

# SAINTS AND SYNCRETISM IN GLOBAL CHRISTIAN ART





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Alexandra Lewis, photographer, designer  
Andie Near, photographer

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De sanctis petro et paulo. *an.*  
**P**etrus apostolus et paulus  
 doctor gentium: ipsi nos docue-  
 runt legem tuam domine. *v.* In  
 omnem terram exiuit sonus eo-  
 rum. *R.* Et in fines orbis terre  
 verba eorum. *Oratio.*

**D**eus cuius dextera beatum petrum apo-  
 stolum ambulante in fluctibus ne mer-  
 geretur erexit: et coapostolum eius paulum ter-  
 tio naufragantem de profundo pelagi libera-  
 uit: exaudi nos propicius et concede ut ambo-  
 rum meritis eternitatis gloriam consequamur  
 Per dominum nostrum.



De sancto iacobo. *an.*  
**L**ux et decus hispanie o iacobe  
 sanctissime: subleuator oppres-  
 sorum: suffragium viatorum: qui  
 inter apostolos primus martyr  
 laureatus obtines primatum.

**S**ingulare presidium: tuorum benignus ex-  
 audi vota seruorum: et intercedas pro nostra  
 omniumque salute. *v.* Ora pro nobis beate ia-  
 cobe. *R.* Ut digni efficiamur. *Oratio.*

**E**sto domine plebis tue sanctificator et cu-  
 stos: ut apostoli tui iacobi munita pre-



# SAINTS AND SYNCRETISM IN GLOBAL CHRISTIAN ART

# INTRODUCTION

by Mariam Tiews '25 and Lauren Carpenter '26

*Saints and Syncretism in Global Christian Art* explores the cult of saints and its impact on visual culture through a phenomenon called syncretism. Syncretism is the process and degree to which artists integrate diverse cultural customs and cultural expressions in visual art, music, and dance, thereby creating something new and meaningful for their audiences. In the visual arts, syncretism captures the saints' adaptability to existing religious and cultural frameworks. As a pillar of Orthodox and Catholic Christianity, and a key element in the growth of the Church worldwide, the cult of saints represents humanity's search for signs of the divine manifested on Earth. Although not always peaceful, the spread of Christianity and the cult of saints reflects the Church's global reach, represented in the many nationalities of canonized saints and their cultural traditions, highlighted by the works selected for this exhibition from the Kruizenga Art Museum's permanent collection.

Since its origins in Late Antiquity, the cult of saints has been adapted into innumerable local visual cultures, past and present, as it spread across the former Roman Empire, and subsequently, around the world. The social classes of people who have become saints have also grown and shifted with the spread of Christianity. Nonetheless, the tradition itself has remained steadfastly rooted in the personal and intimate relationships between individual Christians and their faith practices. Saints offer an avenue for ordinary believers to participate in the sanctity of God while demonstrating how to live a life imitating Christ, the ultimate incarnation of perfection. These exemplars of faith include biblical figures who lived at the time of Jesus and were inspired by the spirit of God, as well as those who came after the Biblical era whom the Church has commemorated through local veneration, beatification, or official canonization.

For the saints, their desire to live like Christ knows no bounds; many eschewed the comforts of the world to accept the sufferings of imprisonment, torture, and self-inflicted pain in imitation of Christ's Passion. Others attained sainthood through their exceptional teachings and by spreading the Gospel. All saints manifest their acceptance into heaven and enjoyment of the beatific vision through the performance of posthumous miracles. According to the Church, the saints' Christ-like miraculous actions come not from themselves—they are simply human—but from God. Upon death, when their earthly lives as models culminate, saints join the communion of saints gone before them, and their heavenly lives as mediators begin. Even then, the saints continue to imitate Christ by interceding on behalf of faithful individuals who pray to them to appeal directly to Christ. Additionally, saints physically bring people closer to God's miraculous and healing sanctity through the very fragments of their bones and scraps of clothing, which act as conduits between heaven and earth.

Despite the prevalence of the cult of saints in modern Catholic and Orthodox traditions, the cult of saints merits a definition. In this context, "cult," describes a



system of beliefs and rituals that arose in the early centuries of Christianity. As Christianity spread across Ancient Palestine and the Near East, the term “holy” (*sanctus*) was ascribed to the disciples and early followers of Jesus for the ways in which they lived. As persecution of the new Christian religion increased by the Roman authorities, Christians found themselves caught between succumbing to repudiation or remaining strong in their counter-cultural beliefs. Thus emerged the first category of saints: martyrs. Martyrs died for their faith and for the reward of an immediate transition to eternal life with Christ. Saints such as Stephen (cat. 1), who is mentioned in the Book of Acts, Perpetua, Felicity, and Polycarp were among the first martyrs and left behind wondrous examples of miracles and resilience. Their bodies were buried outside city gates of Jerusalem and Rome, but believers quickly flocked to their graves. The tombs of saints were believed to be intersections between heaven and earth where miracles were bound to occur.

As Christianity became an official religion, the devotion to saints grew by accruing new categories of saintly identities, spreading accounts of miracles, and venerating holy figures and their relics. Persecution waned when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and so too did the number of martyrs, which prompted “white”— bloodless—martyrs to fill the ranks of sainthood: confessors, virgins, ascetics, and theologians. At the beginning of the fifth century, a somewhat formal process emerged for designating someone as a saint; a written account of the candidate’s virtuous life and miracles was required before a local bishop affirmed sainthood and a feast day was included in the liturgical calendar. After the Fourth Lateran Council in 1214, an official canonization process was established under the control of the papal curia, which required canon lawyers to collect a dossier of testimonials and conduct a trial on the candidate’s case for sainthood. In 1962, the Second Vatican Council shifted the emphasis from saints as miracle workers to saints as models of virtuous behavior; however, many Christians believe in the mysterious, supernatural elements of the saints’ power. Two documented miracles are required as evidence that the saint is basking in the beatific vision.

The cult of saints and its accompanying practices remain an important part of today’s global Church. Saints offer a personal avenue to the answering of prayers and interceding for eternal salvation—a concept highly attractive and easily adaptable to different cultures and religions. It is therefore no wonder that the cult of saints has been intertwined so easily with other religions in both visual and theological terms. When cultures interact, the encounter brings about something new. This process is called “syncretism.” Syncretism is not a new phenomenon but is deeply embedded in the development of Christian art. As Christianity arose from a population of converts across thousands of miles in the Roman Empire, its visual culture was already inherently syncretic. When the Christian church was founded in the first century, it began in the Near East, where its practices were kept secret from the persecution of Roman authorities.

To disguise their worship, early Christians used Roman imagery to portray Christ and biblical figures. While still establishing the visual language of the new religion, Christians in the ancient Syrian city of Dura Europos intentionally combined the features of classical Greek and Roman kouros figures, which were often depicted with a calf on their shoulders, with imagery from the Book of Psalms to represent Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. The earliest Church developed in Ethiopia,

embedding itself in the Horn of Africa in the fourth century. However, despite arising in tandem with Roman Catholicism, its visual culture developed independently from Christian art produced around the Mediterranean and Asia Minor. Naturally, it incorporated its own indigenous artistic traditions and materials. The divergent artistic trajectories in these ancient Churches can be observed today. For example, Agostino Caracci's St. Jerome (cat. 22) depicts the saint in the Western tradition that elevates drawing and composition (*disegno*). The Ethiopian tradition, by contrast, incorporates bright colors with bold outlines (cat. 11).

In tandem with the cult of saints, syncretism resulted from local populations far beyond the borders of the Roman Empire and Ethiopia adapting Christianity to existing visual art traditions. When Jesuit missionaries arrived in Asia in the seventeenth century, China already enjoyed a thriving cultural identity and artistic tradition. The Jesuits' strategy for teaching Christian orthodoxy was to learn Confucian principles that had parallels in Christian theology and to use those parallels to convert new followers of Christ. The missionaries also employed visual culture in this manner. For example, Chinese visual culture already recognized images of a mother and child in the form of Guanyin, the Goddess of mercy and compassion (cat. 15). The Jesuits brought with them images of the Virgin and Child to teach the mystery of the Incarnation and adapted them to the Guanyin prototype. In Latin America, images of the Virgin took on yet another set of visual traditions, particularly in terms of materials. The Virgin of Quito is resplendently crowned in feathers derived from Aztec insignia, signaling her status as Queen of Heaven (cat. 19).

Syncretism reveals the dynamic and multifaceted processes in which cultures are ever-evolving, and thus are receptive to a myriad of artistic traditions, materials, and techniques. Due to the multi-directional transmission of images, materials, and artists alongside Church missionary activity, the nuances of syncretistic interchange can be pulled apart, studied, analyzed, and understood in the context of the cult of saints. Brightly colored vodou flags from Haiti depicting Papa Ogu as a conflation of Saint James the Major and the Dahomeyan/Yoruba God Legba/Ogu, combine European iconography of St. James with highly developed Yoruba beadwork traditions (cat 13). Dahomeyan people had adapted Yoruba practices prior to the Middle Passage. Under the control of the Catholic French in Haiti, the enslaved Dahomeyan adopted Christian and Yoruba practices to form the mystical religion of Vodou. Figures such as Papa Legba/Santiago mediated between the living and the dead, and inspired resistance against oppression for the enslaved population to overthrow the French in the Haitian War of Independence.

Although most discussions of syncretism presume non-European cultures applying their traditional art forms to European images or concepts, syncretism in fact goes both ways. Bernard Picart and Jean-Frédéric Bernard's engraving published in *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* depicts three Aztec deities, Vitzliputzli, Tlaloch and Tescalipuca, as well as two "Mexican priests" (cat. 12). Here the European artist has depicted the Aztec figures as Greco-Roman gods in fully human form seated on thrones with identifying "attributes" such as weaponry and feather insignia.

For this exhibition we stretch the definition of syncretism further still, to capture



not only the material result of artistic interaction between cultures in terms of artistic materials, formal properties, and techniques but also to present images that bear witness to the intersection of the saints with contemporary art and society. Contemporary artists also recognize the power of the saints and inject their traditional imagery with the language of contemporary art. Romare Bearden, for instance, employs Cubist abstraction and color blocking in creating a multi-racial community of saints in *Four Saints in Three Acts* (cat. 29).

Through the exhibition, we celebrate depictions of the cult of saints across the globe. *Saints and Syncretism in Global Christian Art* explores the complexities between Christianity and syncretism, which encourages viewers to see how the cult of saints has been adopted and changed over time and space and is still relevant in the present day. The cult of saints is both a deeply personal religious practice and a source of post-colonial reflection, both of which are important to recognize and paramount to understanding its significance. By exhibiting artworks representative of the cult of saints from across the globe, it is our goal that understanding this ever-relevant practice becomes more tangible and within reach.





## 1.The Stoning of St. Stephen

Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606-1669)

1635

Etching

9.21 x 8.25 cm

*Hope College Collection, the Sarah and Grace Collection, 2018.8.11*

This small etching by Rembrandt captures the moment just before the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, as described in Acts 7:54-60. Called the "Protomartyr," St. Stephen's feast day is celebrated on December 26, the day after the Feast of the Nativity, and the first day of the liturgical cycle commemorating the saints throughout the year. He is the patron saint of deacons, because he was himself a deacon, and stonemasons, due to the manner of his martyrdom. Arrested by the Jewish authorities who opposed his message, St. Stephen was ultimately condemned to death after he denied the accusations against him. Rembrandt's etching of St. Stephen's martyrdom vividly captures the brutality of his stoning, highlighting both the intense hatred he faced for his teachings and his remarkable expression of faith and forgiveness in the face of death. Copied from his 1625 painting of the same scene, the etching allowed people to gain more knowledge about the history of St. Stephen and the Christian Church.

Rembrandt's etching powerfully conveys the tension and brutality of St. Stephen's final moments, while also emphasizing his faith and compassion. The depiction of the attackers, ready to strike, creates a contrast with St. Stephen's calm acceptance and his prayer for forgiveness. This contrast not only intensifies the moment, but also prompts viewers to think about the nature of compassion in the face of suffering. In the center of the image, one of the attackers holds up St. Stephen, whose legs appear weak and helpless beneath him. One of his shoes has come loose, indicating a physical struggle. His solemn expression looks upwards toward heaven as he speaks to God. In Acts 7:60, he says, "Lord, lay not sin to their charge." This upward gaze reflects his prayer for his attackers, echoing Jesus' words on the cross asking God to forgive those who persecuted him. Surrounding St. Stephen, several men prepare to carry out the execution. The figure directly above St. Stephen grips him by his liturgical vestments with one hand while raising a stone with the other, positioned to strike. To the right, another attacker lifts a large stone, focused on delivering a blow to St. Stephen's face. On the left, yet another man leans down to retrieve a stone, adding

to the sense of upcoming violence. In the background, a crowd has gathered to witness the execution. Many faces show anticipation or even satisfaction at the scene unfolding before them, highlighting the collective hatred toward St. Stephen. People on lower ground look up, reinforcing the drama of the stoning. The faint outline of a building in the background indicates that this event takes place outside the city of Jerusalem.

Rembrandt enjoyed great popularity in his early career. However, near the end of his life, he found himself in financial troubles. He sold etchings such as *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* to increase his income. In 1625, Rembrandt painted St. Stephen's martyrdom. Ten years later, he developed the print after the painting garnered a great deal of fame. It was common for artists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to design prints based on successful paintings. However, it was unusual for the same artist to make both the painting and the print. This strategy helped artists to build their reputations and increase their earnings because hundreds of copies could be made and sold.

Rembrandt's etching of St. Stephen's martyrdom visualizes a powerful moment in Christian history. Through vivid imagery, the etching not only illustrates the brutality of St. Stephen's stoning, but also highlights his unwavering faith and extraordinary act of forgiveness. Rembrandt's depiction emphasizes the enduring significance of St. Stephen's martyrdom, reminding viewers of the strength that can be found in faith even in the face of violent persecution. By combining both artistic and religious themes, the etching invites reflection on the power of compassion and the transformative nature of faith, making it a lasting testament to both Rembrandt's skill and St. Stephen's profound legacy.

Gracie Allen '26



Martyre de Saint Sebastian

Original - Robinson - 1847

Augustus - 1847



## 2. The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian

Jacques Callot (French, 1592-1635)

1628

Etching and engraving

19.7 x 34.9 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2016.63.4*

According to St. Sebastian's hagiography, in the third century when the Romans discovered he was converting others to Christianity, they tied Sebastian to a stake and shot him full of arrows (cat. 4). In the center of Jacques Callot's *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, arrows fly towards Sebastian; two arrows have already pierced him. Shadowed in the foreground, the archers draw their bows and aim at their victim. Roman ruins surround the crowds of soldiers. The structure on the left can easily be identified as the Colosseum, whereas on the right, the structure is less identifiable, but could refer to the Temple of Venus and Rome, located to the west of the Colosseum.

The composition as a whole is set up as a stage, with St. Sebastian illuminated at its center, in contrast to the foreground in deep shadow. The viewer enters the piece from the shadows of the audience. Even though St. Sebastian appears very small in the center of the composition, Callot created a visual hierarchy by highlighting him in a void of light. The high contrast is essential to its composition, and Callot utilized such contrast by his technical innovations in printmaking. He created the deep shadows by combining etching and engraving processes, and then submerging the plate into the acid bath multiple times in order to build up the darks. He engraved deep cross-hatched lines in the foreground to produce the darkest part of the image using the *échoppe*, a type of engraving needle that he invented.

In *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, Callot merged classical antiquity with the contemporary age in which he lived, seventeenth-century France. The ancient Roman architecture contrasts with the then-modern French armor worn by the soldiers in the foreground. The modernized French soldiers seem incongruous with the story itself, since St. Sebastian's death occurred in the Early Christian period. However, Callot created this etching ten years into the Thirty Years' War, which was one of the most destructive conflicts in European history. The war was primarily fought due to religious tensions between Catholics and Protestants in the Holy Roman Empire. This print contrasts the religious persecution of St. Sebastian's time with the conflict between Christians in Callot's

age. In the seventeenth century, Christians weren't persecuted like they had been in the third century, but the conflict between Protestants and Catholics nevertheless caused devastating destruction. Callot's *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* powerfully shows religious persecution still happened, but this time it was from within the Church.

In 1633, Callot created a series of eighteen prints depicting the destruction caused by the Thirty Years' War. *The Great Miseries of War* feature prints with compositions similar to *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*. He created multiple images with figures tied to stakes in the center with soldiers crowding around him. This war series became a direct inspiration for the early nineteenth-century painter and printmaker Francisco Goya. Goya created *The Disasters of War*, which is a series of eighty-two prints depicting the tragic events of the Dos de Mayo Uprising. Goya's style is considerably more grotesque than Callot's style, but it is clear Goya drew inspiration from the subject matter and techniques of his predecessors. Jacques Callot introduced a new way of approaching the topic of war through art that focused more on consequences and destruction and less on the heroics of war.

Signe Bieganski '27







### 3. The Martyrdom of Saint Barbara

Willem Basse (Dutch 1613-1672) after Jan Boeckhorst (Flemish, 1604-1668)

Ca. 1650

Etching

20.3 x 15.2 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.35*

Willem Basse's *The Martyrdom of Saint Barbara* captures a profound and poignant moment in Christian martyrdom. Basse, a Dutch artist active during the Baroque period, employs etching to evoke the tragic final moments of St. Barbara, a young Early Christian woman executed by her father, Dioscorus, for her steadfast faith. Through Basse's meticulous etching techniques, the piece conveys Barbara's martyrdom with a sense of solemnity, accentuating the spiritual and symbolic elements inherent in her story.

The historical and cultural context of *The Martyrdom of Saint Barbara* adds a layer of interpretive richness to Basse's depiction. According to tradition, Barbara's father sought to isolate her from the outside world by locking her in a tower. Upon her father's return, Barbara revealed her conversion by commissioning a third window in the tower to symbolize the Holy Trinity. Enraged, Dioscorus sought to kill her, but Barbara fled, finding temporary refuge on a hill. Betrayed by a shepherd, she was captured and presented to the city prefect, Martianus. Despite enduring torture at the hands of both her father and Martianus, she refused to renounce her faith. On December 4, Barbara was condemned to death and beheaded by Dioscorus himself. Divine vengeance followed swiftly, as Dioscorus and Martianus were struck and killed by lightning.

The etching centers on the pivotal moment of St. Barbara's martyrdom. In accordance with her *vita*, Barbara is depicted as a bound female figure, standing defenseless as her father prepares to behead her with a sword. A figure of authority and control, he grips St. Barbara's hair with one hand while holding the weapon behind his back. St. Barbara's bound wrists and her father's sword further emphasize the suffering she endured for her faith. Basse's incorporation of these elements casts St. Barbara not merely as a victim but as an emblem of courage, conviction, and sanctity. Cherubs bearing the palm branch and floral crown represent the iconography of virgin martyrs, signifying Barbara's spiritual triumph and purity. The foreground is stark, with only a few plants near Barbara's feet,

emphasizing her isolation and vulnerability. These compositional elements create a scene filled with sorrow and reverence, prompting viewers to confront the inevitability of Barbara's sacrifice and her unyielding commitment to her faith.

The dominant use of black ink establishes a somber tone, while varying shades of gray, achieved through cross-hatching and stippling, introduce depth and texture. Basse skillfully employs these techniques in the fabric covering St. Barbara to generate tonal contrasts. The artist rendered the figures in the foreground more with saturation in the shades of gray than the softer, less defined background. Basse manipulated lighting to subtly enhance the sacred quality of the scene. While the light source is somewhat ambiguous, it originates from the upper left, casting a gentle glow on St. Barbara and the cherubs. Dioscorus, in contrast, is cast in harsher light, emphasizing his role as the antagonist. Though dimly lit, the tower, St. Barbara's main attribute, stands prominently in the background, symbolizing Barbara's spiritual resilience and devotion.

St. Barbara's veneration began around the seventh century, hundreds of years after her supposed martyrdom in 200 CE. While her historical existence remains uncertain—leading to her removal from the General Roman Calendar in 1969—she is still recognized as the patron saint of miners, artillerymen, architects, and mathematicians. She is also one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, saints believed to provide special intercession against disease. St. Barbara is often paired with St. Catherine of Alexandria in medieval and Renaissance art. Together, they represent the dual aspects of the Christian life: Barbara embodying active faith and Catherine representing contemplative devotion. While focused solely on St. Barbara, Basse's etching captures the essence of her martyrdom and its symbolic resonance within the Christian tradition.

Shannon Smith '26





#### 4. Saint Sebastian

Hispano-Philippine

Ca. 1800

Ivory

27.9 x 6.7 x 5.7 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2023.29.50*

Because of his unique martyrdom story, St. Sebastian may be one of the most easily identifiable saints. According to his vita, when the Romans discovered he was converting others to Christianity, they tied Sebastian to a stake and shot him full of arrows (cat. 2). Miraculously this did not kill him, and he lived for a while longer before the Roman authorities eventually clubbed him to death. Because of his miraculous survival, St. Sebastian is almost always depicted bound to a vertical object, whether a column or tree stump, with multiple arrows piercing him. This nineteenth-century sculpture is no exception. St. Sebastian appears impaled with five delicate silver arrows, each producing a wound dripping in blood. Both his arms are tied to a dead tree and his left hand points towards heaven. St. Sebastian's head painfully turns slightly downcast, his eyes staring towards the ground. In depictions of saints undergoing martyrdom, the saint traditionally looks lovingly towards heaven, since he is dying for his faith and will be joining God. St. Sebastian's lowered gaze thus draws more attention to his suffering and vulnerability.

Due to the dramatic nature of his story, artists frequently represent St. Sebastian in art. In this sculpture, St. Sebastian's idealized body echoes classical Greek and Roman sculptures with his toned muscles and contrapposto pose, a common position where the figure's weight is primarily on one leg and the shoulders and hips are tilted. The small scale of his sculpture draws the viewer in and invites a close connection with the saint. St. Sebastian became especially popular during the time surrounding the Black Death in Europe and is the patron saint of plague victims and others suffering from diseases. The wounds from the arrows were related to the skin boils that developed on plague victims, as well as the spots of a leper. St. Sebastian is thus commonly evoked for protection against plagues and disease.

This sculpture of *Saint Sebastian* demonstrates the mobility of artists and materials within complex networks of trade. When missionaries first arrived in the Philippines from Europe in the sixteenth century, they brought European prints to serve as models

for depicting the saints. Ivory for luxury items made in Asia was harvested in Africa, as trade to both continents connected to the Philippines. The dynamic mobility of images, artists and materials, occurring over centuries, resulted in European imagery mixing with Asian artistic traditions and tastes. For instance, the highly translucent surface of the Saint Sebastian, not found in European ivory, reveals the artist was attentive to an Asian audience. Since the sixteenth century, Filipino ivory carvers intensely polished their sculptures to mimic the glass-like appearance of Asian lacquer work, which was also in high demand. Certain characteristics seen in Saint Sebastian are typical of Filipino sculpture such as the arched eyebrows, narrow almond shaped eyes, heavy eyelids, and flowing hair. *Saint Sebastian* is thus a prime example of the syncretic mixing of elements between various countries that were connected by trade.

Signe Bieganski '27





## 5. Reliquary with Relic of Saint Anne

Italian

17th-18th century

Gilt bronze, enamel, organic material

21 x 7.9 x 5.4 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2023.29.30*

St. Anne is the mother of the Virgin Mary, according to apocryphal writings, namely the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, and the *Protoevangelium* of James. She does not appear in the Bible. However, as Christians desired to know more about Mary, the mother of Jesus, beyond her brief mentions in the Gospels, the persona of Mary's mother developed in devotional literature including the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine and in the frescoes of the Arena Chapel in Padua, Italy. The most important role of St. Anne comes in the Immaculate Conception of Mary. According to tradition, St. Anne and her husband Joachim were aged and childless. When Joachim was cast out of the temple because he had no offspring, he did not return home, but instead sought solitude. Alone, St. Anne promised God that she would devote her firstborn child to the Lord's service. After this she received a vision from an angel who announced that she would bear the glorious Mary.

This Italian reliquary honoring St. Anne dates from the seventeenth century when devotion to the mother of Mary during the period of Catholic Renewal was integral to the Church. Made from bronze, gold, enamel and organic materials, the reliquary contains a third-class relic associated with St. Anne, which is a physical remnant of an object that was once touched by a saint. The relic, in the shape of a cross, is visible through the relic window located at the center of the object.

This vibrant gold metal sculpture stands firmly on a hexagonal base. It slowly rises up in steps forming a bulbous cushion before narrowing to a cherub's face that looks out at the viewer. His hair curls backward and his cheeks plump out, representing youth and innocence. Gracefully extending out of his side, small wings spread outward and curl upwards. Above the cherub sprout intricate crescents, curls and small details that surround the reliquary. In the center, the relic appears in the shape of a small cross, protected by a layer of glass. Towards the top of the design three additional cherubs appear among the vines. They are all identical with smaller wings and plain, restful facial expressions. A flower at the pinnacle invites viewers to reflect on the beauty and intricacy of its design.

The function of reliquaries is paradoxical in relation to the relics they contain. A relic, the physical remains of a saint or an object that touched the body of a saint, possesses the sacred power of the saint in heaven. Through a concept called *pars pro toto* (a part for the whole), even the smallest fragment of a relic was as powerful as the saint's intact body, just as the body is perfected in heaven. However, for all the physical power a relic possesses, its visual power is very limited. Bone fragments, bits of textile or dust are simply not that impressive to look at. On the other hand, reliquaries translate the sacred power of relics into visual terms, through the intricate manipulation of precious materials such as gold, copper and silver. Although these materials are themselves not sacred, gold and silver glitter and reflect the light of heaven, and through the organic vines and scrolls of the *Reliquary with Relic of Saint Anne*, the magnification of heavenly power is radiated upwards and outwards from the object, such that the invisible power of the relic becomes a tangible reality.

Emma Waldvogel '26



## 6. Reliquary with Relic of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

American

20th century

Silvered metal, glass, silk, organic material

34.9 x 16.5 x 16.5 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2019.21*

St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born into an Episcopal family in New York City on August 28, 1774. In 1794, when she was nineteen years old, Elizabeth Ann married William Seton, a wealthy shipping merchant. Although socially well placed, the couple overcame many struggles in their marriage, most poignantly losing their fourth child in infancy. Due to this grief, Elizabeth Ann turned to the Scriptures and spiritual life. In May, 1802, she wrote in a letter that her soul was “sensibly convicted of an entire surrender of itself and all its facilities to God.” Not long after, William declared bankruptcy and died shortly after of tuberculosis while living in Italy in the hope of mitigating his symptoms. While in Europe with her husband, Elizabeth Ann attended Mass in many churches and was impressed by Catholic beliefs. On March 14, 1805 she was confirmed into the Roman Catholic faith. Having returned to America, Elizabeth Ann associated with the Sulpician Fathers and founded Catholic Schools and supported Catholic universities. Elizabeth Ann founded a women’s community called the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph in 1809. She served as its first Mother superior. Elizabeth Anne died in Maryland, also of tuberculosis, in 1821. Known for her compassion and kindness, she was beatified by Pope John XXIII in 1963 and canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1975, making St. Elizabeth Ann Seton the first canonized American saint.

A twentieth-century American artist honors St. Elizabeth Ann Seton with a beautiful reliquary made in the tradition of American silverwork. The back of the reliquary opens to reveal a letter of authentication, stating that the touch relic, called a brandeum, was collected in 1997 when St. Elizabeth Ann Seton’s tomb was opened for cleaning. As with the reliquary of St. Anne (cat. 5) the object’s beauty and fine craftsmanship signifies the sacral power continued within the relic. Silver, one of the precious metals deemed worthy to be used in the enshrinement of relics, radiates the relic’s sacred aura through the aesthetics of shimmer, reflection and light.

The reliquary’s composition combines the tradition of reliquary shapes with distinctly American motifs. The

form begins on a strong circular base and slowly works its way up the neck ornamented by a floral pattern. Just above the midpoint, the textured curls on each side of two leaves emerge upward along the next. Two acanthus scrolls support the main section of the work that contains the relic window. In the lower portion of the main compartment, two sunflowers, indigenous to the Americas, are engraved into the silver. They project symmetry and signal the saint’s native soil. In the center of the reliquary, the relic window appears as a large circular opening, the center of which sparkles like a crystal revealing the touch relic that contacted the saint’s body. On a pink ribbon, an inscription reads “S. E. A. Seton.” The bright, vibrant silver enhances the reliquary’s beauty and serves as a fitting homage to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, adding to the remarkable history of American silversmithing.

Emma Waldvogel ‘26



## 7. Page from a Book of Hours

French

Ca. 1498

Ink and pigments on parchment

15.9 x 11.1 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2020.20.3A-B*

This illuminated manuscript leaf, dating to late fifteenth-century France, encapsulates the devotional spirit of its time. Books of Hours derive their name from the book's structure, organized around the canonical hours of prayer that originated in the monasteries of medieval Europe. By the thirteenth century, praying the hours evolved into a daily activity of personal devotion. So popular were books of hours among the urban middle class and elite Christians, they eventually surpassed the Bible in production during the medieval and Renaissance periods. Books of hours contain prayers, Psalms, and suffrages, which are brief texts commemorating saints and seeking their intercession. The suffrages, from which this page is taken, followed a hierarchical order, beginning with the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, and saints such as the ones depicted on this page. The black script, called fraktur or Gothic, leads the reader through the Latin prayers and responses that were once exclusive to monks and priests. The red and blue pigment covering the large capital letters and horizontal bars aids the text's readability by indicating the start and end of prayers. These richly illuminated and meticulously crafted personal prayer books served as windows into the devotional practices of laypeople and clergy alike.

This manuscript leaf from the suffrages section is adorned with a geometric border of vibrant primary colors. The saints depicted adhere to traditional iconography. St. Peter, illustrated with attributes of a key in one hand and an open book in the other, symbolizes his role as the gatekeeper of heaven. Standing next to St. Peter, St. Paul is identifiable by his attributes: a long beard, a sword signifying his martyrdom and a book alluding to his Epistles. The two saints, one the first among the Apostles and one a martyr in Rome, are frequently depicted as a pair, as they share a feast day on June 29 to signify respectively the establishment of the Papacy and the Catholic Church in Rome. Below, St. James the Greater wears pilgrims' attire including a broad-brimmed hat with a seashell and staff. St. James represents the pilgrimage route, the Camino de Santiago, upon which pilgrims traveled across Europe to Spain, where, according to medieval legend, the relics of St. James washed up on the shores of Galicia

The text on this page follows the model of a medieval manuscript, which includes an antiphon, a sung chant that begins with a single voice, then a verse and response that is sung in unison. In the monastic context, the chant is followed by a spoken prayer. For the suffrage of Sts. Peter and Paul the text reads:

*On Saints Peter and Paul. **Antiphon:** Peter, the Apostle, and Paul, the Doctor of the Gentiles, they taught us Thy law, O Lord. **Verse:** Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth. **Response:** And their words unto the ends of the world. **Prayer:** God, Whose right hand raised up blessed Peter when he was walking on the waves, lest he be submerged, and saved his fellow apostle Paul from the depth of the sea when he was shipwrecked for the third time, hear us graciously and grant that we may pursue the glory of eternity by the favors of both.*

The prayer for St. James is as follows:

*On Saint James. **Antiphon:** Light and honor to Spain, O most holy James: reliever of the oppressed: suffrage of travelers: who among the apostles, the first martyr laureate, you hold primacy. O singular guardian: hear the prayers of your servants in your kindness: and intercede for our salvation and for the salvation of all. **Verse:** Blessed James, pray for us. **Response:** That we may become worthy. **Prayer:** Be the Lord, the sanctifier and guardian of your people: as your apostle James protected the pre...*

By the fifteenth century, books of hours had become an accessible devotional tool cherished by the laity who sought personal connections to God and the saints. The book of hours offered a way to partake in the rituals of the church without the intervention of clergy. This *Page from a Book of Hours* granted its owners prayers to honor St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James within the intimate context of personal prayer.

Shannon Smith '26





De sanctis petro et paulo. añ.  
**P**etrus apostolus et paulus  
 doctor gentium: ipsi nos docue-  
 runt legem tuam domine. v. In  
 omnem terram exiuit sonus eo-  
 rum. R. Et in fines orbis terre  
 verba eorum. **Oratio.**

**D**eus cuius dextera beatum petrum apo-  
 stolum ambulante in fluctibus ne mer-  
 geretur erexit: et coapostolum eius paulum ter-  
 tio naufragantem de profundo pelagi libera-  
 uit: exaudi nos propicius et concede ut ambo-  
 rum meritis eternitatis gloriam consequamur  
 Per dominum nostrum.



De sancto iacobo. añ.  
 Lux et decus hispanie o iacobe  
 sanctissime: subleuator oppres-  
 sorum: suffragium viatorum: qui  
 inter apostolos primus martyr  
 laureatus obtines primatum.

**D** singulare presidium: tuorum benignus ex-  
 audi vota seruorum: et intercedas pro nostra  
 omniumque salute. v. Ora pro nobis beate ia-  
 cobe. R. Ut digni efficiamur. **Oratio.**

**E**sto domine plebis tue sanctificator et cu-  
 stos: ut apostoli tui iacobi munita pre-



## 8. Calendar of Saints' Feast Days: August

Leonard Gaultier (French, 1561-1641)

Ca. 1630

Engraving

33.7 x 21 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.37*

Around 1630, the French engraver Leonard Gaultier created this image depicting the month of August for the *Monthly Calendar of the Saints* published by Jacques Honervogt. The loose-leaf calendar pages highlight the saints and their feast days for each month in the year. The page depicted here covers the month of August. Each day includes an image representing the saint to be celebrated. The saints are depicted with their attributes, identifiable objects or distinctive clothing associated with the individual saint. Some illustrations convey violent scenes, reflecting the martyrdom of certain saints. Below each image, an inscription names the respective saint or saints, which emphasizes the purpose of the calendar: to provide a daily guide to ask the saint the intercession. This calendar was likely intended for display in a private home to serve as an aid in personal devotion. Calendars marking the feast days of the saints originated in medieval liturgical manuscripts, and later in Book of Hours (cat. 7). By adhering to this calendar, lay people experienced a sense of daily unity and participation in the life of the Church, which deepened their understanding of each saint and the reasons for his or her celebration.

Every day of the year is associated with a particular saint. The feast day typically includes liturgical prayers, readings, and a reflection on the saint's life and virtues. Some saints have feast days that are celebrated universally across the Christian Church, while other saints are commemorated in local contexts or specific regions where their impact was most significant. The saints serve as spiritual models for the faithful, with their feast days providing opportunities to remember their lives, virtues, and the lessons they impart. By celebrating the lives of saints, the Church honors the diversity of paths to sanctity and offers the faithful an array of models for living out the Christian faith.

Notable saints celebrated in this August page include St. Bernard of Clairvaux on the 20th and St. Augustine of Hippo on the 28th. St. Bernard is depicted alongside St. Stephen of Hungary to signify their shared feast day. St. Bernard, dressed in a Cistercian habit, is shown bearing a cross and carrying instruments of the

Passion, while St. Stephen holds his royal insignia as the King of Hungary.

August 5th marks the feast day of St. Mary Major, often referred to as Our Lady of the Snows. Due to the feast's significance, it covers two days on the calendar. The first box commemorates the miraculous summer snowfall in Rome. According to tradition, a Roman patrician named John and his wife, who were childless, made a vow to donate their wealth to the Virgin Mary. That very night, during the heat of the Roman summer, a miraculous snowfall occurred on the summit of Esquiline Hill. In response to a vision of the Virgin Mary, the couple decided to build a basilica in her honor at the location where the snow had fallen. This basilica, known as Santa Maria Maggiore, became one of the major papal churches and a central place of devotion to the Virgin Mary. The left-hand image on the 5th depicts the miraculous snow storm, while in the right-hand quadrant Virgin Mary holds the Christ Child. Both images underscore the significance of Marian celebrations and her compassion.

Leonard Gaultier's *Monthly Calendar of the Saints* not only offers a detailed artistic representation of the saints and their feast days, but also serves as an important tool for fostering spiritual unity within the Christian community. By providing visual depictions of saints—each marked by specific symbols and attributes—this calendar brings to life the stories of these saintly figures, offering believers a daily opportunity to reflect on their virtues, sacrifices, and faith. With the help of the calendar, the faithful are invited to participate in a rhythm of devotion that not only deepens their understanding of the saints but also strengthens the communal bond of shared faith and prayer.

Gracie Allen '26



AVGVSTVS.







## 9. Saint Nicholas Icon

Russian

19th century

Tempera and pigments on wood panel

30.8 x 25.7 x 2.5 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2018.10.3*

This Russian icon depicting St. Nicholas was created by an unknown artist sometime around the late eighteenth or nineteenth century. It exemplifies the traditional Eastern Orthodox icon style, rendered on a wooden surface using pigments as the primary medium. St. Nicholas served as the bishop of Bari in southern Italy and is one of the most revered saints in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. He is known for his miraculous deeds and benevolence toward children, sailors, and travelers. This icon would have served as a holy object during prayer and liturgical services, providing believers with a visual aid to guide their spiritual focus.

St. Nicholas appears at the center of composition holding an open book in his left hand and raising his right hand in a gesture of blessing. A white halo outlined in red encircles his head, signifying his saintly status. His figure, though static, exudes an aura of sanctity. St. Nicholas wears the omophorion bearing two black crosses on his shoulders, a liturgical vestment signifying his role as a bishop in the Eastern Church. Two miniature bust figures of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary accompany him, each occupying space on either side of St. Nicholas. In Eastern Orthodox iconography, Christ and the Virgin flanking St. Nicholas is one of his identifying attributes.

This icon follows the Byzantine icon tradition. The figures are primarily flat, with little attempt to create the illusion of a three-dimensional environment. The only suggestion of depth comes from the simple outlining and color contrasts used on the figures' faces and garments. Simple lines suggest wrinkles in the skin.

Icons were seen not as works of art, but as sacred objects of spiritual significance, permanently imbued with sanctity upon completion and blessing. The spiritual role of icons extended beyond artistic representation; they were seen as conduits for divine energy, capable of inspiring miracles and answering prayers. The term "icon" is derived from the Greek word *eikon*, meaning an image or likeness. When Russia adopted Orthodox Christianity in 988, icons flourished, but during the iconoclastic controversies of the eighth

and ninth centuries, the Eastern Orthodox Church formalized doctrines of veneration, establishing strict guidelines for icon production. Russian icons were required to be created by morally upright individuals who had received blessings from priests.

The wood used for icons, such as lime, pine, spruce, or larch, was meticulously prepared to ensure stability and resistance to splitting or insect damage. Limewood, in particular, was prized for its durability. Once cut, the planks were often seasoned for years and coated with resin to resist moisture, leaving a distinctive blackened finish visible on the reverse of this icon. The surface of the wood was then covered with linen and gesso before painting, with gold leaf often applied to create a radiant background. Over time, the wooden surface experiences wear and tear. In the *Saint Nicholas Icon*, cracks in the pigment, loss of color saturation, and surface degradation have occurred. These imperfections, though signs of age, have not diminished the icon's spiritual impact. Instead, they serve as a reminder of its continued use in religious devotion. Recent conservation efforts may have restored some vibrancy to the background.

The *Saint Nicholas Icon* offers a visual tool for religious reflection through its composition, use of space, and symbolic textures. Despite its simplicity of composition and wear from centuries of use, the icon retains its spiritual potency, inviting viewers to contemplate the divine mysteries while reflecting on the enduring power of religious imagery. By focusing on the figure of Saint Nicholas, his symbols, and the medallions surrounding him, the icon bridges the temporal world with the eternal, making it a powerful object of devotion.

Shannon Smith '26





## 10. Saint Mitrofan of Voronezh Icon

Russian

Late 19th century

Tempera and pigments on wood panel

17.8 x 14 x 1.6 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.56*

St. Mitrofan (1623-1703) dedicated himself to the Orthodox Church as a young man and served as a married parish priest until the age of forty. Following the death of his wife in 1663, Mitrofan entered monastic life and accepted the tonsure by having his hair shorn around the center of his skull. He proved himself to be both devout and capable and within a few years he was elevated to the rank of abbot. In 1683, Mitrofan was appointed as the first Bishop of Voronezh by Czar Peter the Great and became an important figure in the czar's efforts to reform the Russian Orthodox Church. Even during his lifetime Mitrofan was said to possess miraculous healing powers. This reputation continued to spread after his death, and his tomb in the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Voronezh became a popular destination for Orthodox Christian pilgrims during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mitrofan was canonized by the Orthodox Church in 1832. This small icon painting was probably made for display in a private home and for use in personal devotions. It depicts the saint wearing monk's robes and holding a book inscribed with one of his favorite maxims: "Do labor, keep a balance, and you will be rich. Drink temperately, eat little, and you will be healthy. Do good, shun evil, and you will be saved."

Charles Mason





## 11. Saint Aregawi and Saint Takla Haymanot

Berhanemeskel Fisseha (Ethiopian, born 1947)  
1998

Paint on cloth  
87.6 x 49.5 cm each

*Hope College Collection, gift of Neal and Elizabeth Sobania, 2018.25.5-6*

In these Ethiopian icon paintings on cloth by Berhanemeskel Fisseha, the viewer encounters St. Aregawi and St. Takla Haymanot, significant figures in Ethiopian Christianity. St. Aregawi was a Syrian monk who ventured to Ethiopia in the early 6th century CE and founded Debre Damo, an important monastery in Tigray province. Debre Damo sits atop a steep-sided mountain, which is located on the right side of the canvas. Debre Damo is celebrated as the first monastery in Ethiopia. St. Takla Haymanot was a 13<sup>th</sup>-century monk who is said to have stood in prayer on one leg for such a long time that his other leg fell off.

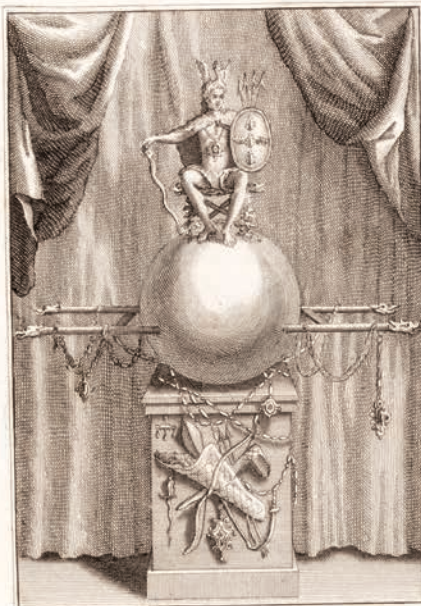
The paintings burst with vibrant and highly saturated colors in bright reds, yellows, and browns, with a strip of a sky-blue border surrounding the edges of the painting. The background is a gradient sky that begins with green at the bottom and shifts into yellow, which then transforms into an orange/red gradient at the top of the panel. In the icon of St. Aregawi, the saint wears a long gold-trimmed robe with an orange layer at the bottom, a blue layer in the middle, and a top layer of green that wraps around his head. St. Aregawi wears a long brown beard, and his head is tilted slightly upwards looking to the right at a large and intimidating snake. However, St. Aregawi's facial expression does not betray any sense of fear. The snake's lower body wraps around St. Aregawi and its tail curls inward. The remainder of the snake stretches all the way up the mountain. Its head arches around the mountaintop and faces downward towards St. Aregawi. The serpent's mouth gapes open with its tongue fully elongated downward; its eyes fix their gaze on St. Aregawi. St. Aregawi holds onto the snake's body with both of his hands.

Although the snake appears menacing, it is actually helping St. Aregawi climb up the mountain to the top where the Debre Damo monastery is located. According to legend, St. Aregawi first climbed the mountain with help from the archangel St. Michael. Also, a large snake carried St. Aregawi up the steep cliffs in its coils which is exactly what is portrayed in this image.

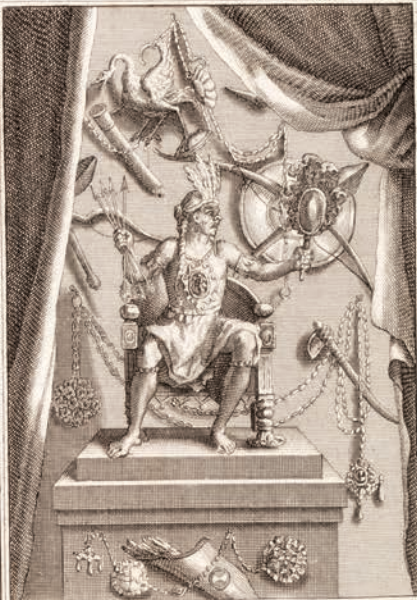
Even today the mountain is very remote; visitors still must use rope to ascend the mountain. Debre Damo is known for its collection of manuscripts and its early church building, which is still in its original style. It also features curved wood panels, painted ceilings, and walls dedicated to the legend of St. Aregawi. On the right side of the mountain, St. Michael the archangel (cat. 38) looks at the snake. His body faces the viewer and his right arm is lifted gently in the direction of the snake. In his left hand, he is holding a sword which is one of his attributes. Another legend says that when a rope snapped while St. Takla Haymanot climbed down from the mountain-top monastery where he lived, God saved him by giving him wings so that he could fly safely to the ground.

Ethiopian icons are based on the same icon theory as those in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. An icon functions as a screen, on the other side of which resides the "prototype," that is the saints whose likeness is represented on the panel. Saying prayers or giving devotions in front of the image pays honor to the saint. Devotions said to the icon are more efficacious, as the petitions travel directly through the icon to the prototype. Because of the close association between likeness and prototype, icons adhere to strict iconographic traditions in representing a saint. Although they share a similar function to Catholic and Orthodox icons, Ethiopian icons have a very distinct color scheme and style that developed independently from Europe, as did the Ethiopian church, which is the most ancient Church in Christianity.

Emma Waldvogel '26



XITLILIPUTLI.



TLALOH, ou TESCALIPIUCA.



TESCALIPUCA représentée d'une autre façon.



PRÊTRES MEXICAINS.

## 12. Aztec Gods

Bernard Picart (French, 1673-1733)

1723

Engraving

39.7 x 25.7 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of Joseph A. Baird, 1985.2.54*

The four-square engraving, “Aztec Gods: Vitzliputsli; Tlaloch ou Tescalipuca; Tescalipuca; Prêtres Mexicains,” depicts Aztec deities from an eighteenth-century French perspective. Pulled from Bernard Picart and Jean-Frédéric Bernard’s *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (“Ceremonies and religious customs from all the peoples of the world”), these images function as a pictogram of how each deity was understood by Europeans during the colonial period. Sourced from the 1684 Spanish text, *Historia de la conquista de México*, these images bear a heavy European influence. The source text, *Historia*, by Antonio de Solís, details the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs and focuses primarily on the actions of Hernán Cortés and the cultural and political landscape of colonial-era Mexico. *Historia* was published nearly two centuries after Cortés arrived in Mexico in 1519, and is imperfect in its record of pre-Columbian Aztec religion and culture. Yet, its French counterpart, *Cérémonies*, drew from Solís’s understanding of Aztec religion, elaborated descriptions, and filled in any blanks with Roman iconography, which further Westernized the Aztec deities and religious practices. In illustrating Huitzilopochtli, Tlaloc, and Tezcatlipoca — Anglican translations of Vitzliputsli, Tlaloch, and Tescalipuca — and Mexican priests, Picart demonstrates how European visual culture assimilated American traditions, while Native Americans adopted European traditions. In other words: syncretism goes both ways.

The engraving is organized into four quadrants. The top left portrays Huitzilopochtli as a man sitting on a sphere atop a podium in front of a curtain. The podium on which Huitzilopochtli sits is adorned with various weaponry, hinting at Huitzilopochtli’s role as the god of war. In his right hand, he bears a curved cane; in his left, a shield with four arrows pointed upwards. Around his neck, Huitzilopochtli wears a large necklace with a square pendant. The top right, “Tlaloch ou Tescalipuca,” is portrayed similarly to Huitzilopochtli. He sits upon a podium decorated with weaponry. Tlaloch wears a knee-length kilt, with bracelets below his knees and an elaborate pendant around his neck. He has feathered bands around his arms and a feathered headdress on his head. In his left hand Tlaloch holds a large fan, and

in his right, four arrows.

The bottom left-hand image shows Tezcatlipoca, standing animatedly upon a podium. His knees are bent and he bears a shield with protruding arrows in one hand and a singular arrow in the other. Tezcatlipoca appears ready to strike. He wears a kilt and a long cape with a pendant similar to the one worn by Tlaloc. This image depicts Tezcatlipoca with darker skin and surrounded by skulls and crossbones. The final scene, at the bottom right, illustrates a conversation between Mexican priests, the left of whom wears a large cape and feathered headdress. The other priest wears a simple long unfitted garment. The left figure holds a jagged knife and stands next to a platform dripping with dark liquid, presumably blood from the Aztec practice of sacrifice. The two figures in conversation stand on a checkered floor and gesture in resemblance to Plato and Aristotle in Raphael’s 1508 painting titled *The School of Athens*.

In many ways, this image illustrates the syncretism between the French visual tradition and Aztec religion, as these gods are depicted with both their traditional attributes and those inherited from the Roman tradition. Moreover, each image is labeled with the Francophone spelling of each deity’s name, and the bottom right image is described as *Prêtres Mexicains*, (“Mexican priests”). Bernard then writes, while describing Huitzilopochtli, in language typical of ethnocentric eighteenth-century France, “They were warned, says the author of the Conquest of Mexico, of this absurd opinion, that there were then no Gods in the other places of Heaven.” In labeling each image as such, the artist has ostensibly illustrated how the French audience came to understand the pre-existing religion of the Aztec peoples.

Lauren Carpenter ‘26





### 13. Ogou / Saint James Matamoros

George Valris (Haitian, born 1953)

Ca. 2013

Beads and sequins on cloth

86.3 x 100 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.42*

The Haitian Vodou deity Papa Ogou, or Ogou Feraï, is often conflated with St. James the Greater, the apostle of Jesus. Ogou represents crossroads and war in Yoruba culture. He appears in scenes of battle or on horseback. This Haitian adaptation of *Ogun* represents the diffusion of Yoruba religion to where its peoples were enslaved and converted to Catholicism and where St. James the Great intermixed with the Yoruba god. However, before the diaspora, St. James the Greater underwent his own transformation in medieval Spain. Medieval Christians called the saint “Santiago Matamoros,” based on the legendary appearance of St. James at the Battle of Clavijo. According to legend, St. James appeared to aid the Spanish in ridding the Muslim Moors from the Iberian Peninsula and henceforth was given the name “Matamoros” or Moor-slayer. As St. James was one of the main saints brought to the Americas by Spanish missionaries, he and many other Iberian saints enjoyed significant cults in Latin American Catholicism.

The beadwork on this Haitian flag ties back to traditional Yoruba visual culture. The artist, George Valris, readapts this art form to delineate the flag’s characters. Valris’s beadwork employs circular, flat sequins to create a base layer of color and block out the general shape of each figure. These sequins, carefully layered to overlap, cover the entire maroon flag. Then, smaller seed beads are embroidered in the center of each sequin to create a sense of depth. From afar, the two beads blend to create a unique shape.

The beaded flag portrays Ogou on horseback trampling and chasing other figures, while he carries a flag bearing an image of the cross. The background has a pink base color, overlaid with smaller beads of green and blue. The remaining space is filled with still different beaded shapes. Rows of seed beads create the detailed faces of each shape and figure, including the sun, which separates them from the background of the work. Each shape is carefully circumscribed so that it is clear where one shape stops and another begins. At the center, Ogou sits in a blue, long-sleeved tunic, with white buttons down the front and a matching kilt. A halo made from yellow beads encircles his head. His

face is abstracted. In his right hand, he holds a white rectangular flag with a horizontal gold cross and in his left hand, a blue and red flag of the Haitian nation. As some of the most overt examples of syncretism, the cross flag and Haitian national flag illustrate how both Catholic and Yoruba traditions come together in Haitian Vodou.

Further referencing Ogou’s and St. James Matamoros’ attributes, Ogou sits on a white horse. The horse walks upon a blue ground, trampling figures lying on the ground. The figures’ faces match that of Ogou, developing Valris’s style. Another figure seemingly flees Ogou. The presence of the white horse and the bodies on which the horse tramples are characterizing attributes of St. James Matamoros, serving as further evidence of the combination of the two, Ogou and St. James.

This Vodou flag, which would not have been flown but draped over an altar, represents the many facets of colonial Caribbean art through which cultures of enslaved peoples syncretized with European traditions to create something new: the Vodou tradition (cat. 25). Adapting and playing into the attributes of St. James Matamoros, Valris represents the deity Ogou through a modern lens, but one that does not leave out the inherently syncretic elements of his image. Therefore, this flag can be read as either Ogou or St. James Matamoros, but more accurately should be interpreted as both. As a key exemplar of the products of forced proximity in the colonial world, the Vodou religion is highly syncretic and often misunderstood, but undeniably conflates Yoruba and Catholic religions.

Lauren Carpenter ‘26







## 14. Female Figure Holding Child

Chinese

16th-17th century

Ivory

17.8 x 5.1 x 5.1 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2024.13.142*

The Chinese ivory and wood sculpture, *Female Figure Holding Child*, created in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, exemplifies the idea of syncretism in depicting the saints. The top half of the woman-and-child composition is formed from a separate ivory piece than the bottom half, as seen by the seam connecting the two pieces which are not perfectly aligned. Additionally, flat spots with dowels and remnants of glue on either side of the woman's arms, as well as on the backside of her head, suggest points of connection where other ivory pieces were once attached to the figure.

The figures include features that firmly place the sculpture within Chinese culture, as well as those that recall European depictions of the Virgin Mary. The woman and child in the sculpture wear traditional Chinese robes. The robes are cinched closed with a belt along the upper waist; long bell sleeves reach down to the figures' feet. Additionally, the female figure's robes include a low neckline, which is uncharacteristic of contemporary Chinese clothing. Due to the dark staining of the ivory and the slight wear, however, it is difficult to tell whether or not the female figure wears a shirt underneath the robe, which would be characteristic of the style of robes worn in late seventeenth-century China. The child she carries sits comfortably on the woman's arm. The infant has no hair, and appears in proportion to his mother. Although most of these features point to the Chinese origin of the sculpture, other features encourage the viewer to see the figural pair as St. Mary, the mother of Jesus.

While it is not clear whether or not this Chinese sculpture is meant to represent the Virgin Mary and Child, this parallel between usual representations of the Virgin and Christ Child and a mother and child creates a conceptual space for this Chinese ivory sculpture to be seen as a depiction of St. Mary. Familiar sculptures and paintings of St. Mary depict her as a young queen, standing with one hip to one side, so as to easily balance the small Christ Child on her hip. Additionally, the syncretic nature of Chinese ivory sculptures in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century, due to the Spanish influence in Southeast China, also allows for such an interpretation. Since this sculpture includes

elements of Southeast China ivory sculptures, such as, according to Jessie Park, "high arched eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, elongated noses, heavy eyelids, and wavy hair flowing neatly along the figures' faces," it is highly likely that this ivory sculpture was made within a network of art created for export, as well as for local Christian communities in China.

The religious persecution and contempt for Christian converts in parts of east Asia including China and Japan, due to the presence of Christian missionaries starting in the sixteenth century, led to a form of "underground" Christianity. In order to maintain the Christian faith without risking persecution, devotional statues would use other religious symbols to camouflage its true meaning. Oftentimes Buddhist symbols, such as the prominent female goddess known as Guanyin in China or Kannon in Japan (cat. 14 & 18), would be used in place of the Virgin, as Guanyin/Kannon was often depicted holding a child. The substitution would capitalize on the visual and conceptual similarities between the two figures, as Guanyin/Kannon, much like Mary, was a compassionate female religious figure associated with salvation. Since China was a center for ivory figural production, Mary-Guanyin-Kannon figures were often exported from China. While this ivory sculpture does not have some of the iconographical attributes of Guanyin/Kannon, such as the lotus, the context of the time period and the syncretic nature of Chinese ivory sculptures suggests that this figure could—whether made for this reason or not—have been used as a way to practice secretly Christianity and devotion to St. Mary.

Ashley Keltsch '25



## 15. Guanyin with Child

Chinese

17th-18th century

Glazed porcelain

23.8 x 13.6 x 8.2 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.130*

*Guanyin with Child* is a Chinese ceramic depiction of the Buddhist bodhisattva of compassion, the child-giving Guanyin. The sculpture is made from glazed porcelain with shades of light and dark cobalt blue and pastel pinks. Diminutive in size, this *Guanyin with Child* glows with the signature shine of porcelain, one of the most prestigious materials in Asian visual culture. Guanyin sits with one leg crossed balancing a child upon her knee. The noticeable size discrepancy between the child and woman emphasizes Guanyin's highly revered status within Chinese Buddhism.

With an erect hair coiffure atop her head from which a blue headdress flows, Guanyin demands the viewer's attention. The draped fabric around her appears like an archway revealing Guanyin's face. Guanyin holds a smooth, peaceful expression made from limited marks and pink accents. This pink glaze functions as a highlight throughout the piece, which can be seen on the folds in the fabric of Guanyin's sleeve, the tips of her fingers and toes. The light pink brings a flushness to the otherwise monochromatic palette and imbues a sense of life to the minimally marked sculpture.

In Buddhism, rather than entering nirvana after reaching a state of enlightenment, bodhisattvas remain in the world to assist others in breaking the cycle of rebirth known as samara. Guanyin is the bodhisattva of compassion, who helps those who appeal to her. Guanyin is short for Guanshiyin, which means "The One Who Perceives the Sounds of the World." Guanyin has an immediate presence in people's lives so that she can help them in this world. Guanyin presents an infant standing in the crook of her arm. He dons a blue rectangular loincloth and subtle marks of a top on his chest and down his arms. The baby's facial features are very faint compared to Guanyin, and his expression appears more lively and animated. The child's countenance, coupled with his tucked-in arms and nestled body, emphasizes the sculpture's focus on motherhood and highlights Guanyin's traits of love and compassion.

Chinese artists developed porcelain in the fifth century and relentlessly guarded the secret process of its clay

mixture and firing process. Porcelainware was highly sought after, not only in Asia, but also by rulers in Islamic societies and European Christians, who coveted the thin, delicate structure that could be achieved from the clay, as well as the translucent quality of the glazed surface. True Chinese porcelain is all white; however, in the tenth century, Islamic ceramic artists in Iraq created imitation porcelain, sometimes called Basra ware, which included blue glaze to appeal to Islamic taste. Thus, Chinese porcelain artists also incorporated blue and other pigments to appeal and compete in a global market.

In the sixteenth century the Jesuits arrived in China in the first wave of their missionary efforts. The Jesuits' strategy for teaching the tenets of Christianity was to adapt Buddhist theology and visual culture to Christian iconography. The Guanyin figure served as a prototype for images of the Virgin and Child, which could then be used for instruction on the Incarnation (cat. 18). Guanyin, known for her compassion, could also serve the Christian cult of saints who functioned as intercessors between the devotee and God. Whether this *Guanyin with Child* would have been seen as the bodhisattva of compassion or the Virgin and Child, would depend on the Buddhist or Christian faith of the viewer. The *Guanyin with Child* is a testament to the interconnectedness of the global movement of goods and ideas in the Early Modern period.

Sophia Funston '25





21  
150

Carmen Pano

## 16. The Virgin of Guadalupe

Carmen Parra (Mexican, born 1944)

1989

Screenprint

74.9 x 56.5 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.62*

In December 1531, an Indigenous Aztec man named Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin experienced a series of visions known as the Guadalupan Event. In the mountainous terrain near Mexico City, Juan Diego saw four appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Each time, she spoke to Juan Diego in his native Nahuatl language. This apparition became known as the Virgin of Guadalupe and attracted a large devotional following among the Indigenous people of Mexico. The Virgin of Guadalupe was invoked to symbolize Mexico's distinct political and cultural identity during the 1810-1821 War of Independence from Spain, and again during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920. She is regarded as a powerful protector of the poor, oppressed, and those who seek social justice, as well as a personification of the spirit of the Mexican people. Crowned in gold and bordered by a faux Baroque frame, Carmen Parra's *Virgin of Guadalupe* harmonizes three hundred years of Colonial Mexican art and religion with the avant-garde styles of the twentieth century. Parra layers coats of ink and spiritual significance onto the thick paper, resulting in a visually complex and symbolic print. The Mexican artist proclaims herself the "nation's witness," thus this piece fits well into her oeuvre focusing on colonial-era artists, altars, baroque architecture, angels, archangels, and the formation of mestizo Mexico. With each print, Parra's contemporary adaptation of the Virgin of Guadalupe bolsters a cultural image that lives in its own continuous presence.

The *Virgin of Guadalupe* is recognizable by the narrative elements exhibited in the original apparition. A dusty blue cloak studded with stars covers her head and bodily frame; her rose-colored garment is decorated with leafy filigree. Behind the Virgin's clasped, prayerful hands, a black belt cinches her waist, and a dainty necklace adorns her neck. Parra makes a significant choice to include the Virgin's crown, which according to certain accounts, disappeared from the original apparitional image. Nonetheless, Parra's incorporation of the crown within the Virgin's mandorla of golden sun rays speaks to the admiring view shared by devotees. These radiating beams end in a burnt-red scalloped oval frame. At the other end of her body, beneath her feet, a dark crescent moon and a small

winged cherub uphold her stature and glory. These elements, covered by wispy cloud-like splotches of matte gray, cede the visual focus to the magnificence of the gilded Virgin of Guadalupe.

Completing this reasonably traditional representation of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Parra adds flourish to her composition with a screen-printed baroque frame. Made of layered dark brown, beige, and gray ink, the frame is purposefully distressed to suggest its age. Rococo-style, decorative appliqués embellish the corners and sides with brushed silver. This mineral is pivotal to the history of mining and its effects on Colonial Mexican culture and society. Yet more than just a matter of supplementary visual interest to the figure of the Virgin, the faux frame serves a symbolic role.

Parra's depiction of the Virgin of Guadalupe is an image based on a prototype—an apparition that appeared to Juan Diego. This concept employs the rhetoric used for Christian icons (cat. 9); the subject of an icon is the prototype from which the derivative, the work of art, is made. Essentially, the icon itself is not sacred (cat. 47), yet because the figure depicted is, honoring the image thus gives honor to the saint through the conduit of the saint's likeness rendered in the image. Parra's *Virgin of Guadalupe* engages with this tradition not only by illustrating the Virgin but also by printing an imitative frame. Carmen Parra transports the ancient icon tradition and a paradigmatic figure into the contemporary world.

Mariam Tiews '25





## 17. Mary, Queen of Heaven

Indo-Portuguese

17th-18th century

Gilt bronze

23.5 x 10.2 x 5.7 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2023.29.69*

This Indo-Portuguese sculpture of *Mary, Queen of Heaven*, gracefully invites her viewers to gaze upon her glistening golden form, a symbol of her sanctity and divine grace. The sculpture represents Mary, the mother of Jesus. Embodying her power, beauty, and strength, the work is crafted from bronze and coated in gold—an intentional choice that beautifully reflects Mary's place in heaven as supreme intercessor full of mercy and compassion. The name "Queen of Heaven" originated from the principle that after her death (cat. 32), Mary ascended into heaven, where she sits next to the Throne of Mercy, crowned as a queen. The Queen of Heaven is also an ancient address to Mary used in prayers that date back to at least the fourth century. Since the twelfth century, Mary's role as Queen of Heaven was proclaimed each year during Eastertide, when the hymn *Regina caeli* filled churches with the words, "Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia! The Son you merited to bear, alleluia, / Has risen as he said, alleluia, Pray to God for us, alleluia!"

This sculpture of *Mary, Queen of Heaven* captures the drama and majesty of the *Regina caeli* hymn. The figure of Mary stands on a rectangular base adorned with decorative columns that elegantly curve upward at the sides. At the top of this base sits an angel, gazing upwards. This angel lifts up the base supporting Mary. Mary stands on an upturned gold crescent moon, a reference to the Book of Revelation. The work's precise visual detail holds the viewer's attention and speaks to the artist's craftsmanship. Mary's flowing robe cinched with a belt features crescent shapes, small curls and small dots, reminiscent of textiles from the region. The folds in Mary's robe and each part of the copper sculpture have been intentionally made with sharp lines, so as to add to the drama. The swirling fabric suggests her holy body has a divine power. Mary holds her hands in a prayer gesture, placing her fingers on top of each other pointed upwards towards the sky. Wearing a crown, depicted here as a diadem, her regal visage reflects her royal status. Mary tilts her head slightly downward and to the left, looking content and right where she is supposed to be.

Behind Mary's figure appears one of the most radiant

moments of this whole piece. Twenty-nine points of light rays extend outwards in a fiery mandorla. The rays of light have their own unique texture, resembling extended arms. The style of the rays recall a very similar style seen in representations of the Hindu goddess Durga. Building on the iconography of Durga would carry significant meaning to the local Hindu population in India where this sculpture was made, some of whom converted to Christianity in the Early Modern Period. Similar to Mary's virtues, Durga is associated with protection, strength, and motherhood.

The sculpture gives evidence to the dynamic artistic synthesis that took place when the Portuguese settled in the city of Goa, a small state on the western coast of India. The goal of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century was to control the spice trade and to convert the Hindu population to Christianity. At that time, the Jesuits led the missionary enterprise, whose strategy harnessed the local populations' religious beliefs as a vehicle for teaching the tenets of Christianity. Artworks played a crucial role in missionary activity, not just as functional devotional objects, but to teach Catholic theology. The Jesuits employed Hindu artists to fashion images of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the saints for use in private devotion and for public display in local churches. Using European prints as models, the Jesuits employed artists and encouraged them to draw on their own traditions and methods in creating images for Christian devotion. Although this sculpture was made well after the arrival of the first missionaries, it still retains the Indo-Portuguese style of depicting Mary with a round face and smooth skin, which are specific features sent forth in the *Shilpashastras*, an ancient Hindu artist manual for the production of sculpture depicting Hindu gods and goddesses. Mary powerfully represents influential themes of motherhood, purity, and resilience. She is the Queen of Heaven because of her status in the heavenly realm and her closeness to God.

Emma Wadvogel '26





## 18. Maria Kannon

Japanese

17th century

Ceramic

12.1 x 8.9 x 8.9 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2019.51*

Small in stature, rough in texture, and obscure in detail, the sculpture of Maria Kannon represents an intersection between two wildly dissimilar religions. The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara—Kannon in Japanese—is the Buddhist embodiment of compassion. She is often depicted as a young woman holding a willow branch, a vase of nectar, a lotus flower, or a small child. Yet because of the relatively analogous iconography, Japanese Christians have historically used Kannon in place of, or to secretly represent, the Virgin Mary. This particular image of Maria Kannon is not large; however, the syncretic message that it represents exemplifies a much larger significance regarding the ideological and theological underpinnings of Maria Kannon.

The statue is made of blackened ceramic and sits atop a dark-stained wooden pedestal, perhaps a later addition to the piece. While the sculpture's silhouette is tear-shaped due to the radiating full-length halo, the actual Kannon is centered within a mandorla. She stands erect with hands clasped in prayer, indicating a Christian portrayal of the Kannon, as this pose does not fit within pre-existing manifestations of the Buddhist tradition. Maria Kannon stares straight ahead in pious stoicism. Her facial expressions are unknown, as they have been washed away by time and the elements, but her head is crowned in a headdress reminiscent of the traditional lotus hat. In the Buddhist tradition, the Kannon is sometimes depicted holding a lotus flower, which represents enlightenment and the potential for spiritual awakening in Buddhism. While this Maria Kannon lacks the lotus blossom, the hat nonetheless references this traditional Buddhist attribute. Long, flowing robes envelop the rest of her body to serve enduring Christian and Buddhist visual traditions for both the Virgin Mary and the Kannon. Other versions emphasize the white color of these robes; however, this sculpture is homogenous in hue and material.

Without the pre-existing visual traditions of both Kannon and the Virgin Mary, no Maria Kannon would exist. The tangible nature of the sculpture not only *represents* the syncretic mediation between Buddhism and Christianity, but also establishes the entire concept of syncretism through the very existence of the image-type. Our particular *Maria Kannon* comes

from the seventeenth century and is a product of a country already changed by Christianity. Brought by Jesuit missionaries in 1549, Christianity flourished in Japan for more than fifty years, and its successful spread within the Buddhist country was virtually unprecedented, in part due to the existing doctrine of Buddhism that accepts other gods, as well as comparable visual customs. One missionary, Father A. Valignano, utilized the advantageous Buddhist similarities in Japan to increase Christian conversions. Using it as a theological stepping stone, Valignano adopted "Buddhist models in the shaping of Christian church and community organizations." However, even though Jesuit missionaries had already been evicted from Japan in 1587, by 1614, a new government had come into power ordering restrictions on religious freedom. Without attendant institutional regulations, Japanese Christians soon fused practices with similar cultural Buddhist beliefs. *Maria Kannon* demonstrates the conflation of underground Christianity with Pure Land Buddhism which eventually formed a third religion, *Kakure Kirishitan*.

Upon seeing the statue, one might assume it is a relic of an earlier time. Yet while it was made in the seventeenth century, the sculpture represents a topical merging and unification of two contradicting visual cultures, belief systems, and societal practices. The underground usage of Kannon as the Virgin Mary began as a necessity for survival; the outlawed Christian iconography was disguised in Buddhist forms. However, the two figures eventually merged into one. Without the preceding spiritual personifications of the Virgin Mary and the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, there would never have been such a fascinating unification in the form of the Maria Kannon. Based not just on the external similarities, *Maria Kannon* represents the intrinsic symbolic connections between the two figures and their respective religions.

Mariam Tiews '25





## 19. The Virgin of Quito

Ecuador

Late 18th century

Wood, paint, silver

55.3 x 31.1 x 17.8 cm

*Hope College Collection, purchased with funds donated by Ronald '62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2024.45*

Associated with the city of Quito, the capital of Ecuador, the *Virgin of Quito* figure represents a combination of indigenous Ecuadorian and European Catholic traditions—a clear example of the process of syncretism. The artist used wood, paint, and metal, as well as detachable elements such as her hands, wings, and headdress in a beautiful display of craftsmanship. This sculpture is a copy of the famous Virgin of Quito made in 1734 by Bernardo de Legarda. The original work still exists in the church of St. Francis in Quito.

As with many depictions of the Virgin Mary in South America, *The Virgin of Quito* triumphs over evil, symbolized by her placement atop a serpent, a symbol in both Christian and native Ecuadorian culture. She stands atop a thick green and scaly serpent, clearly reminiscent of an indigenous jungle snake. Its mouth gapes open as the Virgin's left foot rests firmly on the snake's head. This image of triumph over sin and Satan aligns with traditional Christian iconography, where the Virgin is shown crushing the serpent, a creature associated with temptation and sin. The crescent moon, referring to Mary's title as the "Queen of Heaven" (cat. 17), encircles the Virgin's feet. Her pose, with arms raised to her right in a slight sway, gives the impression of graceful movement, almost as though she were dancing. This unusual pose seems to portray her reaching towards the sky, once again making the association with heaven and God. Her waist-length brown hair, large brown eyes, and pale, rosy-pink skin, display characteristics of many colonial representations of the Virgin.

The *Virgin of Quito* wears a detailed cloak that reflects both cultural heritage and Catholic symbolism. The long, cream-colored dress bears painted red flowers with four petals and green leaves, attributes that are often used to represent purity, love, and the divine. Flowers, particularly roses, are frequently associated with the Virgin Mary, as they symbolize both her beauty and her connection to divine grace. The red flowers in the Virgin's attire further reinforce her purity, with red also symbolizing the Virgin's heart and the blood of Christ. Her collar and the cuffs of her sleeves are painted with shiny gold that catches the light and highlights her sacred and powerful status. Over

her dress, the Virgin wears a royal blue mantle that features a swirling gold pattern. The blue pigment, due to its great expense, was reserved for images of Virgin Mary, and thus has become one of her attributes.

Two unique features of this *Virgin of Quito* are the magnificently large gilded silver wings on her back and the feather headdress that crowns her. The wings are intricately carved with layered textures to suggest flight. The wings are not only a symbol of the Virgin's title as the "Queen of Heaven," but they also point to the Book of Revelation, chapter twelve, where St. John envisions a woman given wings to escape the serpent. Furthermore, a feathered headdress, an important element of indigenous Ecuadorian culture, crowns her head. Many South American people regard birds as sacred, and therefore their feathers give strength and protection. Feathered headdresses are traditionally worn by indigenous leaders and are often used in ceremonies to mark important events. By incorporating this element into the Virgin's attire, the artist connects the figure to the cultural identity of the Ecuadorian people, elevating her not only as a Catholic saint, but also as an indigenous queen.

The *Virgin of Quito* is one of many depictions of the Virgin Mary created during the Spanish Colonial period. The inclusion of indigenous cultural symbols, such as the feathered headdress and the serpent, reflects the ways in which Catholic and indigenous beliefs were interwoven during the colonial era. The resulting art often reflects a mix of both traditions, creating a unique and distinct South American form of religious expression.

Emma Brenny '25





## 20. Standing Madonna

Hispano-Philippine

17th century

Ivory

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2023.29.43*

At the time this remarkable ivory sculpture of the Virgin Mary was made, the Philippines had become a vital hub for maritime trade, connecting Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The sculpture embodies the fusion of cultural influences stemming from the colonial era, particularly the intersection of Asian artistry and European Catholic devotion. The statue's craftsmanship speaks to the skilled artisanship of the time and the incorporation of elements from two different cultural and artistic traditions. Crafted from ivory, the statue exhibits a cracked surface, a testament to its age and the delicate nature of the material. Despite these imperfections, the sculpture holds an undeniable beauty, symbolizing the purity and sanctity associated with the Virgin Mary. The choice of the highly prized commodity, ivory, reflects the historical significance of trade and cultural exchange during this period.

The Madonna stands in contrapposto, suggesting a naturalism that invites the viewer's gaze. Her head tilts downward to the left, a characteristic pose that aligns with traditional representations of Mary in Christian art. Her gesture is gentle, with one hand held up to her heart, and the other down towards her side. This dual gesture not only reflects her role as Theotokos (Mother of God) but also serves as an invitation for viewers to engage in prayer and veneration. "Madonna" (my lady) reflects the intimate relationship devotees felt towards the Virgin Mary since the seventeenth century. Her soft facial features, with half-closed almond-shaped eyes and an elongated nose, evoke serenity and contemplation. The wavy hair flows gracefully, enhancing her gentle characteristics. The distinct facial features and overall style of the sculpture suggest Asian influences. This melding of techniques and aesthetics illustrates the transpacific cultural exchange during the early modern period. The *Standing Madonna* would have been an accessible representation of faith for worshipers, helping to convey stories and teachings of the Catholic Church. The absence of paint emphasizes the milky color of the ivory, aligning with the iconography of Mary that takes its inspiration from marble statuary.

However, the sculpture's iconography is not common in the context of ivory statues of the Virgin Mary.

Usually Mary carries the Christ Child in her arms or she brings her hands together in a gesture of prayer. When depicted without the Child, the Virgin often stands on a crescent moon in reference to the Book of Revelation, or wears a crown as Queen of Heaven. But in this example, Mary lacks these details. However, comparisons to images of the Annunciation reveals important similarities. The Annunciation, as described in the Gospel of Luke, marks the moment when the archangel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive and bear a son (Luke 1:26-38). In many images of this moment, Mary is depicted with her head bowed and holding one hand to her heart while the other extends outwards, as she listens to the angel's words, just as she is depicted here. This event is one of the most frequent subjects in Christian art and ties many cultures throughout the world to the devotion of the Virgin Mary. The Feast of the Annunciation is celebrated on March 25.

The ivory used for this sculpture was likely sourced through extensive maritime trade routes, illustrating the global movement of goods, ideas, and religious beliefs. The competition among artisans and the desire for sacred objects among diverse cultures played a crucial role in the production and transportation of such artworks. Ivory statues were prized commodities in Filipino markets from the late sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Ivory statues like the Standing Madonna were markers of luxury because they were made out of African elephant tusks. This ivory statue not only reflects artistic skill and devotion, but also serves as a cultural artifact that encapsulates the complexities of colonial history. It highlights the shared aspirations and interactions between cultures, revealing how art can bridge divides and express collective identity amidst the backdrop of trade and migration.

Gracie Allen '26





Rosa Cordis me  
tumichi Sponsa



## 21. The Mystical Marriage of Saint Rose of Lima

Peruvian, Cusco School

18th century

Oil paint on canvas

104.1 x 76.2

*Hope College Collection, promised gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, TR2024.2*

According to St. Rose of Lima's *vita*, she was such a beautiful child that a servant saw her face transform into a rose. When confirmed in the Church, she abandoned her original name, Isabel, and officially adopted her nickname, Rose. Because of this, roses have become one of her defining visual characteristics, called attributes, when St. Rose of Lima is represented in art. On the right side of the *Mystical Marriage of Saint Rose of Lima*, St. Rose kneels before Mary and the Christ Child. She wears the traditional habit of the Third Order of St. Dominic, the community which she joined in 1606 at the age of twenty. On the left, the Virgin Mary sits on a throne and wears an elegant robe. The textile pattern bears similarities to other depictions of her from the Cusco School, a colonial Catholic artistic tradition associated with the city of Cusco, Peru. The bold colors and the beautiful gold floral embellishments enhance her importance in the image. Mary gently holds the Christ Child while he reaches for St. Rose's outstretched hand. Rose gazes at the Virgin and Child with great reverence and devotion.

In the background above St. Rose floats a white banner with the words "Rosa Cordis me tu michi Sponsa." This phrase translates from Latin as "Rose of my Heart, you are my bride." This text refers to Christian interpretations of the Old Testament Song of Solomon, the text of which Christian theologians interpret as the union of Christ (the bridegroom) and the Church (his bride). In this instance, St. Rose desires Christ's love and presence similar to how a bride longs for her bridegroom. According to her St. Rose's *vita*, she received the grace of a mystical marriage with Christ and had a ring engraved with the words she heard from Christ: "Rose of My Heart, be My spouse."

One small unusual element in this depiction of St. Rose is that she is not adorned with her usual attributes of a crown of roses. She is almost always shown wearing a crown of roses to cover the crown of thorns she wears to emulate Christ's pain. In some images where St

Rose does not wear the crown of roses, she always holds at least one flower. In this painting, however, St. Rose does not wear or hold any flowers. Instead of a crown of roses, a golden halo, like the ones on Mary and Christ's heads, encircles her head. Although St. Rose is not herself decorated with roses, the entire painting is surrounded by a beautiful border of large multicolor roses. This border and the banner help confirm that this woman is indeed St. Rose of Lima. *The Mystical Marriage of Saint Rose of Lima* compares similarly to other paintings from the Cusco School.

The Cusco School of Painting is considered the first European style painting school in the Americas and it exclusively focused on religious subjects. The paintings produced from this school all have a similar style with primarily red, yellow, and earth colors. Artists utilized gold leaf in images of Mary to signify her sanctity.

St. Rose is the patron saint of Peru and all of South America because she was the first person canonized by the Roman Catholic Church to have been born in the western hemisphere. Pope Clement IX canonized St. Rose of Lima in 1671. This act made St. Rose of Lima the first saint of the New World and added to the growth of Catholicism in the Americas.

Signe Bieganski '27







## 22. Saint Jerome

Agostino Carracci (Italian, 1507-1602)

Ca. 1602

Engraving

38.9 x 27.6 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2016.63.2*

Agostino Carracci's 1602 engraving depicts St. Jerome in the body of a Roman hero. Known for his scholarship, including translating the Bible into Latin, and as an ascetic hermit, St. Jerome lived in the fourth century and was pivotal in shaping the Christian church. However, despite his role as a Church Father, St. Jerome was not canonized until 1767. His feast day is celebrated on September 30.

St. Jerome was born in the Balkans during the Constantinian dynasty of the late Roman Empire, but moved to Rome at a young age. Following his baptism, and for the next twenty years, St. Jerome traveled among monasteries. According to hagiographical tradition, during this time a lion entered his resident monastery. While his fellow monks fled, St. Jerome approached the lion like a friend, finding and removing a thorn within its paw. After living as a hermit in the desert for two years, around 379, St. Jerome focused heavily on translating Scripture before working as a secretary for Pope Damasus I. Consequently, St. Jerome is a crucial figure of the Early Christian period, whose scholarship defined the Patristic Era. Not surprisingly, Carracci depicted St. Jerome as a Roman hero in classical Counter-Reformation style.

In this scene, the Early Christian saint kneels on his right leg and bears a tall cross in his left hand. The cross is angled and creates a diagonal from the top to the bottom of the work, using the Classical ideals of symmetry and perfection. St. Jerome's muscles are visible and well-developed, to the point that he resembles a Hellenistic Greek sculpture. Illustrating the ancient idea of an ideal figure and a heroic Church, St. Jerome is mostly nude, with only his ecclesiastical garb draped over his shoulder and waist and spilling dramatically onto the floor.

To create the illusion of space and form, Carracci utilized the cross-hatching technique to darken certain areas of the image and delineate the saint from the background. In addition, Carracci left several highlighted spaces on the page nearly blank to represent color and light, creating a painterly aesthetic. As St. Jerome leans towards the cross, only his right profile is visible. Carracci rendered anatomically

accurate muscles created by deep grooves in his torso, legs, and arms. The wrinkles on his forehead and his full beard suggest an advanced age. His eyes gaze upwards, looking towards the cross, where a corpus hangs. In the background, a sleeping lion lies in the top left corner on a rock ledge. The semi-realistic lion bears a slightly abstracted, flattened face, and a soft, curly mane. The background is properly foreshortened to create the illusion of space, though the figure of St. Jerome and his attributes compose much of the artwork, from one corner to the other.

This Early Modern depiction of St. Jerome is as close to perfection as possible. He does not appear as an ascetic, nor does he imitate the passion of Christ. Rather, his muscled torso ostensibly references the Roman Belvedere torso, which deepens the connection between this saintly individual and Roman sculpture. These representational elements add to Carracci's classical, heroic depiction of St. Jerome, and illustrate how saints were frequently depicted during the Renaissance and period of Catholic Renewal. In illustrating Jerome's sanctity, Carracci did not depict St. Jerome as ascetic as he appears in his hagiography, but rather as a hero of the Catholic Church.

Lauren Carpenter '26





## 23. Saint Jerome Retablo Painting

Mexican

Late 19th century

Oil paint on tin

27.9 x 20 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2019.43.3*

This nineteenth-century votive Mexican retablo painting depicts an aged, ascetic St. Jerome. The depiction of the Early Christian saint strays from the type seen in Renaissance and Baroque artworks. Instead, this image portrays an elderly man who has been traveling in the desert for many years. Contrary to Early Modern engravings, such as that of Agostino Carracci (cat. 22), retablo artists did not adapt the Classical canon for their depictions of Christian saints. This Mexican depiction of St. Jerome emphasizes his frailty and isolation in a verdant setting representing the desert, rather than referencing the European prints and paintings that brought the saint to the Americas by Spanish missionaries.

In the image, St. Jerome hunches over with a hand held to his heart. He is pale and balding, has a long white beard, and wears white undergarments with a vibrant red bolt of cloth wrapped around his left arm and legs. In his left hand, he holds a flagellation device. St. Jerome's midsection is lacerated, represented by crosshatched incisions on his body. The same abrasion appears on his upper right arm. The wounds drip deep red blood. In the foreground, the attribute of St. Jerome, the lion, lies peacefully on the lush grass. The yellow-brown fur, thin mane, and flat, anthropomorphic face reveal a folk art sensibility commonly seen in retablo paintings. On the rock are writing quills, a skull, a book, and a thin cross, all attributes of the saint developed from his years as a hermit. The cerulean blue sky is interrupted by a heavenly trumpet announcing the divine inspiration of St. Jerome's scholarship.

This painting employs several visual techniques that create the stylistic tone of the retablo. Like many *santos* retables of the period, which brought the saints into domestic spaces, the highly stylized nature of this scene characterizes the painting as an icon for the home. In the foreground, the grass is marked with quick lines of light green, intentionally left unblended, and the illusion of shadow created by smudges of dark evergreen. There is, however, some illusion of relief in the rocky background, though it appears smooth as opposed to a rough lapidary texture. The various chunks of rock are separated by gradients of light-

to-dark brown. Other areas of the painting appear to be smooth and glassy, such as the subtle blending of the cloth around St. Jerome, while still others are highly detailed, notably the faces of the saint and the lion. The artist, presumably someone without formal training, has elected to depict St. Jerome in a distinctively nineteenth-century Mexican style, forgoing the historical canon portraying a St. Jerome in the Italian-Baroque style.

Lauren Carpenter '26





## 24. Ritual Agricultural Staff and Sheath (opa orisa Oko)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Early to mid-20th century

Iron, wood, leather, beads

120 cm high

*Hope College Collection, 2018.49A-B*

*The Beaded Sheath and Ritual Staff* from the Yoruba people of Nigeria are powerful examples of the culture's exceptional craftsmanship and deep spiritual connection to nature and agriculture. These ritual objects were used in ceremonies honoring Oko, the Yoruba god of agriculture and fertility. The ritual staff combines wood, metal, and leather, the symbolic materials associated with Oko. The staff and its protective sheath embody the intersection of Yoruba beliefs and artistry.

The pieces exhibit significant signs of wear and tear, but these imperfections speak to the ritual use of these objects over time. Between the staff's coloring, the materials found in the earth, and the reused materials from cultivating the land, it is clear that each aspect connects the staff to the land and the natural world. Although the designs engraved on the staff are difficult to decipher, they appear to point toward the center where a thin, square section divides the staff into two parts. Three lines of small cone-shaped details, made from repurposed tools, emphasize the agricultural theme. The instruments of agriculture symbolically link the staff to the earth, as hoes, for example, are essential in the cultivation of crops.

The sheath forms a protective covering for the staff and preserves its spiritual power when not in use. Covering nearly the full length of the staff, the sheath is crafted from cloth, leather, and a complex design of beads, showing the Yoruba people's long tradition of beadwork. Beadwork is an important form of artistic expression in Yoruba culture, and this sheath is an exceptional example of how beads can be used not only for decorative purposes but also for their spiritual symbolism. Beadwork incorporating vibrant colors such as yellow, blue, orange, green, black, and white emphasizes status and wealth. These colors hold specific meaning in Yoruba culture, with many associated with the elements of nature, the gods, and fertility. At the top of the sheath, a flower design features a variety of colored petals, reinforcing the spiritual connection between the divine and the earth.

The body of the sheath is divided into alternating sections that combine both geometric and figural motifs. One section of the sheath shows a turtle, its shell adorned with a diamond pattern, while another section features a bird with a vibrant yellow beak and royal blue background. These creatures are symbolic of the natural world. Other sections of the sheath include a symbol of two connected diamonds leading into a smaller diamond, each point touching a circle. This symbol may represent the cycles of growth and harvest, or the interconnectedness of life. The final sections of the sheath feature a human figure in yellow, with protective gear on its legs, possibly symbolizing Oko or a farmer prepared for the task of tending the earth. Each of these sections is framed by petal-shaped, beaded fabric elements that further enhance the work's visual and symbolic complexity.

The Yoruba people traditionally practiced a polytheistic religion centered on a hierarchy of deities known as Orishas. However, in the period of the diaspora when the Benin and Yoruba peoples were enslaved in the Caribbean, and with the arrival of European missionaries to Yorubaland in the nineteenth century, the Yoruba retained elements of their traditional beliefs and developed syncretic practices that blended Christian teachings with Yoruba religion, which is manifested in the Vodou flags (cat. 13 and 25). Many Haitians who mix Christianity and Yoruba faith associate St. Isidore (cat. 40) with Oko, as both are viewed as figures to assist in agriculture and nature.

Emma Brenny '25







## 25. Papa Legba / Saint Anthony Abbot

Roland Rockville (Haitian, born 1954)

Ca. 2005

Beads and sequins on cloth

98.4 x 88.2 cm

*Hope College Collection, purchased with funds donated by Ronald '62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2024.41*

Papa Legba / St. Anthony Abbot, a vibrant contemporary piece created by Haitian artist Roland Rockville, merges two important religious figures in Haitian Vodou and European Catholicism: Papa Legba and St. Anthony Abbot. The rich color palette and thoughtful incorporation of various symbols highlight the bridge between Haitian Vodou beliefs and Catholic iconography. The textile's primary focus interprets Papa Legba, the Haitian Vodou loa (spirit) of crossroads and communication as a visual representation of St. Anthony Abbot, a prominent Catholic saint and figure often associated with healing and protection. Rockville's artistic choice to merge these two identities, as is common in Vodou practices where Catholic saints are often syncretized with African deities, speaks to the multifaceted nature of Papa Legba.

Rockville employs cloth, sequins, and beads to create a textured and visually appealing work of art. The flag's border, made from a pink silky fabric, serves as a frame that highlights the central figure of St. Anthony. While this type of piece is called a flag or "drapo" (the Haitian Creole word for flag), the terminology refers more to the function and design, than its similar appearance to a flag. They are used in ceremonies and are often carried or displayed as a way to honor and communicate with the spirits.

An elderly figure with long, white hair and beard, dressed in a red robe, gold belt with a bell-shaped pendant, and sandals stands in the center of the flag. He resembles St. Anthony Abbot, with his characteristic white hair and beard. He is depicted with a calm and assertive presence, seeming to show both wisdom and authority. St. Anthony, an Early Christian saint, sold all his possessions for and gave to the poor, and lived his life in complete devotion to God through prayer, solitude, and learning. St. Anthony, here as Papa Legba, holds a gold staff in his left hand, a standard attribute of the spirit's role as a gatekeeper between the living and the divine. The staff shows authority, and it seems to emphasize Papa Legba's role as the figure who opens the gates of communication with other spirits. In his raised right arm, he extends

an open-handed gesture. This gesture could be a symbolic invitation for those seeking spiritual guidance to approach Papa Legba, reinforcing the idea that the loa is a mediator between worlds.

Rockville's choice to dress St. Anthony Abbot in a vibrant red robe ties the figure directly to iconography associated with both St. Anthony and Papa Legba. Red is a significant color in Haitian Vodou, symbolizing vitality, strength, and the active energy of the spirit world. In Catholicism, red symbolizes passion, blood, fire, love, and martyrdom, which can be connected to the sacrifices St. Anthony made to devote his life to God. Behind Anthony, Rockville depicts a cave that links to St. Anthony who lived in an unused tomb outside the village, and St. Lazarus, whom Christ called out of a tomb. Lazarus is also associated with Papa Legba, depending on the community or family's worship practices.

The lower half of the flag displays a range of animals, each carrying symbolic significance in the Vodou tradition. A pig lying directly at Papa Legba's feet often symbolizes the earth, impurity, and sin in both Catholic and Vodou iconography. The rooster is an animal commonly used in Vodou rituals, and is associated with fertility and the cycles of life in the context of both human offspring and agricultural success. The rooster is often seen as a protector against negative energies or spirits in Vodou, just as these animals protect their flock.

Haitian Vodou, a syncretic religion combining African traditions, Roman Catholicism, and indigenous beliefs, often merges religious figures and symbols to represent complex spiritual truths. The merging of St. Anthony Abbot with Papa Legba is a powerful example of this syncretism, reflecting the flexibility and adaptability of Vodou practices.

Emma Brenny '25





38/96

SADAO WATANABE 1997

## 26. The Raising of Lazarus

Sadao Watanabe (Japanese, 1913-1996)

1977

Stencil print

65.1 x 57.1 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of Lavina "Daisy" Hoogeveen, 2015.53.14*

In this 1977 stencil print by Sadao Watanabe depicting the New Testament Lazarus story, the viewer witnesses a dramatic portrayal of Lazarus's awakening. Watanabe incorporates traditional Japanese folk art called *mingei* with Biblical themes to capture this moment of sorrow turned into joy. The print beautifully captures Watanabe's unique style of expressive gestures, dynamic drapery, and blocks of highly saturated pigment. His figures display bold lines and vivid colors that emphasize the story's theophanic moment when Jesus revealed his power to raise the dead. Its bright yellow background shines through adding to the work's vibrancy, thus allowing the thick black outlines of the characters to stand out. Lazarus appears wrapped like a mummy in burial windings, while the expressions of those around him reflect a range of emotions illustrating the drama of the story.

This artwork not only illustrates a pivotal moment in the Gospel of John, but also invites viewers to contemplate themes of life, death, and forgiveness. The Raising of Lazarus depicts the final miracle of Jesus before the Passion, as recounted in the Gospel of John (John 11:1–44). According to scripture, Mary and Martha of Bethany asked Jesus to come to the aid of their brother Lazarus because he was ill. Jesus did not go at once, but went to Judea instead. Four days after Lazarus had died, upon seeing Jesus, Martha rebuked him for not coming to Lazarus's aid. Jesus replied that Lazarus will rise again, and Martha believed him. But when Jesus saw Mary weeping and she reproached him, "Jesus wept." He then asked to be taken to Lazarus's tomb, and in front of a crowd, Jesus looked to heaven and cried "Lazarus come out!" Lazarus emerged from his grave, and Jesus instructed the stunned crowd to loosen Lazarus's burial windings and let him go.

The print captures the high drama of the Gospel story. To Lazarus's right stands a figure of his sister, Martha. She wears a yellow gown, matching the yellow background. She gently places her hand on Lazarus's chest, almost as if she were sensing his heartbeat. To the left of Lazarus, three figures face Jesus and an attendant. These three women project disbelief. One

woman kneels at Jesus's feet and touches his hand. She is Mary of Bethany, the one who reproached Jesus, saying, "if you had come, my brother would not have died." The other two figures could be some in the crowd who came to comfort Martha and Mary, and who witnessed Jesus's miracle. The standing woman on the right, stretches her hand across her chest, while the middle figure's hands are pressed against her lips. Jesus, depicted to the left and identified by his halo, calls for Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Jesus's red and white robe drapes over Him and appears wrinkled under His pointing arm. The figure on the far left is praising the scene, watching Lazarus with one hand on his heart, a gesture indicating that he has witnessed Jesus as the Son of God.

Watanabe's depiction of the *Raising of Lazarus* follows the long tradition of representing the moment in the narrative when Jesus calls Lazarus out to the astonishment of the crowd. However, Watanabe tells the story through folk art traditions. This medium enhances the story's drama through the raw and expressive texture that is created by using crumpled paper and a stencil printing process known as *kappazuri*. A special paper is made from several layers of *kozo* paper that is laminated with a tanin made from unripe persimmon fruit. The paper is dried and smoke-cured. Watanabe then crumples and flattens the paper just before printing. To print the image, the artist made a separate stencil for each color, printing the lightest colors first. The key stencil forming the outlines of the image is printed last. The uneven color blocks and bold outlines emphasize the immediacy of the Gospel message.

Emma Waldvogel '26





## 27. Saint Lazare

French

19th century

Silk embroidery, mixed materials

50.8 x 55.2 cm

*Hope College Collection, purchased with funds donated by Ronald '62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2024.48*

The followers of Jesus named in the Bible became part of the community of saints because of their proximity to the Savior. Lazarus (French: Lazare) was one of the “friends of Jesus.” Jesus saved his greatest miracle for Lazarus, when he raised him from the dead. So great was the pull to venerate Biblical figures that many developed “afterlives” that took them to Europe, where they became leaders of the Church and cults developed around their remains. According to the late medieval *Golden Legend*, after Jesus’s Ascension, the Jews expelled Jesus’s followers from Judea. Roman authorities put Mary Magdalene (believed in the Middle Ages to be Mary of Bethany), along with her siblings Lazarus and Martha, on a rudderless boat to be drowned in the Mediterranean. However, they arrived safely on the southern coast of France, where Lazarus became the first bishop of Marseille. He served the first Christian community there, converted the Gauls, and was martyred. Some of his relics are purported to be interred in Marseille and the Burgundian town of Autun.

In *Saint Lazare*, the golden *rinseau* frame and original glass invite the viewer to peer into a scene depicting St. Lazare, as the bishop of Marseille. Lazarus majestically stands on a hill surrounded by water, towering over three devotees who rise up among the rushes in the lower left, their hands open in gestures of prayer. His vestments, the alb, cope, sandals, mitre, as well as the crozier in his left hand and the bible tucked under his right arm, identify Lazarus’s episcopal office. As none of these are identifying attributes, unfurling from the mast of the boat in the foreground, a banner reads “St. Lazare.” Two additional boats, each with passengers, float in the still waters of the foreground. Two trees growing on each side of the composition frame St. Lazare and focus the eye on the saint. Thick vegetation grows at the bottoms of the trees, punctuated by red and white flowers. Behind St. Lazare, low waves swell and the blue sky lowers to an orange glow on the horizon line.

Aesthetically, the image oscillates between a life-like quality and artifice. The unusual materials of silk and wool threads, sequence, paper cutouts, and lace

create a scene in which the three-dimensional *mise-en-scène* balances the work’s painterly qualities. The primary technique, *chenille*, means caterpillar in French in reference of the fuzzy effect of loosely spun wool and silk threads woven into the weft of textiles. The result appears in various textured surfaces, as can be seen in the boats, the trees and flowers framing St. Lazare, as well as the saint’s cope, mitre and crozier. Further enhancing the vestments’ life-like qualities, two white cords with tuft ends tie the lace alb which St. Lazare wears. Around the base of the trees leading into the water, loose *chenille* threads of various thickness glued in organic patterns push out from the picture plane. Contrasting with the sculptural effect of the *chenille*, the face of St. Lazare and the figures in the fore- and middle-ground are painted paper cutouts. The ground on which the saint stands and the background consists of fine silk thread, revealing its texture in the natural environment.

*Chenille* originated in France in the seventeenth century, and appeared mostly in trimming and bordering upholstery, evening gowns, luxury textile crafts, and vestments of the Church. Due to the availability of fabric scraps and surplus thread, the handicraft was soon employed for making picturesque scenes, mostly flower bouquets, portraits, and genre scenes of courting couples. Because of the importance of *chenille* in the manufacture of liturgical vestments and furnishings, it is not surprising that saints comprise a common subject in *chenille* pictures. Since *chenille* was a domestic art, a female artist likely created *Saint Lazare* (cat. 35).

Dr. Anne Heath





## 28. Saint George Slaying the Dragon

Qes Adamu Tesfaw (Ethiopian, born 1933)

1997

Paint on cloth

150 x 100 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of Neal and Elizabeth Sobania, 2018.25.4*

*Saint George Slaying the Dragon*, created by Ethiopian Orthodox priest and artist Qes Adamu Tesfaw, colorfully depicts the most widely venerated saint in Ethiopia. In the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, saints are viewed not only as sacred figures, but also as intercessors who can act on behalf of the faithful. Such images commonly appear in Ethiopian churches, where they serve as focal points for prayer and worship (cat. 11). St. George is revered as the patron saint of Ethiopia. For centuries, his image has been carried into battle as Ethiopians fended off foreign invaders.

This painting presents a distinctly Ethiopian interpretation of the European legend of St. George. It combines Biblical themes with specific references to the cultural, spiritual, and national identity of Ethiopia. The legend tells of a Christian knight who slayed a fearsome dragon to save a princess and her city. The dragon had been terrorizing the town, and when the king's daughter was chosen as the next victim, St. George arrived just in time. He battled the dragon and led it back to the town, where the people, witnessing the miracle, converted to Christianity. St. George's victory symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. Through his use of color, form, and symbolism, Qes Adamu Tesfaw paints St. George within the Ethiopian context, emphasizing his role as a divine protector and warrior.

The image centers on St. George astride a white horse, as he traditionally appears as a mounted knight. In this representation, however, Qes Adamu Tesfaw has portrayed St. George with a distinctly Ethiopian identity. Rather than traditional European armor, St. George is barefoot and clothed in brightly colored Ethiopian robes, with bold green, yellow, and red colors that reflect Ethiopia's national flag. In his right hand, St. George holds an important element of the narrative, the spear. The spear is decorated with white and blue crosses, reinforcing the Christian symbolism and linking the saint's actions to Christ's own victory over evil through the crucifixion. The presence of the crosses on the spear makes it clear that the act of slaying the dragon is with Christ's authority and power. The rearing horse, painted in bright white according to

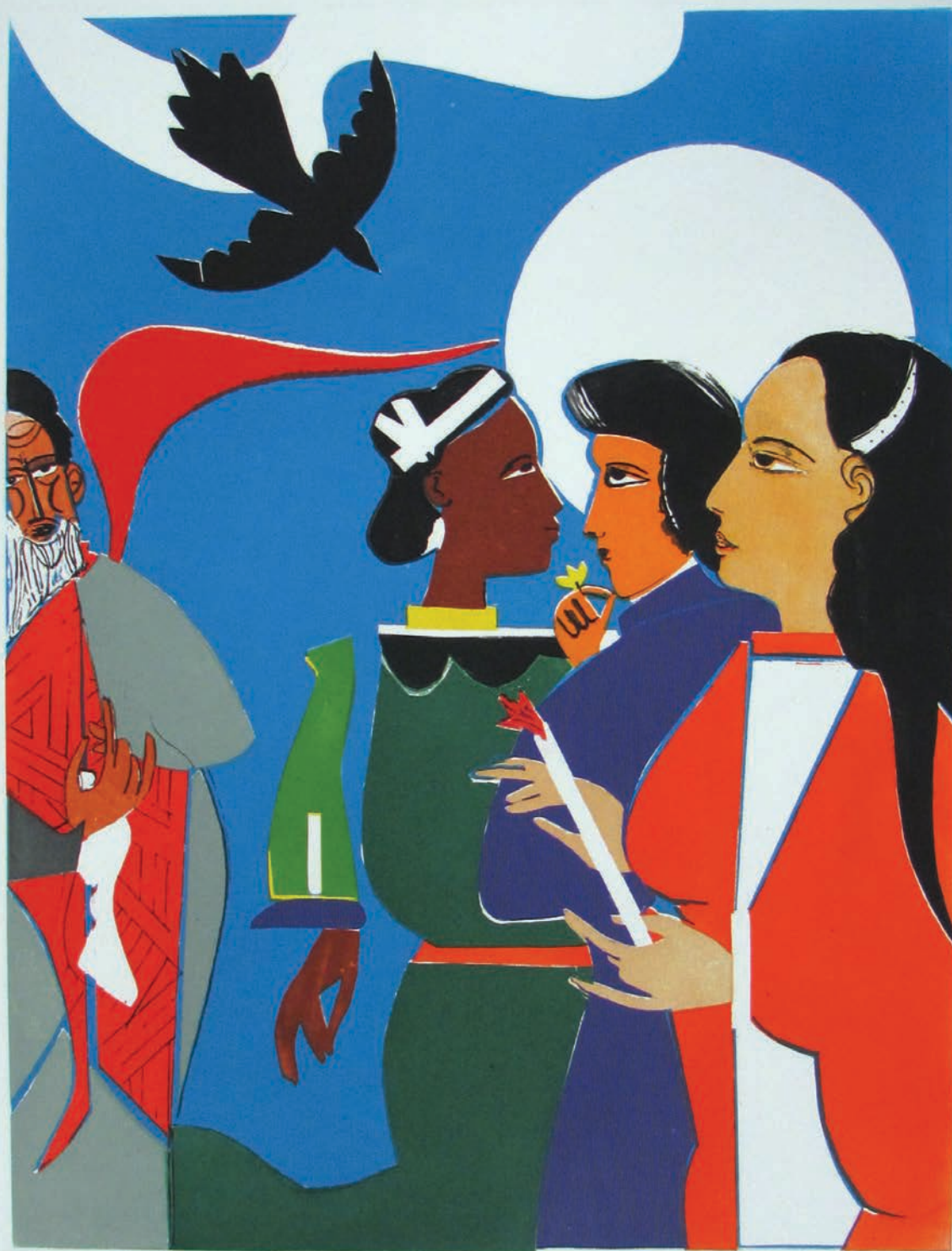
European tradition, symbolizes courage and strength. Behind St. George, a sun shape surrounds his head in red and yellow-gold, a type of halo used in many Ethiopian religious paintings. To the right of St. George, a young Ethiopian woman, referring to the princess in the legend, is tied to a tree. Her calm facial expression contrasts with the dramatic actions around her, seeming to show her trust in St. George. Departing from the European legend, three men stand to the left of St. George. These figures are dressed in similar traditional Ethiopian clothing, and are also barefoot and armed with spears. Their calm expressions and neutral stances suggest that they are symbolic witnesses to the saint's triumph, which builds on the idea that the victory is for all.

At the bottom of the painting, Qes Adamu Tesfaw painted the dragon in high detail, with scales of yellow and orange, a white underside, and St. George's spear entering the dragon's mouth. The creature represents evil; in the Christian context, it is often linked to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. This moment of victory through the spear emblazoned with crosses is a direct metaphor for Christ's ultimate triumph over sin and death through his crucifixion and resurrection.

In Ethiopia, St. George holds particular significance, and his image is often used for protection and victory, especially in times of conflict or danger. The legend of St. George, a heroic Christian martyr who slayed a dragon to save a princess, resonates with Ethiopians as a symbol of divine justice, courage, and triumph over evil. Through this painting, Qes Adamu Tesfaw captures the qualities of the saint's story but also the ideas of St. George as a protector and intercessor for the Ethiopian people.

Emma Brenny '25





3/100. Sunday morning at Avda

no more heartache

## 29. Sunday Morning at Avila

Romare Bearden (American, 1911-1988)

1981

Etching

91.4 x 76.2 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2015.51*

Romare Bearden created *Sunday Morning at Avila* in 1981. Inspired by the 1928 opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* by Virgil Thomson, with a libretto by Gertrude Stein, Bearden received a commission to create the print in celebration of the play's revival in 1981. The original opera was most notable for its all-Black cast, bringing a groundbreaking perspective to the stories of historically white saints. The 1981 revival also employed a diverse cast. Among the identifiable figures are St. Teresa of Avila, a sixteenth-century mystic saint, and St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). Other saints mentioned in the play, such as St. Plan, St. Settlement, St. Plot, and St. Chavez, blend real and imagined personas. Romare Bearden's *Sunday Morning at Avila* uses vibrant colors, abstract shapes, and symbolic imagery to reinterpret the themes of Virgil Thomson's original opera, while highlighting the diverse cultural perspectives of its 1981 revival.

The original opera debuted in 1928 in Hartford, Connecticut, as part of the celebration for the first major retrospective of Pablo Picasso's work in the United States. The production was groundbreaking not only for its avant-garde style but also for its revolutionary all-Black casting, an unusual and bold choice for opera at the time. Also contributing to the opera's unorthodox approach, Gertrude Stein, who wrote the libretto, chose to make only St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Teresa the central figures, explaining that she "liked them better than the others," as noted in the original *New York Times* review of the Opera. This decision further highlights the opera's objection to traditional expectations and its embrace of an abstract exploration of sainthood and spirituality.

Bearden's use of colors and abstract shapes is striking. The artist presents the figures' clothing, skin tones, and accessories in bold, flat tones that help to establish the characters and simplify their appearance. To the right, a woman with a dark skin tone appears layered beneath two other characters. She faces right while her body is oriented towards the viewer, wearing dark green garments accented with colorful details. The dark green of the first woman's clothing, the stark purple of the vague figure, and the bright orange and white of the second female figure all contribute to the visual distinction of each character. The angular, almost geometric structure of their limbs and facial profiles suggests a departure from naturalistic soft curves, and shifts towards abstract representation, in homage to Picasso's cubist aesthetic. The absence of excessive detail in their clothing and facial features further distills the figures' identity. In the upper left corner, a black bird flies towards the saints. Although this bird's meaning is uncertain—it could

be a raven—in *Four Saints in Three Acts* a dove plays an important role in the context of the opera's structure. The dove is a traditional Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit. In the opera, the dove is most closely associated with St. Teresa of Avila.

St. Teresa of Avila, the namesake of this print, was born into a wealthy family and entered the convent of the Carmelite nuns at age twenty. St. Teresa is renowned for her influential writings on prayer and mysticism, particularly *The Interior Castle* and *The Way of Perfection*, which explore the stages of spiritual development and emphasize the importance of contemplative prayer. St. Teresa's insights into contemplation and her profound relationship with God continue to inspire both Catholic and broader Christian spirituality today.

St. Ignatius of Loyola was a Spanish theologian and one of the most influential figures in Roman Catholicism. After being struck in the leg by a cannonball during battle in 1521, he experienced a profound spiritual transformation during his recovery. In 1534, St. Ignatius co-founded the Society of Jesus alongside a group of companions, including the renowned missionary Francis Xavier. He was canonized by Pope Gregory XIII on July 12, 1622.

Romare Bearden's early work emphasizes themes of unity and cooperation within the African American community. During his travels throughout Europe, he visited Picasso and other prominent artists, drawing inspiration from their work. Many of Bearden's abstract pieces were influenced by religious stories. In his later collages, Bearden incorporates elements of Picasso's techniques, such as innovative methods of constructing pictorial space, the use of silhouetted figures and the incorporation of African mask imagery.

In *Sunday Morning at Avila*, Romare Bearden creates a vibrant and abstract print that reflects the innovative spirit of the 1981 revival of *Four Saints in Three Acts*. It is a striking etching that pays tribute to the abstract themes and groundbreaking casting of the 1981 revival of the opera. Bearden uses his cubist style, which is greatly inspired by Picasso, through bold colors, geometric abstraction. Ultimately, Bearden's vibrant composition honors the legacy of *Four Saints in Three Acts*, capturing the spiritual essence of sainthood while reflecting the diverse cultural perspectives presented in the 1981 revival.

Gracie Allen '26





### 30. Stories from the Life of Shakyamuni Buddha

Tibetan

20th century

Ink and pigments on sized cloth

93 x 69.2 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2016.33.3*

This twentieth-century Tibetan painting on sized cloth with silk borders is a thangka painting depicting some of the Jataka tales about the lives of Shakyamuni Buddha. Jataka tales recount the previous lives of the Buddha. Before he became the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama was a prince born in Nepal, India around 560 BCE. He renounced his worldly life and began a spiritual quest to reach nirvana, a release from the cycle of death and rebirth. Despite the slight wear to the painting, the small details and Jataka tale depictions are still visible to the naked eye. Buddhist artists use specific techniques and stylistic choices to create detailed thangka paintings. These paintings originated in fourteenth-century Tibet and were intended for personal meditation and instruction. Jataka tales recount the deeds of Bodhisattvas, perfected beings who refrain from entering nirvana in order to help others reach spiritual enlightenment.

The painting's focal point centers on the largest depiction of the Buddha. This figure sits atop a red, green, and blue pedestal shaped like an open lotus flower. Two lions support the pedestal. Buddha sits in the traditional yogi pose, legs criss-crossed. He is painted in gold and wrapped in a red and gold robe that exposes his right arm and breast. His right arm reaches over his right knee, so that all five fingers extend downwards, while his left arm is bent and laid on his lap. This pose is known as the traditional *bhumisparsha mudra*, a gesture used by Buddhist artists to symbolize the moment when the prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment under the pipal tree. The Buddha's facial features include a small pursed mouth, a short wide nose, long thin eyes and thin black upturned eyebrows. His black hair twists in a bun, surrounded by connecting black dots that appear as if his hair had curly texture or were adorned in hair decorations. The Buddha's ears stand out, as they are large with long drooping lobes. A blue-green halo encircles his head. His body sits in front of a blue and dark blue striped mandala. Both halos are surrounded in a gold and swirled patterned halo; these halos are then bordered by pink clouds with animals, such as lions, elephants and snakes, as well

as anthropomorphic human figures. They wear blue robes and their black hair buns are not decorated like the Buddha's hair. The animals appear slightly abstract, as their faces take on anthropomorphic qualities of expression, and their bodies are rendered with cartoonish shape and proportions. All around this central composition appear different stories from the Jataka tales depicting the Buddha with other humans, animals, nature and clouds.

The stories positioned above the central Buddha are surrounded in white clouds; the stories beside the Buddha take place within large brown and green trees, and the stories below this Buddha include elephants, images of death and swirling blue water. The artist used techniques and stylistic choices, such as Buddha's pose, the slightly abstracted proportions and halos to visualize the Jataka. Jataka paintings are important as they were a powerful tool for communicating Buddhist tenets and philosophy to a wider public. According to the ancient Indian worldview of samsara, life is cyclical: one is reborn after death and can only be escaped through reaching nirvana, a state of enlightenment. For Buddhists, nirvana was the only way to escape endless suffering from the cycle of life. Therefore, Bodhisattvas are significant, as they delay their freedom from suffering in order to help others. This painting depicting the stories of the Bodhisattvas is intrinsic to the values of the Buddhist religion.

Ashley Keltsch '25







### 31. Stories from the Life of Christ

Lawrence Francis Sinha (Nepalese, born India ca. 1950)

Ca. 1995-2000

Ink, colored pigments and gold on sized cloth  
88.3 x 54 cm

*Hope College Collection, partial gift of Armstrong De Graaf International Fine Art, 2022.11.2*

Lawrence Francis Sinha's work, *Stories from the Life of Christ*, exemplifies the concept of syncretism laid out in this exhibition. The subject matter, the image of Christ, also speaks to the meaning of the cult of saints. Saints are models of Christian virtue, but the power manifest in them belongs only to God. Lawrence Sinha, a Christian from Nepal, married into a devout Hindu family. In order to reconcile his faith with that of his wife's family, he incorporated the thangka form of art to portray a visual representation of the gospel (cat. 30). Sinha wanted to introduce the life of Jesus to non-Christians in a way that was more approachable to them. Incorporating Christian theology with Buddhist artistic practices allowed for Sinha's art to gain traction in Nepal with tourists and the government, eventually leading to greater religious freedom in Nepal.

The focal point of the painting centers on the depiction of Christ, seated like a Buddha figure, much like the Tibetan piece *Stories from the Life of Shakyamuni Buddha* (cat. 30). Christ sits atop an open lotus flower supported by lions. Similar to the Jataka painting, Sinha's piece uses pink, orange, green, and blue colors for the lotus flower, although four lions support the pedestal instead of only two. Christ sits in the traditional yogi pose with his legs criss-crossed. He is wrapped in a mostly red and gold robe with his right arm and breast exposed. A significant difference between the Jataka painting and this Christian painting lies in the poses of the figures. Christ takes the abhaya mudra pose, where his right arm is bent and raised to shoulder level with his fingers outstretched, the palm slightly cupped, and facing the viewer. This Buddhist mudra gesture symbolizes peace and friendship, and denotes the acts of pacification, reassurance, and protection. Moreover, the Christ figure in Sinha's painting is depicted with the stigmata, wounds on his palms and middle of his feet where he was nailed to the cross during the Crucifixion. Christ's facial features reflect traditional Christian stylistic choices, where Jesus is seen with long tawny brown hair, a beard, pale white skin, a long straight nose, full lips, round brown eyes and soft downturned eyebrows. Christ's

head is encircled by a pink halo and his body is surrounded by a dark blue and gold striped halo. Both halos are encompassed by a gold and swirling-pattern mandala. These halos are then circumscribed by blue clouds with animals, such as lions, elephants and snakes, and human beings. The animals are slightly abstracted as their faces take on anthropomorphic qualities of expression and their bodies are soft and rounded with proportions parallel to Buddhist stylistic techniques seen in the Jataka painting. These figures in the blue cloud halo have dark brown skin, they lack beards, and their robes fully cover their arms and chests. All around this large central Christ figure, different stories depict the stories of Jesus's life found in the Bible, such as the Raising of Lazarus at the very bottom of the painting.

The painting is laid in the middle of a red cloth banner with an inch-wide yellow border around the edges and a yellow cloth that can fold over the top to cover the painting. This covering functions as a veil when the image is not in use and protects the painting whenever it is rolled up for storing. Paintings like Sinha's are used for worship, so when not actively aiding someone in worship they are covered with the cloth "curtain" to continue to preserve the sanctity of the painting.

Ashley Keltsch '25





## 32. The Death of the Virgin

Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606-1669)  
1639; this impression 17th-18th century  
Etching and drypoint  
40.6 x 31.4 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of Dr. J. William Thomas and Dr. Carolyn P. Thomas, 2018.40*

Rembrandt van Rijn's *The Death of the Virgin*, created in 1639, embodies the Baroque period's spiritual and dramatic style. The print captures the sorrow surrounding the Virgin Mary's death. At the heart of the composition lies the Virgin on her deathbed. Mourners encircle her, including a figure in bishop's vestments and another figure holding a tall staff and reaching above the bed. Celestial figures hover in the clouds above, symbolizing Mary's impending Ascension.

The etching embodies the Baroque period's emphasis on dramatic contrasts, emotional intensity, and spiritual devotion. Although Rembrandt could have followed the Counter-Reformation tradition of portraying the Virgin's death as a grand ecclesiastical ceremony, he instead created a rather intimate scene. Mary lies quietly surrendered to death, with a figure, perhaps Peter, gently adjusting her pillow as a doctor calmly checks her pulse. Rembrandt's religious works often feature male figures in turbans, a motif more prominent in his etchings than in his paintings. Rembrandt may have taken inspiration for *The Death of the Virgin* from Albrecht Dürer's *The Birth of the Virgin*, as Rembrandt's practice of referencing earlier works of art while infusing his innovative style is well known.

Visual cues guide the viewer's gaze through Rembrandt's composition. His use of light, composition, and symbolism reinforces the sacred nature of Mary's final moments, evoking reverence and faith in the viewer. The bright area behind Mary's bed first draws the eye; then, the gaze moves across the mourners, finally resting upon the large open book in the foreground. The path of the staff leads the eye upward toward the angelic figures in the clouds. Lighting, one of Rembrandt's most effective tools, enhances the work's expressive power by softly illuminating Mary's face from the upper right, while keeping the surrounding figures in the darkness. This selective lighting exalts the Virgin and suggests her transcendence, as it subtly marks her passage from the earthly world.

The story of Mary's death appears in the Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine, a thirteenth-century

text popular during a period of increased devotion to the Virgin. According to the Golden Legend, an angel visited Mary, presenting her with a palm branch from paradise and foretelling her reunion with her son in three days. Mary prayed for the Apostles to be present at her death, and though they spread themselves far and wide to preach the Gospel, they were miraculously brought back to her side. Unlike traditional depictions where Mary is youthful, Rembrandt portrays her in a distinctly human condition of frailty.

Rembrandt's signature style evolved over his career. Until 1632, he signed his works with "RH" or "RL," but later shifted to his full name, Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn. In this print, dated 1639, "Rembrandt" is etched in the lower-left corner, followed by an "F" for "fecit," Latin for "made it," signaling Rembrandt created the composition and etched the plate. While his early etchings relied solely on acid to develop lines, by 1639, he experimented with drypoint, a technique of sketching lines directly onto the copper plate, which added richness and definition to the print. *The Death of the Virgin* is one of his earliest uses of drypoint, marking what is known as the "middle period" of his etching career, a phase including many of his masterpieces. *The Death of the Virgin* aligns closely with a fourth-state of this composition, as observed by comparing it with two prints from the Museum of New Zealand. Rembrandt's revisions often involved refining composition or adjusting contrasts of light and shadow; even small changes could profoundly affect the print's emotional impact.

Rembrandt found an audience in the international art market, creating prints such as *The Death of the Virgin*, which could be widely produced and sold, unlike singular paintings. *The Death of the Virgin* highlights Rembrandt's ability to balance dramatic Baroque elements with a contemplative, intensely personal vision of faith.

Shannon Smith '26





### 33. The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception

Hispano-Philippine

17th century

Ivory

16.5 x 3.8 x 3.1 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2023.29.58*

The intricate ivory sculpture, *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*, represents the Catholic theological principle that the Virgin Mary was conceived without original sin. Miniature in size, the sculpture's proportions offer an intimate connection between the holy figure it represents and the viewer. This particular piece offers an expression of the Spanish and Filipino mixture of religious and artistic traditions when European missions and trading brought European and Asian cultures into contact. During this time, both European and Asian artistic taste highly prized ivory sculptures (cat. 4, 14, 20, and 36). *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* serves this taste in its intricate carving, fine detailing in the Virgin's hair, robes, and facial features, as well as its historical context as a devotional ivory object.

The spiral design on the base of the sculpture may represent a cloud. This would align with the Virgin's status as the "Queen of Heaven" (cat. 17). The Virgin's slight smile is gentle and peaceful, an expression that adds to her overall character of grace and tranquility. Depicted as a young girl, the Virgin's features convey innocence and purity, which are consistent with the theological understanding of her sinless conception. Her long, flowing hair, which, though worn and slightly faded, retains traces of gold gilding that once highlighted her divine radiance. The hair trails down her back, following the natural curve of her body, an effect that enhances her presence in this sculpture form. With her hands held together in a gesture of faith the Virgin takes a posture of prayer and devotion. This position, characteristic of Marian representations, emphasizes her connection to God and her role as the mother of Christ.

The ivory's color palette—subdued tones of ivory ranging from light tan to rich brown—reflects the natural beauty of the material itself, with subtle hints of the artist's gilding enhancing her divine purity. The slight discoloration and visible wear on the sculpture's surface are likely the result of centuries of handling, which only adds to its sense of history and reverence.

The carving technique demonstrates the expert skill typical of Hispano-Filipino ivory works. The artist has paid close attention to detail, sculpting the Virgin's hair, clothing, and facial features with precision. Mary wears a simple, floor-length gown, with a robe flowing around her form. The design of her attire—especially the way the fabric is meticulously carved to suggest folds and movement—speaks to the skill of the artist. The robe is arranged in a manner that appears to be in motion, with one side of the dress swirling upwards. The back of the gown creates a sense of volume and structure. The texture of the hair, the folds of the robes, and the small detailing display the fine craftsmanship that defined the ivory works produced in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period. Additionally, the use of subtle gilding, especially on the hair, enhances the Virgin's divine nature and reflects the popular techniques of the time, as gilding was prevalent in Europe.

Ivory sculptures, particularly of religious figures, were highly valued in the Spanish Philippines during the seventeenth century. The Hispano-Filipino tradition blended European Catholic iconography with local artistic practices, creating devotional works that resonated with both the spiritual and cultural life of the time. The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception was a common subject, reflecting the widespread devotion to Mary in Catholic religious life. These images were often carried by the faithful as devotional items in private prayer or displayed in household altars. The carving, gilding, and graceful representation of the Virgin is proof of the artistic flourishing of this period and the religious devotion roots. Although this belief reaches back to the Middle Ages, the Immaculate Conception only became official in the nineteenth century, as one of the four Marian dogmas of the Catholic Church. However, this theology was already widely accepted in Catholicism during the seventeenth century.

Emma Brenny '25





### 34. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Lawrence Francis Sinha (Nepalese, born India ca. 1950)

Ca. 1995-2000

Ink, colored pigments and gold on sized cloth  
88.9 x 54.6 cm

*Hope College Collection, partial gift of Armstrong De Graaf International Fine Art, 2022.11.3*

*The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary* presents a cacophony of yellow, blue, pink and green pigments in an array of vignettes of the life of the Virgin Mary. The Assumption of Mary refers to the belief that at the end of her earthly life, the Virgin Mary's body was taken up to Heaven. References to the Assumption of Mary date back to letters and sermons written in the fourth or fifth century, but in 1950 Pope Pius XII declared the Assumption an article of faith when he wrote that "she [the Virgin Mary] was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." Sinha depicts the moment after Mary's earthly death (cat. 32) when she is assumed into Heaven. He places the Virgin in swirling clouds set in a landscape dotted with trees, tufts of grass, and emerging circular pink flowers that burst from palm branches. The blue clouds, inspired by Chinese scroll painting, are painted in highly saturated blue framed by the white painting. The pattern of line work within the clouds evokes swelling waves, which in turn recalls the one of the titles of the Virgin Mary, *Stella Maris*, or Our Lady Star of the Sea. This title refers to Mary as the "guiding star" to Christ, which is the theme of this painting. The red hills of the landscape lead to a blue Himalayan mountain range that blends into a cloudy sky. There, the Ascension of Christ appears as a sun in the sky with rays of golding beaming him into heaven in a golden swirling cloud. Utilizing the style of Hindu paintings, Sinha renders the figures in these scenes with minimal brushstrokes and a variety of colored cloaks and tunics.

The difference in scale between Christ and the Virgin Mary cements her as the main event of the painting. She is front and center, as she is assumed into heaven by a gradient-filled triangle of bright orange melding into golden yellow. She holds a soft, passive expression and stretches her hands towards the scenes below her. Her skin is fair and her eyes are blue. A peak of red hair can be seen below a white veil that wraps around her blue cloak and red-orange tunic. The garments are decorated with gold circular patterns that mimic the yellow halo behind her and

emphasize the circle of narratives radiating around her.

The floating scenes surrounding the center figure of the Virgin depict moments within the Biblical canon that are related to the Virgin's role in the life of Christ, namely her role in the Incarnation and Jesus's human nature, as well as her role as a compassionate, motherly intercessor. As in the case of *Stories from the Life of Christ* (cat. 31), Sinha did not arrange the scenes in chronological order, so as to emphasize these theological points. For example, in the top left corner of the composition, the Annunciation appears next to the Ascension of Christ. The first scene marks the beginning of the God manifested in human form, and the latter represents the fulfillment of Jesus's earthly life. Similarly, the redemptive crucified Christ looks down on the scene of Cain killing Abel in the bottom right. Curiously, the Nativity scene is not separated by a cloud, but blends into the natural landscape. A doting Virgin Mary can be seen not far from the naked Adam and Eve standing behind bushes facing the viewer, a reference to the Incarnation redeeming humanity's original sin.

Sophia Funston '25





### 35. Reliquary with Relics of Seven Saints

Italian

1799

Pigments on vellum, silver, gold leaf, paper, velvet, organic material

9.8 x 9.8 x 1.9 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2017.46*

*The Reliquary with Relics of Seven Saints* is a circular reliquary containing the relics of seven saints: The Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Cassian of Imola (d. 363), St. James Intercisus (d. 421), St. Peter Chrysologus (d. 450), St. Anthony of Padua (d. 1231), St. Aloysius Gonzaga (d. 1591) and St. Paschal Baylon (d. 1592). The top of the reliquary encases a stippled painting on vellum depicting five of the saints, who are placed within an ethereal setting of velvety clouds made from small marks of pinks, creams, and grays. The Blessed Virgin Mary presides over the top of the composition. She wears a blue robe with long pink sleeves and an ivory veil flowing behind her. The fabric appears as wings as the Virgin floats down from heaven to welcome the saints below her. Her fair skin made from pink pigments and delicate lines show her peaceful expression.

The gathering of saints invites the viewer's eye to move in a spiral motion from the center palm leaf to St. Peter Chrysologus, who holds a book and quill and looks towards the viewer. Then the eye follows his left arm to St. Cassian of Imola's gaze up to the Virgin's cloak, and back down to her left hand and St. James Intercisus, before following the lily in St. Anthony Padua's hand back towards the Virgin. This circular shape of the reliquary enhances the viewing experience and compliments the reliquary's interior where the remains of six saints encircle a relic from the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On the reliquary's underside the relics of the above saints appear as if in a celestial garden. Each relic is affixed upon a white diamond that is encircled by gold folded as a fan. At the top of each circle inscriptions identify the saint's name. The circles' bottoms are decorated with intricate flower patterns of gold, pink, blue, and green stones. The Virgin Mary's relic is surrounded by a halo of green jewels and white petals. Swirling gold flowers, decorated with jewels and white petals atop a deep rose red fabric filled the space between the relics. The floral ornamentations and radial symmetry is evocative of a garden. The Blessed

Virgin Mary, high in the clouds, occupies half of the tableau. The in-aria composition refers to the iconographic type called a *sacra conversazione*, or "holy conversation," in which an enthroned Virgin presides over a convening of a group of saints. The genre of *sacra conversazione* painting developed in Italy in the Renaissance period. The saints who gather around the Virgin usually reflect a particular connection, such a common civic patronage. As a group, the figures represent the community of saints in heaven. The attributes identify each of the saints (left to right): St. Anthony of Padua by his friar habit and white lily symbolizing virginity; St. Cassian of Imola by the martyr palm and the building possibly referencing the Comacchio Cathedral dedicated to him; St. Peter Chrysologus by the book he holds and the pallium he wears; and St. James Intercisus by his martyr palm, the scars on his body and the ax over his shoulder referencing his execution.

Compared to the larger sized reliquaries typically found in churches, this reliquary is a small devotional object meant to be kept in the domestic space. While the top of the reliquary displays the distinctly Italian *sacra conversazione*, the interior arrangement of the relics within a celestial garden, has precedents in late medieval artwork of the Low Countries depicting Enclosed Gardens. Referring to the motif in the Song of Solomon, medieval theologians interpreted the enclosed garden as presaging Mary's Virginity and the mystery of the Incarnation. Enclosed gardens appear in painting, as well as in three-dimensional works, such as small wonder-cabinets that feature small mixed-media assemblages of pearls, papier-mâché, paper rolls, wax seals, embroidery and other textile handwork. The resulting aesthetic was highly tactile, verdant gardens in an array of colors and textures. This style of enclosed gardens is attributed to feminine craft, specifically paper quilling which entails delicate folding and rolling of paper to create intricate three-dimensional designs. The garden motif found in the *Reliquary with Relics of Seven Saints* also appears in reliquaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Scholars attribute these types of reliquaries to cloistered nuns, which aligns with this piece's size and illuminates its possible function as a personal devotional object. One can imagine how the *Reliquary with Relics of Seven Saints* may have fit into the spiritual devotions of nuns, or as monastic devotions were integrated into lay devotions (cat. 7), the object may have been a precious object of daily devotion or a memento of a pilgrimage taken to Italy.

Sophia Funston '25





### 36. Saint Anthony of Padua

Hispano-Philippine

19th century

Ivory

30.5 x 10.2 x 8.9 cm

*Hope College Collection, gift of David Kamansky and  
Gerald Wheaton, 2023.29.61*

This small ivory sculpture beautifully represents St. Anthony of Padua and his major identifying attributes. The Italian saint's left hand holds a thick book, on the top of which stands the Christ Child. The nude infant Jesus carries an apple, while his right arm raises to show the sign of the Trinity with a gesture of three extended fingers. St. Anthony wears a simple robe tied with a cord wrapped around his body, identifying him as a Franciscan monk. His tonsure, shaved hair around the crown of his head, further signals his membership in the Franciscan order. According to his vita, St. Anthony possessed extensive knowledge of scripture and theology. The large book he holds is a visual representation of his wisdom. The Christ Child symbolizes a vision in which St. Anthony saw the infant deep in prayer. Holding the Child portrays his devotion to the humanity of Christ and his connection to God. In addition to these symbols, it is possible that St. Anthony of Padua once held a lily flower symbolizing purity in his right hand. Two fingers on his hand have broken off and additional damage to his hand indicates that he could have been holding a long lily stem.

Shortly after St. Anthony joined the Franciscan order in 1222, he was asked at the last minute to deliver a simple sermon that others in the order had declined to give. The local crowd was thoroughly impressed by his passion and knowledge of scripture. As a result of his powerful sermon, St. Anthony was assigned to preach in northern Italy. According to legend, when his congregation was not willing to listen to St. Anthony, he preached to a school of fish instead, which responded to the saint's sacred words. St. Anthony's immense influence on the Church continued for the rest of his short life; he was canonized a year after his death in 1232. Hundreds of years after his death, St. Anthony was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1946 by Pope Pius XII for his theological knowledge and missionary work.

Similarly to the sculpture of Saint Sebastian (cat. 4) this piece is also Hispano-Filipino from the nineteenth century. Both pieces are carved from ivory, but this example is significantly browner and many cracks have appeared within the grain of the ivory. The

artist used the grain of the ivory to follow the folds of the robe displaying a great understanding of the material. Although both sculptures are from the same time period, this sculpture of Saint Anthony of Padua appears to have suffered more wear from use and time.

Signe Bieganski '27





### 37. San Ramon Nonnato Retablo Painting

Mexican

Late 19th century

Oil paint on tin

25.4 x 17.2 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.38*

This nineteenth-century Spanish Colonial oil painting on tin celebrates San Ramon Nonnatus as a cardinal and preacher. Meant for domestic spaces, retablo paintings were accessible to devotees due to the availability and affordability of tin, referred to as “poor man’s silver.” Retablo paintings have two traditions, *ex-voto* and *santos*. The *San Ramon Nonnato Retablo Painting* represents the *santos* type, which is an adaptation of the European tradition of depicting saints. The background is minimal and adheres to the iconographic conventions. There is no narrative in this painting; the main subject is the veneration of San Ramon Nonnatus.

The vertical composition shows St. Ramon Nonnato as the singular figure in this retablo painting. St. Ramon Nonnato appears before a darkened sky in front of billowing clouds made from layers of ocean blue and several layers of deep steel grays and wispy marks of light gray pigments. The shadowy nature of the setting alludes to a twilight scene, signifying the presence of a celestial realm. The saint stands on the ground surrounded by accents of a golden yellow green erupting around his feet signifying earthly life. The juxtaposition of these two realms place St. Raymond Nonnatus as the bridge between the devotee and the promise of heaven.

The viewer’s focus immediately goes to St. Raymond Nonnatus oval eyes that look onward and are set deep within his round cheeks, where one notices a light that appears to emanate. St. Raymond Nonnatus wears a cardinal’s scarlet mozzetta over the Mercedarian Habit, which casts a pink glow to the sides of his face and beard. The black rosary hanging from his left hip is composed of only black dots which hang over his habit which is made by layering gray brushstrokes. St. Raymond Nonnatus holds a monstrance (a container for the consecrated Host) which signifies his role as priest. He is classified as a martyr and is depicted with a triple crown martyr palm. The triple crown references the Aureola Crowns that signify virginity, martyrdom and learning. A set of markings on the right of his habit signals the coat of arms of the Mercedarian Order.

San Ramon Nonnatus was a thirteenth-century Spanish saint, born via cesarean delivery after his mother died, hence the name *Nonnatus*, meaning “not born.” San Ramon Nonnatus lived a life of piety and took the habit of the thirteenth-century medicant Mercedarian Order, known as the Royal, Celestial and Military Order of Our Lady of Mercy and the Redemption of the Captives. In Algiers, San Ramon Nonnatus liberated slaves and gave himself as ransom. According to his vita, while in captivity, captors placed a padlock around San Ramon Nonnatus’s lips to keep him from crying out to pray and preaching to the captives. He was tortured, sentenced to death by impalement. San Ramon Nonnatus is commonly painted with a padlock around his lips and surrounded by enslaved people, but this is not the case in this painting. He was appointed Cardinal of the Church of San Eustaquio by Gregory IX. Before he was able to make it to Rome he succumbed to his injuries dying in Cardona, Spain and was buried in the chapel of St. Nicholas.

This loose style of painting, made with indigenous pigments became popular vessels of veneration. It transformed the static and hierarchical iconography of European portraits that came through Spanish missionary work into a celebration of divinity and the personal relationship one can have with the divine. San Ramon Nonnatus comes to life in this retablo as an invitation to worship and act as an active participant not a looming authority.

Sophia Funston ‘25





### 38. Saint Michael the Archangel Retablo Painting

Mexican

Late 19th century

Oil paint on tin

25.4 x 17.8 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2019.43.1*

The *Saint Michael the Archangel Retablo Painting* depicts St. Michael triumphantly standing over the devil. Created by an unknown Mexican artist in the nineteenth-century, this oil painting on tin was likely intended for display in a church or home. The image serves as a powerful reminder of courage and the victory over evil.

The composition features two central figures: St. Michael and the devil positioned on a brown hill against a dark background. St. Michael appears in vibrant clothing; his green and yellow pants expose his legs, while flowing fabric trails behind him. His shirt transitions from red at the bottom to black at the top, decorated with yellow vertical and horizontal stripes and stars. A red circle on one side represents the sun, while a white circle on the other symbolizes the moon. A flowing red cape drapes over his shoulder, and atop his head sits a black helmet adorned with yellow stripes and featuring a striking red feather that matches his cape. The most distinguishing feature of St. Michael is his pair of angelic wings, signifying his archangel status. He wields a sword in one hand and holds a scale in the other, demonstrating his role in the Last Judgment. The devil, depicted beneath St. Michael, is less detailed, characterized by horns and a tail.

Retablo paintings are devotional artworks typically created on wooden panels or, as in this case, tin. Commonly found in churches and homes around Latin America, Mexico specifically, these vibrant paintings express faith and often reflect a blend of indigenous and European artistic traditions. They hold significant cultural and spiritual value, frequently commemorating specific events or personal dedications. Notably, holes punch through the painting's support indicate it hung on a wall. One hole is positioned directly on the devil, reinforcing the theme of triumph. Retablos were frequently painted on tin due to the metal's affordability and the abundant mining of tin in Central America. These artworks often utilize indigenous pigments, resulting in dark, somber colors. During the Mexican Revolution, retablos emerged as a form of artistic

expression reflecting national identity. This particular retablo is a *santos*, meaning it represents an image of a saint. Inheriting the tradition of European depictions of saints, *santos* retablos typically exhibit a rigid style and follow established iconographic conventions, showcasing the saint's attributes. In the case of St. Michael, he is depicted as a champion and guardian, and holding his tes of a sword and scale.

In Roman Catholic tradition, St. Michael holds a revered position as a protector and warrior, known for his defeat of Satan and symbolizing courage, protection, and divine intervention. He appears in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. His name means "Who is like to God?" In times when a wondrous power is needed, Michael is sent. In the Book of Daniel, Michael stands to protect and defend the elect. He fought with the dragon and his angels, expelling them from heaven. Michael is also known for receiving the souls of the saints and leading them into paradise.

St. Michael's miracles became known in Mexico during the seventeenth century. According to tradition, he appeared three times to a boy named Diego Lazarus. The first encounter occurred on April 25, 1631, in the village of San Barnabas Capula. St. Michael instructed Diego to tell the villagers that a spring of miraculous water would be discovered in a valley between two hills in the area. The boy did not believe St. Michael, but soon after, Diego became ill and the archangel appeared to him again surrounded by bright light. The third appearance, Diego collected water from the fountain and sent it to the local bishop, who then distributed it to a number of sick people. Everyone who drank the water was miraculously healed. The story of Diego and St. Michael the Archangel is well known through the state of Tlaxcala in Mexico. Stories like these have made St. Michael popular throughout Mexico.

Gracie Allen '26





### 39. Mary Mother of Sorrows Retablo Painting

Mexican

Late 19th century

Oil paint on tin

25.4 x 17.8 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2019.43.2*

Artists often choose to use certain formal strategies to evoke specific meaning in their paintings. The nineteenth-century Mexican oil on tin painting, *Mary Mother of Sorrows Retablo Painting*, includes formal elements specifically used in paintings depicting the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Sorrows. The piece showcases the Virgin Mary in a half-length portrait. She is dressed in a red tunic with a dark blue and white lined cover over her head and shoulders. Her head turns to her right and her hands clasp in front of her chest. Her facial features include a soft undefined chin and jaw, large brown doe eyes, thin brown downturned eyebrows, a long sharp nose, and small pink lips. The Virgin Mary is painted realistically, but seems not fully rendered, as her skin and features are softened and undefined. The dark brownish red background of the painting includes no details, but almost matches her tunic. On her right side, faint and faded iris vines climb up the side of the painting's edge. In the foreground appears a light wooden beam, perhaps part of a window sill, with three nails protruding from the beam. A vine weaves between the three nails. Additionally, a single sword pierces her left side. No visible wound or blood appears around the sword. The three nails, as well as the sword, are iconographic elements seen in many renditions of the Mother of Sorrows. Both the nails and the sword are references to certain moments in Mary's life. The nails represent Jesus's crucifixion. The number three, in addition to the two piercing his hands and one on his feet, may be a reference to the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Lastly the sword, while not seen in every version of the Mother of Sorrows, is indicative of the seven sorrows of Mary. Usually seven swords protrude from Mary's heart.

While there are many retablos of the Mother of Sorrows that depict seven swords protruding from Mary's heart, the Bible verse on which this concept is based only discusses one sword. In Luke, Simeon's prophecy is recounted where he tells Mary that "a sword will pierce through your own soul" (Luke 2:35). Some images of the Mother of Sorrows may include seven swords to represent the seven different sorrows; however, the single sword is a direct reference to the prophecy that

indicates the many sorrows that Mary would experience in accompanying her Son on his mission from God. The seven sorrows represent several verses across the Gospels of Luke, Matthew, and John. They include the prophecy of Simeon, the Flight into Egypt, losing the Christ Child for three days, Mary meeting Jesus on his way to the Crucifixion, the Crucifixion and death of Jesus, the Deposition (Jesus's body being removed from the cross), and Jesus' burial. The name of and images of Our Lady of Sorrows are meant to honor the pains and trials Mary lived through.

The painting shows signs of age and use. For example, a hole for hanging the painting punctures the top of the tin and a scratch and water spot mark the top right corner. The tin has begun to rust, making the paint bubble up in spots and causing the paint on the bottom of the piece to become discolored and flake. While the paint is quite faded in color, the brushstrokes from the artist are still visible and the white highlights are still bright and obvious.

Ashley Keltsch '25





## 40. Saint Isidore Retablo Painting

Mexican

Late 19th century

Oil paint on tin

35.6 x 25.4 cm

Hope College Collection, 2024.46

This work represents a customary depiction of the St. Isidore visual tradition, translated into the form of a Mexican retablo. St. Isidore the Farmer, né Isidore Merlo Quintana, was born circa 1082 CE in Madrid, Castile (now part of Spain). His cult, however, eventually formed a powerful following in “New Spain.” For example, the Festival of St. Isidore in Metepec, Mexico occurs each year on May 15 for farmers to honor and request the saint’s benevolence in agriculture, while in Acapantzingo, ritual dances accompany a planting festival.

Since the eighteenth century, Mexican retablos paintings have primarily been defined as objects and conduits for religious devotion. Retablos combine existing European depictions of saints with “New World” interpretations and mediums, but these paintings were not commissioned by the Church, but rather by individual lay devotees. This St. Isidore retablo reaffirms this assertion by showing St. Isidore as a devout peasant in his traditional hagiographic setting.

Seen here kneeling in a field, St. Isidore spent his life as a day laborer and is hence the patron saint of farmers and livestock. Recalling the origins of his cult, St. Isidore wears typical medieval Spanish attire. The artist depicted on his torso a light brown *cota* or *saya*, a traditional outer garment that medieval day laborers wore for its versatility and looseness. A scalloped lace collar and white cuffs trim the openings and offer an artistically exaggerated elegance; small gold accents trace the hem, pockets, and climbing buttons. On his legs, Isidore wears royal blue pants known as *bragas*, covered by long stockings called *calzas*, which historically could be worn to the knee or to the heels. On his feet, the saint wears sturdy black boots suitable for his work in the fields and holds a staff, which according to legend, brought forth a spring of water from the ground when struck. Finally, Isidore turns his face towards the heavens in the upper right-hand corner. A thin beard and long curly hair frame his face.

The artist of this retablo includes elements from St. Isidore’s hagiography by following the established

European visual tradition. To the saint’s left, a quaint Spanish chapel stands with a clanging bell tower. This was added not for dimensional accuracy or compositional interest, but to remind the viewer of St. Isidore’s devotion to the Catholic Mass. Additionally, at the bottom right, a small angel plows the field in classical Greco-Roman robes. Formed from tiny brushstrokes, he steers a pair of oxen through the rows of farmland, just as the angel in St. Isidore’s hagiography assisted the day laborer in his toils. A row of flowers dances before distant mountains just behind Isidore, and the sky above is moody and gray, ornamented with a flock of birds and a singular cloud with a wispy tornado snaking out the bottom.

Each detail of this Mexican retablo is painted not for artistic interest but for theological purposes and devotional aid. Mexican retablos stemmed from the tradition of the *retro tabula*, meaning behind the altar, but have since taken upon an intimate role outside of the official Church building and liturgy. Separated into categories of *ex-voto* and *santo*, the paintings portray either personal stories of divine intervention or more traditional, formal depictions. This retablo fits within the second division of *santos*, as it imitates established practices of icon painting. It functions as a visual portal into the practice of reverential prayers for intercession and the hagiographical elements aid the devotee in this veneration. The retablo of St. Isidore is not painted in the way of a Renaissance masterpiece, rather its significance lies in its ability to serve the faithful and promote the legacy of a modest Spanish day laborer.

Mariam Tiews ‘25





## 41. Saint Cajetan Retablo Painting

Mexican

Late 19th century

Oil paint on canvas

43.8 x 25.4 cm

Hope College Collection, 2024.47

Following the tradition of Christian icons (cat. 9), St. Cajetan is the visual and theological focus of this Mexican *santos* retablo. Gaetano dei Conti di Thiene, or Cajetan, was born in Vicenza, Italy on October 1, 1480, and died on August 7, 1547, which is now celebrated as his feast day. St. Cajetan's life as a pious individual seems almost predestined; his parents dedicated him at birth to the Blessed Lady Mary, which solidified a life within the Church, one which Cajetan never abandoned. He is traditionally venerated as both a wise teacher and Church leader. After receiving a doctorate in ecclesiastical and civil law, St. Cajetan advocated for church reform. This call for renewal resulted in the formation of the Theatine Order, the first community of Regular Clerks primarily focused on sacred ministry and charitable work. Cajetan led by example, spending his fortune building hospitals and devoting himself to the plague-stricken and the poor. He is accordingly venerated as the patron saint of luck for his assistance to those in need.

In this painting, St. Cajetan stands centered beneath a wooden cross. His black clerical garb flows in the wind as he thoughtfully ponders toward the heavens. The high-collar habit of the Theatines identifies St. Cajetan's affiliation with the order. A gold belt and ornate rosary accent the ensemble and complement the details gilded on the bottom of the sleeves and garment. Adorning his facial features of Spanish descent, a halo signifies the saint's holiness. In one hand, St. Cajetan holds a branch of flowering lilies, his chief pictorial attribute, while the other clutches to his chest in supplication. Behind him stands a wooden cross bearing a crown of thorns on one side of the crossbar, and a floral wreath on the other. This cross represents St. Cajetan's mystical vision of the Cross which revealed to him the path to Church reform, but was also understood as a call to bear the Cross alongside Jesus. Thus, the Theatine adopted the Cross with the flowering wreath signifying the resurrection of Christ as the symbol of their order. Enveloping this scene, wispy clouds rise up beneath St. Cajetan and lead him into a celestial, blue sky. En masse, the effect of each detail conjures an understanding of the virtuous nature of St. Cajetan.

In their very conception and nature, retablos are made to be aesthetic visualizations of the needs and desires of believers. In fact, devotion is a primary characteristic of retablo paintings, thereby prompting scholars to depict the saints according to their visual tradition and accompanied by attributes that refer to their holy deeds. In the case of the St. Cajetan retablo, his hagiographical elements, most prominently the Cross, prompt a believer to also desire such an inspiring life.

Mariam Tiews '25





## 42. San Simón/Maximón

Diego Canal (Guatemalan, died 2023)

Ca. 2022

Wood, paint, textiles, mixed media

50.8 x 27.9 x 38.1 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.43*

The carved wooden *San Simón* may at first be confusing to the unaccustomed eye. With an ill-fitting outfit, a hat made of paper, and eyelashes that curl in a dainty fashion, *San Simón* nonetheless radiates a measure of otherworldliness. Each detail of this compelling figure, most notably his face, plays a role in his persona. Carved from wood, his countenance is permanently lacquered onto his rosy-pink skin. A black slanted handlebar mustache frames his mouth to match a jet-black head of hair and prominent eyebrows. The effect is such that even those who have never encountered the indigenous Guatemalan folk saint feel a force of energy.

*San Simón* serves as an example of syncretism in the sense of a cultural mediation between colonizing Spain and Indigenous Mexico. San Simón, also called Maximón, is a folk saint and patron of everything from tobacco, alcohol, and tricks, to fertility, sexuality and illness. Uncertainty surrounds his origins, demonstrated by a multiplicity of identities and names. The ambiguity of San Simón's status allows for alternative, non-Western histories to endure. His title as a folk saint references the Catholic Church's rejection of San Simón as an official, canonized saint. Yet to traditionalist Tz'utujils, a sect of Mayan Indigenous people in Guatemala, the ambiguity surrounding Simón's status and biography is his appeal. Since its arrival in Central America, Catholicism has not altogether been accepted in Guatemala. San Simón—or Laj Mam, Ximón, Moncho, Maximón, or even Judas Iscariot—represents both the destruction of the original native religion and the traditions that remain through the syncretistic process. Even the popular feast day of San Simón, October 28, acts in direct response and protest to St. Jude of Thaddeus, whose feast day is celebrated on the same day.

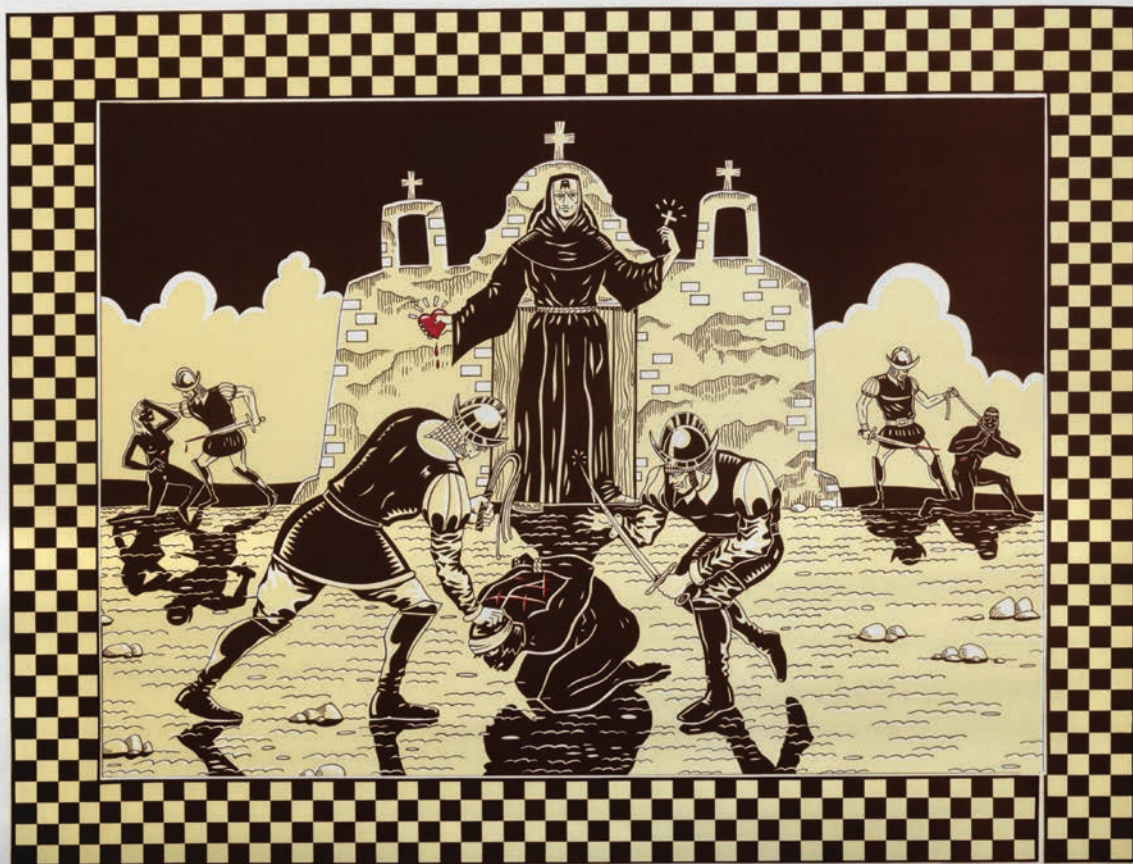
To supplicate to the *San Simón* sculpture, one must alleviate his vices and give offerings that include money, cigars, liquor, tortillas, as well as more traditional alms such as candles and incense. Upon seeing his face, a viewer might assume *San Simón* expresses a state of surprise because his mouth appears to hang open from shock. This, however, would be an assumption based on incomplete evidence, as most often, San

Simón holds a cigar between his teeth. Such gifts increase in volume on San Simón's feast day, when all sorts of celebrations occur that themselves are syncretistic in their interchange between indigenous and Catholic traditions. In exchange for these and prayers, San Simón performs miracles granting both pure and immoral wishes.

In synergy with San Simón's role and reputation as a folk saint, the making of this figure is a product of grassroots workmanship. Yet, this is not to say that there was not an immense amount of care bestowed on the creation of this sculpture. Neither a relic nor a traditional museum piece, this sculpture exists as a pivotal part of an ongoing, dynamic, and consistently changing tradition. Popular religion in Central America is often defined as a vibrant and vivacious expression of devotion to the cult of saints that is not limited to the official guidance of the Catholic Church. San Simón is a perfect example and embodiment of that tension. Certainly, the ideology of the cult of saints, whether officially canonized by the Church or not, assures a vested interest and steadfastness on the part of devotees that is applied to all manifestations of saintly individuals. This may look different for San Simón than for traditional saints, but the fundamental reverence remains. The folk saint symbolizes not only an avenue in which humanity can plead for perhaps the less righteous of desires, but he also epitomizes a spiritual, cultural, and historical group of people who wish to find significance outside of the colonizing religion.

Mariam Tiews '25





XVI / x x

"SANTS AND SINNERS"

DIEGO ROMERO 17

### 43. Saints and Sinners

Diego Romero (American, born 1964)

2017

Lithograph

70 x 77.5 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.49*

The Spanish colonization and evangelism of California resulted in the brutal treatment of Native Americans. Moreover, the recent canonization of one of the main priests involved in this missionary work has sparked controversy. Diego Romero, a Pueblo Native American, created this three-color lithograph to express his views on the events depicted in the print. In the image, a Catholic priest looms over the hierarchical composition that centers on him. With his left hand, he grips a small cross, and with his right, he clutches a dripping red scalloped heart symbol. His ruthless facial expression reveals no sympathy or pity. Surrounding him, soldiers brutally beat three Native Americans. The woman to the left and the man on the right suffer from small red stab wounds, while the man kneeling in the center bears the brunt of the cruelty. Red slashes from the soldiers' whip and sword incise a messy latticework on his back. In the background stands a small mission capped with three small arches adorned with simple crosses and a wooden door. The cross on the center cupula hovers over the priest's head.

The priest at the center of this print represents Junipero Serra, known as the "Apostle of California" and "The Father of the California Missions." In 1749, Serra left Spain with the Franciscans to improve existing missionaries established in Mexico City and found new missionaries on the frontier of the American Southwest. Serra continued this work for eighteen years. He was then appointed the president of the missions of the Californias. In his effort to convert the indigenous people, Serra received pushback from those who did not want to convert. Serra responded with brutality towards the tribes in California and resorted to using whatever means necessary to get them to cooperate. Conversion was forced upon the indigenous people, and they had no choice in the matter. Under the so-called protection of the Spanish king, Franciscan monks tortured and sometimes killed those who tried to escape the mission or refused Christianity.

To emphasize Serra's approach to conversion, in *Saints and Sinners* Romero utilized small areas of red ink to enhance the print's disturbing tone and connect Serra to this brutality. In his hands, Serra holds two

red symbols that iconically represent love: the cross and a heart. The strategic placement of red in Serra's hands and also on the wounded people visually connects the priest to the part he played in the subjugation of the indigenous peoples of California.

In 2015, Pope Francis officially canonized Serra. This act was met with great controversy by many Native Americans. Many tribes protested against his canonization because of the brutality that many faced under Serra's command. However, some Native Americans supported Serra's canonization because he brought many tribes into the catholic faith they still practice.

In *Saints and Sinners*, Romero leaves no doubt as to his perspective on Serra's canonization. He created this piece in 2017, two years after the controversial canonization. The title he chose, *Saints and Sinners*, poses the question: Who are the saints, and who are the sinners? The Spanish colonizers saw it as their duty to "civilize" the Native Americans and force them to worship the Christian God through any means necessary. The Spanish missionaries saw themselves as saints because they believed they were doing God's work, but many native people were killed by Serra to avoid conversion.

In addition to lithograph prints, Romero specializes in ceramics and combines his love for comic books and pop culture with traditional Cochiti Pueblo ceramics. His ceramic pieces have a similar style to this lithograph where he paints narratives onto the vessels. Romero incorporates his ancestor's building method of coiling clay, but expands on it with painted imagery similar in style to *Saints and Sinners*. Romero's pieces reflect social commentary on Native politics, history, and identity.

Signe Bieganski '27





#### **44. His Excellency, the Most Reverend Fulton J. Sheen**

Harris and Ewing Photographic Studio  
(American, active 1905-1977)

1954

Gelatin silver print

25.4 x 20.3 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.58*

Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979) was a Catholic priest, theologian, and educator who served as the auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese of New York from 1951 to 1966, and as bishop of the diocese of Rochester, NY from 1966 to 1969. He also hosted a number of religious radio and television programs between the 1930s and 1960s. His most popular program was the television show *Life is Worth Living*, which ran from 1952 to 1957 and won Sheen two Emmy awards. Sheen's great contributions to the Catholic Church in America were recognized during his lifetime and after his death, and the process to have him canonized began officially in 2002. In 2012, he was elevated to the status of Venerable Servant of God by Pope Benedict XVI, and in 2019 Pope Francis approved the validity of a miracle attributed to Sheen and cleared the way for his beatification. A few months later, however, questions were raised about Sheen's handling of cases involving the sexual misconduct of Catholic priests during the 1960s and the process of his beatification was halted. Subsequent investigations by the Church and by the State of New York have not produced any evidence of error or wrongdoing on Sheen's part, but his path toward sainthood still remains in limbo.

This photographic portrait of Sheen was taken in 1954 to be used for press releases and other publicity purposes. It was taken by an unidentified photographer working for Harris and Ewing, then the largest photographic studio in the United States.

Charles Mason





MAY 2010

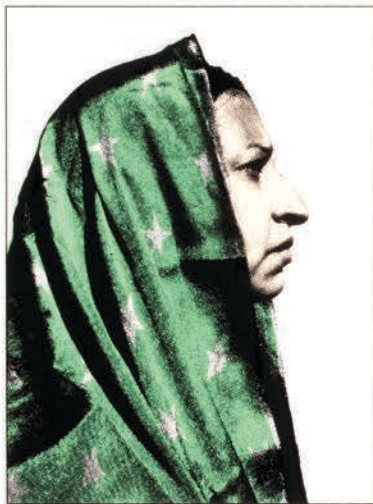
STATE OF ARIZONA  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

# WANTED

## TERRORIST

# LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE

ALIAS: Guadalupe, Reina de las Americas, Virgencita, Nuestra Madre, Tonantzin, Lupe, Lupita



#### DESCRIPTION:

Date of Birth: 12/12/1531

Place of Birth: Tepeyac, Tenochtitlan/Mexico

Height: 5'

Weight: 100 lbs.

Build: Medium

Hair: Black

Eyes: Dark Brown

Complexion: Dark Brown

Scars and Marks: Unknown

Languages: Nahuatl, Zapotec, Yaqui, Purépecha,  
Maya and Spanish

Race: Amer-Indian

Nationality: American

## SHOULD BE CONSIDERED POWERFUL AND DANGEROUS

**OCCUPATION:** Cult Leader, Human Trafficking, Terrorist.

**REMARKS:** La Virgen de Guadalupe always covers her head with a star patterned shawl and wears long rose patterned dresses. She is accompanied by a young child (possibly drugged) who wears wings and pretends he is flying.

**CRIMINAL RECORD:** For over 160 years, La Virgen de Guadalupe has accompanied countless men, women and children illegally into the USA. She has given limitless aid and comfort to unidentified suspects at the time of their death, especially in the desert areas near the U. S./Mexico border.

**CAUTION:** She has an unexplainable, possibly dangerous light emanating from her body which could contain explosive material. She is known to have a large loyal fanatic cult following.

**REWARD:** The State of Arizona is offering of up to \$500,000 for any information leading directly to the apprehension and conviction of La Virgen de Guadalupe.

IF YOU HAVE INFORMATION CONCERNING THIS PERSON, PLEASE CONTACT THE ARIZONA STATE RANGERS OR YOUR LOCAL IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (ICE) OFFICE.



© 2010 Ester Hernandez

*Janet Killemall*  
Janet Killemall, President of Arizona

## 45. Wanted

Ester Hernandez (American, b. 1944)

2010

Screenprint

76.8 x 55.9 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2019.49.2*

Ester Hernandez's *Wanted* provides a shocking commentary about the politically and religiously charged state of immigration in the United States. Using paradoxical motifs, Hernandez frames the emblematic Virgin of Guadalupe within the confines of a State of Arizona wanted poster. The figure at the center of the print first appeared in December 1531, when an Indigenous Aztec man named Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin encountered a vision of the Virgin Mary, later known as the Virgin of Guadalupe (cat. 16). This apparition attracted a large devotional following among the Indigenous people of Mexico and, in recent years, Mexican immigrants coming to the United States have carried images of the Virgin of Guadalupe as protective talismans. By translating a national, historical, and religious icon—and the mother of God—into a fugitive and public enemy, Hernandez effectively comments on the anti-immigrant and racial profiling in Arizona, Arizona Senate Bill 1070, while simultaneously representing the resilient spirit of the Mexican people.

Because of the composition's nature as a wanted notice, the piece itself is text-heavy with only two images of a modern-day Virgin of Guadalupe in the form of documentary photography. A woman with a dark brown complexion stands with a furrowed brow; she is obliged to pose for her mugshot, solidifying her identity as an outlaw. The supposed terrorist wears a green shawl patterned with silver stars—an indication of her identity as the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is never depicted without her cloak bearing a star pattern. Yet, the thick, black capitalized text draws the viewer into the composition even more than the two images. Dominating the other elements of the print, the capital letters "WANTED" set the tone in its stark, sans serif typography. Using a variant of Helvetica, Hernandez employs an easily legible text to give the pseudo-wanted poster an element of authenticity. Hernandez leaves no confusion regarding the conceptual links between immigration, terrorism and spirituality. In fact, the text warns the viewer that the Virgin of Guadalupe "SHOULD BE CONSIDERED POWERFUL AND DANGEROUS."

The paradox continues as the reader continues through the text. Playing on the sense of irony,

Hernandez assumes the audience has pre-existing knowledge of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a saint while describing her as anything but a saint. For instance, under "Caution," Hernandez writes that the Virgin of Guadalupe "has an unexplainable, possibly dangerous light emanating from her body" and is known to have a "large, loyal fanatic cult following." Here, the artist references the popular interpretation of the Virgin's full-body halo as described by Miguel Sánchez, a seventeenth-century priest from Mexico City, in his text "Woman Clothed in Sun [who is] the light of humankind." This golden mandorla can be viewed in Carmen Parra's *Virgin of Guadalupe* print (cat. 16). Finally, Hernandez authenticates the warrant with a faux "President of Arizona's" signature. The signature "Janet Killmall" acts as a double entendre by using the contemporaneous governor's name, Jan, and the fictional surname, "kill-em-all." One cannot be mistaken about the political comment made with this screen print.

This print was originally made in response to the 2010 Senate Bill 1070, signed by Arizona Governor Jan Brewer. The bill allowed the detainment of individuals suspected of being illegally in the country. Additionally, foreign nationals without proof of residency could be charged with a misdemeanor. Yet, the passage of this bill sparked a wave of controversy throughout Arizona and the United States as many suggested it would require enforcement officials to engage in racial profiling. Through the medium of screen printing, Hernandez gives her perspective on the state of immigration. Although *Wanted* does not depict the Virgin of Guadalupe in traditional visual terms—as she appeared on Juan Diego's *tilma*—Hernandez nonetheless invokes the well-known image within the viewer's mind using ironic wording and collective memory. As a result, the Virgin's enduring and boundless cultural reach is emphasized. Perhaps she has indeed become too powerful for the State of Arizona.

Mariam Tiews '25



# Joan of Arc Saved France



Haskell Coffin



**WOMEN OF AMERICA  
SAVE YOUR COUNTRY**  
*Buy* **WAR SAVINGS STAMPS**

UNITED STATES TREASURY DEPARTMENT

## 46. Joan of Arc Saved France

Haskell Coffin (American, 1878-2018)

1918

Lithograph

82.6 x 57.2 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.55*

Joan of Arc was born in 1412 during the Hundred Years' War between France and England. In 1415, the English King Henry V invaded and declared himself King of France. Around 1424, Joan experienced visions of the saints who urged her to support Charles VII's rightful claim to the crown. After granting an audience to Joan, Charles sent her to the battlefield at the Siege of Orléans, where the French pulled off a surprising victory. The French repeated their success, which allowed Charles to enter Reims, traditional city of French coronations, where the archbishop of Reims consecrated him King of France.

However, Joan's—and France's—success was short-lived. In contests over Paris, Joan, still leading the fight, was captured and sold to the English. Joan was now an inconvenience to Charles, thus the king did nothing to win her release. The English brought Joan to the Inquisition in Rouen and tried her as a heretic, hoping to dispel any French support for her. The Inquisitor convicted Joan and sentenced her to death. While she burned at the stake, Joan allegedly invoked the name of Jesus and the saints. Ultimately, the plan backfired and Joan became a folk hero, and in 1456, the Inquisition revoked its verdict, bringing Joan back into the Catholic Church. Because she served as an unlikely hero for France, French revolutionaries in the eighteenth century claimed her as their own in overthrowing the French king, and she became a national symbol of France. After victory in the First World War, Pope Benedict XV canonized her and declared St. Joan as the patron saint of France.

Prior to her canonization, the United States Treasury Department evoked the image of Joan of Arc to encourage Americans to buy war bonds during World War I by circulating lithographic posters around the country in the final year of the war. *Joan of Arc Saved France* utilizes American painter William Haskell Coffin's portrait of Joan in the center of the image with her sword raised. Joan stands in full armor: a fitted breastplate, chainmail and leather buckles. Her face is visible, with tufts of auburn hair protruding from her helmet. Her visage recalls the archetypal Gibson Girl who exemplified early twentieth-century beauty standards that emphasized soft, delicate features with

straight white teeth, pinkish lips, blue wide-set eyes and lightly blushed cheeks. The Gibson Girl signified the new modern woman: athletic, educated, and confident. In depicting Joan of Arc as a Gibson Girl, the Treasury appealed to American women to support the war effort.

The deep blue background, with a beam of light surrounding Joan like a halo, marks her connection to the divine. This stark, solid background highlights both Joan of Arc and the text above, written in yellow: "Joan of Arc Saved France," with the implicit notion that so too could American women. Joan lifts her eyes, looks beyond the viewer and extends a broadsword pointing to the message. Just below Joan's waist, a text box interrupts the portrait, reading "Women of America / Save Your Country / Buy War Savings Stamps." A War Savings Stamps logo and fine print reveal the poster's maker "United States Treasury Department." The poster calls American women to action, reminiscent of St. Joan's actions to rid medieval France of its invading army.

In 1918, the Treasury Department produced a series of posters utilizing Coffin's portraits to target women for the war effort. These posters feature allegorical female figures to encourage women in purchasing war stamps and joining the Red Cross. Although Joan of Arc was not yet canonized in 1918 (she was beatified in 1909), this poster illustrates how the saints were employed for political purposes. Joan of Arc enjoys a unique standing in both popular and religious culture and can be uniquely used to instill faith within the Church, as well as patriotism as a historical figure.

Lauren Carpenter '26





DEDICO ESTE RETABLO Y DOY GRACIAS A LA SANTISIMA  
VIRGEN DE SAN JUAN DE LOS LAGOS POR HABER LIBRADO  
DE MORIR A MI SOBRINO RAFAEL SEGURA SANCHEZ CUANDO LLENDO  
EN BICICLETA LO ATROFELLO UNA CAMIONETA  
GRACIAS MILAGROSA VIRGENCITA  
BERNARDINO SEGURA SANCHEZ  
G. MACERO TAMPS.

## 47. Virgin of San Juan de Los Lagos Ex-Voto Painting

Mexican

1950s

Oil paint on canvas

24.8 x 34.9 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.36*

The legend of the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos dates to the sixteenth century. In 1543, Father Miguel de Bologna brought a sculpture of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception to the city of San Juan de los Lagos, Mexico. According to local history, a circus troupe traveled through San Juan de los Lagos, performing stunts with knives and swords, when a young local girl slipped and mortally injured herself. The girl died; her body was wrapped and placed under the statue of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. Immediately, people saw movement under her burial shroud, and the girl emerged unharmed. As miracles followed, believers throughout Mexico and the United States venerated the Virgin represented in the shrine. In 1904, Pope Pius X granted the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos a Pontifical Decree of Canonical coronation, and her cult further grew in popularity. This ex-voto gives thanks to the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos for saving a devotee's nephew from a car accident. The term ex-voto comes from the Latin *ex-voto suscepto*, "from the vow made." Ex-votos refer to objects placed in shrines as expressions of gratitude to a specific saint. *The Virgin of San Juan de Los Lagos Ex-Voto Painting* demonstrates how Christians have come to venerate or pay tribute to saints who will personally intercede on their behalf.

Illustrating the standard format for ex-voto paintings, the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos appears on the left surrounded by blue-tinted clouds. The Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos is depicted as she appears in the shrine: standing on a gold pedestal with a crescent moon at her feet and wearing a triangular blue robe with a white stripe running down the center and fanning out around her. The Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos sculpture is also flanked by two nude cherubs who bear a pink inscribed ribbon hanging above the Virgin's head, which reads "Mater Immaculata Ora Pronobis" (Immaculate mother, pray for us). On the right hand side, the artist illustrates the scene for which the devotee thanks the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos. A red Ford pickup truck appears along a gray street after hitting a cyclist. Beneath the image, an inscription explains why the devotee gives thanks to the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos. The prayer translates to

"I dedicate this retablo and give thanks to the holy Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos for having liberated my nephew Rafael Segura Sanchez from death when he was riding a bike and a van ran over him, thank you miraculous little virgin." From this inscription, it is clear that the devotee attributes their nephew's survival to the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos, relating the accident to her origin story of miraculous healing.

The *Virgin of San Juan de Los Lagos Ex-Voto Painting* depicts Mexican and Southwestern United States venerative practices. The painting and its prayer reveal the importance of universal veneration of the Virgin Mary, as well as particular shrines dedicated to her. As an ex-voto, this painting reveals one way in which the Christian saints are called upon to aid individuals in times of need. In recreating the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos as she appears in her sculptural form, the artist raises complex theological and artistic questions about the traditions of image veneration and representation (cat. 16). As in the tradition of icons, the saints' power is concentrated near its likeness, such that prayers offered to a saint through its image are believed to be more efficacious (cat. 9 & 10).

Lauren Carpenter '26





MILAGRE Q<sup>o</sup> FES N.<sup>a</sup> S.<sup>a</sup> DO CARMO AD. CA  
THARINA DE PILAR DE A MILHORAR DE HUMA EM FERMIDADE NO ANO DE 1788

## 48. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Ex-Voto Painting

Portuguese

1788

Oil paint on canvas

37.5 x 47.6 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.40*

Artists often combine specific formal techniques with cultural practices and ideals to create pieces ingrained in tradition, yet relevant to present concerns. This Portuguese oil on canvas painting, *Our Lady of Mount Carmel Ex-Voto Painting*, demonstrated the compositional structure of the tradition of ex-voto paintings, as well as elements from the Carmelite Order. The thick black frame is embellished with gold leaves on the edges and a gold border on the outer and inner ring of the frame. The paint on the canvas and the frame is beginning to crack and the right edge of the painting appears to be scraped, perhaps from framing the canvas.

The elements of the painting and the text on the bottom indicate that this painting functioned as an ex-voto. This painting is composed of the three basic elements of this image type (cat. 47), which according to Durand, Jorge, and Massey, is “a holy image, a graphic rendering of a threatening occurrence or miraculous event, and a text explaining what happened.” The painting depicts a bedroom where a female figure sleeps in a canopy bed as St. Mary appears to her in a vision. The woman lies underneath a blue blanket and white sheets and places her head on a white pillow with ruffles running along the edge. The bed has a white skirt and a bright red canopy, which is closed on all sides except for the side facing out. The bed is situated upon deep red flooring along the beige walls of the room near a corner. In the middle of the composition, Mary appears surrounded by clouds and a light blue sky in the background. She wears a dark brown tunic, a white cape, a gold head covering and a very large gold crown, signifying her role as Queen of Heaven (cat. 17). In one hand, Mary holds two white and brown scapulars in her right hand and the Christ Child in her left hand. The Christ Child wears a long bright red tunic with a similar gold crown atop his head. He sits in the crook of Mary’s left arm and also holds two white and brown scapulars. He cocks his head to the left and his right hand touches Mary’s chin. He has soft brown, short curly hair, pale skin, and facial features and figural proportions of a small adult. The person lying in bed also has soft brown curly hair, a soft round face, a long thin nose,

and small pale plump lips. Her face is very similar to Mary’s, except her features are slightly smaller, softer, and more feminine. As the patroness of the Carmelite order, this Lady of Mount Carmel was likely venerated as she was seen to be responsible for healing those who were sick and prayed to her for help. The Carmelite order was founded in the twelfth century as a mendicant organization, whose members assume a vow of poverty and commit themselves to a wide variety of services helping others in the name of God.

Along the bottom of the painting black text written across a plain white background states “MILAGRE Q. FES N.<sup>A</sup> S.<sup>A</sup> DO CARMO AD. CA.” Below, a second line of text states “THARINA DE PILAR · DE A MILHORAR DE HUMA EM FERMIDADE NO ANO DE 1788.” While this inscription does not directly translate from any known version of the Portuguese language, it references the miracles Mary bestowed on the sick woman.

Ashley Keltsch '25





Vera effigies Sacri Capitis  
Dive Catharinae Sen: quod in Ede Ven:  
Mon: Castri: S: Dominici Senis religiose colitur:  
relemni pompa per Urbem delati die xxi Aprilis  
Anno MDCCEVI



## 49. Mummified Head of Saint Catherine of Siena

Italian

1806

Engraving

33.7 x 21.6 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2022.84*

St. Catherine, born in 1347 in the Italian city of Siena, rejected marriage and lived with her parents. Eschewing food and preferring ardent prayer, Catherine experienced mystical visions of her unity with Christ. When she died in 1380, followers immediately campaigned for Catherine's canonization, championed by the Dominican leader Raymond of Capua, who wrote Catherine's first *vita*, the *Legend maior*. However, eighty years and two attempts transpired before ultimately the city of Siena took Catherine's cause to the Sienese Pope Pius II. Pius II may have been moved to canonize a compatriot who demonstrated heroic virtue and performed posthumous miracles, but he also may have been motivated by Catherine's visions predicting the return of the papal court to Rome after its exile in Avignon. Pius II was keen to emphasize the strength of the Papacy as he prepared for crusade against the Turks after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Pope Pius II finally canonized St. Catherine of Siena in 1461.

Catherine's relics played an important role in her canonization. Catherine was buried in the Dominican basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, where she died. In the same year she died, Raymond of Capua severed Catherine's head from her body and transferred it to the Dominican convent in Siena. Catherine's head was carried in procession in a spectacular tabernacle from the Palazzo Pubblico to the sacristy of San Domenico. The Dominicans kept the head in the sacristy along with one of her fingers. After the procession, the finger relic was taken back to the Campo (public square), where a cardinal blessed Siena with her finger. In Venice, where the first major investigation of her sainthood took place, Catherine's foot was venerated in the basilica of Giovanni et Paolo.

The head relic, which is the subject of this engraving, remains in the sacristy of the basilica of San Domenico. In the *Mummified Head of Saint Catherine of Siena*, St. Catherine is presented as a bust portrait hovering in a conceptual space between personhood and relic. Deep sockets enclose the saint's closed eyes. The nose, missing its cartilage in the relic, is fully restored, but her cheeks are sunken. Her mouth drops open,

as if to speak, revealing wide gaps of missing teeth, some of which were removed as relics. The artist intentionally makes the distinction between relic and representation, by setting the head within a beveled oval frame, which is itself contained within a larger rectangular beveled frame ornamented with knobs at each corner.

Two angels hovering over the top of the oval crown St. Catherine with a Crown of Thorns, one of the saint's attributes derived from her visions: Christ offered Catherine either a crown of gold for earthly riches, or a crown of thorns for glory in Heaven. Lilies sprout around the bottom of the oval frame, signaling St. Catherine's ascetic life in imitation of Christ's passion. An inscription within cartouche molded out of acanthus leaves reads:

*Vera effigies sacri capitis  
Divce Catherinae Sen[ensis]: quod in Aede ven[entiis]  
Mon[te] Cass[in]i; S. Dominici Sen[en]is religiose  
colitur solemn pompci per urbem delati die XIII Aprilis  
Anno MDCCCVI.*

(A true effigy of the holy head [or person], of Catherine of Siena: that in the Venice chapel Monte Cassino; St. Dominic in Siena is venerated reverently with a solemn procession carried through the city on April 13, 1806.)

The inscription refers to the procession of Dominica in Albis (White Sunday) that takes place on the Sunday after Easter. Although the White Sunday refers to newly baptized members who wear white albs to Mass; in Siena, the day was also considered an important civic day. The city's most important relics were chosen to lead the procession each year. Catherine's head relic was chosen in 1806 and again in 1827, demonstrating the continued importance of St. Catherine in the civic life of Siena.

Dr. Anne Heath





## 50. Hearing of the Causes of Beatification and Canonization in the Vatican

International News Photos, Inc. (American, active 1909-1958)

1941

Gelatin silver print

16.5 x 21.6 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.59*

This documentary photograph, taken from Jean Pages's feature film titled "The Story of the Vatican" written and narrated by Fulson Sheen (cat. 44), offers a rare view of the process of beatification and canonization. The news agency Time, Inc. sponsored the monthly newsreel series that premiered in movie theaters across the country. Covering a wide range of topics, the genre of "pictorial journalism" included on-location reporting, as well as dramatic reenactments, which is likely the case here. The scene presented depicts cardinals of the papal court who are members of the Congregation of the Causes of the Saints. They gather to open a meeting of the Causes of Beatification and Canonization. In addition to the four cardinals gathered around the table, a medical doctor wearing a necktie and a woman reading from a piece of paper participate in the hearing. The woman reads a statement testifying to a miracle attributed to the candidate for canonization. Most modern miracles concern recoveries from disease or accidents; thus a medical doctor must verify that no other explanation could account for the healing. In the film, prior to the moment captured in this photograph, an attendant passes around for inspection a sealed envelope containing the investigation documents conducted by the local diocese. Once satisfied with the seals' integrity, the cardinals call in the witness who enters and kneels on a prayer bench to give her testimony. On the table, a crucifix appears on the left, while a candle offers light for the reader and attests to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Stamping and sealing instruments emphasize the formality of the occasion. After the woman verifies her testimony, she signs her name on the document.

The process of canonization; that is, the path to sainthood, can only begin five years after the death of a person of the Catholic faith. Two essential elements make the case for sainthood: evidence of virtue in life and witnesses for miracles after death. The modern canonization process begins in the local diocese when the bishop makes a petition to initiate a cause

for beatification and canonization. Once the cause is opened, the individual is declared a "Servant of God." A postulator investigates the virtues of the individual by reviewing the evidence and writing a biography. He needs extensive proof that the candidate lived and died in an exemplary and holy way, and is worthy to be recognized as a saint. With such proof, a diocesan tribunal affirms the heroic virtues have been demonstrated. Then, the volumes of documents called Acta are collected, sealed, and sent to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. It votes on whether the cause should continue, thus elevating the candidate to the status of "Venerable."

At this stage, supporters may print prayer cards to promote the cause and encourage the faithful to pray for a miracle (cat. 51). (Martyrs are exempt from the first miracle requirement.) If a miracle occurs and can be medically verified by the tribunal in the diocese, then the candidate would be beatified and reach the status of "Blessed." Finally, if a second miracle can be verified, the process is brought to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, where the sealed documents are reviewed and testimony of these miracles is given and verified. Since the sixteenth century, the process appears similar to a trial. Canon lawyers present evidence of the candidate's virtuous life and the evidence of posthumous miracles. An opposing lawyer, called a devil's advocate (*advocatus diaboli*) argues against promotion to sainthood. If the evidence supports canonization, the case is brought before the Pope who declares sainthood. The declaration allows for universal veneration in the Catholic Church.

Dr. Anne Heath





LA SERVANTE DE DIEU  
SŒUR THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT JÉSUS

Marie-Françoise-Thérèse MARTIN  
Naguit à Alençon le 2 Janvier 1873. A l'âge de  
15 ans elle entra au Carmel de Lisieux où elle passa  
9 ans et 6 mois dans la pratique constante de toutes  
les vertus se distinguant surtout par un ardent amour  
pour Dieu et une admirable confiance en Lui. Elle mourut  
en odeur de sainteté le 30 Sept 1897.



ETOFFE AVANT TOUCHÉ À LA SERVANTE DE DIEU

« Je sens que ma mission va commencer, ma mission de faire aimer le bon Dieu comme je l'aime... de donner aux âmes ma petite voie de confiance et d'abandon. JE VEUX PASSER MON CIEL A FAIRE DU BIEN SUR LA TERRE. Ce n'est pas impossible, puisqu'au sein même de la vision béatifique, les Anges veillent sur nous. Non, je ne pourrai prendre aucun repos jusqu'à la fin du monde ! Mais lorsque l'Ange aura dit : « Le temps n'est plus ! » alors je me reposerai, je pourrai jouir, parce que le nombre des élus sera complet. »

(Histoire d'une âme écrite par elle-même).

#### PRIÈRE

pour obtenir la béatification de la Servante de Dieu,  
THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT-JÉSUS et de la SAINTE FACE.

O Jésus, qui avez voulu naître petit enfant, pour confondre notre orgueil, et qui, plus tard, prononciez cet oracle sublime : « Si vous ne devenez comme de petits enfants vous n'entrerez point dans le Royaume des cieux », daignez écouter notre humble prière, en faveur de celle qui a vécu, avec tant de perfection, la vie d'enfance spirituelle et nous en a si bien rappelé la voie.

O petit Enfant de la Crèche ! par les charmes ravissants de votre divine enfance ; ô Face adorable de Jésus ! par les abaissements de votre Passion, nous vous en supplions, si c'est pour la gloire de Dieu et la sanctification des âmes, faites que bientôt l'aurole des Bienheureuses rayonne au front si pur de votre petite épouse, THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT-JÉSUS ET DE LA SAINTE FACE. Ainsi soit-il.

Permis d'imprimer :

THOMAS, év. de Bayeux et Lisieux. - 21 nov. 1907

Les personnes qui reçoivent des grâces attribuées à la Servante de Dieu sont priées de les faire connaître au monastère des Carmélites de Lisieux, où elles trouveront l'Histoire d'une Âme et des souvenirs de Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus.

Reproduction interdite — Carmel de Lisieux

S. BIRVEN IMP. TOULOUSE-PARIS

## 51. Prayer Card for the Beatification of Sister Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face

French

1907

Lithograph

12.7 x 6.7 cm

*Hope College Collection, 2024.60*

In 1897, the Carmelite nun, Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, also known as the Little Flower, died in her Carmelite monastery in Lisieux, France. She was only 28 years old when she succumbed to tuberculosis. As was the case with Catherine of Siena (cat. 48), shortly after Thérèse's death, calls for her canonization were already making themselves heard. However, Thérèse's accelerated canonization marks a contrast to the hurdles that stalled Catherine of Siena's cause. Promoters published Thérèse's memoir, *The Story of a Soul*, the year of her death. Then, in 1914, Pope Pius X opened the process for her canonization. In 1921, his successor Benedict XV elevated her to Venerable Servant of God on the decree of the heroic virtues and beatified her in 1923. St. Thérèse of Lisieux was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1925.

The speed between Thérèse's elevation from Venerable to Blessed was supported by the proliferation of prayer cards that asked followers to pray for Thérèse's beatification. This card, printed in 1907, is made from thick paper stock sprayed with gold paint. In the center, appears an oval lithographic bust portrait of the young Carmelite nun dressed in the religious habit of the reformed Carmelites known as the Discalced (without shoes) Carmelites, founded by St. Theresa of Avila (cat. 29). Basking in a divine light while petitioning the viewer, Thérèse holds roses in her hands and a crucifix on a diagonal. Below her portrait, her title reads:

*La servante de dieu*

*Soeur Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus*

(Servant of God)

Sister Thérèse of the Infant Jesus)

Below, a brief biography signals Thérèse destiny to sainthood:

*Marie-Françoise-Thérèse MARTIN*

*Naquit à Alençon le 2 Janvier 1873- À l'âge de 15 ans*

*elle entra au Carmel de Lisieux où elle passa 9 ans et 6 mois dans la pratique constante de toutes les vertus se distinguant surtout pour un ardent amour pour Dieu et un admirable confiance en lui. Elle mourut en odeur de sainteté le 30 Sept. 1897.*

(Born in Alençon on January 2, 1873. At the age of 15 she entered the Carmelites of Lisieux where she spent nine years and six months in the constant practice of all the virtues, distinguishing herself above all by an ardent love of God and an admirable trust in him. She died in the odor of sanctity on September 30, 1897.)

At the bottom of the card, a bright red thread sews a touch relic, known as a *brandeum*. The inscription below reads:

*ETTOFFE AYANT TOUCHE A LA SERVANTE DE DIEU*

(Fabric having touched the servant of God.)

In the lower left corner, the prayer card is authenticated with the seal of the Vice Postulator, the office in charge of the cause of sainthood:

*Sigillum RD Rogerii de Teil v. Postulatoris*

(Seal of RD Rogeri of Le Teil, Vice Postulator)

On the prayer card's reverse side, an excerpt from *The Story of a Soul* invites the reader to speak the words of Thérèse on her love for God, followed by a prayer for her beatification.

Dr. Anne Heath





## 52. Blessed Carlo Acutis

Italian

Ca. 2023

Resin

40 cm high

*Hope College Collection, 2024.61*

The title Blessed in the Catholic Church indicates that a person has been beatified, the second to last stage on the path to sainthood. This sculpture depicts Blessed Carlo Acutis (1991-2006), an Italian teen who during his short life used his prodigious computer skills to create a website that documented every Eucharistic miracle and Marian apparition recorded and approved by the Catholic Church. Calls to declare Acutis a saint began shortly after his death from leukemia in 2006. He was formally recognized as a Venerable Servant of God in 2018 and was beatified in 2020 after Pope Francis validated a miracle that was ascribed to Acutis's intervention. The Pope validated a second miracle ascribed to Acutis in 2024, clearing the way for him to be canonized and designated as a saint in April, 2025. Carlo Acutis will be the first Catholic saint from the millennial generation.

The sculpture is one of several similar sculptures that have been produced by studios in Europe, North America, and South America since Acutis was beatified in 2020. It was made in a mold using a synthetic resin compound and was hand painted. It is based on a photograph of Acutis taken shortly before his death. The same image has also been used to create prayer cards, posters, medallions, and other souvenirs that give faithful admirers a tangible connection to this newly canonized saint.

Charles Mason



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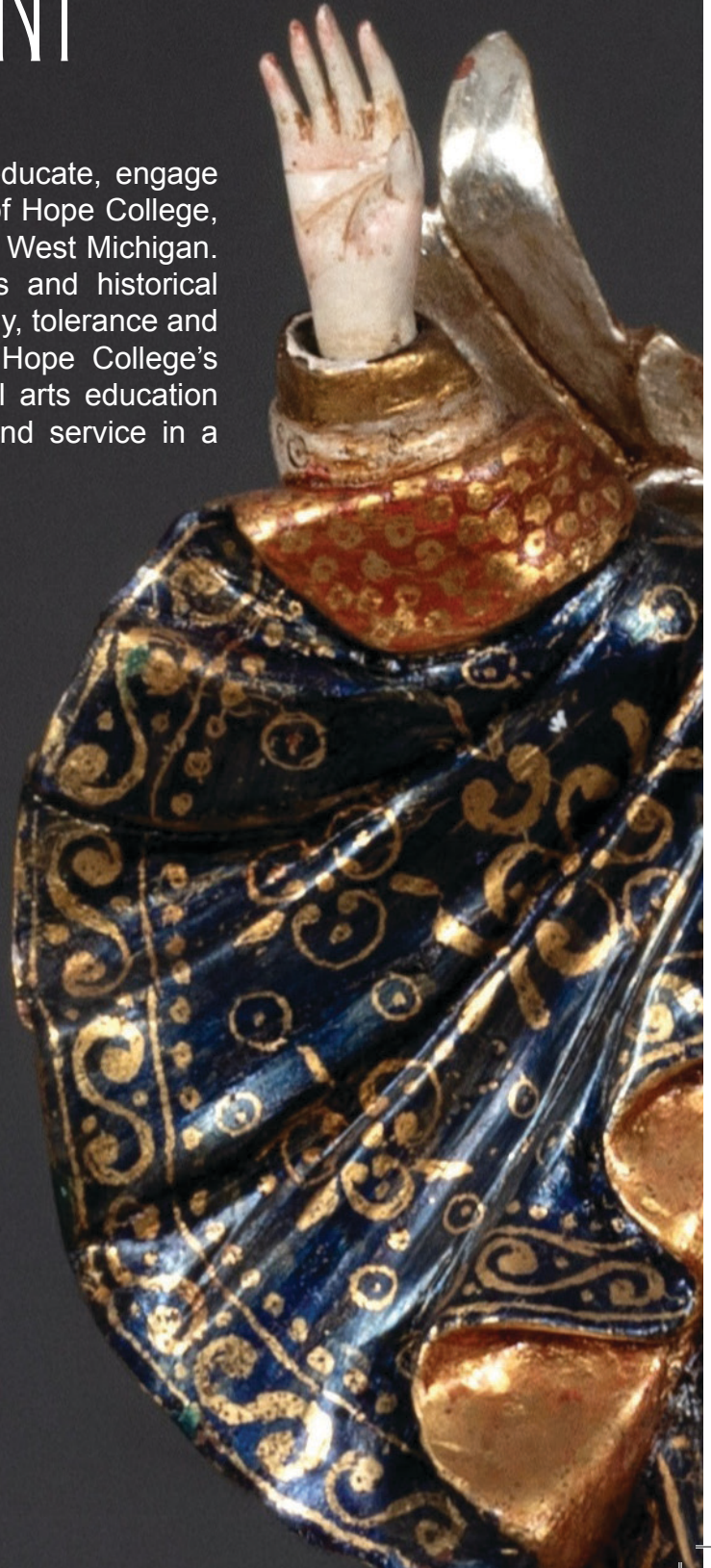
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# MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Kruizenga Art Museum is to educate, engage and inspire the students, faculty, staff and alumni of Hope College, as well as the broader communities of Holland and West Michigan. By presenting art from a wide range of cultures and historical periods, the museum fosters the qualities of empathy, tolerance and understanding that are essential components of Hope College's mission to provide an outstanding Christian liberal arts education while preparing students for lives of leadership and service in a global society.











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