

Exhibition of Religious Folk Art of the Southwest

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 St., New York

April 28 - June 13, 1943

(Unless otherwise noted all pieces are lent by the Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center)

1. CARRETA DE LA MUERTE (Death Cart)

Used in the Holy Week ceremonies of the Penitentes (Brothers of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi), a sect which still exists in remote parts of New Mexico. During the reenactment of the Passion on Good Friday, the Cart accompanied the procession of flagellants on the road to Calvary. The figure of Death was supposed to release his arrow and mark the man who was to take the part of the Christ, or, according to another legend, the man who was to be Judas, the betrayer.

This piece, probably the most extraordinary example of folk sculpture of the entire region, is said to have been carved by the grandfather of José Dolores López (whose work is shown in this exhibition) and was preserved for four generations in the morada (Penitente chapel) at Cordova.

2. CHRIST AS THE MAN OF SORROWS (Cristo Nazareno)

Representations of the suffering Christ were used in the ceremonies of the Penitentes. They were kept either in the local church or moved back and forth between it and the morada (Penitente chapel). In these images every means was used to produce the proper psychological preparation in those Brothers undergoing penance. The figures were carried in processions, the jointed arms swinging in weird motion. Usually each figure had a complete wardrobe. This figure is so constructed that a large cross can be fitted on its left shoulder.

3. EL SEÑOR (Crucifix)

Used in a Penitente morada (chapel) this figure shows the characteristic exaggeration of the wounds and the emphasis on sacrificial suffering.

4. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE (Our Lady of Guadalupe)

5. LA TRINIDAD (The Trinity)

The trinity is here represented as seated upon the world, the union of the three figures being peculiar to New Mexican art and contrary to canonical rule. Such representations are often found in retablos but rarely in bultos.

6. SANTA LIBERADA

This figure represents a purely popular conception, uncanonized and entirely mythical. Believed to relieve those in distress, this pseudo-saint was widely known throughout Europe and was relatively popular in New Mexico. It is thought that the figure owes its origin to a misconception of the Crucifix.

7. EL SEÑOR (Crucifix)

The angel and chalice in this Penitente figure are missing. (See no. 3). The discs attached to knees and breast wound are a rare, abstract representation of clotted blood.

8. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA SOLEDAD (Our Lady of Solitude)

This figure is typical of the Santa Cruz Valley style. The delicate rendering of the features, protruding eyes, pouting mouth, and sharp pointed nose are characteristic.

9. SANTA BÁRBARA (St. Barbara)

Here St. Barbara, the patron saint of arms and fortifications and protectress against lightning and explosion, is accompanied by her symbol, the tower.

10. SANTA RITA DE CASCIA (St. Rita of Cascia)

The stigmata on the forehead shows this figure to be St. Rita. She should also bear a skull in her left hand and a cross in her right. In New Mexico, St. Rita is known popularly as ABOGADA DE LOS IMPOSIBLES--the helper of those in desperate circumstances.

11. CRISTO NAZARENO (Christ as the Man of Sorrows)

Representations of the suffering Christ were used in the ceremonies of the Penitentes. They were kept either in the local church or moved back and forth between it and the morada (Penitente chapel). In these images every means was used to produce the proper psychological preparation in those Brothers undergoing penance. The figures were carried in processions, the jointed arms swinging in a weird motion. Usually each figure had a complete wardrobe.

12. EL SEÑOR (Crucifix, with Mary and St. John)

13. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOS DOLORES (Our Lady of Sorrows)

By the same maker as no. 19. Both have the framework construction over which plaster-covered cloth is stretched. This is an ambitious attempt to follow the Mexican style with its carefully wrought details of eyes, teeth, and tongue. These large figures with much realistic detail are typical of the santos from the northern part of the Rio Grande.

14. SAN MIGUEL (St. Michael)

This figure once stood on the altar of the church of San Miguel Del Vado. Though an example of the best type of New Mexican work, it has been heavily over-painted with mouse paint.

15. EL NIÑO PERDIDO (The Christ Child Lost in the Temple)

The Christ Child preaching to the elders in the Temple, a popular New Mexican representation.

16. SAN MIGUEL (Archangel St. Michael)

A carving in cottonwood made by José Dolores López of Cordova, New Mexico, about 1930. (see label about López).

17. SAN CRISTÓBAL (St. Christopher)

According to the legend the giant, Christopher, unknowingly carried the Christ Child across a river and found himself faltering beneath the Child's miraculous weight. St. Christopher was popularly venerated in Mexico as a protector of childhood.

18. NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL CARMEN (Our Lady of Carmel)

The post-like pieces on either side of the figure are conventionalizations of a niche.

19. NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL ROSARIO (Our Lady of the Rosary)

20. JESÚS

Figures of Christ other than those relating to the Passion or descriptive of the childhood of the Savior were rare in New Mexico. This figure is unique, both in style and in subject matter.

21. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE (Our Lady of Guadalupe)

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the most popular aspect of the Virgin in the whole Spanish-American world and was adopted as the patroness of Mexico.

22. SAN RAFAEL (St. Raphael)

The use of incised carving in the decoration of the body is very unusual.

23. SAN FRANCISCO XAVIER (St. Francis Xavier)

The head of this figure has been repainted.

24. SAN JOSÉ (St. Joseph)

25. SAN JOSÉ (St. Joseph)

In the Catholic art of Mexico, of which that of New Mexico is an offshoot, St. Joseph, the husband of Mary, was held in particular favor as representing protective fatherly care. He is usually shown as a man of youthful vigor and carrying a flowering staff.

26. SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS (St. Francis of Assisi). Lent by the Denver Art Museum.

One of the rare bultos of St. Francis from New Mexico. The restorations made by native hands are poor. Gilding was not used in early New Mexican art since silver and gold were expensive and not easily available.

- 27. NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL CARMEN (Our Lady of Carmel)
In the best tradition of Cordova, New Mexico. The costume imitates dresses fashionable during frontier days.
- 28. SAN YSIDRO LABRADOR (St. Isadore the Laborer)
San Ysidro was a poor and devout laborer whose cruel master would not allow him time for devotion. One day his master found him in the fields praying while his task of plowing was being continued by two angels.
Here, San Ysidro wears the costume of a charro or country gentleman of Mexico, probably in order to make the saint more impressive and to dignify the humble calling of field laborer.
- 29. SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA (St. Anthony of Padua)
St. Anthony is one of the most popular saints of New Mexico. Although a Franciscan, in this region he sometimes wears a blue habit rather than the usual brown of the Franciscan monks.
- 30. SAN FRANCISCO (St. Francis)
St. Francis, the ascetic, meditates on the transitory vanities of the world, typified by the skull, and extends the crucifix to the worshiper.
- 31. SAN RAFAEL ARCÁNGEL (St. Raphael, the Archangel)
This figure is exceptional in its extensive use of gesso in the modeling. It is an example of the New Mexican interest in the childhood of the saints.
- 32. EL SANTO NIÑO DE PRAGA (The Christ Child of Prague)
This representation of the Christ Child was frequent in religious prints of the 19th century.
- 33. NUESTRA SEÑORA (Our Lady)
Around Santa Fe and Mora many saints were made with flat, elongated bodies and angular treatment of the faces and arms.
- 34. SAN JOSÉ (St. Joseph)
The figure has been repainted and the crown is missing.
- 35. SAN MIGUEL (St. Michael, the Archangel)
This piece is a typical bulto of the Santa Cruz Valley group, characterized by egg-shaped heads and sharp, well defined features. In this case, St. Michael's attributes of sword and scales have been lost, and the usual representation of the dragon or Lucifer has been replaced by a stump base painted with heads of the fallen angels.
- 36. SANTIAGO (St. James the Great)
In Mexico and New Mexico, St. James, apostle, martyr and patron saint of Spain, was revered as the great warrior who led the Spaniards in their successful wars against the Moors.
- 37. JOB THE AFFLICTED
Although not a canonized saint, this Old Testament personage was revered by the people of New Mexico as the protector against syphilis. Here he sits in a special shrine made of an old oil can, an article much prized by the New Mexicans in the early days, and one of their principal sources of tin for decorative purposes.
- 38. CRISTO NAZARENO (Christ as the Man of Sorrows)
Representations of the suffering Christ were used in the ceremonies of the Penitentes. They were kept either in the local church or moved back and forth between it and the morada (Penitente Chapel). In these images every means was used to produce the proper psychological preparation in those Brothers undergoing penance. The figures were carried in processions, the jointed arms swinging in a weird motion. Usually each figure had a complete wardrobe.
- 39. CRISTO NAZARENO (Christ as the Man of Sorrows)
This piece is unusual in that it avoids the realism which characterizes most bultos of the Christ.
- 40. CRISTO NAZARENO (Christ as the Man of Sorrows)
From the Penitente morada of El Burro, Mora County, New Mexico. The cross and whips are symbolic of the ceremonies of the Penitentes.

- 41. SAN JUAN BAUTISTA (St. John the Baptist)
The saint here gives the warning of judgment. Cloth, soaked in plaster and painted, takes the place of carved draperies. The rose on the cruciform staff is not part of the original figure but a later devotional offering.
- 42. SAN YSIDRO LABRADOR (St. Isadore the Laborer)
The saint is shown as patron and protector of the farmer. As such, he is the warden of irrigation, weather, soil, etc. He is usually shown plowing with an angel helper.
- 43. SANTA FAMILIA (Holy Family)
- 44. SAN ACACIO (St. Acacius)
This humble saint, the crucified Roman soldier martyr, is a patron of soldiers and a favorite in New Mexico. He is here depicted in contemporary soldier's uniform accompanied by a military guard at the base of the Cross. Representations of St. Acacius are often identified with the crucified good thief.
- 45. SAN FELIPE DE JESÚS (St. Philip)
A Jesuit missionary to the Far East in the 17th century who met martyrdom by impalement on the spears of the Japanese. This is a reminder of the connection of Old Mexico with the Orient along the route of the Manila galleons. The representation of a Jesuit saint in New Mexico is uncommon, as Franciscan saints were most popular.
- 46. SAN JOSÉ (St. Joseph)
This retablo, from the sanctuary of the church of Santa Cruz is the only documented and dated piece known. Unlike the usual retablo, it is painted in oil in a somewhat debased academic Mexican style. The inscription says that it was given as an object of devotion by Captain Don Salvador Garcia de Noriega in 1783.
- 47. SAN FRANCISCO (St. Francis)
A late work showing St. Francis in a blue robe, a variation peculiar to New Mexico.
- 48. SAN JOSÉ (St. Joseph)
- 49. EL NIÑO PERDIDO (The Christ Child Lost in the Temple)
The New Mexican interest in the childhood of the saints made the story of the Christ Child in the Temple a particular favorite.
- 50. SAN ANTONIO DE PÁDUA (St. Anthony of Padua)
- 51. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE REFUGIO (Our Lady of Refuge)
A popular representation taken from a widely distributed print.
- 52. EL SEÑOR DE ESQUIPULAS (The Christ of Esquipulas)
Copied from a miraculous image in the village of Esquipulas in Mexico.
- 53. ÁNGEL DE LA GUARDIA (Guardian Angel)
This retablo is unusual because it is signed by the maker, José Aragon. It is one of a large group originating in the upper Santa Cruz Valley.
- 54. SAN ANTONIO DE PÁDUA (St. Anthony of Padua)
This can be dated roughly about 1860.
- 55. NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL CARMEN (Our Lady of Carmel)
- 56. SAN ACACIO (St. Acacius)
One of several saints selected as the patrons of soldiers. St. Acacius seems to have been the favorite in New Mexico. Since he suffered the martyrdom of crucifixion, he is generally shown on the Cross and is, therefore, sometimes confused with the crucified Good Thief. St. Acacius is represented wearing contemporary military costume and usually accompanied by soldiers at the foot of the Cross.
- 57. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOS DOLORES (Our Lady of Sorrows)
- 58. SAN JOSÉ (St. Joseph)
In the so-called Laguna style, being by the same hand as a famous retablo in the old Laguna Mission

59. ECCE HOMO (Behold the Man)
Probably painted for use by the Penitentes. About 1870.
60. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA LUZ (Our Lady of Light)
This unusual example is undoubtedly a copy of a Mexican engraving. The Virgin is shown rescuing a soul from Purgatory and receiving an offering of the hearts of sinners. It has been considerably repainted.
61. EL SEÑOR (Crucifix)
Unusual because of the use of silhouetting against a dark ground. This probably indicates that it was copied from a print, which is also suggested by the placing of the wound in the bosom in the correct anatomical position--unusual in New Mexico.
62. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE (Our Lady of Guadalupe)
63. LA TRINIDAD or PITIE (The Trinity)
64. SANTA VERONICA (St. Veronica). Lent by the Denver Art Museum.
The merciful Veronica wiped the brow of the Savior on the way to Calvary and found that a likeness of his features had been miraculously impressed upon the cloth. Here the cloth bears the likeness of the Trinity - an extremely free and uncanonical representation.
65. NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL CAMINO (Our Lady of the Road)
The Virgin of the roadside shrine--the protectress of the wayfarer.
66. SAN JUAN NEPOMUCENO (St. John Nepomuk)
The famous martyr and confessor of the Queen of Hungary who refused to divulge the secrets of the confessional and was thrown from a bridge and drowned. In New Mexico, he is chiefly revered as the patron saint and protector of bridges--of great importance in a country subject to freshets and floods.
67. SANTA FAMILIA (Holy Family)
Probably designed from a print after Murillo.
68. SANTA CATHERINE DE SIENA (St. Catherine of Siena)
69. SAN MIGUEL (St. Michael)
The archangel depicted as the plumed leader of the church militant, bearing the sword and the scales with which he weighs the souls of the departed.
70. SAN MIGUEL (St. Michael)
An example of the type originating near Trampas, New Mexico.
71. SAN JUAN NEPOMUCENO (St. John Nepomuk)
This patron saint of bridges is a New Mexican favorite.
72. SAN IGNACIO DE LOYOLA (St. Ignatius Loyola)
73. EL SANTO ENTIERRO (Christ in the Sepulcher)
From the Penitente morada at Arroyo Hondo, New Mexico; used in the Holy Week ceremonies. The Christ is first placed on the Cross, then lowered to the tomb, and later resurrected, following the story of the Passion. The jaw and neck are jointed and moved in puppet fashion by strings. This portable sepulcher is of more recent construction than the figure, for the use of a foot-power lathe is evident. Such figures as this and the Cristo Nazareno (Man of Sorrows) provided the equipment necessary for the dramatization of the Passion.
74. CRISTO NAZARENO (The Man of Sorrows)
75. ALLEGORY OF REDEMPTION. Lent by the Denver Art Museum.
In the upper part Christ is shown between Mary and Joseph as a child, and in the lower, Mary and Joseph are separated by the Cross.

76. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOS DOLORES (Our Lady of Sorrows)

The Virgin is here shown with the attributes both of the Queen of Heaven and of our Lady of Sorrows.

77. NUESTRA SEÑORA DE REFUGIO DE PECADORES (Our Lady of Refuge for Sinners)

This strange conception, dated 1820, is an adaptation from a Mexican print which was invariably accepted in New Mexico as the proper rendering of the Virgin in this aspect.

78. SANTA NIÑA (The Virgin as a Child)

79. SAN GERÓNIMO (St. Jerome)

Also: ALTAR

This structure of hand-hewn planks was taken from a church in the Santa Cruz Valley. It was originally set into the adobe wall, only the altar table projecting. The date on the lower left panel is a later addition, the altar probably having been built in the mid-nineteenth century; the altar table is a reconstruction. The five painted panels represent, on the upper tier, St. Lawrence, the Holy Trinity, and Bishop Athanasius, the author of the Creed; and on the lower level, the Madonna of the Rosary, and St. Joseph, flanking the niche now holding the bulto of Our Lady of Carmel.

COLCHA (Bedspread or throw)

New Mexico, late 19th century. Embroidered in wool on cotton.

CARVINGS BY JOSÉ DOLORES LÓPEZ:

ST. MICHAEL. Lent by the Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. (See #16)

Lent by Mrs. Meredith Hare:

- ST. ANTHONY
- THE TREE OF LIFE
- GARDEN OF EDEN
- ADAM AND EVE

Lent by John R. L. Goodwin:

Group of animals and birds.

Barela, Patrocino (New Mexico)

*The Coronation of the Virgin, wood carving
Lent by the WPA Art Program*

*Lazarus, the Rich Man, and Moses, wood carving
Lent anonymously*