

IMAGES IN DIALOGUE: Flemish prints and south-andean colonial painting



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SPAIN AND THE VISUAL GLOBALITY OF THE EARLY MODERN AGE

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish Empire made use of the image to spread its evangelization from East to West, from America to the Philippines. The missionaries and colonizers took with them printed books—the great novelty of the Gutenberg era—: images of sculptures, paintings and specially prints from engravings.

The Catholic Reformation and the Counter-Reformation movements, led by Spain, promoted and regulated the making of images through different media of reproduction, where originality was not the key factor. Its validity was based on its orthodoxy, its narrative quality and the potential to seduce and convince, which allowed this discipline to flourish and adapt to different formats, contexts and audiences. The process of the modern visual culture was underway, in which the work of art—the original—is multiplied and allows for infinite variants, combinations and transformations.

Because of its small size, serial production, low cost and easy transportation, the prints were incomparably more accessible than paintings and sculptures and constituted a privileged method of teaching. They reached a vast audience and were used as iconographic and compositional guides by religious people, and particularly by Hispanic American—and Eastern—artists to make their works.

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ANTWERP: CENTER OF EUROPEAN ENGRAVING PRESS

Spain drew upon the centers where engraving had reached great quality and prestige. These were located in Flanders, the Spanish “Netherlands”, which had been under Spanish rule from the time of king Charles V of Spain. From the 16th to the 18th century, the Spanish demands were supplied by the specialists and workshops of Antwerp.

Strategically located, Antwerp, a banking capital and an international commerce hub, had the economic resources and the clientele to finance the printing business, whose highest cost was paper. It also attracted great artists, such as Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), genius of inexhaustible creativity, devoted spirit and champion of the Catholic Reformation. His talent expressed in religious painting, engravings and prints, which brought with them their motifs to Hispanic America, thus making a decisive contribution to the development of colonial painting.

Some of the most distinguished Antwerpian printing houses that worked for Spain were that of Martín Nucio during the 16th century, then the Plantin press and later the Plantin-Moretus press, which operated until the 19th century under a concession given by king Philip II that monopolized the production and exportation of prints and printed books overseas. Many engravers collaborated with this printing house: by the end of the 16th century, the most important were Maerten de Vos; Hendrick Goltzius; Adrien Collaert; the Wierix brothers; Philip, Theodor and Cornelis Galle; and Jan and Aegidius Sadeler. In the 17th century, the most distinguished engravers were Schelte Adamsz Bolswert, Lucas Vosterman, Paulus Pontius, Jan Collaert II, Cornellis Galle II, Karel van Mallery, Coenrad Waumans, and Abraham van Diepenbeeck.

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A TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL REVOLUTION **METAL ENGRAVING**

The words engraving and printmaking correspond to two different and successive image reproduction processes. Prints usually stress these differences and the authorship in its making process.

Engraving consists in copying or transferring an image over a rigid surface using sharp instruments or through chemical processes, inking the incisions that later are pressed on the surface to be printed, thus obtaining the final image called “print”. The surface of the engraving is called matrix, where the drawing is done. During the 16th and 17th centuries, it was mainly made of copper.

During this time, metal engraving techniques were perfected. **Copper plate engraving, also called chalcography or hand engraving**, appeared in Europe around 1460, and consolidated until it displaced woodcut. It used a normalized and scientific method—the stroke theory—by crossing lines in both directions, creating a network of rhombuses of different densities to produce chiaroscuro and depth.

Many different materials, processes and mediums were used in copper engraving: **burin engraving**, done with a burin; **drypoint engraving**, done with a fine and sharp awl; etching, which uses corrosion—“biting” the metal—; the **soft varnish**, which is a variant of etching; **aquatint**, with fine power of rosin resin; and **mezzotint** or smoke etching.

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TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE IMAGE: FLEMISH ENGRAVINGS AND COLONIAL PAINTING

From the 16th century, with transatlantic commerce, Flemish prints arrived to America and to the Peru Viceroyalty; individual works, such as didactic images, illustrating books and in albums. They left an indelible mark on the blooming art done by Europeans, and later, on the works of mestizos and natives. They did not only boost invention, but also served as a guide for compositions, a repertoire and attitudes and poses, and as a guarantee of iconographic orthodoxy.

The numerous studies and contributions related to them have allowed us to identify some of the engravings that serve as a basis for pictorial works of the Gandarillas collection. Printings from drawings and engravings of religious pictures of Rubens on the life of the Virgin Mary and of Jesus predominate in this selected exhibition with works by his closest followers, thus following the route of the “moving images”, where an engraving is adapted to the sphere, sensibility and landscape of the Andean South of that time.

The colonial painters did not literally copy the Flemish prints, but they did interpret them: they invert, change the direction, suppress or add characters, they characterize human types, they enhance with gold leaf brocades, and, above all, they show their capacity to translate a brief composition in paper to a format at times monumental with a new technique, oil painting. They use bright colors, and their decorative details stand out.

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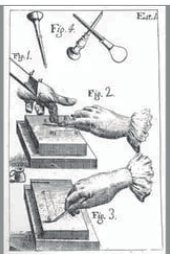
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SYSTEMATIZING THE ENGRAVING PROCEDURES THROUGH A MANUAL

In 1645 in Paris, Abraham Bosse published a treaty on chalcographic engraving entitled *Traité des manières de graver en taille douce sur l'airin par le moyen des Eaux Fortes & des Vernis Durs & Mols* (Treaty on the ways to engrave on copper using etching and soft and hard varnishes). This was a pioneering work in the systematizing of the valid engraving procedures of the middle of the 17th century.

Buril



Introducción a las
técnicas de
grabado
calcográfico

Graphein

Xilografía

Calcografía

Litografía

Serigrafía

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PAPER PRODUCTION: SUSTAINABLE RECYCLING OF OLD CLOTHES

Metal engraving was possible thanks to the improvement in paper production, which was invented in China during the 1st century A.D. using scraps of used fabric, tree barks and fishing nets. The Arabs improved their procedures and introduced them to Spain in the 8th century, where the first paper mill was built in the XI century, soon spreading throughout Europe. From the Middle Ages, paper was produced through the sustainable recycling of cotton and linen rags from shirts and underwear. These were macerated with water and isinglass and then crushed by a mallet system in a paper mill moved by water and, from 17th century onwards, by wind in Holland. The resulting paste was shaped with a rectangular wired grid. Finally, the sheet of paper was taken from the frame and underwent new drying processes. This paper, called “handmade paper”, was the only type produced in the Western world until the 19th century, and, because it is acid-free, it has optimal conservation.