaps more appropriate for
an understanding of a wide range of objects, especially those often ascribed to the category of the “decorative arts”. As a racially neutral term (and especially in opposition to mestizo art), hybridity has the added benefit of bringing the artistic production of Latin America into conversation with objects from around the world that were also produced in response to situations of cultural exchange and contact brought about either through colonisation, diplomacy, or, increasingly, global commercial circulation. It thus allows one to discuss art produced under the Iberian empires in the context of early modern material culture on a global scale.

Among the objects from the Spanish Viceroyalties that belong to this category are ceramics, such as the Talavera ware from Puebla (Mexico) which imitated Chinese porcelain in its blue and white colouring and often exotic designs. Just as Asian craftsmen responded to European interest in their products by adapting European forms and iconography, so too did craftsmen elsewhere in the world respond to the exotic Asian arrivals through processes of imitation and assimilation (Curiel 2009; Pleguezuelo 2003, 111). Talavera ware, however, was not trying to substitute for imported Chinese porcelain; contemporaries distinguished easily between its rougher surface texture and the Asian product (Liebsohn 2012, 30). However, the popularity and massive production of Talavera ceramics attests to the way in which global circulation of porcelain fostered creative responses in local production; in part, it sought to compete with the Asian market but, interestingly, the result was that it contributed to forging a new “viceregal” consumer taste in the process. Japanese folding screens or biombos, which arrived in the Viceroyalty of New Spain as diplomatic gifts in the early seventeenth century, and subsequently through the Manila Galleon from other parts of Asia as well, became so popular that local artists were encouraged to produce their own variety, especially in Mexico. By the late seventeenth century, biombos in New Spain were made of diverse materials, techniques, and styles: they ranged from loose imitations of painted Chinese lacquerware with a red colour field dominating the background against which vignettes of daily and festive life—real, imagined, or exoticised—were arranged; to completely Western-style paintings with no Asian elements remaining except for the object format (Sanabrais 2009; Castelló and Martínez del Río del Redo 1970). Further south and into the eighteenth century, in the Andes, the widespread circulation of Chinese silks inspired local weavers to adopt new motifs, such as the mythological winged dragon (qiling) and enlarged peonies.

Some of the resulting textiles are among the clearest examples of hybridity in so far as the Asian elements are combined freely with the repertory of flora and fauna that had developed in the Andean textiles after the conquest and which also did not derive entirely from European influence (Phipps et al. 2004). Combined with other elements borrowed from European iconography (such as crosses, lions, and Christological pelicans), such textiles reflect the processes of assimilation and resignification which to a certain extent were happening for the decorative arts quite spontaneously and naturally in many parts of the world through greater contact between the continents, especially between Europe, America, and Asia. However, what is also of great interest in this history of art is that all these objects—and many more—are generally easily identifiable as from one region or craft tradition or another. By the late seventeenth century, Spanish American society, multifaceted and multi-ethnic, had come into its own. At the very moment in which the Spanish
monarchy was at its most expansive and contact between geographies was at its highest, each region in the New World had developed its sense of self and place, thus weaving its own identity into what were ultimately new art forms.

In the Portuguese realms, orthodox classicism remained valid throughout the seventeenth century, but other options were also formulated from the end of the sixteenth century mostly through the action of the Jesuits. For them, European orthodox styles were not the most effective way to address the local populations of Asia. They felt that adjustments and concessions to local tastes and sensibilities had to be made and thus they developed accommodation solutions. The Jesuit strategy of accommodation was implemented in various parts of Spanish America as well,
and this has been studied in a number of contexts, including the famous Paraguay mission churches or those of the Chiquitos population in Bolivia. Another example is provided by the Inca Christ figure discussed above whose promotion is associated with the Jesuits (Estenssoro Fuchs 2005, 137–141). As the word itself implies, accommodation took different shapes according to location and in this way relates to the concept of negotiation discussed earlier in this chapter for Spanish America. It involved not only imagery and architecture but also practical aspects such as dress codes and ritual practices, for instance. For the Portuguese territories, it was perhaps in India that this need was first felt because of the confrontation between Roman Catholic and Syrian Malabar liturgical practices. The latter were used by a Christian community from the coast of Malabar, in the Southwest of India, that pre-existed the arrival of the Portuguese, also called the Saint Thomas Christians. In their quest to impose Roman orthodoxy, Goan authorities declared the Malabar rite to be heretic, and tried to force the Christians of Malabar to conform to Catholic practices and to accept the authority of the Roman Catholic bishops. The Jesuits, in turn, believed that some flexibility towards such differences would be more effective. At the same time, missionary work in India, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, had created a large population that was no longer Indian, but neither was it entirely European. Thus the Jesuits presided over the creation of a local language that was itself the result of this new society. The earliest architectural experiences took place in Goa, in the Jesuit church of Bom Jesus (1594–1605).

Image 22.7  Jesuit Church of Bom Jesus, Goa, India (1594–1605)
Source: Bikashrd (Own work)/ Wikimedia Commons/ CC BY-SA 4.0
For the most part, this church conforms with European building and stylistic practices, but its façade displays a taste for dense decoration that is not altogether European, but feels rather closer to what one finds in Hindu temples. No Indian motifs are used but the intensity of this façade’s carving makes it very unlike the churches that were built in Portugal (or anywhere in Europe for that matter) at the same time. As the future would show, a local discourse (often called Indo-Portuguese) was in the making. In time, such trends spread to other parts of Portuguese (Jesuit) India and even beyond. Soon after, the church of Saint Paul in Diu was built (1601–1606), adopting an even more decorated discourse, the same one the Jesuits maintained throughout the following century as can be seen for instance in their church of Saint Anne, in Talaulim (a parish of greater Goa), already dating from the late seventeenth century (1682–1689) (Gomes 2011).

Further East and often in conflict with Rome, the Jesuits persevered on their accommodation approach. Their church in Macao (ca. 1620–1644) is perhaps the most spectacular of the architectural results of such policy. Built on top of a hill, and thus particularly visible, its only surviving component is the stone façade; the body of the church was built in wood and disappeared in a fire in 1835, never to be rebuilt. From a distance, the Serlio-inspired façade with its rich discourse of detached columns and superimposed orders looks European. However, as one

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Image 22.8  Detail of the façade of the Jesuit Church of Mater Dei, Macao (ca. 1620–1644)
Source: Bjørn Christian Tørrissen (Own work)/Wikimedia Commons/ CC BY-SA 4.0
gets closer and takes a more detailed look, one starts to see the figures carved on the upper floors, a beast of many heads crushed under the Virgin’s feet, a winged demon, a skeleton. There are even Chinese inscriptions making it very clear that the iconographic program of this façade was meant for a local, Chinese audience not for the Portuguese who lived in Macao, most of which could not speak, let alone read Cantonese.

Japan posited a number of specific problems, including a prohibition to build churches. There, the Jesuits were given pagodas to use for their rituals, which they accepted even though these where not necessarily the most orthodox spaces. While certainly less surprising (for today’s observer) than the churches the Jesuits built in India or in Macao, the pagodas they used in Japan were perhaps the most extreme spaces in which accommodation allowed the priests to celebrate mass.

In contrast to the processes that took place in the various parts of the world mentioned above, one does not even find traces of accommodation in the art and architecture of colonial Brazil simply because there was nothing the Portuguese deemed worthy of adopting or incorporating. It is therefore frequent to find traveller reports, even contemporary ones, that claim to feel as if in a Portuguese village when visiting the historical centre of, say, Salvador da Bahia (Smith 1949 and 1953; Bury 1984; Whistler 2001). Architectural practices were transferred from Portugal to Brazil along with the conventions of sculpture and painting, gilded wood carving, and silversmithing. The crowning example of such practices is, perhaps, the culture of tiles, a form of wall covering in which Brazil is particularly rich even though its production was forbidden by law in the territory during the whole colonial period (Senos 2012). The hundreds of thousands of tiles that one invariably finds in Brazilian colonial churches and palaces were all imported from Portugal. Local production did play a major role in the formation of the artistic landscape of the colony, but it tended to follow metropolitan models rather than developing a discourse of its own (Senos 2007). It took a few centuries for Brazil to develop the strong, independent artistic personality that we all recognise today.

**CONCLUSION**

At the beginning of the early modern age, Portugal and Spain were two European monarchies that decided to expand their sovereignty beyond the borders of their historical, continental territories. They both did it with a fundamental mission to Christianise and in such endeavours they both had to deal with cultural otherness. In this text we tried to provide a summary of the roles art and architecture played in these processes. As we have seen, there were similarities and even instances of simultaneity, but there was also much variety of processes and artistic results. For a long time, art historical attention was dominated by the paradigm of direct transferal of European models onto the colonised territories; the conclusion was almost invariably that colonial artistic and architectural production was second-rate. More recently, cases of syncretism and hybridisation, accommodation and even resistance have gained more attention, and our understanding of these processes has become much richer and more nuanced. As a result, today an ever-expanding circle of researchers from various fields has at its disposal an extraordinary wealth of images and objects, the products of an astonishing variety of
peoples and circumstances, and the testimonies of the extent to which the world really changed in the early modern period.

WORKS CITED


