

Late in life, Rubens designed for Philip IV over sixty wall-to-wall paintings of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The theme was tailor-made for an artist who, as this lavish catalogue illustrates, perfected the art of metamorphosis.

Charles Scribner, *New York, NY*
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Lettered Artists and the Language of Empire: Painters and the Profession in Early Colonial Quito. Susan Verdi Webster.

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017. xviii + 334 pp. \$50.

Every survey of colonial Latin American art includes mention of Andrés Sánchez Gallque's triple portrait, *Francisco de Arobe and His Sons, Pedro and Domingo*, from 1599, the Quiteño painting celebrated as the first signed portrait in South America. In her new book, *Lettered Artists and the Languages of Empire*, Susan Verdi Webster discusses this portrait not only in the context of a newly rich understanding of the artist, his life, and his training but also in the context of the culture of sixteenth-century Quito, its painters, and their contributions to the colonial city's communication of identity.

Webster's study of painters in colonial Quito is an extremely important contribution to viceregal scholarship. The book's focus on the first century of artistic production in the viceroyalty of Peru is unusual in the literature and offers the author an opportunity to untangle some of the oft-assumed myths of early European dominance and the erasure of Andean culture, customs, and artisans. Her meticulous study complicates the narrative and importantly demonstrates the integration of artists, materials, and languages that flourished from the very beginning of Quito's colonial existence.

The strength of Webster's work lies in two components of her text: the extensive archival documents, most of which had not been previously published, and her astute analysis of history and objects, which allows her to offer a portrayal of early colonial urban culture in Quito that is more accurate than past characterizations. Webster first narrates the necessary context for learning about colonial Quiteño artists, with a thorough study of how painters were trained and educated, the materials they used, and how these systems related to both Andean and European ideas and traditions. There follow detailed discussions of documented artists, some well known, some not known at all. For example, Webster gathers all scholarship on Italian artist Angelino Medoro, who was in Quito for a brief time. Medoro has been mentioned by many scholars, but never discussed in such a succinct way, supported by varied sources. Webster gives similar attention to artists such as Francisco Gocial, the first Andean painter documented in Quito. Her research reveals that many artists, even in the early years, were Andean, and worked at the same level, with the same titles, as their European

counterparts. As she points out, the traditional guild system utilized in other colonial cities was not in place in sixteenth-century Quito.

What is perhaps most striking, and significant as a contribution, in Webster's discussion of artists is her sensitive analysis based not on the ambiguous stylistic assessments that have generally driven scholarship about enigmatic artists such as Mateo Mexía in the past but, instead, on documents that help to construct a narrative of the artist's life and career, and a demonstration of the plurality of styles present in colonial Quito at single moments in time—making any analysis based solely on traditions of chronology or geography implausible.

While Webster's scholarship in this book can serve as an example, generally, of smart, meticulous attention to archival materials and detailed analysis of works of art, it should also be a reminder to all current scholars of the need for more studies like this—studies that mine the understudied archives of Latin American cities for information about the colonial past. Finally, scholars should also pay attention to the focus on the first century of cultural development, during which, as Webster has shown, a rich foundation was laid for later centuries, a time that has too often been swept aside for later periods, when more distinctly segregated European and indigenous styles and iconographies emerged.

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Sacred Landscapes: Nature in Renaissance Manuscripts. Bryan C. Keene and Alexandra Kaczynski.

Exh. Cat. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017. 112 pp. \$24.95.

This beautifully illustrated catalogue accompanied an exhibition held at the J. Paul Getty Museum, returning to a theme from their 2006 exhibition *Landscape in the Renaissance*. It explores the representation of the natural world in manuscript illumination from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The small exhibition, comprised of around thirty-five manuscripts, drawings, and paintings from the museum's collections, is greatly augmented by the catalogue, which includes a number of works that were not on view and additional pages from the various manuscripts. The catalogue is divided into three sections: "Elements and Symbols of the Natural World," "Gardens and the Cultivated Earth," and "Wilderness and the Land beyond the City," preceded by an extensive introduction. Each chapter concludes with a brief aside focusing on a single manuscript, along with several images contained therein.

The introduction provides a good general overview of the attitudes toward nature expressed by Renaissance artists and intellectuals and traces the changes in the depiction of the natural world in manuscripts from the fourteenth into the fifteenth century.