



Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh



VISUAL ARTS
NEW YORK

Fri, October 15–
Sun, January 09, 2022

Venue

Hispanic Society Museum & Library, 613
W 155th St, New York, NY 10032

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Admission

Free

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This exhibition at the Hispanic Society Museum & Library offers a rare glimpse of a major art form from the Hispanic World 1500–1800: polychrome sculpture.

Building on the legacy which Archer M. Huntington left the museum, the institution has added to its holdings of this material so that today the HSM&L holds the finest collection of these works outside Spain. Until recently, this vivid sculpture went largely unnoticed. *Gilded Figures* is the first event in New York to feature this art form in the last 20 years. The over 20 sculptures exhibited not only attest to the high level of artistic production, but they also include major works by women artists and show how the stylistic conventions of Spain were adapted in the New World.

Gilded Figures begins with late Gothic and early Renaissance works by the finest sculptors from Castile. Among these, a monumental relief of the Resurrection attributed to Gil de Siloe reveals the talent of those artists. How decisively Italian models shaped the work of following generations appears in the sixteenth-century reliquary busts by Juan de Juni. The Baroque period witnessed an impressive flowering in which figures like Pedro de Mena achieved effects of naturalism as seen in his St. Aciscus.

The exhibition also draws attention to another consideration –the role of women artists– in a section of pieces by Luisa Roldán and Andrea de Mena. The first of these achieved considerable success in her lifetime, rising to the position of Royal Sculptor (*escultora de cámara*).

The last section of *Gilded Figures* focuses on sculpture from Latin America in this period, in works characterized by a wide range of scale and emotion. A monumental sixteenth-century relief of Santiago Matamoros (St. James the



Moorslayer) from Mexico reveals how Spanish models were transplanted and adapted to the needs of the Catholic church as it embarked on a campaign to convert the indigenous people. In addition to Mexico, Ecuador witnessed a flourishing of polychromed sculpture in which sculptors in Quito produced masterpieces. Painted with a vivid attention to detail, statues like the Virgin of Quito or St. Michael show the powerful effects these talented artists achieved.

The exhibition concludes with perhaps the most dramatic display from this school: Caspicara's *Four Fates of Man*. In these figures, the sculptor depicts a range of emotions with consummate skill and a delicate touch as part of a theological lesson to inspire people to persevere in their faith.