

**DEPICTIONS OF THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE IN MEXICAN
BAROQUE ART: AN INTERCHANGE OF ICONOGRAPHY
AND TECHNIQUE**

An essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for graduation from the
Honors College at the College of the Charleston
with a Bachelor of Arts in
Art History and Arts Management

María Carrillo-Marquina
May 2019

Advisor: Rebekah Compton

The Weeping Virgin by indigenous artist Juan Bautista Cuiris of 1590–1600 is a feather on copper painting that shows a distinct fusion between pre-Hispanic motifs and sixteenth-century Catholic themes, following the Spanish Conquest of Latin America (Fig. 1). *The Weeping Virgin* is brightly colored and glistens when light touches the feathers affixed on the painting's surface. The Virgin is seated in a three-quarter view within an oval, cameo-like frame; small cherubs alighted in the four corners. The angels stretch their wings to frame the rectangular composition, gazing at one another from the four corners. Special attention given to the directionality and coloring of the feathers closely mimics actuality. The materiality of feathers playfully elides with the representations of divine wings. Mary's head inclines downward with eyes half closed; tears stream down her cheeks. She wears a large blue robe, and Bautista Cuiris renders the folds of this drapery by interchanging blue and green feathers. In a similar fashion, the negative space of the Virgin's tunic alternates in color to show depth and dimension. The inside of the Virgin's robe, for example, is shaded with distinctive reds, oranges, and pinks that subtly blend together amid the background of the shimmering blue-greens of her gown. While Bautista Cuiris demonstrates depth in depicting three-dimensional relationships, he pays little attention to depth and atmospheric space in the background and renders instead a flat plane of blue, green, and gold feathers, suggesting that this image should be understood/functions as an icon. A golden halo crowns Mary's head and draws the viewer into the work. Crafted in pre-historic Michoacán, in the Augustinian school of Tiripetío, this work exemplifies how traditional arts were altered Spanish Catholic for the viceregal contexts.¹

¹ Kelly Donahue-Wallace, *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America: 1521-1821*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), 68.

This image, from the third sorrow of the Virgin Mary, presents after she has been searching for Jesus with Mary and Joseph. Jesus had slipped away from his family when they were in Jerusalem; he was missing for three days and his parents found him questioning scholars in the temple. *The Weeping Virgin* by Juan Bautista Cuiris also includes a companion piece, *Christ at the Age of Twelve*, to complete the narrative of the event from the Seven Sorrows. The inscription that encircles the Virgin reads: *Fili qvid fecisti nobis sic ecce ego et pater tvvs dolentes qvaerebamvs te* (Son, why have you done this to us? Behold: your father and I have sought you sorrowing), which serves as her response to Jesus's abandonment.² This composition is likely copied from an engraving produced by the Frenchman Philippe Thomassin in 1590, who based it on a drawing by Giulio Clovio, an Italian miniaturist (Fig. 2).³ The portability of the prints medium allowed for an exchange of iconography between Spain and Mexico. Italian Renaissance icons could be remade in a traditional art form. This specific work employs the pre-Hispanic technique of creating images out of feathers but interprets Catholic iconography. *The Weeping Virgin*, like other feather mosaics produced in the colonial era, could even be interpreted as an innovation of pictorial language of the church and shows the success of the evangelical effort in New Spain.

In the mid-1500s there was a push to employ images as a method of aiding the spiritual conquest of the indigenous peoples of New Spain by the colonizers.⁴ Images became one of the key tools for teaching Catholicism, because they overcame the barriers of language and culture in order to further indoctrinate Catholic beliefs. Franciscan missionaries, for example, utilized

² The New International Version of the Bible, Luke 2:48

³ Donna Pierce, *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life 1521-1821*. (Denver: University of Texas Press, 2004), 104.

⁴ An idea that can be traced back to Saint Gregory the Great that images are the books of the illiterate from the 6th century.

visual language as a mode to help the indigenous people to envision the religion by synthesizing images that subtly alluded to pre-Hispanic art, technique, and practices but ultimately conveyed a message of European religion. This synthesis between the indigenous and the European is most apparent in the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, whose representations can be traced back to the icon of Mary's Immaculate Conception.

In this essay, I analyze the interchange of iconography and techniques between Mexico and Spain between 1500-1800, with a specific focus on the Virgin Mary. The elements of technique that will be covered include the tradition of *plumería* or Mexican feather painting and the tradition of oil painting in Spain. The merging of these two techniques in Mexico and Spain alongside a similar merging of iconography serve as a source for agency and identity for the native Mexicans. I will use *Weeping Virgin* by Juan Bautista Cuiris, the miraculous image titled *The Virgin of Guadalupe*, and *La Virgen de Guadalupe* by Miguel Cabrera to visually demonstrate the synthesis of European imagery and techniques with pre-Hispanic modes and methods of artmaking. I will use Bautista Cuiris's piece as an example of pre-Hispanic *plumería* technique that merges with Catholic iconography. I will use the miraculous image of the Virgin of Guadalupe to decode and analyze her distinctive iconography, and Cabrera's piece to show the remarkable strides for New Spanish paintings in the artists' attempts to emulate European masters. Through this analysis, I will be able to show the agency of pre-Hispanic artists amidst the spiritual and physical conquest of the Americas.

Materials and Techniques for Plumería

Plumería is a pre-Hispanic art form of gathering, assembling, and creating works out of precious feathers. The craftsmen of *plumería* techniques resided in a neighborhood called *Amantla* in Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital of the city, which is why there were called *amantecas*

or “feather artists.”⁵ A map of Tenochtitlan and the Gulf of Mexico from Cortés’ Second Letter to Charles V, painted on parchment by an anonymous artist from 1524 presents the Aztec capital where the neighborhood of *Amantla* was located (Fig. 3). This nominal similarity between the works *Amantla* and *amanteca* shows an association with the pueblo and the line of work, concentrating more on the particulars of the region. *Amanteca* would thus evolve to literally mean “he who fabricates objects made of feathers.”⁶ This class of craftsmen held a highly privileged position in the Aztec society as did the masterpieces that they created. The creative techniques of *amantecas* provides a lens into Aztec culture and allows for us to see the elements that they valued in terms of artistic virtue. *Plumería* works were created by affixing feathers onto board or canvas to create images as well as headdresses for the rulers of the Aztecs. *Plumería*, which originally and traditionally depicted native gods, reached its peak in Mexico right before the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century. From the beginning of the conquest, *plumería* artists adopted Catholic imagery while keeping their original techniques. This artistic mode sets the precedent for the use of a native hand in the translation of foreign imagery, as a mode that indigenous artists will assert as they continue to produce Catholic imagery of the New Spanish Baroque Art.

⁵ There are no colonial records that document a district called *Amatlan* in Tenochtitlan, but there is one that is closely name related that is called Amanalco which was located in the southwest of the city of Tenochtitlan. Similarly, a Franciscan monastery of San Francisco was built on “Mocteuczmoma’s aviary” which was also located in southwest of the city. Refer to Barbara Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 105-106. Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: A General History of the Things of New Spain*, translated by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012). book 9, chapter 18, 83.

⁶ Other pueblos and artisans shared this geographical association with their craft. “Pochteca, “organized merchant”; and Tolec, “artist”, “artisan”. Alfredo López Austin and Olivier Guilhem, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl: Religion, Rulership, and History in the Nahua World*, (Colorado: University Press of Colorado: 2015), 62.

Decoding the art status that feathers and certain birds had in Aztec society is necessary in order to better understand *plumería* techniques and the role of indigenous artists in the later creation of oil paintings. The coloration of the feathers and the use of those same tones in oil works of the mid 1600s demonstrates the synthesis of those two cultures and showcases the hand of the native artists. The value that *amantecas* and *plumería* had is indicated by their documentation in the encyclopedic text, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (*General History of Things in New Spain*), also called the *Florentine Codex* (*Códice Florentino*) of ca. 1575–77, written by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún. The last part of Book 9 is dedicated to the *amanteca*'s crafts and methods.⁷ The codex examines the history of the Nahuas, the indigenous peoples of Central Mexico in the 1600s, their ancestors, their religious beliefs, their humanity, and their natural histories. The numerous illustrations in the *Florentine Codex* show the detailed process of crafting *plumería* and also give insight into the images' flat pictorial style that the images have. As described by Alessandra Russo, colors in ancient Mesoamerica “evoke a world of appearances that cannot be reduced to rigid taxonomies or subjected to one-sided interpretations. They suggest the irreducibility of painting in New Spain... to a fixed paradigm of unchanging gestures, knowledge, and recipes.”⁸ This notion of multiplicity is one that is heavily rooted in the Nahua culture, ranging from color associations to the histories of various Gods.

⁷ The Florentine Codex is a twenty-volume encyclopedic work that is written in both Nahuatl and Spanish. The books are currently located in the Laurentian Library in the city of Florence. Original Nahuatl text was interpreted and translated into Spanish by Franciscan Friar Bernedino de Sahagún. Diana Kerpel Magaloni, *The Colors of the New World: Artists Materials, and the Creation of the Florentine Codex*, (Getty Research Institute, 2014), 1.

⁸ Alessandra Russo, “Uncatchable Colors” in *Colors Between Two Worlds: The Florentine Codex of Bernardino de Sahagún*, ed. Gerhard Wolf and Joseph Connors in collaboration with Louis A. Waldman. (Florence: Harvard University Press, 2011), 391.

The *Florentine Codex* dedicates a whole chapter to the detailed process of *plumería*, which highlights the status that *amantecas* held in the Nahua society. Likewise, the documentation of these practices is an invaluable record that allows for technique comparisons to be made with oil painting in the years to come. The text begins with a brief explanation of the process that the *amantecas* employed:

And in the ornamentation, in working with feathers, two methods [were used]. In the first, the feathers were fastened with glue to complete the work. And in the second, with only cord, with maguey thread, were the works completed, perfected. In these ways was [feather] craftsmanship undertaken; thus, the feathers workers started their work...The feather workers, who painted with feathers, who rejoiced in feather [work], thus began their creations.⁹

According to Sahagún, the feather painting process began with the Nahua scribes tracing the design or the “pattern” on a maguey leaf and then re-enforcing it with cotton by applying glue. The process of applying glue and allowing it to dry continued until the “surface of the cotton [was] glossy, shiny.”¹⁰ This process would produce a paper-like surface on the board, canvas, or copper that was made from glue (most likely agave) and cotton. The artists then applied the feathers in hierarchical layers by first gluing on all of the “common feathers,” first, the dyed feathers. Third, the most precious feathers, which were typically the *quetzal* feathers.¹¹ This process can be seen directly in the original manuscript through the illustrations that accompany the text (Fig. 4). In this series of images, the *amanteca* is depicted carefully choosing the feathers to work with, fastening the feathers onto the working surface, and filling in the remainder of the space with pigments or more feathers. Throughout the ninth book of the Florentine Codex,

⁹ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: A General History of the Things of New Spain*, translated by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012). book 9, chapter 21, 92-93.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 94-96.

illustrations help visualize the exact processes of *plumería* and serve to supplement the instructions and observations written in Spanish and Nahuatl.

Feather Myths

There are two pre-Hispanic myths that explain the conception of featherwork paintings, or at the very least, their reverence in pre-Hispanic cultures. These histories were transmitted in an oral fashion and set the tone for the status of feathers and their connections to the deities of the Aztec culture. The first myth that I will discuss describes how Quetzalcoatl received his feathers and the multiplicity of his selves. The second myth describes the conception of the deity Huitzilopochtli, her birth from feathers, and an interpreted association between her and the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. These myths illustrate the status that these gods had in pre-Hispanic cultures, reveal multiplicity of their interpretation, and establish a historical narrative that is needed for the visual analysis of New Spanish oil works, specifically those depicting the Virgin. Most importantly, multiplicity is an idea that is deeply rooted in the Aztec culture, which allowed for indigenous artists to exhibit their own agency in their interpretations of Catholic imagery, which they were subjected to by colonization.

Quetzalcoatl, a deity in the Aztec culture, is the patron of Aztec priesthood, learning, and knowledge. His name literally means “Quetzal Feathered Serpent” which shows a distinct connection with this deity and the most prized feathers, also called quetzal. There are many different myths on the conception of the Quetzalcoatl and his adoption of feathers, and I have found discrepancies as to whether or not Quetzalcoatl was patron of the *amantecas*, despite the

clear name association. in the text *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*.^{12 13} For example, Alfredo López Austin lists pre-Hispanic deities that are associated with the district of Amantla and the occupation of *amantecas* to consist of the gods Tizahua, Macuilocelotl, Macuiltochtli, Xihui, Tlati, Xilo, Tepoztecatl, Coyotl, Inahual, Chicomexuchitl, and Xochiquetzal, I agree with López Austin and prefer to attribute patronage of these craftsman specifically to Coyotlinahual, the Aztec patron of featherworkers, which would also link Quetzalcoatl to the popular association of this deity with feathers. Specifically, by noting the story of his transformation from that of a human to a feathered serpent.

Coincidentally, the story of how Quetzalcoatl got his feathers is one that also tells about how Quetzalcoatl died. As recorded in the “Anales de Cuauhtitlan,” three sorcerers had grown tired of Quetzalcoatl because he refused to perform human sacrifices, a traditional duty of the ruler of Tula.¹⁴ And thus, one of the sorcerers hatched a plan for Quetzalcoatl to see his own body and appearance in a mirror. After viewing his naked flesh, Quetzalcoatl was stricken with shame and was unable to appear in front of men. Coyotlinahual, was then called to fashion him a feathered mask and feathered beard that would give him the appearance of the “feathered serpent.”¹⁵ Quetzalcoatl grew confident in his appearance and as a result of the urging from the

¹² These district designations were called *calpulli*, or “self-sufficient collectivity in which the products needed to maintain daily life were produced by its own members... [and of] the existence of groups engaged with specialized tasks and labors.” Alfredo López Austin, and Olivier Guilhem, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl: Religion, Rulership, and History in the Nahua World*, (Colorado: University Press of Colorado: 2015), 59-61.

¹³ This for example is a text that attributes Quetzalcoatl as a patron of *amantecas*. Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, (London: Thames and Hudson Inc. 1993), 23.

¹⁴ The first section of the Codex also referred to as the Codex Chimalpopoca. The city of Tula is also commonly referred to as Tollan. Primo Feliciano Velazquez, ed. *Códice Chimalpopoca: Anales de Cuauhtitlan y Leyenda de los soles*, (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, 1945).

¹⁵ Alessandra Russo, “A Contemporary Art from New Spain” in *Images Take Flight: Feather Art in Mexico and Europe, 1400-1700*, ed. Alessandra Russo, Gerhard Wolf, and Diana Fane (Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2016), 33-34.

sorcerers, Quetzalcoatl became drunk and then embarrassed himself. Due to that disgrace, he decided to leave the city of Tula. While still wearing his outfit of feathers, as described in the *Codex Chimalpopoca*, Quetzalcoatl then traveled to the coast and there sacrificed himself.

And they say as he burned, his ashes arose. And what appeared and what they saw were all the precious birds, rising into the sky. They saw roseate spoonbills, cotingas, trogons, herons, green parrots, scarlet macaws, white fronted parrots, and all other precious birds. And as soon as his ashes had been consumed, they saw the heart of a quetzal rising upward. And so they knew he had gone to the sky, had entered the sky.¹⁶

The birds associated with the death Quetzalcoatl are the same birds whose feathers the *amantecas* used in the work *Weeping Virgin* by Bautista Cuiris (Fig. 1). Bautista Cuiris specifically used the hummingbird, parrot, ibis, and egret feathers in the work, *Weeping Virgin*. The association with feathers of “precious birds” and native divinities shows a significant association between what the natives considered holy and the status of iridescent feathers. This relationship is further stressed when the usage of the plumage is used to construct an image of the Virgin Mary instead of one of the native deities.

In the *Florentine Codex*, Sahagún mentions Quetzalcoatl briefly in the first chapter is seemingly cautious to accept the indigenous tales of Quetzalcoatl, and instead paints him as a “real person, moral and corruptible, an intimate associate of demons, and now consigned to burn in hell by the dictates of divine justice.”¹⁷ This mention of Quetzalcoatl is skillfully the only mention of him in this text, as the Franciscan friar seems to be careful of his role in discrediting the supernatural and divine nature of him.

¹⁶ Primo Feliciano Velazquez, ed. *Códice Chimalpopoca: Anales de Cuauhtitlan y Leyenda de los soles*, (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, 1945), 7:32.

¹⁷ Alfredo López Austin, and Olivier Guilhem, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl: Religion, Rulership, and History in the Nahua World*, (Colorado: University Press of Colorado: 2015), 11.

Another myth related to feather painting in sixteenth-century Mexico comes from the conception of the deity Huitzilopochtli, whose birth closely mimics the Immaculate Conception in Catholicism. The mother of Huitzilopochtli, Coatlicue, who was also known as the mother of gods and symbol of the earth, is commonly depicted as a serpent wearing a skirt and necklace strung with skulls and hearts. The story of Huitzilopochtli's birth begins with Coatlicue being showered by feathers falling from the heavens. As the feathers descended on Coatlicue, she quickly grabbed them and placed them in her waist. From these collected feathers, Huitzilopochtli, god of sun and war, was conceived in the abdomen of Coatlicue and is often represented by the image of a hummingbird.¹⁸ Huitzilopochtli's conception is immaculate because he too was born from a miraculous event.

The "immaculate conception" of Huitzilopochtli from feathers and his representation as a hummingbird shows the continued veneration for fowl by the Aztec culture. The fact that the *amanteca* thus, created works of art that used a great quantity of feathers from these sacred animals, illustrates that the position of the *amanteca*, was one held by a sacred few. This set of associations helps to explain why *plumería* works were reserved for the ruling family. This treasured position within the hierarchy of the society further fortifies value held on both the plumes of birds in the area and that of objects created. These two myths demonstrate a connection between divinities and birds of the pre-Hispanic culture. The association of feathers with the divine illustrates the sacred value of this material and explains why feathers were used in works of art that featured Christian divinities. Just as gold was used in mandorlas to convey the holiness of heaven, feathers were employed in pre-Hispanic culture to express divine value.

¹⁸ Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, (London: Thames and Hudson Inc. 1993), 83.

Moreover, the linear association of quetzal feathers with the deity Quetzalcoatl showed this connection. Just as feathered birds sprouted from the skies at Quetzalcoatl's death; Huitzilopochtli was miraculously conceived out of feathers. Feathers hold transformative properties as do their divine associations. For *plumería* paintings existed then and continued to exist in the period of New Spain as a way to introduce the viewer to the beauty and novelty of the craft, but to also showcase the emotive and transformative status that results in being rendered through *plumería*. Again, this idea is clearly encapsulated in the *Weeping Virgin* by Bautista Cuiris as an example of cultural exchange through the use and form of feather mosaics.

Multiplicity

As per the wish of Franciscan missionaries, the Nahuas eventually adopted the Catholic religion, at least nominally.¹⁹ The main miscommunicated problem of the Franciscan missionaries in synthesizing Christianity into the culture of the natives of Central Mexico stems from their inability to realize the dualistic nature of Nahua culture. Christian ideology is rooted in terms of an order between good and evil, Louise Burkhart explained in teachings as the “superiority of God’s power and his creations to the evil forces;” however, this belief system did not take into account the fact that for the Nahuas this cosmic belief of good and evil did not exist, as will be explained below.²⁰ Louise Burkhart argues that the Franciscan friars viewed the Nahuas of easily molding to Christianity because of the supposed simplicity of their lives and values. The friars believed that they could synthesize this lifestyle with the Christian religion, and thus they ignored large “essential aspects of their thought system.”²¹ This demonstrates the

¹⁹ Nahua is a term used by many historians to refer to people living under the Aztec Empire and who often spoke Nahuatl (but not necessarily always).

²⁰ Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 35-36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36-44.

agency of *tlacuilos*, indigenous painters, whose re-interpretations of Catholic imagery ensured the survival of the memory of the Nahua society. This highlights the complexity of the native hand in the battle against spiritual and visual colonization of the Americas.

The cosmic concept of Nahua multiplicity is further explained in Alfredo López Austin's text *The Human Body and Ideology: Concepts of Ancient Nahuas*, where he states that "Gods did not have absolute individuality. They fused and unfolded; they changed attributes and names... their personalities altered constantly in accordance with the dynamics of the contexts."²² As described by the scholar Louise Burkhart, "Good and evil were phrased metaphorically in terms of the principles of order and chaos, but, since the Nahua did not view good and evil as universal principles, such phrasing lost this aspect of its metaphorical load and become reference to reality as the Nahuas already conceptualized it. The Nahua concept of deity, *teotl*, was retained in essence if not in its object; the Devil was diminished to the status of a sorcerer—superhuman but a poor rival for Europe's Lucifer."²³ Thus, with the arrival of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Nahuas take her image as a dynamci symbol that sees a continuation in this interpretation to the modern day.

Thus, taking into account the multiplicity that is seen in ancient Central America, the myth of the conception of Huitzilopochtli could be translated to that of Christ and Mary. However, while this could provide a possible link in the shift of icon veneration, it is important to note that the Aztec gods are characterized as having a multiplicity of bodies and selves, which

²² When considering the god Quetzalcoatl specifically, he is described as the creator of mankind in some legends as well as one of the four sons of the divine pair (Oxomolo and Cipactonal), but is a times considered to be this same pair or a "dual god" when associated with the "divinity who creates man". Alfredo López Austin, *The Human Body and Ideology: Concepts of the Ancient Nahuas*, (Utah: University of Utah Press, 1988), Vol. 1, 241.

²³ Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 45.

would create a difficult connection to the immaculate conception of Huitzilopochtli and that of Christ as a one to one relationship. Another example of this fact would be the multiplicity seen in the god Quetzalcoatl with his *nahualli* or double, Xolotl, and likewise the veneration of the Virgin.²⁴ Especially in noting that the Nahuatl suffix *-coatl*, translates to mean both “twin” and “serpent”. This can relate back to Catholic ideas of Christ as existing in multiple forms as the a lamb or blood as wine. It could however, describe the relationship between the Virgin of Guadalupe and Tonantzin, the pre-Columbian deity of fertility and earth, a multifaceted figure for the Indians. The connections between Aztec myths and that of the idea of multiplicity shows the existence of ambiguity of the true nature of these deities and allows for the synthesis with divine figures of Christianity.

Guadalupe–Tonantzin

The image of the Virgin Mary was first introduced to the indigenous people of Mexico through the conquering expeditions of America. One of the first Christian images brought to New Spain was of Saint James, to which the native community perceived as having a likeness to Huitzilopochtli, the god of war.²⁵ In contrast to Saint James, the image of the Virgin Mary translated a sense of benevolence and “consolated the vanquished.”²⁶ The beginnings of the Marian cult ultimately fortified through the arrival of the Franciscans, whom were specifically devoted to the Virgin Mary, as argued by Jacques Lafaye.²⁷ The introduction of the icon of the

²⁴ Xolotl is canine god that is often associated with disease and deformity. It is also important to note that dogs in the Aztec culture was negatively viewed; considered filthy and immortal. Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, (London: Thames and Hudson Inc. 1993), 190.

²⁵ Ibid., 226.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Virgin is best explained through a miraculous apparition, which marks the beginning of the cult of Guadalupe.

The Virgin of Guadalupe appeared before Juan Diego, a native Mexican peasant, in December of 1531 on top of the Hill of Tepeyac. She called herself “The Virgin Mary” and requested that a shrine be built in her honor. She revealed herself to Juan Diego two more times, each time pleading for the construction of her shrine. Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico, rejected Diego’s request to build a shrine to the Virgin Mary time after time. On the Virgin’s third appearance to Juan Diego, she instructed him to collect roses from a hill, place them in his cloak, and then open it in front of the archbishop. Diego did as he was instructed and upon the unfolding of the cloak, out cascaded a collection of roses that revealed a painted image of the Virgin imprinted upon the cloth.²⁸ The archbishop acknowledged the miracle and decided to have a shrine built in her name on Tepeyac.²⁹

The Virgin of Guadalupe became a fusion of a shared experience for the Mexican Indians, which allowed for the evolution of her image as a symbol of the emerging *mestizo* nation. The shrine for the Virgin of Guadalupe was not the first shrine to be built on the hill of Tepeyac. The hill had previously belonged to Tonantzin, a Nahuatl word translated as “Our Precious Mother.”³⁰ The word Tepeyac translates literally to “water mountain” or “the

²⁸ The miraculous image is currently located in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, Mexico. The flowers are *Flores de Castilla*, native to Spain. The imprint of the Virgin’s image is a reference to the Veil of Veronica, who set the precedent for apparitions to materialize on clothe.

²⁹ Following this event, Indians would travel to the shrine with food and drink to pay their respects to the Virgin, as is common practice in Aztec culture. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Mexico’s Indians embraced the Christian religion “making the values truly theirs by converting them into indigenous divinities, saints, and rites.” Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, (London: Thames and Hudson Inc. 1993), 144.

³⁰ Jeanette Favrot Peterson, *Visualizing Guadalupe: From Black Madonna to Queen of the Americas*. Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 70.

beginning.” This term alludes to birth, renewal, and to an all-knowing mother. For the natives, the adoption of Tonantzin to the Virgin of Guadalupe was an easy one because of the facilitation of the indigenous ideas of multiplicity. This manifestation is described by Bernardino de Sahagún in the excerpt from the *Florentine Codex* below:

Near the mountains, there are three or four places where they are accustomed to perform very solemn sacrifices and they came to them from very distant lands. One of these is here in Mexico where there is a small mountain, they call Tepeyaca. The Spaniards call it Tepeacquilla; now it is dedicated to the mother of the gods whom they called Tonantzin, which means Our Mother. There they performed many sacrifices in honor of this goddess ... And now that a church of Our Lady of Guadalupe is built there, they also call her Tonantzin, being motivated by the preachers who called her, Our Lady, the Mother of God, Tonantzin.³¹

Despite this noted connection, Sahagún and other members of the Franciscan church deemed the Virgin of Guadalupe as a mere replacement for the Aztecs and equated the worship of the Nahua Mary in association with Tonantzin as a sinister and pagan affair, almost “appear[ing] to be a Satanic invention to cloak idolatry under the confusion of this name, Tonantzin”.³² The same idea is applicable to the actual synthesis of feather works, which embody a synthesis of the new and old world.

The classification of the images of the Nahua Mary with Christian subject matter and as Indian traditions cannot be pigeonholed in this nature, despite other sources and scholars characterizing this amalgam as just that.³³ For succumbing to that ideal would be facile and would completely diminish the reciprocal exchange of art, iconography, and technique between

³¹ Ibid.

³² A 16th century ethnographic research study in Mesoamerican by the Spanish Franciscan Friar Bernardino de Sahagún. The Medici family gained possession of the document by Ferdinando de' Medici and shows the transatlantic exchange of ideas from Mexico to Europe. Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: A General History of the Things of New Spain*, translated by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012), Introduce and Indexes, 90.

³³ Alessandra Russo, “A Contemporary Art from New Spain” in *Images Take Flight: Feather Art in Mexico and Europe, 1400-1700*, ed. Alessandra Russo, Gerhard Wolf, and Diana Fane (Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2016), 29.

Mesoamerica and Europe. The above myths show a relationship between feathers and the biblical stories, which demonstrated a connection of influences between Europe and New Spain. This synthesis would also in part deny the power of agency and identity that the natives exerted through their portrayal and adaption of the image. As the Marian cult grew in New Spain, painters such as Juan Correa, José de Ibarra, Juan Rodríguez Juárez, Nicolás Rodríguez Juárez, and Miguel Cabrera, adopted the Western techniques of oil painting and changed the status of artists.

The Image of the Virgin

This image is currently housed in the Basílica de Guadalupe, in Mexico, Mexico City. The miraculous image of the Virgin of Guadalupe depicts the Mary standing on the central vertical axis with a slightly bowed head and hands folded in a gesture of prayer (Fig. 5). She is standing on top of a half crescent moon held aloft by a cherub. This angel's outstretched arms barely grasp the corners of the Virgin's green-blue cloak and rose tunic. The moon seems to either be floating in the center of the work or resting slightly on the wings of the cherub. The radiance of the Virgin is quite literally alluded to by the golden rays of sun materializing from behind her. The image shows two distinct sources of light: one that originates from the golden aura that shines from behind the figure and the other that shines directly onto the figure producing shadows in her drapery. The golden aura of light is referred to as a mandorla, or in other words defined as a full body halo of light. This radiance along with the golden rays appear in this and future renditions of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

This miraculous image is what established the basic iconography of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Traditional iconography would consist of how her face and hair, mantle and tunic, hands, medallion, sun, moon, and angel are depicted. The new image features a brown skinned

Virgin, who would change the entire idea of religiosity of New Spain. She is specifically a *mestizo*, a term that refers to a person of combined European and indigenous descent, which is based on her brown complexion which shows a synthesis between Spain and New Spain was depicted in a visual way. The Virgin of Guadalupe is also traditionally depicted with downcast eyes to show humility and her hair is loose underneath her mantle. The rose-colored tunic that the Virgin wears patterned with petaled flowers with gold pigment. Her mantle is typically a bluish-turquoise shade that is covered in stars. Both the color of her mantle and tunic symbolize royalty and allude to a heavenly importance. The Virgin's hands are clasped in prayer and a black ribbon tied either around her belly or hanging from her folded hands. Hanging from her neck is a circular medallion that in different reproductions include an engraving of a cross. This could symbolize a connection between the Virgin of Guadalupe and that of Jesus Christ. Behind the figure of the Virgin are traditionally rigid rays of the sun. She also stands on a dark colored crescent moon. Lastly, there is a singular angle with outstretched arms that lifts the Virgin up to the heavens. The angel holds a corner of her mantle in its left hand and a corner of her tunic in the other. The angel's head then rests on the crescent moon. The wings of the angel are tricolored and also bears a darker skinned complexion.

The likeness of the Virgin of Guadalupe was transformed over the years to resemble a brown-skinned idol, as she is seen in the modern-day context. This image was made to resemble the biotype of the indigenous population and was crafted with these characteristics for this fact specifically.³⁴ The Virgin became a protective divinity of the region, because she was the first religious Christian symbol that is so specifically Mexican. As described by Jacques Lafaye, the

³⁴ Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl And Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531-1813*, (Chicago: The University of the Chicago Press 1976), 36.

Virgin “came to signify the salvation of the New World, a world chosen to be the site of a renewed Christendom—renewed even if not completely new”.³⁵ The Indians were able to rediscover their devotion to the concept of Tonantzin, through this new religion. For just as Tonantzin symbolized an earthly and motherly veneration, the Virgin Mary promised salvation and redemption.

First Representations of the Immaculate Conception in New Spain

During the evangelical period in New Spain (ca. 1524-1620), mendicant and missionaries who worked in the viceroyalties drew upon indigenous traditions of sacred imagery as a way to teach images that reflected Christian teachings. Other than *plumería*, another medium that was used were mural paintings and illustrated manuscripts. New Spanish Franciscan friars explained “imagery communicated concepts in visual form, which, ... facilitated native understanding of the faith; the images certainly bridged gaps while the clerics learned native languages”.³⁶ New Spanish religious imagery includes the life of Christ, the apostles, saints, martyr’s and the Virgin Mary. The mural painting, *The Immaculate Conception*, by an anonymous artist from the Franciscan Covenant of San Miguel de Huejotzingo, Mexico from ca. 1500 would have been used for religious indoctrination (Fig. 6). The image is executed using a grey-scale palette, devoid of richer colors. Kelly Donahue-Wallace argues that the prominence of grisaille imagery in New Spanish mural paintings “may have reflected the woodcuts and engraving that provided models for indigenous artists ... and made an emphatic distinction between Christian paintings and the colorful pagan murals and manuscripts of Mesoamerican tradition.”³⁷ In the mural,

³⁵ Ibid., 227.

³⁶ Kelly Donahue-Wallace, *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America: 1521-1821*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), 35.

³⁷ Ibid., 43.

Mary's gaze is turned downward towards the earth, although in traditional iconography, she looks at the heavens. Her hair hangs loosely and she wears a halo constructed of twelve stars. Mary is depicted wearing a mantle and tunic, but due to the black and white palette it is difficult to differentiate the coloration of the drapery. Mary is depicted with hands joined in prayer placed in the middle of her body. She stands on a crescent moon and is placed underneath a painted half-figure of the God the Father with his left hand raised. He is placed underneath a scroll that is inscribed "TOTA PULCHRA ES AMICA MEA ET MACULA NON EST IN TE" (You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you).³⁸ Clouds create a mandorla that enhances the celestial light radiating behind Mary. Within these clouds are symbols and emblems that are traditionally associated with the Immaculate Conception and Mary's purity, each of them inscribed on a scroll. Above these are the image of the Sun with a scroll inscribed "ELECTA VT SOL," a star with a scroll inscribed "STELLA MARIS," a crescent moon with a scroll inscribed "PVLCHRA VTI-VNA," and the Tower of David with a scroll inscribed "TVRRIS DAVID." Other attributes this same style. Symbols are depicted in a cedar tree, an olive tree, the city gate of paradise, a rose bush, a mirror, a fountain within a pool, and a heavenly city. Flanking the sides of Mary are the representations of The Dominican Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Franciscan Duns Scotus who promoted the devotion to the Immaculate Conception. This mural image of the *Immaculate Conception* is one of many found in New Spanish monasteries and convents that helped transform these sites into teaching spaces. These murals served as public and accessible mode of exposing Christian doctrines to the natives. Similarly, on a smaller scale, images of the Immaculate Conception from illuminated manuscripts also served a similar

³⁸ The New International Version of the Bible, Songs of Solomon 4:7.

purpose, including the *Rule Book of Monasterio de la Concepcion de Nuestra Senora*, 1594, from Toledo, Spain (Fig 7). The illustration of the Immaculate Conception depicts Mary in the center of the work with hands joined and gazing at the earth. Her tunic is red and her mantle is a deep blue. She stands on a crescent moon with golden rays radiating from behind her are labeled with scroll inscriptions. Similar to the mural painting, Mary is surrounded by symbols that indicate her purity. This page from the manuscript bears a striking resemblance to the mural discussed above and shows a consistency in the representations of the Immaculate Conception in Spain and New Spain.

Through a deeper analysis of representations of the Immaculate Conception, as exposed to in New Spain, will show that depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe using a simplification of form was a deliberate choice by New Spanish painters and as a result of artistic ability.

Image Descriptions and Analysis– Plumería, Murillo, y Cabrera

The Virgin of Guadalupe is clearly influenced by the iconography and representations of the Immaculate Conception, as depicted by Spanish and Flemish artists. Their works were exposed to the native population. One peculiar aspect to the creation of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is that New Spanish artists had the ability and skill to paint in the methods and techniques of these Old Masters and yet, they chose to depict the Virgin of Guadalupe in a simplified and almost linear form. In order to track these changes in a chronological aspect, it is necessary to analyze the following works to see how the representations of the Virgin Mary change: *Virgen de Guadalupe*, ca. 1600-1700 by an anonymous artist, *The Immaculate Conception of El Escorial*, 1660-1665 by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, and *Immaculada* 1751 by Miguel Cabrera.

Virgen de Guadalupe of ca. 1600-1700 is a work by an anonymous artist that is comprised of copper, amate paper, and feathers from Michoacán, Mexico (Fig. 8). The title of the work is an attributed title based on the known iconography of the Virgin of Guadalupe. As one of the only known images of a full-bodied Virgin of Guadalupe constructed in *plumería*, *Virgen de Guadalupe* was most likely constructed as a tool for teaching Catholicism and for the familiarization of the image with the native population.

In this image, the Virgin's head is slightly tilted and her gaze looks downward to the earth or the devotee from the heavens. Her hands are clasped in prayer to show her deep veneration. The Virgin wears a mantle and a tunic that are heavily outlined by black feathers, but her clothes do not follow the traditional coloration of the Virgin's garments. Instead, her mantle and tunic are depicted with different shades of brown feathers that create depth with the tones of the plumage. However, the dye of the feathers could have worn off and become discolored with time and poor conservation efforts. Light and shadow changes are illustrated by changing the coloration of the feathers, as seen in the tunic of the Virgin; where there is a shift from a deep and dark brown to a half-tone and finally to a light brown that alludes to the highlight. Despite the brown tones in the Virgin's clothes, the underside of her mantle appears dull blue. One interesting aspect of this work, that is scarce in other representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the early 1400s, is the depiction of stars on her mantle. Traditional iconography of the Immaculate Conception shows Mary with a crown of twelve stars and a star on her mantle over her left breast, but it is not until the Virgin's apparition to Juan Diego in 1531 that images of the Virgin with a starry mantle become more prolific. In this image of the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, the small diamond shapes on the Virgin's mantle can be interpreted as stars, an icon attribute that will later be an essential visual indicator of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The simplification of the

star forms to diamonds could be due to the small scale that the *amantecas* were working in and the difficulty of representing such complex forms in feathers. The Virgin is depicted centrally, standing on a half-moon with rays radiating from her body and clouds surrounding her to create a mandorla. She is held up to the heavens by a cherub with colored wings and a pale red shirt. The clouds surrounding the Virgin show a varying assemblage of feathers: blue, white, and brown. The representation of the blue feathers in the mantle and in the background of the Virgin indicate that these craftsmen had access to these feathers and were conscious of their use in Marian depictions, but it presents a question as to why they did not decide to create a more expansive use of the blue color to fit the traditional iconography of the Virgin. The mandorla created by the clouds that surround the Virgin is contained by a thin border of black, yellow, and red feathers that outline an open space of intricate patterns of floral detailing. This established pattern frames the image and shows a certain level of skill. Those added embellishments emphasize the importance of this work.

The overall style of the feather painting of Mary shows a reliance on line and a simplification of the figures. The thick contour lines are especially apparent in the rays that originate behind the figure. The sharp angular triangles are outlined with black to create shadow and emphasis. The drapery of the Virgin is presented in a similar fashion, with either gold or black feather used to suggest dimension to an otherwise flat figure. Similar to Phillipp Thomassin's *Weeping Virgin* from 1590, *Virgen de Guadalupe*'s simple style could be based on an etching or drawing of the figure, which was then translated into the *plumeria* technique. It is also interesting to note the difference between the radiance and the use of color in the mantle of the Virgin with Thomassin's work and this image. The simplification of the forms in this work may also indicate the work of a student or beginner. Since the work has no known artist its exact

intents and purposes are obscured. This piece is also connected to *plumería* because that its own framing is constructed out of feathers. As one of the earliest representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe using a feather medium, there is an evident exchange of Christian figures and native techniques.

Miguel Cabrera– Un Pintor Mexicano

Mestizo artist, Miguel Mateo Maldonado y Cabrera or more commonly known as Miguel Cabrera, was born in 1695 in New Spain Antequera. Cabrera studied under art and techniques under Jose Ibarra and the Rodriguez Juarez brothers.³⁹ In 1746, the Virgin of Guadalupe a patroness of the entire colony of New Spain, highlights the impact that the image had on New Spain and how devotion towards her increased. From 1749-1756, Cabrera served as the official painter to the archbishop of Mexico, Rubio y Salina, which is especially significant because during this service, devotion to the Marian image gained even more popularity as did access to her image. On December 12, 1751, the formal coronation ceremony for the Virgin of Guadalupe in Tepeyac celebrated her as the “Universal Patroness of this Kingdom of New Spain.”⁴⁰ A year after the Virgin’s coronation, Cabrera was permitted access to the icon of the Virgin of Guadalupe to make three copies: one for the Archbishop José Manuel Rubio y Salinas, one for the Pope, and one as a model for future reproductions of her image. Having been given this special permission, Cabrera wrote the famous text in 1756 of *Maravilla Americana, y conjunto de raras maravillas, observadas con la dirección de las regales de el arte de la pintura en la prodigiosa imagen de Nuestra Sra. de Guadalupe de Mexico* (American Marvel, a collection of

³⁹ Jose Ibarra was a Mexican painter born in 1688 in Guadalajara, Mexico. He was a main influencer of the New Spanish style.

⁴⁰ In order to commemorate the Virgin of Guadalupe’s coronation, previous images of the Virgin that depicted her wearing a crown had to be painted over and later repainted after her official coronation.

rare marvels, observations with the attention to the rules of the art of painting in the prodigal image of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Mexico), which was based on his early study of the icon of the Virgin of Guadalupe.⁴¹ In this work, Cabrera explores the image from an artistic standpoint, specifically the materials and techniques that were used for its creation, which resulted in the reaffirmation that this image was indeed a miraculous endeavor. In fact, as a conclusion to the short survey of the Virgin, Cabrera states:

Hizelo afsi, y à mayor abundamiento, lo di à la cenfura de otros tres de quienes me conftaba fu fuficiencia, y que han vifto à la Santa Imagen con aquel cuydado, y fpeculacion baf tante á dar fu parecer en efte affumpto; pues, aunque hai otros Pintores de conocido credito en Mexico, no me confta el que la ayan vifto, como los antecedents, cuyos pareceres pongo aqui, paraque en todo tiempo hagan fee. Todo cede en honra, y gloria de Dios, en culto, y veneración de nueftra Santifsima Madre, y en comprobación de fu Maravillofa, y celeftial Pinura.

Doing it like this and to the greatest abundance, I gave it to the approval of other three whom have given me the pride and have seen the Sacred Image with careful attention and who speculate sufficiently to be able to give their opinion on this subject; well, even though there are other known and credited Painters in Mexico it does not convince me they have seen her, like the predecessors, whose opinions I put so that at all times there will be faith. Everything is relinquished in honor and in the glory of God, in the cult and veneration of our Most Holy Mother, in the verification of her Marvelous and celestial Painting.⁴²

Cabrera's survey was conducted after the Pope had given his formal confirmation for the Virgin of Guadalupe to be the "Patroness of the Entire Kingdom" in 1754. Cabrera's painted reproductions of the Virgin coupled with his study of the image would serve as a template for future renditions of her image. In the final and eighth chapter of the *Maravilla Americana*,

⁴¹ This treatise would be consulted by New Spanish artists and painters alongside Spanish and Italian treatises. This document holds a particularly important role in that it is the only 18th century documented treatise that was published and produced by a local New Spanish artist.

⁴² My translation of the text into Modern Spanish. My translation of the text into English. Cabrera, Miguel. *Maravilla Americana, y conjunto de raras maravillas, observadas con la dirección de las Reglas del Arte de la Pintura en la prodigiosa imagen de Nuestra Sra. De Guadalupe de Mexcio*. (Mexico City: Imprenta del Real, y más Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, 1956), 30.

Cabrera details the design aspects of the Virgin of Guadalupe, including a description of each of her facial features, the nature of her tunic, and her stance on the half moon.

Cabrera's *Maravilla Americana* was the turning point for New Spanish artists to be seen as painters and not craftsman, as previously viewed by the Europeans. The classification of *Indio* artists as craftsman was rooted in both Western notions of alterity and in an effort to discredit any agency or creativity of these artists. This label was also supported historically; when looking at the *Florentine Codex*, an artist of *plumería* was an *amanteca*, i.e. craftsman. Cabrera's humbling tone attributes the help, scholarship, and corroboration of other painters in Mexico in the quote above to both nod to a growing area of painterly masters, but to also equate their art with that of a higher power. And thus, it is this text that elevates the status of artists in New Spain, because they are analyzing this miraculous image as a product of God. This marks the validation and classification of artists with a capital A: Artists.

Sevillian artist Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's *The Immaculate Conception of El Escorial* of 1660-1665 captures a pure and alluring version of Mary (Fig. 9). In this representation, Mary is a young and virginal woman whose typical symbols in the context of Immaculate Conception are reduced to the bare essentials. She stands centrally in the composition with hands clasped in prayer and her head raised to the heavens. She stands in a slight contrapposto with the left knee bent, as demonstrated through the folds of the fabric. Her hair is loose and cascades down. Mary wears a white tunic and an ultramarine blue mantle that billows from behind her. This mantle obscures her feet and the left side of the up-turned moon. The depiction of the mantle by Murillo creates movement, which pushes Mary higher into the heavens and detracts from the centrality of the figure within the composition. In *The Immaculate Conception of El Escorial*, the Virgin is surrounded by a radiance of light that is created through a soft golden yellow color. There are no

hard rays that emit from behind the figure, rather the luminosity of the heavens blends with the clouds that surround Mary. The actual angels are harder to distinguish from the clouds and full-bodied cherubs are depicted in the bottom right-hand corner of the work. They blur together to create both an atmospheric presence and a hazy mandorla around the Virgin. These angelic figures while not necessarily holding up the Virgin to the heavens, show a transitional precedent to the depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe being held up by a singular angelic form. The moon, lilies, and a palm leaf are still present to help distinguish the narrative, but the work is more focused on Mary as a stand-alone figure. Mary stands on a half-moon that is turned with its points towards the sky. The moon itself is a white or ivory color that matches Mary's tunic. Murillo carefully encapsulates the Immaculate Conception's message of hope, purity, and glory of the Virgin Mary through the simplification or omission of symbolic elements in other renditions of the Immaculate Conception such as José de Ribera's *The Immaculate Conception*.

There are many differences and similarities between the European Immaculate Conception and the Mexican Guadalupe. The similarities: Hands are usually either depicted in prayer or are in a cross shape placed over her chest and gazing upwards to the heavens. Mary is usually placed in the center of the composition with a slight bent in the right foot to create an "S" curve. Consistent with other depictions of the Virgin Mary, she is always shown having ivory skin and long light brown or blonde hair flowing loosely from behind her. The white tunic with an ultramarine blue mantle that usually billows from behind or to the sides of the Virgin to create an illusion of movement and to counter the centrality of the placement of the figure; a twelve-star halo is typically depicted around or above the head of the Virgin and other typical symbols of the immaculate conception include a serpent, palm tree, lilies, tower of David, globe/orb/mirror, dove, star (singular and not usually on the mantle). An oval-like mandorla is sometimes shaped

by the clouds and putti that surround Mary, but always softly depicted in a way that ties together the composition, never with harsh or simplified lines. Putti are usually grouped either around Mary, the half-moon, or in the clouds on the sides of her.

With the elements of the European style of depicting the Immaculate Conception in mind, it is easy to see those influences immediately in Miguel Cabrera's *Immaculada* of 1751 on oil on canvas (Fig 9). Considering Cabrera's version of the Immaculate Conception, it is possible to see how this piece is skillfully developed with the influence of European Spanish painters from the 1600s. And also poses the question of why the depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe which are later copied, remain in such a simple and linear fashion if New Spanish artists had the technical skills to present a more realistic and naturalistic version of her?

Unlike Murillo's *The Immaculate Conception of El Escorial*, Cabrera's *Immaculada* inserts all of the typical symbols of the Immaculate Conception: a spotless mirror/orb/earth, stem of white lilies, and a palm branch next to David's tower, instead of simplifying the overall work. Again, Mary's gaze is upwards facing with eyes looking up to the heavens; her facial expression shows an exercise of prayer an acceptance for God will receive her in heaven and this work directly depicts the physical world *assuming* her into heaven. Her hair falls loosely and flows from her head. Her hands are joined in a prayer in near her right breast. Mary is pictured in the middle of the composition dressed in the traditional white with a blue mantle that billows from around her body. The mantle moves diagonally higher and like Mary is rising to the heavens. The drapery of her blue mantle moves from behind the left side of her body and floats diagonally on the right side. The diagonal nature of her mantle offsets the centrality of the work as a whole. Her ultramarine blue mantle billows in the wind and is covered with either silver or white stars. This star mantle is important in that it shows a relationship with the starred mantle in the

depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe and presents a clear connection in the influences of one to the other. A connection this connection could perhaps be made when comparing the *plumería* piece *Virgen de Guadalupe* and the its faint portrayal of a starry mantle and this one by Cabrera. The mantle's ends are a seemingly brown, perhaps a faded yellow or golden pigment. The flowing nature of the clothe, again, helps distract the centrality of the composition and moves the viewer's eyes upwards to the heavens. In this piece, there is also a clear representation of the earth and the process of Mary assuming her stop in Heaven, which shows a clear and direct sense of movement unlike other works. A faint halo of golden light draws attention to her halo, which is constructed out of twelve stars form a crown around her head, but in this image, the crown portrayed as a flat ring around her head showing no dimension. Hovering above the head of Mary a dove or a representation of the Holy Spirit. At the feet of Mary, a serpent is a common symbol of Satan and evil. Lastly, the globe/orb/sphere under the feet of Mary, it is a sign of redemption. In this piece, the grouping of the cherubs is similar to Murillo's work in that there starts to be more of an emphasis on their placement at the foot of the Virgin rather than that of the snake or the orb. Cabrera's soft brushstrokes are fundamental in understanding and considering his artist skill.

When looking at another of Miguel Cabrera's works, *Virgen de Guadalupe*, 1743, oil on canvas, the simplicity of the overall composition between the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin of Guadalupe is immediately apparent (Fig. 11). These similarities behind the depiction of the Virgin of Guadalupe and that of the Immaculate Conception are shown in the stance of Mary, the drapery of her mantle and tunic, in some instances a twelve-pointed crown, a radiant mandorla, a cherub, and the half-moon. Cabrera does not shy away from the formal aspects of

Guadalupe's typical iconography, but rather portrays the Virgin of Guadalupe in an almost exact copy of the initial miraculous image (Fig. 4).

In Cabrera's *Virgen de Guadalupe*, Mary is a stagnant figure that rises into the heavens. In this work, her hands are clasped in prayer as she gazes downward towards Juan Diego and to the earth. Rather than looking upwards towards the heavens in a state of bliss, the Virgin's attention is directed towards Juan Diego to emphasize her compassion and nurturing characteristics also to the viewer. The Virgin is depicted ascending into heaven, but her downward gaze helps cultivate an intimate relationship between the native viewer and the Catholic message, for it maintains the Virgin's role as a mother. Mary wears a rose pink or light red tunic with an ultramarine blue mantle covered with stars that drapes over her head, clings close to her body, and shows no sign of movement or definition of the drapery. The Virgin is surrounded by a clean and linear oval-like mandorla. The undulations of the clouds that help frame the mandorla are simplified and perfectly rounded semi-circles. There is no attempt to include any realistic elements in the depiction of the clouds or atmospheric space, unlike that seen developed in Cabrera's *Immaculada*. As a whole, the piece has a flatter plane and is only concerned with depicting depth in the folds of the drapery.⁴³

In this work, the Virgin held up by one cherub under the half-moon, holding Mary's mantle in the left hand and the tunic in the right hand instead of being surrounded and supported by multiple putti. In this work, the Virgin is crowned to represent her status as the Universal Patroness of New Spain and likewise, an indicator of the prominence and importance that was

⁴³ The Virgin of Guadalupe did not have her formal coronation ceremony as the Universal Patroness of the Kingdom of New Spain until December 12th, 1751, or eight years *after* this completion of this work. In preparation for the Virgin's official coronation, Cabrera painted over this image to remove the crown and then added it back in after her ceremony.

forming around the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Since the natives were used to seeing *plumería* works which in general consisted of more simplified, geometric lines and flatter planes, an argument could be made for those elements to have been adopted in the later representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe. But also presents a question of why depictions of the Virgin Mary in other representations were shown as having more realistic features.

Miguel Cabrera– La Virgen de Guadalupe ca. 1700

With the establishment of a proposed progression and development of the depictions of the Virgin, from the Immaculate Conception to the Virgin of Guadalupe, a closer look into Miguel Cabrera's *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, ca. 1700, oil on canvas laid on wood, is an excellent example of the New Mexican style of the depiction of the Virgin with direct European influences (Fig. 12). In this work and similar to previous depictions of the Virgin, Mary is standing frontally with hands clasped in prayer. She gazes downward as if in a deep meditative state. The skin-color of the Virgin of Guadalupe is a revolutionary factor that may have caused a lot of appeal and could have contributed to the cult of Guadalupe. Traditionally, Christian religious figures have been depicted with European features; i.e. light skin, blonde hair, blue or green eyes, slender face shapes. These representations were created with facial features that would resemble and relation to the white European population of region. With the beginning of the proliferation of images of the Immaculate Conception in New Spain, it was found that the portrayal of such white figures did not accurately reflect the native population, for they simply did not adhere to those European physical ideals. Therefore, images of the Virgin of Guadalupe feature her skin-tone as brown with dark black hair as a calculated effort to create a visually physical connection to the native population of New Spain as seen in this work *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. The depiction of the Virgin Mary with ashen skin and darker hair was not the only shift of image with

the introduction of Catholic images in New Spain as seen in Miguel Cabrera's *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, ca. 1700.

The Virgin's tunic is painted a green-blue color that mimics the blue of the quetzal feathers, which are native to this region of New Spain. Her dress is a salmon colored pink and like the tunic had gold gilded on top of the painted fabric. The gilded gold detailing of floral patterns on her dress coupled with the golden stars of the tunic bring attention to the divine power of the Virgin. In this work, the repetitive image of flowers shows a connection of the Virgin to that of her miraculous apparition to Juan Diego.⁴⁴ Unlike the miraculous image of the Virgin, this work plays with vivid color by saturating all of the tones on the canvas and emphasizing her holiness through the use of gold leaf rays coming out from behind her body. It is important to note the angular and triangular nature of the rays that emit from her body. A singular cherub that is lifting the Virgin into the heavens is also depicted in a darker shade; brown skin, dark hair, and dark colored eyes. The representation of the cherubs with brown skin changed visually and subtly enhanced the idea of creating an image *for* and *of* the indigenous population. In New Spain, the traditional depictions of fair-skin, blue eyes, and blond hair did not reflect that of the native people. In order to make the veneration of such Catholic figures stronger, it became necessary for a native person to see their selves portrayed and represented in the art. Instead of donning blonde hair, blue eyes and slender faces, the angels have a rounded physical features, dark hair and brown eyes.⁴⁵ Their noses are also rounded and shy away from the elongated facial nature of the Europeans. The figures do their best to resemble the features of

⁴⁴ The flowers depicted on the tunic of the Virgin are actually Castilla flowers that are native to Spain. They would not have grown locally or have been easily obtained in New Spain at this time, especially when noting that Juan Diego presented the Castilian roses to the Spanish-born Bishop Don Juan de Zumárraga y Arrzola in the winter month of December. This both emphasizes the miracle nature of the event and a Spanish exchange of materials.

⁴⁵ This was the typical mode of representation of in Renaissance and religious works.

the native population while still instilling the racial hierarchy of fair-skinned beauty.⁴⁶ These changes in the representation allow for the indigenous people to see their likeness reflected in these images and better envision themselves as aligned with the Catholic religion.

However, the cherubs surrounding the meta-images are shown as having light skin and brown hair and eyes. Visually showing an “inclusive” nature to their depiction, but still highlighting lighter skin as a heavenly ideal by showing that as a presence and a preference. The clouds surround the Virgin’s body upon which are the images of four more cherubs that hold up a meta-image.⁴⁷ Each of the meta-images depict the miraculous apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe and are intended to be read from left to right, starting with the top left image and then reading the bottom two. The meta-images begin with the apparition of the Virgin to Juan Diego and an angel directing Diego to realize the holy presence of the Virgin on top of the hill of Tepayac. The following meta-images, show the process of Juan Diego discovering the Virgin and unfurling a mantle in front of the Bishop Zumárraga to get approval to be able to build the Virgin of Guadalupe a shrine. Despite the painted image of the Virgin being on a smaller scale in the four meta-images, the gold gilding used for the rays on her tunic is still translatable and presents a layer of grandeur. It is particularly impressive to see the amount of detail that underwent in creating thin and angular rays of light radiating from the mandorlas within each meta-image.

At the bottom of Cabrera’s piece there is the Latin inscription “Non fecit taliter omni nationi” which translates to “He has done this for no other nation”, referring to the power that the

⁴⁶ Examples of this blatant hierarchical society can be seen in casta paintings. Casta is a term that was used to describe people of mixed race in South America during Spanish colonial rule. Miguel Cabrera was an artist who painted many of these ‘educational’ works.

⁴⁷ *Meta-image*— A term coined by me.

very image of Guadalupe had to the nation of New Spain.⁴⁸ This shows a Godly predicate for the validation of the apparition of the Virgin as real and connects back to Cabrera's *Maravilla Americana*, that he would write years later to corroborate the heavenly origin of the miraculous image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is an extremely powerful one, whose history needs to be decoded. The image of this Virgin in particular is one that symbolized both oppression and resistance and acts as a reminder of the spiritual conquest. The Virgin of Guadalupe is an image that is as Michael Schreffler describes as one that is “entangle[d] in the conventions of colonial historiography” and history which are continuously becoming relevant in the modern-day as we engage with this image.⁴⁹

Modern Day Reflections

The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe has been widely adopted as a sign of the nation of Mexico in the modern-day context. Her image, like at the turn of the revolution with Hidalgo, was used as a symbol of liberation and as one that encompasses Mexico's national identity. As the United States' history became associated with that of Mexican-Americans, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe has become a symbol of both the ever-changing Mexican identity and one of Mexican cultural heritage. One of the examples of this is to see how the Chicanx community has re-appropriated this image in works such as Alma Lopez's *Our Lady*, Yolanda Lopez's *Tableaux Vivant* and the Guadalupe series, and Ester Hernandez's *Wanted* to reflect their personal relationships and experiences with the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. These works

⁴⁸ The New International Version of the Bible, Psalm 147:20.

⁴⁹ Michael Schreffler, “Their Cortés and Our Cortés”: Spanish Colonialism and Aztec Representation,” *Art Bulletin* 91 (2009), 415.

implement the idea of the collective transfer of memory over time, but do so in a simplified explanation of the image. The continued use of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe shows the how modern and contemporary rhetoric and iconography research creates a distorted view of the role and agency of the indigenous Aztec painter. That is why with the images produced by Lopez, Lopez, and Hernandez created such a stir in audience responses, because they are contemporary vehicles of visual representation of history, space, and culture of Mexico's history. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe has been transformed to carry a whole new meaning and has become a romanticized version in the present-day context. The intent of the "creation" of this image stemmed from a purely religious intent but has evolved over time to adopt an entirely different idea of meaning; for the romantic concept of the artistic subject is connected with meaning and authorship. In thinking about the future and the uses of the images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, does the idea of the meaning of her image line up with the changing public perceptions of her? Has the Virgin of Guadalupe become an *object* of imaginary compensation? And how does this fit within the larger context of border relations of Mexico and the United States in the modern-day?

Regardless of the answers to the proposed questions on the role of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the present-day, the interchange between iconography from Spain to New Spain can be seen through the representation of both the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin of Guadalupe. From the beginnings, producing images of Mary in the tradition of *plumería* to the transition of oil painting; the merging to these two mediums show a sense of agency from the native Mexicans in New Spain and a synthesis of cultures. Through an analysis of visual representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe in post-colonial New Spain, the agency of pre-Hispanic artists midst spiritual and physical conquest of the Americas clears shows the

complexity of indigenous artists and similarity the intricacies of de-coding relationship between Mexico and Spain.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cabrera, Miguel. *Maravilla Americana, y conjunto de raras maravillas, observadas con la dirección de las Reglas del Arte de la Pintura en la prodigiosa imagen de Nuestra Sra. De Guadalupe de Mexcio*. Mexico City: Imprenta del Real, y más Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, 1956.

Couto, José Bernardo. *Diálogo sobre la historia de la pintura en México*. 1860-61. Edited by Manuel Toussaint. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1947.

Pacheco, Francisco. *Arte de la pintura, su antigüedad y grandezas...* Seville: Simón Fazardo, 1649.

Secondary Sources

Bray, Xavier, Alfonso Rodriguez G. de Ceballos, Daphne Barbour, and Judy Orzone. *The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600-1700*. Exh. Cat. London: National Gallery, 2009.

———. *Colors Between Two Worlds: The Florentine Codex of Bernardino de Sahagún*. Edited by Gerhard Wolf and Joseph Connors in collaboration with Louis A. Waldman. Florence: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Conover, Cornelius. "Reassessing the Rise of Mexico's Virgin of Guadalupe, 1650s–1780s." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 27 (2011): 251-79.

D'Agostino, Paola. "Neapolitan Metalwork in New York: Viceregal Patronage and the Theme of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 43 (2008): 117-30.

Donahue-Wallace, Kelly. *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America. 1521-1821*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011.

Fane, Diana, ed. *Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America*. Exh. Cat. Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum; New York: Abrams, 1996.

Gruzinski, Serge. *Painting the Conquest: the Mexican Indians and the European Renaissance*. Paris: Flammarion, 1992.

Hibbard, Howard. "Guido Reni's Painting of the Immaculate Conception." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 28 (1969): 19-32.

- Hills, Helen. "Iconography and Ideology: Aristocracy, Immaculacy and Virginity in Seventeenth-Century Palermo." *Oxford Art Journal* 17, no. 2 (1994): 16-31.
- Hyman, Aaron M. "Inventing Painting: Cristóbal de Villalpando, Juan Correa, and New Spain's Transatlantic Canon." *Art Bulletin* 99.
- Jeanette Favrot, Peterson. "The Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest of Liberation?" *Art Journal* no. 4 (1992): 39.
- Jeanette Favrot Peterson. "Creating the Virgin of Guadalupe: The Cloth, the Artist, and Sources in Sixteenth-Century New Spain", *The Americas* 61 (2005): 571-610.
- King, Heidi. ed. *Peruvian Featherworks: Art of the Precolumbian Era*. Exh. Cat. New York. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012.
- Lafaye, Jacques. *Quetzalcóatl And Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531-1813*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- López Austin, Alfredo and Olivier, Guilhem, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl: Religion, Rulership, and History in the Nahua World*. Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2015.
- Mues Orts, Paula, ed. *El Arte Maestra: Traducción novohispana de un tratado pictórico italiano*, Mexico City: Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, 2006.
- Mues Orts, Paula, ed. "Merezca ser hidalgo y libre el que pinto lo santo y respetado: La defensa novohispana del arte de la pintura", In Cuadriello, *El Divino Pintor*, 29-59.
- Painting in Latin America, 1550-1820*. n.p.: New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2014.
- O'Connor, Mary. "The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Economics of Symbolic Behavior." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28, no. 2 (1989): 105-19.
- Peterson, Jeanette Favrot. *Visualizing Guadalupe: From Black Madonna to Queen of the Americas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014.
- Pierce, Donna. *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life 1521-1821*. Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2004.
- Russo, Alessandra, Gerhard Wolf, and Diana Fane, eds. *Images Take Flight: Feather Art in Mexico and Europe, 1400-1700*. Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2016.
- Russo, Alessandra. *The Unstoppable Image: A Mestizo History of the Arts in New Spain, 1500-1600*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014.
- Sánchez Lora, José Luis. *Mujeres conventos y formas de la religiosidad barroca*. Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1988.

- Stevens-Arroyo, Anthony M. "The Evolution of Marian Devotionalism within Christianity and the Ibero-Mediterranean Polity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 1 (1998): 50-73.
- Taylor, William B. "The Virgin of Guadalupe in New Spain: An Inquiry into the Social History of Marian Devotion." *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 1 (1987): 9-33.
- Vargas Lugo, Eliza. "La vida de María." In Martínez del Río de Redo and Estrada de Gerlero, *Juan Correa: Su vida y su obra*, vol. 4, (1994): 75-101.
- Villaseñor Black, Charlene. *Trade Networks and Materiality: Art in the Age of Global Encounters: 1492-1800*. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, February 2015.
- Young, Eric. "Claudio Coello and the Immaculate Conception in the School of Madrid." *The Burlington Magazine* 116 (1974): 509-15.

Images



Figure 1:
Juan Bautista and/or Juan Cuiris, *Weeping Virgin*, 1590/1600 century
hummingbird, parrot, ibis, egret feathers, paper; wood, gilded/ mosaic.
Inscribed *Iuanes Cuiris Feci Michuac[an]*
Feathers on copper; 25.4 x 18.2 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



Figure 2:
Weeping Virgin
Philippe Thomassin, 1590
Engraving after Guilio Clovio; 25.4 x 18.2 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



Figure 3:
Map of Tenochtitlan and the Gulf of Mexico from Cortés' Second Letter
Anonymous, 1524
Pigment on parchment
The Newberry Library, Chicago, United States



Figure 4:
 Amanteca in the Florentine Codex: Book 9, folio 65v
 Bernardino de Sahagún, c. 1577-1579
 Pigment on leather or paper
 Laurentian Library, Italy, Florence



Figure 5:
Virgin of Guadalupe: tilma image
Anonymous, 16th century
Oil and tempura on cloth; 171 x 109 cm.
Basilica de Guadalupe, Mexico, CDMX

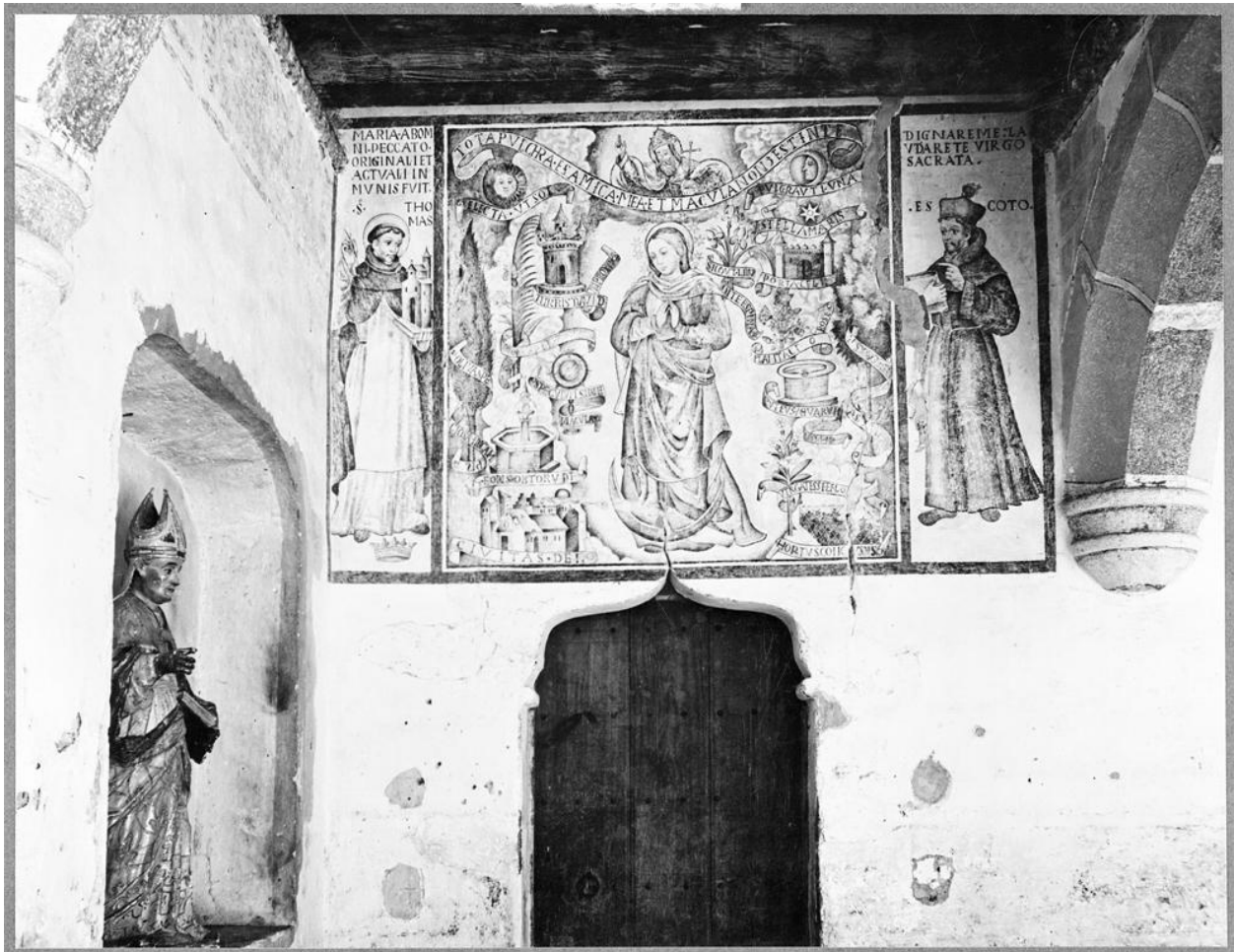


Figure 6:
The Immaculate Conception
Mexican School, ca. 1500
Fresco
Franciscan Convent of San Miguel, Huejotzingo, Puebla, Mexico



Figure 7:
Rule Book of Monasterio de la Concepción de Nuestra Señora
Monastery in Toledo, Spain, 1594
Pigment on parchment
Index of Christian Art, Princeton University



Figure 8:
Virgen de Guadalupe
Anonymous, ca. 1600-1700
Copper, amate paper, feathers; 30 x 21 cm.
Michoacán, Mexico
Museo de América



Figure 9:
The Immaculate Conception of El Escorial
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1660-1665
Oil on canvas; 206 x 144 cm.
Museo del Prado



Figure 10:
Immaculada
Miguel Cabrera, 1751
Oil on canvas, 184 x 123 cm
Museo de América



Fig. 11:
Virgen de Guadalupe
Miguel Cabrera, 1743
Oil on canvas; 80 x 53 cm
Mexico
Museo de América



Figure 12:
La Virgen de Guadalupe
Miguel Cabrera, ca. 1700
Oil on canvas laid on wood; 46.7 x 33.7 cm.