

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER GENERAL  
CANADIAN WORLD EXHIBITION, MONTREAL, 1967  
800 VICTORIA SQUARE, Suite 2022  
MONTREAL, P.Q., CANADA. AREA (514) US 1-1776

## THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

### SANTOS

In the United States the Spanish word Santo, meaning "saint" or "holy", refers to a body of religious painting and sculpture produced between the middle of the 18th century and the end of the 19th century by Americans of Spanish descent living in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado - the old Rio Arriba. It has been called the most important manifestation of folk art in this country, and is, in fact, the only non-Indian religious art native to it.

Santo is a generic name in Spanish for any sacred image. The word santero in New Mexico is applied to one who made them, and santeria is a workshop where they were made. A sculpture in the round, such as these displayed in the U.S. Pavilion, is a bulto, usually carved in sections from the soft root of the cottonwood tree, coated with gesso made of burned gypsum and animal glue, and painted in water soluble tempera, sometimes covered with a native rosin varnish. The pigments were partly imported from Mexico (vermilion and cochineal for reds, indigo for blue), partly native (yellow and brown from oxides, carbon black).

The first santos in New Mexico naturally were carried north from Mexico. Few are known to survive dated before 1690. The village of Santa Cruz, north of Santa Fe, was established in 1695 as the second settlement in New Mexico. It is here that native religious sculpture appears to have been born; and in this valley were created some of the finest examples. Not long after this, another center of activity sprang up in Taos. Typical of this area are highly personalized figures with such naturalistic effects as wigs of human hair, selenite eyes and simulated teeth, ribs and fingernails. Joints are usually articulated with cloth or rawhide to permit dressing since many bultos were designed to be clothed. Other distinctive styles of santos carving developed in Arroyo Hondo, just north of Taos, Canjilon, the village of Mora and in southern Colorado. One of the most famous New Mexican woodcarvers of recent times was Jose Dolores Lopez of Cordova, New Mexico, who died in 1938.

The Puerto Rican Santos included in this exhibit date from the 16th century. Their history follows the same pattern as those from the New Mexico area. However, Puerto Rican figures are found usually to be smaller in size than their western counterparts. Unfortunately, very little is known of the individual history of these santos; however, their beauty and individuality add a wider dimension to this imaginative and appealing American folk art.

## 2. TOTEM POLE (cont'd)

pride and wealth. It is impossible to "read" the designs because the significance of each figure is determined by the owner and not in accordance with any general system. The carver arranges the figures on a pole in accordance with his taste, and not in the order in which they appear in the story or genealogy. Even the sequence of figures on two poles telling the same story is not identical.

The pole illustrated tells a family legend. Raven dives to the bottom of the ocean finds totem poles at the home of Killer Whale, and with the aid of various creatures brings one to the surface and gives it to the Indians.

Loaned by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, United States Department of the Interior.

## 3. INDIAN WEATHERVANE

This ten-foot high weathervane is "St. Tamany" - a large Indian wearing a feather headdress and holding a bow and arrow. It has been simplified to be recognizable from a distance.

Loaned by The Museum of Early American Folk Art.

## 4. GRANITE EAGLE

The value of this sculpture is \$2,500.00. This piece of statuary was a gift of the Pennsylvania Railroad, through the courtesy of Mr. Stuart T. Saunders, Chairman of the Board to the National Zoological Park and Smithsonian Institution. From 1910 to 1965, this granite eagle was one of 22 birds that graced the old Pennsylvania Station in New York City which was designed by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White. The statue was placed in the National Zoo on June 23, 1965. Its composition is granite ranging from light gray to pink gray in color. It weighs 5,700 lbs. Its measurements are: width of eagle, 72", height of eagle and base, 64", height of eagle, 58". The center claw of each foot extends 2½" over front of the base. The wings extend 10" over sides of the base. The statue has a rough sand-like texture finish.

The Pennsylvania Railroad Station, one of the best known buildings in New York City, will be torn down and replaced by a huge "Palace of Progress" building. The new building will have space for wholesale markets, offices, and some 200 permanent exhibits from many countries. The old building fills 7½ acres of midtown Manhattan and serves some 200,000 train passengers a day.

## 5. ADIRONDACK GUIDEBOAT

The typical Adirondack guideboat is an exceptionally light rowboat, sharp at both ends, and between about 14 and about 16 feet long. Boats of this kind were developed and built in the

6. St. Joseph

Over the years, attributes accompanying carved santos have often been lost. Here San Jose or St. Joseph still retains the Christ Child, a painted leather crown and his flowering staff. This is from the Medina family chapel in Arroyo Hondo.

7. St. Bonaventure

Another santo from the Medina chapel, obviously by the same anonymous hand as St. Francis and St. Joseph in adjoining cases. San Buenaventura was a Franciscan mystic who became a cardinal of the Church, and official biographer of St. Francis. In his hand he holds a book inscribed, "San Buena Ventura."

8. St. Joseph

One of a number of small, elegant figures of unknown authorship from the Santa Cruz Valley between Taos and Sante Fe. San Jose retains here a metal crown, but has lost the Christ Child normally carried on his arm, and the traditional flowered staff.

9. St. Raymond Nonnatus

Overall height 26" Another bulto by Jose Rafael Aragon, one of the most famous New Mexican Santeros, for the chapel of Our Lady of Talpa. San Ramon Nonato (1204-1240), the Unborn, was so named for having been delivered by Caesarian section after the death of his mother. At an early age he was sent by the Order of Our Lady of Mercy to ransom Christian captives of the Moors in Algiers. He underwent torture and imprisonment, and upon his return to Spain was made a cardinal. He refused the trappings of office, however, and in Spanish-American art is usually shown bareheaded, wearing a simple cloak and holding a monstrance and palm. Here he is more formally attired, and the palm has become an umbrella-like sceptre.

10. Our Lady of Talpa

The village of Talpa, N.M., appears to have been named after a shrine in southern Mexico dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. The figure of Our Lady seen here is from a family chapel dedicated to her in 1851. The artist was Rafael Aragon of Cordova, N.M.

11. The Holy Trinity

Height 8". For centuries the Byzantine concept of La Santisima Trinidad as three identical personages flourished in western Europe beside the one commonly accepted today, showing God and Christ in human form but the Holy Spirit

The Holy Trinity (cont'd)

as a dove. In 1745 it was forbidden by Pope Benedict XIV, but the decree seems never to have reached New Mexico. Giving the three figures a united body was not a local invention, but is traceable to the 13th century. The chain reinforces the idea of unity.

12. Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Protectress of Mexico, as she appeared to the shepherd Juan Diego in 1531, naturally became one of the favorite representations of the Virgin in New Mexico. She wears a star-spangled robe; the cherub at her feet once supported a crescent moon.

13. St. Liberata

A purely mythical saint supposed to have been a virgin martyr of the 3rd century. She is little known in Mexico, but became quite popular in the area around Mora, N.M., in the mid-19th century. Outside Spanish art she is often shown bearded.

14. St. James the Greater

Spanish art has portrayed Santiago, a national hero of Spain, on horseback for centuries, and it is in this form that he appears in New Mexico as the patron of soldiers. This much repaired figure, however, is one of but three known carvings.

15. Our Lady of Sorrows

Small in stature, this representation of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores expresses poignantly the sorrow of the Mother of Christ at the foot of the Cross. It is by the same unknown artist as the figures of St. Joseph and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

16. Our Lady of the Rosary

The remarkable feature about this example is the elaborate floral decoration on the robe. It should be remembered that the religious folk art of the Spanish Southwest contains many more paintings than sculptures.

17. The Holy Family

Height 17½". Late 19th century, from Mora, New Mexico.

18. St. Isidore the Husbandman

According to legend, San Ysidro Labrador was a humble

St. Isidore the Husbandman (cont'd)

farmer of 12th century Spain, so devout that angels did his ploughing while he prayed. The narrative element is rare in Spanish-American art. Even here, the difference in scale tells us that the angel and oxen are simply the saint's attributes.

19. St. Michael the Archangel

San Miguel was among the saints for whom St. Francis had a particular devotion, and thus became popular among his followers. The faces beneath his feet represent the fallen angels he cast out of Heaven. Missing from his left hand are the scales used in weighing souls.

20. St. Barbara

With Acacius and Liberata, also shown here, Santa Barbara formed a trio of imaginary but popular saints in New Mexico, out of a total of more than sixty. She was supposed to have been a Roman virgin martyr, and was revered as the protectress against fire and lightning.

21. Crucifixion

Sts. Mary and John are the traditional figures at the foot of the Cross. When used by the Penitente brothers in a morada or meeting house in the upper Arroyo Hondo, the figure of Christ was clothed in a white cotton skirt and petticoat.

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