

February 5, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## THOMA FOUNDATION AWARDS \$159,000 TO SPANISH COLONIAL SCHOLARS

### INAUGURAL RECIPIENTS OF THE MARILYNN THOMA FELLOWSHIP IN SPANISH COLONIAL ART ANNOUNCED



From left to right: Katherine Moore McAllen, Catalina Ospina and Verónica Muñoz-Nájar Luque

**CHICAGO, IL** – The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation will award \$159,000 in fellowships and research grants to six scholars studying Spanish colonial art, the artistic legacy of the convergence of native cultures and the Spanish Empire from 1492 to the independence movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in present-day Latin America.

In the first award of its kind, three fellowships will be distributed the inaugural year; two pre-doctoral fellowships of \$45,000 each, and one \$60,000 post-doctoral fellowship. Additionally, the Foundation will distribute three short-term travel awards.

“After deliberate consideration, and in consultation with over 80 academics working with Spanish colonial art, we created these awards to directly respond to the needs of the field – resources we knew didn’t exist elsewhere, but were strongly desired by scholars,” notes Carl Thoma. “We are thrilled with the results. The six scholars the jury selected are each accomplished, dynamic thinkers, and we are proud to be supporting their diverse and novel work,” he continues.

The \$60,000 post-doctoral fellowship is awarded to **Katherine Moore McAllen**, Assistant Professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande, who will produce a book manuscript examining how winemaking in colonial Mexico and Peru helped fund the production of art and the decoration of churches. Examining this intersection of economic history, art history, and cultural exchange on the Spanish colonial missions, McAllen explains, “I have found that Spanish and indigenous landowners, who owned and operated vineyards, became powerful and

influential patrons who actively played a role in the artworks chosen to decorate chapels in Jesuit churches. The Thoma Fellowship will provide me with the crucial time and space I need to finish my research and prepare a monograph.”

Pre-doctoral fellow **Verónica Muñoz-Nájar Luque**, a PhD candidate at University of California, Berkeley, will receive \$45,000 to conduct research on the unexamined imagery of the Amazon communities, collectively referred to as “Chunchos,” that inhabited Peru’s tropical lowlands during the viceregal era. Muñoz-Nájar Luque’s research will take her to several sites in Bolivia and Peru, as well as to Spain and Italy, where many of the Spanish Empire’s archives are housed. “My project seeks to rethink the representation of marginal Amazonian communities beyond the traditional Eurocentric and nationalistic colonial frameworks. The Thoma Fellowship will allow me to highlight the role that the tropical lowlands played in the colonial imagination as the ultimate exotic frontier for both European and Andean populations,” states Muñoz-Nájar Luque.

**Catalina Ospina**, a PhD candidate at the University of Chicago, will also receive a \$45,000 pre-doctoral fellowship to support her study of the native Andean image-making practice of *mopa-mopa*. *Mopa-mopa*, or more commonly *barniz de Pasto*, is a unique laquer-like resin that comes from the leave buds of the *Mopa-mopa* tree. Native Andeans boiled and chewed the resin to clean it and mix-in pigments. The resin substance was then stretched by hand into thin sheets, which were cut and pasted to form complex compositions for inlay in wooden objects. Ospina will be the first scholar to analyze the process of making *mopa* images, relating it to better-known oral traditions of the Andes, such as chewing corn to make *chicha* or corn beer, or chewing coca leaves to relieve hunger and stimulate mental activity. “It is a great asset to have my work validated by the only award that is solely devoted to Spanish colonial art,” Ospina states.

Additionally, the Thoma Foundation is also pleased to announce the recipients of its **Research and Travel Awards** in Spanish colonial art. **Jennifer Baez** (PhD candidate, Florida State University), **Emily Floyd** (Lecturer, University College London) and **Paul Niell** (Associate Professor of Art History, Florida State University) will all receive stipends for self-designed research projects that involve travel to the Caribbean, Chile and Peru.

The 2019-20 fellows were selected from a competitive pool of international applicants on the basis of their academic accomplishments, their commitment to the field of Spanish colonial art and the relative merit of their project. All awardees were chosen by an international jury of three undisclosed experts in the field.

Inspired by the Thoma Foundation’s collection of over 130 works of art from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries from the Viceroyalty of Peru and the Kingdom of Nueva Granada, the **Marilynn Thoma Fellowship** and the **Thoma Foundation Travel Awards** are the first awards of their kind to devote significant and unrestricted funding to scholars whose projects will make a significant contribution to the understanding of colonial Spanish American art and its history.

## MISSION

The Carl & Marilynn Thoma Art Foundation recognizes the power of the arts to challenge and shift perceptions, spark creativity and connect people across cultures. We lend and exhibit artworks from our collection and support innovative individuals and pivotal initiatives in the arts.

## CONTACT

Erin Fowler  
[erin@thomafoundation.org](mailto:erin@thomafoundation.org)  
312-254-3368

Thoma Foundation  
875 N. Michigan Ave.  
Suite 1310  
Chicago, IL 60611

[www.thomafoundation.org](http://www.thomafoundation.org)

####