

was thrown into a grave outside the town, but the Hospitallers took him and buried him in a cemetery (205). In 1289, the jurymen assembled and swore an oath to the priory concerning the rights of its free-hold to the land (235). The prior, in 1296, paid a fine through secular proctors for his estates and possessions in return for royal protection (275).

This volume is of interest to those wanting to know, through an important priory in England, about the politics of that country and of the Continent, and France, as well as the relations between church and state and the religious and secular worlds at a local level. Although there are no detailed accounts of guilds, confraternities, or lay religious associations, it is most evident that the lay world was closely connected to the priory and the church generally. This is a book that provides a context for these organizations.

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Webster, Susan Verdi. *Lettered Artists and the Languages of Empire. Painters and the Profession in Early Colonial Quito*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017. Pp. 333 + 53 b/w ill, 35 plates, tables. ISBN 978-1-4773-1328-2 (hardcover) US\$ 50.

Susan Verdi Webster's book offers a compelling and innovative insight on the work of painters in sixteenth and seventeenth century Quito. Her approach merges distant and close reading, thus carefully reconstructing both the general context of professional European, Creole, and Andean painters in the Spanish American colonies and the material conditions, circumstances and urban geography in which they operated.

The book is divided in two parts. The first one analyses in both depth and extent the context in which the activity of these painters took place. Webster describes the organisation of the Spanish colonies, the role of religious confraternities in the education of painters, the structure and extent of the local market, the formal relationships between masters and disciples, and the legal boundaries between customers and artists.

The second part is centred on the life and careers of the painters active in Quito between 1550 and 1650, with particular focus (both biographical and critical) on Andrés Sánchez Gallque and Mateo Mexía. The book, and especially this second part, is based mainly on unpublished materials, which Webster gathered with a meticulous archival work. Webster studied the contracts between painters and clients (five of which are reproduced in the appendix of the volume), and offers a new insight of the

extent of literacy among painters in Quito (and especially Andean painters), thus presenting an accurate and innovative understanding of their social status. Webster's analysis of the work of Gallque and Mexia presents an interesting and convincing re-evaluation of their work in the context of colonial Quito, where the artists had to merge different styles and representational grammars in order to adapt Christian and political imagery for a broad and varied audience. Specifically, Webster argues that the interpretation of Quito's painters as an organised school is incorrect, since a painters' guild did not exist in the city at the time, and that it strongly limits the understanding of the multiform and varied manifestations of art in colonial Ecuador.

Webster considers paintings as well as a variety of other artistic forms such as prints and illustrated books, together with textiles and painted tools. Most interestingly, the book connects the activities of Andean indigenous painters with pre-existing Incan art forms of alphabetic writing, painting, and other graphic expressions. Although most Incan and Andean paintings on textiles and wood have not survived, Webster is convincing in tracing the most innovative features of Quito's painters to these art objects. As she points out, "those Andean painters, pre-Columbian and colonial, were the skilled agents and intermediaries who perforce possessed the particular understandings and the technologies to translate the spoken language of power (Inca, viceroy, or king) into graphic, often colored, forms that could later be "read" by those equally knowledgeable and versed in the technology" (p. 41).

Lettered Artists and the Languages of Empire will be of particular interest for those who study religious orders (for the insight that it offers on the role of the Franciscans in colonial Quito) and confraternities (for the records of these societies in Quito). The Franciscan Colegio de San Andrés, the first formal school for Andean and other students established in Quito (of which Webster offers also a compelling architectural and archeological description) played an essential role in the formation of indigenous painters and in mediating. Quito's lack of a specific guild or confraternity for painters until the latter half of the seventeenth century points, on the one hand, to a lack of protection for the artists, but on the other to a higher degree of artistic freedom.

Although Webster's subject of research is extremely specific and specialised, she is always careful to draw useful comparisons and general conclusions. While the treatment of her topic is never excessively theoretical, Webster does not underestimate the importance of her research in redefining the understanding of colonial relationships and of the interaction between Western Christian culture and artistic practices and Andean subjectivities and forms of expression. As she writes that the fact, "that the majority of Quito's early colonial painters were Andean [...] demonstrates

that it was overwhelmingly indigenous people who translated, interpreted, and crafted almost exclusively Christian imagery for their varied colonial viewers" (p. 9). By reconsidering in depth and with attention the extensive presence of indigenous painters in Quito and the vitality of their style comparatively to Western canons, Webster invites her readers to reconsider the interactions between ethnic groups in colonial Ecuador, offering a more complex and nuanced portrait of the relationship between colonial subjects and Spanish rulers than usually thought.

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