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EXHIBITION

Clothed in Glory



Joaquín Gandarillas Collection

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

March 12 to August 31, 2024

This exhibition leads us on a journey of reflection through everyday life and particularly on our changing Western Christian attire which, over the course of history, has embodied shifting representations of the holy and the divine in relation to the religious clothing.

Within the context of the Catholic Baroque, especially in the countries of southern Europe—Italy and, in particular, Spain—the image is transformed into a fundamental means of evangelization, and clothing into a manifestation of the magnificence of God.

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The applied arts are placed at the service not only of royalty and nobility but also of the Church, and the dressing of images—especially those of the Virgin Mary—emerged as an increasingly common practice at the end of the Middle Ages, reaching a peak of expression in the Baroque.

Invocations of the Virgin Mary as Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of the Rosary of Pomata, or Our Lady of Mount Carmel are the most interesting here due to their luxurious and peculiar outfits that exalt the concept of the “living image”—of Catholic pastoral care.

Heir to both the Hispanic tradition and indigenous textiles, South Andean viceregal art bore expressions of this mestizo past in the clothing of holy images. Such art was designed to reach devotees and churchgoers not only in the form of abstract notions but also through the senses and, in particular, through those feelings deemed worthy of exaltation: as a means of giving glory to God.



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The attire of holy figures as a symbolic system bears its own transcendent codes of communication and expression in accordance with the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

The Council of Trent reinforces its meaning and its indoctrinating, didactic, and cultic role, at the same time warning against idolatry by emphasizing the orthodoxy and dignity that is due to the divine persons, the saints, and the “holy stories” presented. In this conciliatory arrangement, the motif of the image establishes a relationship with its clothing and adornment, whose spiritual refinement reflects an inner beauty.

With the Catholic Reformation, the holy image must satisfy requirements of naturalism and representation of reality that foster identification with its divine models and holiness. Likewise, religious art requires a moral and historical coherence with the themes portrayed, and this must be done in accordance with the time and context of the events depicted. In this way, its devotional and didactic objective is fulfilled according to the maxim of the viewer. Hence, the richness, splendor, and sumptuousness of the religious art of the Catholic Baroque finds justification in cult images.

In clothing, greater potency is given to feel—to the profusion of qualities, thicknesses, and textures that the faithful are able to reach out and touch, thus making contact with the holy and its miraculous powers. Through the senses is sought sensitivity and, in turn, the motivation of feeling and affect.

The Spanish Baroque appeals to a theatricalization of the image that seeks to erase the boundary between the sacred and the mundane, and to the serial repetition of images, motifs, and iconography as a learning strategy in which costume, jewelry, and accessories play a key role.



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The heavy, dark, voluminous fabrics; the profusion of folds and highlights; the lace on collars and cuffs; the heavy jewelry of precious stones set in silver or gold; the strings of pearls worn by the seventeenth-century Spanish social elite and adorning religious images—all of these features spread to far-flung overseas territories.



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Only the richest fabrics are chosen for religious images, thus accentuating their decorum, which shifts in South Andean viceregal art from dignity towards majesty. This also emphasizes the power attributed to dressed or painted images: supernatural, thaumaturgic, and miraculous power to change events, heal, console, and guide.

The paradoxical Baroque fashion of voluminous sleeves and skirts, a reflection of the aesthetics of an era of increasing individualism that seeks to isolate the body by creating its own protected space, also serves to disguise it beneath these hyperbolic forms. Religious images are by no means immune to this treatment, and artists resort to more voluminous sizes and structural reinforcements to enlarge the clothing of their painted figures with folds and movements that float and swirl.

Viceregal artists and craftsmen focus on the reproduction of clothing using a rich palette of pigments that enhances the application of gilding. In the pictorial studios, work is meticulous and carried out with the care inherent to the dignity of the subject. Here, thanks to the iridescence of the taffeta and the transparency of the chiffon, we can appreciate the contrasting front and back of the damask, and the gilding of the brocades. This is achieved by the application of dissolved gold leaf with a brush, or by employing a sgraffito technique to reveal the gold background beneath the color.



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Jewelry made up the final layer and was therefore the most visible within the clothing ensemble of viceregal images. In addition to their luxurious attire, sculptures and paintings—especially in the case of the Virgin Mary—are adorned with splendid jewelry in the fashion of the time, since the Church—along with the family—was the main recipient of bequests.

By the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, the use of rhinestones begins to emerge in Spanish and Latin American jewelry, and the Baroque taste for color led to the incorporation of emeralds, topazes, amethysts, and sapphires. The aesthetics of radiance dated back to the thirteenth century, when theologians were speculating on the metaphysical properties of light and reflection and applying them to the stained-glass windows of Gothic cathedrals.

The images exude a special aura, the sparkling clothing and jewels that surround them invoking heavenly beauty and perfection. It is the theological and didactic principle of light that frames the use of these sumptuous elements of goldsmithing and jewelry, and the monetary worth of items is considered secondary to their conceptual and symbolic value.



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The profusion of jewelry that in religious images highlighted both the piety and social rank of the donor could completely envelop the venerated figure: there was jewelry for the head, neck, and shoulders; jewelry for the arms and hands; jewelry for the torso, hips, and feet.

The most important pieces adorned the head: halos or aureoles; crowns; headbands; diadems; garlands; headdresses; the Virgin's face-framing *rostrillo* or *toca*—metallic or made of curled and decorated fabric; decorations for the hats of men and women; and various types of earrings: hoops, studs, and pendants, often consisting of two or three pieces and taking the form of a button, buckle, or teardrop.

At a second level of the hierarchy were items of jewelry placed around the neck and over the chest: pendants of diverse materials and bearing various ornaments; necklaces; chokers; chest rosaries; medals; and crosses complete with their gold and silver chains.



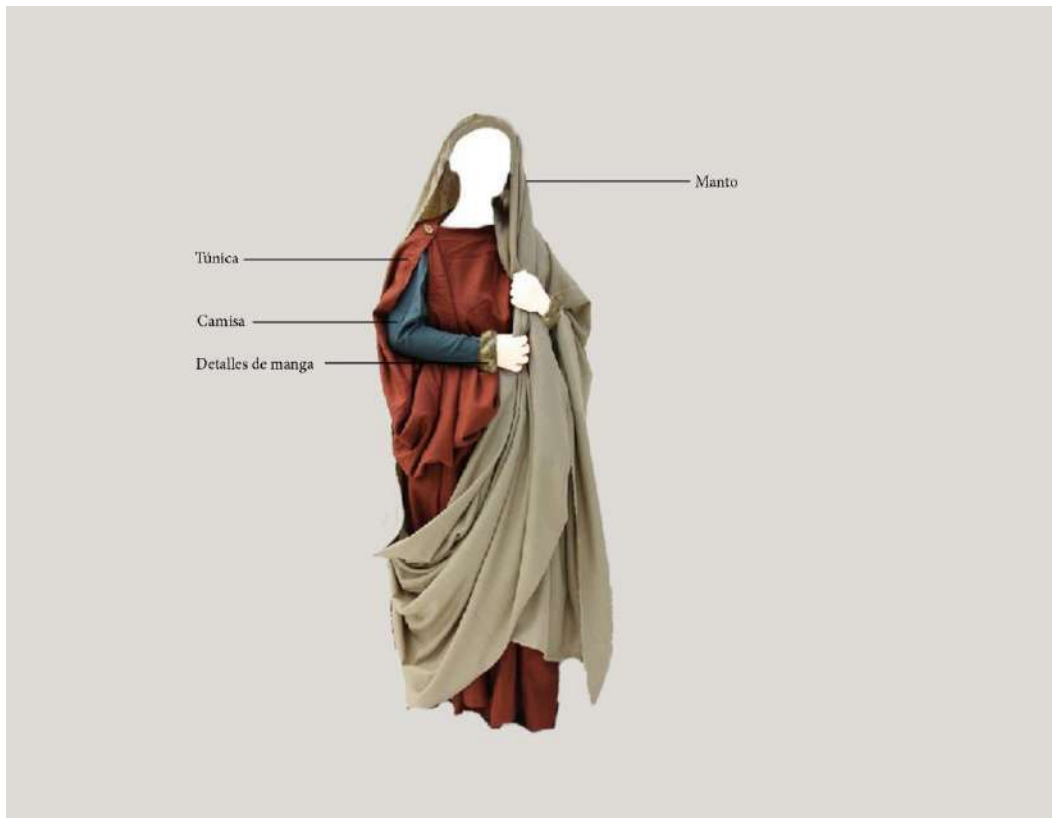
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Men of high status wore shirts with bowknots and other elaborate collar designs, along with decorations, canes, broaches, and buttons of precious stones, although it was rare for holy male images to bear such adornments. Churchmen wore a distinctive ring carrying a seal or inscription. In addition to their rich Moorish-style saddlery, the belts and cinctures show off colored glass inlays, zippers, pins, and buckles wrought of fine metals, and images often bear ribbons embroidered with gold and silver thread, bows, sashes, and fabrics that blur the line between jewelry and clothing.



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In the clothing of holy images, a variety of fabrics are layered one on top of the other in the fashion of the social elites of the time. Much of this fabric was imported from Spain and, during the eighteenth century, entered Chile in the holds of smugglers' vessels via the port city of Valparaíso.

A fabric of gold or silver silk thread woven into intricate patterns and imitated in paintings using *brocateados* or gilt, brocade is the preferred material for the production of sumptuous clothing. Used since time immemorial in China and India, silk passed to Persia and from there spread across the Mediterranean to Italy in the first century, following the "Silk Road."



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Enveloped in a gleaming splendor of clouds and litanies, the figure of the Immaculate Conception appears in these paintings in accordance with the description by the Spanish preceptist Francisco Pacheco, based on the text of the Apocalypse of Saint John, which indicates that she was “Dressed in the sun”: dazzling. She wears the crown of a queen, a sumptuous blue floral mantle of gold brocade with gold trim and passementerie, a red reverse, and a white tunic adorned with brooches and further passementerie. Two such representations wear earrings bearing fine stones, rings, and bands imbued with “protective powers”.



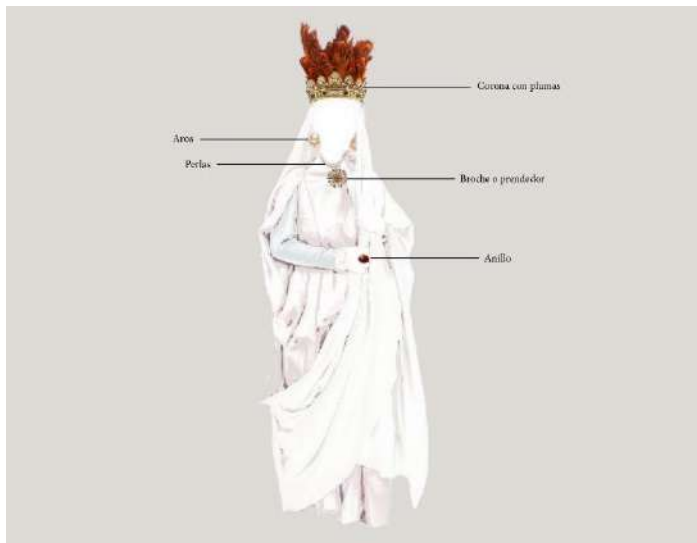
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The most luxurious garments, found in the second and third layers of clothing, were lined. This is indicated by documents of the time and visible on the backs of the cloaks found on images, on clothed sculptures, and in paintings. Chosen for its firmness, linen was used as an interlining to provide the rigidity required by Baroque fashion and to reinforce the solemnity of religious worship. When the reverse was arranged in an exposed drop, as seen in many paintings and sculptures in the Gandarillas Collection, it often consisted of a silk fabric woven of cotton satin.



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Following ancestral customs, jewelry was sometimes attributed less orthodox properties, and certain stones and metals were considered to have protective, thaumaturgic, and prophylactic “powers.” In this pre-scientific era, it was God the Father, Jesus Christ, Mary, and the saints who protected against and cured the various illnesses and ailments, and this power was channeled not only through religious vows and prayers, but also through medals, crosses, and reliquaries of fine materials hung from the neck and, thus, kept in close proximity to the heart.



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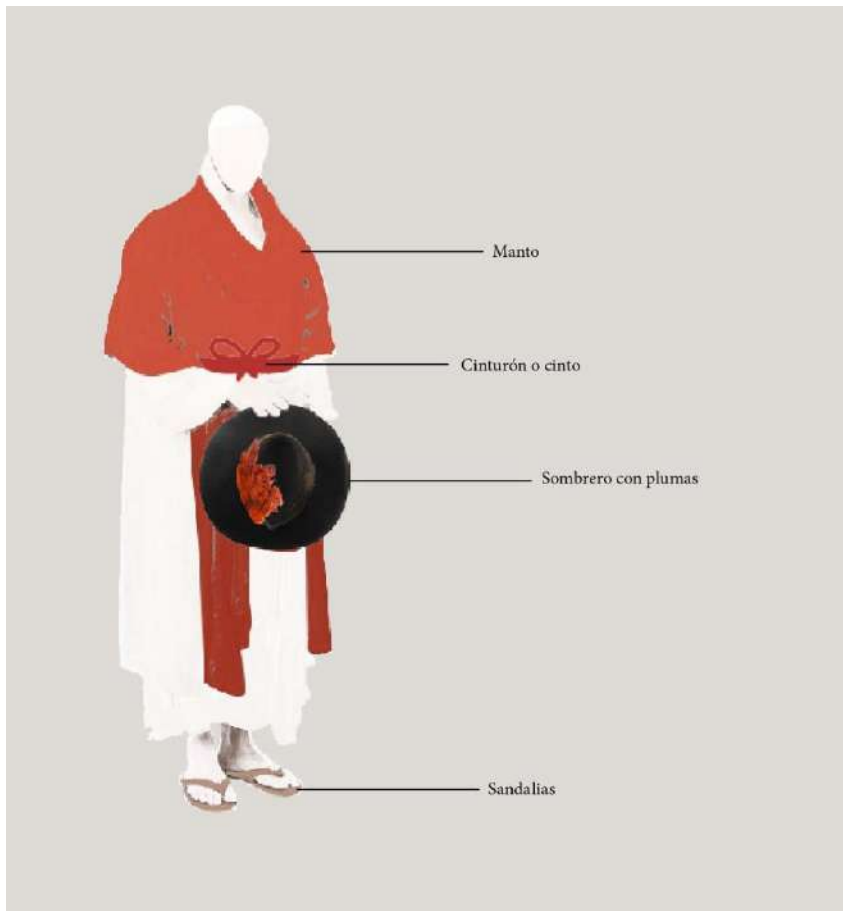
A royal emblem of status and power, the crown is an attribute that in the sacred sphere of the viceregal Baroque defines the holy persons: the Virgin Mary, the Child Jesus, or Christ of the Passion.

A crowned religious image acquires the triumphant aspect that the Catholic Church seeks to present to the faithful as a result of the epic struggle for the establishment of the faith. In the Viceroyalty of Peru, the abundance of silver and its lunar shine makes it the preferred material with which to crown Mary, as Virgin and Mother.

Formed of circular and ascending shapes and finished with a crossed spherical structure, the crown establishes power over the world. Richly carved in the Baroque, Rococo, and Neoclassical styles, and complemented with local features, the luster of the silver crown bestows majesty—an essential attribute with which the holy is clothed within the hierarchical and ritual sphere of its relationship with the devotee.



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The clothing of male holy figures varies according to their iconography and the historical era to which they belong. However, certain garments have remained largely altered since early Christian times, such as the mantle, a key item that can be folded in a variety of ways; the long or mid-leg tunic that reveals the footwear; the cincture, ribbon, or belt that holds the tunic closed; and the hat, designs of which include the seventeenth-century soft, broad-brimmed hat, which was adorned with feathers and found the length of the Southern Andes.



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The footwear of male religious figures is largely similar to that of society—as reflected in the boots, sandals, and, in particular, the elegant ribboned and white silk shoes of the Arquebusier Archangel—and in part hark back to ancient Greco-Roman and medieval clothing such as the laced boots or buskins worn by Saint Isidore.