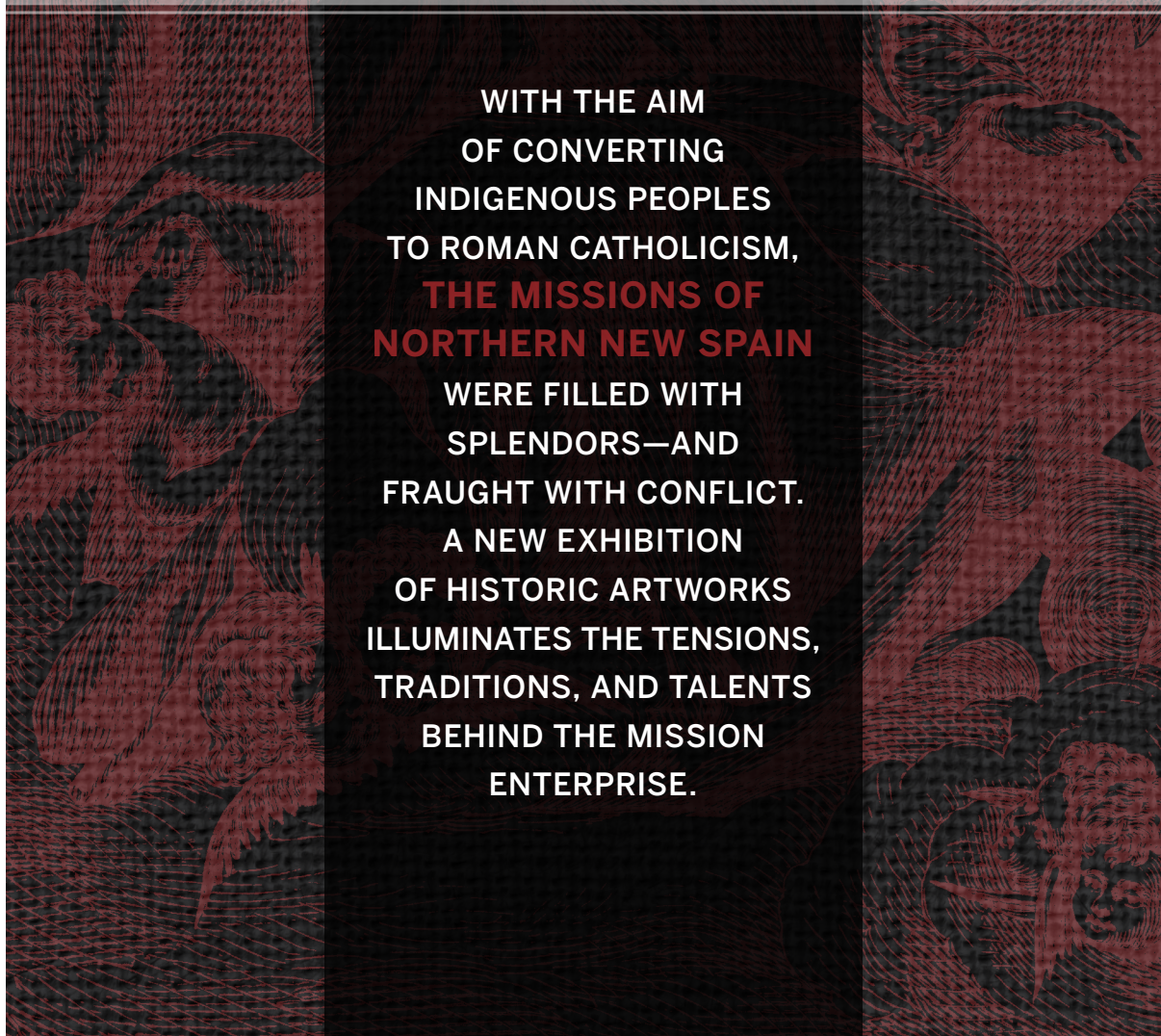




# ARTICLES OF FAITH

WITH THE AIM  
OF CONVERTING  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
TO ROMAN CATHOLICISM,  
**THE MISSIONS OF  
NORTHERN NEW SPAIN**

WERE FILLED WITH  
SPLENDORS—AND  
FRAUGHT WITH CONFLICT.  
A NEW EXHIBITION  
OF HISTORIC ARTWORKS  
ILLUMINATES THE TENSIONS,  
TRADITIONS, AND TALENTS  
BEHIND THE MISSION  
ENTERPRISE.







Opening spread: Luis de Mena, *Virgin of Light with Native Devotees*, 1769–1772. This spread, clockwise from above: Cristóbal de Villalpando, *The Mystical City of God*, 1706; José de Mota, *Our Lady of Joys*, 1711; Anonymous, *Virgin of Loreto*, mid-18th century; Anonymous, Chumash, *Basketry Bowl with Heraldic Designs*, early 19th century.

**+ IT'S THE RARE CALIFORNIAN** who hasn't visited at least one of the state's Spanish colonial missions or studied them in school. When *Splendors of Faith/Scars of Conquest: The Arts of the Missions of Northern New Spain, 1600–1821* opens in the Oakland Museum of California's Great Hall on February 26, audiences will have an unprecedented opportunity to explore the larger cultural and historical context in which the rich, expressive arts of those missions developed.

"Although many aspects of the history of the missions have been studied, very little attention has been paid to the paintings, sculptures, and other objects that were sent to the missions or made there during the Spanish period," says curator Clara Bargellini, Ph.D., of the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Bargellini spent more than ten years planning the exhibition with curator Michael Komanecky, Ph.D., of the Farnsworth Art Museum, under the auspices of Mexico City's Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, in collaboration with four other institutions.

*Splendors of Faith/Scars of Conquest* includes more than 110 objects drawn from collections and religious institutions in Mexico, the United States, and Europe. It is the first exhibition to bring together artworks from all the regions of northern New Spain, an area that included not only present-day California but also Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and Florida, as well as the Mexican states of Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Nayarit, Sinaloa, Sonora, Durango, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and Baja California.

From the time Hernán Cortés captured Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) in 1521 and members of religious orders began arriving in New Spain, conversion to Roman Catholicism was central to the goals of colonization. The

### *Splendors of Faith/Scars of Conquest*

opened at the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso in 2009 and traveled to the San Antonio Museum of Art, Puebla's Museo Amparo, and the Centro Cultural de Tijuana before arriving at OMCA, its final stop. **The show will remain open through May 29.**







mission enterprise proceeded in three phases. "Franciscan friars took part in the first Spanish expeditions northward from Mexico City, and before the end of the century they had established missions in New Mexico," explains Bargellini. "In 1591, the Jesuits reached Sinaloa on the Pacific Coast and began the establishment of a mission system that would eventually reach the Northwest Territories. When the Jesuits were expelled in 1767, the Franciscans remained as practically the only missionaries in the North." During the final stage of mission work, these Franciscan friars, led by Fray Junípero Serra, founded the twenty-one missions of Alta California between 1769 and 1823.

The shadow cast by the fraught relationship between the Spanish colonizers and the indigenous peoples they sought to convert underlies the exhibition. Some of the oldest objects in the show are maps and studies—often produced by the missionaries—of Native languages and cultures. In the California missions in particular, Native artisanship was especially present, and indigenous techniques such as basketry, wood, and shell work from the California missions survive today.

Much of the other work in the exhibition was created by fine artists in Mexico City, by master craftsmen in the different



regions of the missions, by artisans in Europe and Asia, and by the missionaries themselves. Paintings and sculptures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and various martyrs were central images inside the mission churches and were believed to have protective, mystical powers. Rich liturgical vestments and ceremonial objects of valuable materials such as silver were used in the mass and other religious rituals. As the mission enterprise grew, so too did the splendor of the altarpieces and other objects used in the missions; the level of monumentality and complexity reached its apex in some of the churches of Alta California.

"Art is about how individuals express themselves within cultural traditions—for themselves and for others," says Bargellini. "The missions were contested ground in many different ways, and the art produced in or for them can help us understand what different people—missionaries, colonists, and different indigenous groups—may have been feeling and thinking at the time the missions were established and continued to function."

Opposite page, top: Joseph Rubio, *Antiphonal (Choir Book)*, c. 1800. Bottom (and on cover): Anonymous, probably Chumash, *Tabernacle*, 1789.



Above: Alma Lopez, *Our Lady*, 1999. Right: Ester Hernandez, *Wanted*, 2010.

## CONTEMPORARY CODA

Artists reinterpret the legacy of the Spanish conquest

**+ HALF A MILLENNIUM** has passed since the Spanish conquest of California, but its indelible impact continues to inspire and provoke contemporary artists and thinkers.

To illuminate contemporary perspectives on this highly charged subject, OMCA is presenting a companion installation to *Splendors of Faith/Scars of Conquest*, in which artists offer new takes on age-old themes, legacies, and iconographies.

"The Spanish conquest is not a simple history, and it's not a dead time period," says Louise Pubols, chief curator of history. "This show is our way of bringing the story forward. Some visitors may find certain works difficult or unsettling, but as a museum, we need to be a safe place where people can ask unsafe questions."

Many of the artists in the contemporary section are self-identified Chicanos and Native Californians. Their work is deliberately provocative and searingly relevant, such as a new print by Ester Hernandez that depicts the Virgin of

Guadalupe as a terrorist wanted for giving aid to illegal immigrants. Other featured artists include Alma Lopez, Marian Martinez, and Harry Fonseca.

"Some of the artwork is critical, and some is devotional," says Drew Johnson, associate curator of photography, who organized the exhibit. "Our goal is to offer divergent points of view, as a kind of coda to *Splendors of Faith/Scars of Conquest*."



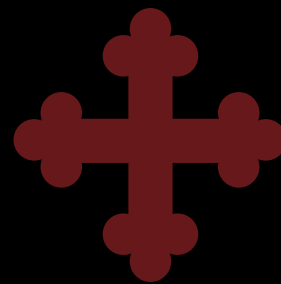




## THE SHADOW CAST BY THE FRAUGHT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SPANISH COLONIZERS AND THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THEY SOUGHT TO CONVERT UNDERLIES THE EXHIBITION.



This exhibit was originally organized by the Mandato Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso. The Mandato Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso receives financial support and is composed of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (CNCA), and the Gobierno del Distrito Federal (GDF). The organizers and museum participants express their deepest appreciation to CNCA, the UNAM, the INAH, and the INBA for their generous collaboration. Furthermore, the organizers recognize the valuable support provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art, which is dedicated to promoting the exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States for national and international audiences. By recognizing the importance of experiencing original works of art, the foundation provides opportunities for interaction and study, beginning with the introduction and growth of its own art collection in Chicago. To continue the cross-cultural dialogue over American Art, the foundation supports and collaborates on innovative exhibitions, as well as investigative and educational programs. Inherent in these activities is the conviction that art has the potential, at the same time, to distinguish and unite cultures. Additional support for the project came from the United States Embassy in Mexico and the UNAM-PAPYT. This exhibition has been made possible locally by generous grants from the Goldsbury Foundation, the William and Salomé Scanlan Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additional support came from Myfe White Moore. The Oakland Museum of California presentation is made possible in part by generous support from the Oakland Museum Women's Board and the OMCA History Guild.



## THE MISSIONS IN CONTEXT

OMCA's History Gallery  
examines Spanish  
colonialism in California

**+** AFTER VIEWING *Splendors of Faith/Scars of Conquest*, visitors may be curious to learn more about the Spaniards' enormous impact on California. A visit to the Gallery of California History, which offers a wealth of contextual information, will answer many of their questions.

For example, *The Spaniards Take This Land*, an interactive exhibit in the Gallery, engages visitors to learn about the diversity of things and ideas the Spanish brought with them to California. There is information on the many physical items they introduced, including plants, animals, and crafts, as well as explanations of how the Spanish influenced law, economics, and religion. The Gallery also features many artifacts from the mission era, including portraits, weapons, tools, and maps.

"One thing that visitors often find very intriguing is our large map of the Spanish empire," says Louise Pubols, chief curator of history. "The map puts California in a global context. And many people realize for the first time that California was only a small part of a much larger empire."