

12-1-2009

IMAGINING THE NOBLE AND LOYAL CITY: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIOMBO FRANZ MAYER

Madalena Consuelo Salazar

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/arth_etds

Recommended Citation

Salazar, Madalena Consuelo. "IMAGINING THE NOBLE AND LOYAL CITY: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIOMBO FRANZ MAYER." (2009). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/arth_etds/35

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art & Art History ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Madalena Consuelo Salazar
Candidate

Art & Art History
Department

This thesis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality
and form for publication:

Approved by the Thesis Committee:

Roy Hernandez-Duran

, Chairperson

Erin P. Acl

David Crowen

**IMAGINING THE NOBLE AND LOYAL CITY:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIOMBO FRANZ MAYER**

BY

MADALENA CONSUELO SALAZAR

**B.A. ANTHROPOLOGY (ARCHAEOLOGY)
ART HISTORY, MINOR
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2003**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Masters of Arts, Art History
Department of Art & Art History**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July 2009

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My utmost gratitude goes to my thesis chair, Professor Ray Hernández-Durán for your mentorship, and assistance with my scholarship. You inspire me with your groundbreaking approaches to art history, and you are always ready to encourage my academic and professional development.

I would also like thank my committee members, Professor Kirsten Buick, and Professor David Craven. Professor Buick, you believed in me when I could not see past academic obstacles. Professor Craven, you are a steadfast supporter of your students, and your extensive knowledge has challenged me to see global histories in a new light.

Thank you to all of my friends, old and new. Also to those in my department who not only listened to my ideas and offered suggestions, but were also there to share frustrations, and encourage perseverance. I am especially grateful to Lissa Dehring, Liz Olton, Emmanuel Ortega, and Meghan Tierney. Furthermore, muchisimas gracias to my thesis/dissertation writing group: Veronica Calvillo, Lissa Dehring, Chalane Lechuga, Patricia Perea, Christopher Ramírez, and Annette Rodríguez – I could not have motivated myself without your help. In particular, Annette who always had an encouraging word, a helping hand, and scrutinizing eye for editing.

Gracias a mi gente de Project for New Mexico Graduates of Color and the Raza Graduate Student Association, and El Centro de la Raza - seguramente me hubiera perdido en el camino durante la maestría. I am also pleased that we could support each other through the successes in addition to the obstacles. I hope that your organizations remain an inspiration to many future UNM graduate students.

Greatest thanks are due to my the members of my family – in particular my grandmother, Elma, my mother, Judith, and my Aunt Consuelo who taught me and my prima-hermana, Natalie, the importance of education. Your love and support means everything.

**IMAGINING THE NOBLE AND LOYAL CITY:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIOMBO FRANZ MAYER**

BY

MADALENA C. SALAZAR

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts, Art History
Department of Art & Art History

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July 2009

IMAGINING THE NOBLE AND LOYAL CITY:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIOMBO FRANZ MAYER

by

Madalena C. Salazar

B.A. Anthropology, University of New Mexico, 2003

ABSTRACT

The “decorative arts,” of New Spain had, until recently, been peripheral in art historical discourse. Current scholars have begun to widen the lens of interpretation to include new spheres of influence and objects that defy traditional disciplinary classifications. One such object is the *Biombo Franz Mayer*, a viceregal *biombo*, or folding screen. Although useful for elucidating larger themes, recent studies have de-contextualized the *Biombo* by regarding the object in terms of group identity or as a representation of colonized spaces. Building on previous scholarship, this thesis will reintroduce the object’s context, and through formal and iconographic analyses, study the screen holistically. This thesis constitutes an extended proposal for future in-depth explication of the use of material objects in the elite domestic space and their impact on public visual culture and sociopolitical policy.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Anonymous	Hispano-Filipino cabinet	Inlaid wood	1680-1700 C.E.	3	
Figure 2.	Anonymous	<i>Biombo Franz Mayer: Conquista de México</i>	o/c	1680-1700 C.E.	5	
Figure 3.	Anonymous	<i>Biombo Franz Mayer: La muy noble y leal Ciudad de México</i>	o/c	1680-1700 C.E.	5	
Figure 4.	<i>Salon de estrado</i>				52	
Figure 5.	José de Alcívar	<i>Retablo, Santuario de Guadalupe</i>	Santa Fé, NM	o/c	1776-1796	54
Figure 6.	Miguel González	<i>Biombo de la conquista de México</i>	o/panel with shell inlay	1698.....	56	
Figure 7.	Anonymous	<i>Codex Xolotl</i>	Pigment on amate	16 th cen.....	62	
Figure 8.	Albrecht Altdorfer	<i>The Battle of Darius and Alexander</i>	o/c	ca. 1529	64	
Figure 9.	<i>Mirador</i> Alhambra Palace Granada, Spain					

13 th -15 th cen.....	66
Figure 10.	
Anonymous	
<i>Cordoban</i>	
Leather, dye, gold	
n.d.....	67
Figure 11.	
Charles leBrun	
Vaux-le-Vicomte, Salon of the Muses (interior)	
Maincy, France	
1661.....	69
Figure 12.	
After Giulio Romano, Gobelins	
<i>The History of Scipio, Conquest of Carthage</i>	
Wool and silk tapestry	
1688-89	71
Figure 13.	
Juan Gómez de Trasmonte	
<i>Map of Mexico City</i>	
Painted engraving	
ca. 1628.....	78
Figure 14.	
Anonymous	
Kyoto View Screen, left screen	
Ink and gold on paper	
Edo Period, 17 th cen	80
Figure 15.	
Anonymous	
Kyoto View Screen, right screen	
Ink and gold on paper	
Edo Period, 17 th cen.....	80

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER ONE	2
INTRODUCTION: ISSUES, QUESTIONS, REVIEW OF LITERATURE	2
Issues and Questions	2
Literature Review.....	10
CHAPTER TWO	39
METHODOLOGY	39
Modes of Analysis and Interpretation.....	39
Formal, Iconographic and Comparative Analyses.....	41
CHAPTER THREE	47
OBJECT OF STUDY: FORMAL, CONTEXTUAL, AND COMPARATIVE	
ANALYSIS.....	47
Introduction.....	47
Formal Analysis.....	50
Contextual and Comparative Analysis.....	55
CHAPTER FOUR.....	85
CONCLUSION.....	85
Synthesis	85
Further Research	90
APPENDIX A.....	93
Inscriptions in <i>Conquest of Mexico</i>	93
APPENDIX.....	94
Inscriptions of the <i>Vista de la Ciudad de México</i>	94
REFERENCES	96

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: ISSUES, QUESTIONS, REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Issues and Questions

Seventeenth-century elite commissioned material objects of varied media; their selection and use referenced local histories, diverse economic influences, and political jurisdiction. In a period marked by sociopolitical unrest, territorial expansion, and the fear of a growing miscegenated population in New Spain, elite objects that were used in daily Novohispanic life were a mode of representing and reifying the values of the group. Among them we find repeated themes, like the Conquest of Mexico, or emblems such as crests of the nobility, common to Hapsburg period,¹ as well as Novohispanic portraiture, narrative painting, and household items like tapestries, metal and ceramic dishes, and folding screens, among other items (fig. 1). Traditionally, scholars have tended to assume that such work conveys Spanish authority in New Spain. However, when we speak of elites utilizing material objects as tools to convey a message of imperial authority, we have not asked where they were used, or who would have had access to these objects. Who would have been presenting these objects, and for what intended audience? Large-scale, public objects (like architecture) accessible to a wide audience would have easily conveyed the message of colonial power structures. But what of the numerous commissioned objects with limited audiences housed within the walls of elite

¹ The Hapsburg period in Novohispanic refers to the period between 1521 and 1700.

residences? How should we interpret these often small-scale and private works as conveying Spanish colonial dominance to the population at large, if only a select group



Figure 1
Anonymous, Hispano-Filipino cabinet, inlaid wood, 1680-1700 C.E.

would have been able to view them? It seems we need to focus the study on the immediate context, use, and audience of quotidian objects. Utilizing the *Biombo Franz Mayer* as a case study, I will explore how Novohispanic elites imagined and presented their relationship to each other by constructing a history and territory in Tenochtitlan/Mexico City through quotidian objects within the particular areas of their socially constructed domestic space.

Within the urban space of colonial Mexico City, objects of material culture proliferated and became the props in the performance of identity and power relations. These objects were polysemic in terms of their interpreted meaning; as familiar presences in daily life, they also took on layered meanings based on their use and subsequent reception by various spectator-participants. This M.A. thesis is an introduction to the study of one such object utilized in the domestic space of an elite Novohispanic home. This work is a late-seventeenth-century *biombo*, or folding screen, entitled, *La muy noble y leal Ciudad de México* that currently resides in the Museo Franz Mayer in Mexico City (figs. 2, 3).² From this point forward, I will refer to this work the *Biombo Franz Mayer*, abbreviated as *BFM*, particularly because we cannot be sure the phrase from the inscription would have been understood as a title. When literature expounds upon the *BFM*, either in terms of artistic ties to viceregal economics or creole identity, scholars have tended to remove the work's subject matter from its constituent parts to discuss grand trends in viceregal art. While these are important contributions to the field, I believe it is crucial not to simply explore the object as one example of a larger genre, nor focus on the themes represented within the imagery of the *BFM*, but instead to study the

² The title given here is taken from the inscription on the *BFM*. It describes the panorama of Mexico City on one side of the screen.



Figure 2
Anonymous, *Biombo Franz Mayer: Conquista de México*, o/c, 1680-1700 C.E.

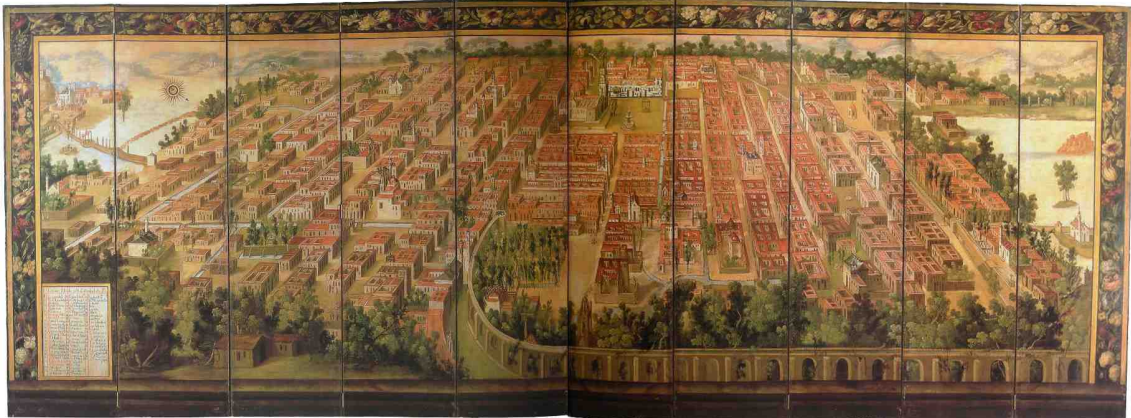


Figure 3
Anonymous, *Biombo Franz Mayer: La muy noble y leal Ciudad de México*, o/c, 1680-1700 C.E.

entire form of the work and how the object functioned within its more immediate context—its domestic space. I believe that the object’s complexity necessitates further scrutiny than it has been afforded; through such an exploration we can begin to answer questions regarding the reception of and complex interaction between Novohispanic presentation of material culture and the elite social practices of the late seventeenth century.

In the study of Novohispanic visual culture,³ there is scant, albeit growing discussion about the use, presentation, and reception of objects. Conspicuously absent is a discourse surrounding objects that functioned in the [elite] domestic sphere. Scholars have asked few questions about how objects functioned within the context of display, who were the ideal audiences, who had access to them, or why certain formal and iconographic choices were made in the production of objects. Some scholars have made brief note of what objects were found in viceregal elite interiors, and Michael Schreffler’s recent contribution has discussed the Viceregal Palace interior representation of the king’s symbolic presence in New Spain.⁴

The BFM is a luxury object of Asian derivation and localized subject matter, and as such would have been legible to an audience familiar with painting conventions that derived from local and international sources. During this time period, both wealthy

³ For the most part, I will be using the phrases “visual culture” and “material culture,” interchangeably throughout the thesis, unless specifically discussing methodological approaches. When I use these phrases I am referring to that which is perceived visually. When utilizing “material culture,” I am emphasizing the tangible qualities and use of objects, whereas “visual culture” emphasizes objects in relationship to the human gaze and/or experience.

⁴ See Schreffler, *Art of Allegiance*.

*criollos*⁵ and peninsular⁶ administrators in New Spain were growing in number and influence. Those peninsulars and creoles that made up the Novohispanic nobility often identified themselves as central to the function of the global economy, which was dependent on the control of international markets.⁷ What they lacked in political might in the Hispanic world, they made up for in the control of wealth, and the center of Hispanic trade was Mexico City. In this place goods were passed back and forth from Asia to Europe as well as locales spanning the Americas. It was noted by peninsulars that elite Novohispanic creoles were distinguished by their close relationship to the local, regional, and transoceanic business spheres.⁸ Conversely, creoles widely held the belief that they were central to the global economy, similar to how previous rulers of Tenochtitlan, which would become Mexico City, had understood themselves as occupying the central position of the cosmos in Mexica/Aztec society. While these viceregal elites held a great deal of political and economic power, they constituted a minority, and their position was overtly and continually challenged by groups of different socioeconomic and ethnic status beginning in the late sixteenth century, and periodically throughout the seventeenth-century.⁹ However, within the Valley of Mexico during the seventeenth century the

⁵ American-born individual of Spanish descent. The English form “creole” will be used interchangeably throughout.

⁶ Also called, *peninsulares* or the derogatory *gauchupines*, individuals born in the Iberian Peninsula.

⁷ Rivero Lake, 86–7.

⁸ Israel, 93.

⁹ It is also important to note that the creoles and peninsulars were a diverse and contentious population within their own groups and amongst each other. From the beginning there were insurrections of creoles against peninsular officials and popular riots. There were notable and destructive popular riots in the beginning and ending quarters of the seventeenth century, in 1624 and 1692. They were alleged to have been started by *indios* negatively influenced by *castas*; however, we cannot say with certainty which groups instigated and/or participated in the riots. See Cope, 23, 26.

social position of the nobility was not always assured and had to be constantly promoted to remain constant. Elites based their position on their economic interaction and familiarity with myriad populations, their placement within this particular physical space, and further legitimized themselves through the creation and ritual repetition of an origin myth, all of which were disseminated and propagated through various cultural forms like literature, ritual performance, and politics.

Material objects, like the *BFM*, not only surrounded daily (elite) life, but were part of another, more permanent and tangible cultural form that worked in tandem with those mentioned above. Nevertheless, there has been little scholarly discussion about how material culture is a ritual occurring within and constructing elite interior spaces.

Focusing on the *BFM*, I will interrogate the issues surrounding the form, use, and reception of objects in the elite home. As I begin this investigation, I will review the strengths and weaknesses of previous scholarship, propose new approaches for interpretation, and analyze the form and content of the *BFM* within its contemporaneous context.

In the course of this paper, I intend to pose questions that will lead to further research regarding presentation, reception, and use of the *BFM* as an example of secular elite Novohispanic material culture. To do so, I must first return to the basics of art historical investigation—object analysis. Up to this point scholars have approached the *BFM* with interpretive tools that made the screen illustrate their point. It can be said of the *BFM* that “interpretations were hurled at objects in order to tame them, to bring them under control by endowing them with meanings they did not necessarily possess.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Moxey, 132.

Therefore, we must look closely at the *BFM* to see what information we can glean from the object rather than adapting preordained analyses to the object. “The physical properties of images are as important as their social function,”¹¹ and this is particularly true for this screen. In other words, there is more to the screen than its relationship to the political circumstances within which it was constructed. The materiality of the object and the viewers’ perceptions are also important to scholarship. The *BFM* has seemingly proven difficult for scholarly inquiry because it could not be placed within a specific style, medium, or context. While the *BFM* exhibits sculptural, painted, and architectural qualities, it is from an era in which artists were rarely considered to have created mixed-media installation. In addition, the mixed media and practical use cause confusion for stylistic interpretation. Should the work be analyzed in terms of stylistic trends within the decorative arts or the so-called “high arts”—related categories with different trajectories? We have little contextual information because we do not have a concrete idea of the patrons, where it would have originally resided, the contract, or who created the object. In order to place it within a time period, we can only look within the image at the depiction of Mexico City. What is left to us is the object itself, the “physical property”; therefore, we begin the investigation with the object’s qualities. For this reason, formal and iconographic analysis is a necessary step to propose further interrogations.

Analyzing the form, content, and use, we are able to narrow its placement within its cultural context. When we return to the basics of art historical analysis, we will be able to see how well the *BFM* fits within the history of its scholarly interpretations. Focusing

¹¹ Ibid.

on the physical elements of the *BFM* will lead to questions that are relevant and answerable but have not yet been asked in scholarship. Throughout this thesis, it will become apparent that extended viewing of the *BFM* has raised several questions for the author. A selection will be posed here, and a few interpretations offered.

This preliminary case study for one object has the potential to be the starting point for an in-depth exploration of the symbolic functions of Novohispanic material culture within the elite home. Such a comprehensive study, to be undertaken in the future, would not only reassess current interpretations of viceregal “decorative arts,” but the understudied elite domestic spaces, clearly loaded with symbolic import, wherein these objects were used. From here, scholarship could turn to assessing the relationship between the private and public sphere in New Spain. It would seem that which is played out as a grand sociopolitical spectacle would have a cognate behind palace walls in interpersonal displays of authority. Understanding the relationship between objects within the lived and symbolic spaces where they were utilized will generate new, more accurate approaches for interpreting Novohispanic political imagining and social identification during the Viceregal period.

Literature Review

Architectural space in New Spain became an important tool for the colonizing and reconfiguring of Pre-Columbian identity, history, and social structure. Immediately after the Conquest of Mexico in 1521, the indigenous Mexica (alternatively known as Aztec) imperial architecture was dismantled and replaced with Spanish imperial structures. During the seventeenth century, the colonial structure became consolidated and American

populations developed—those groups emerging out of the interactions between myriad indigenous, African, Asian, and European peoples. With these changes, the transforming urban environment of the Valley of Mexico became the stage for the expression of collective identities, the interaction of social groups, the construction of memory, and the interplay of power relationships.

Within this urban space, objects of material culture proliferated and became props in the performance of identity and power relations. These objects were polysemic as they were useful for the purposes of daily life, and their form also took on layered symbolic meanings, often based on their use. The *Biombo Franz Mayer* is a multifaceted object that must be interpreted accordingly. Little is known about the original provenance of the object, and the artist/workshop and patron remain unknown. Scholars have speculated that the final Hapsburg viceroy of New Spain commissioned it as one in a set of at least four screens, but there appears to be no definitive proof of this as yet. Nonetheless, it is clear that this is a luxury object commissioned by and utilized within the homes of nobility in New Spain.

The seventeenth-century has been characterized by the consolidation of a burgeoning viceregal American populace that was the product of interactions between both the pre-existing and introduced peoples and systems within the newly redefined spaces. In order to consolidate and maintain their social status and political position as a group that mediated between the political power of the authorities in Spain and the diverse ethnic and social groups that made up the majority of Novohispanic society, local elites devised techniques to convey the merit and relevance of colonial rule in the kingdom of New Spain. Colonial elites, whether peninsular or creole, communicated

their status at the top of the Novohispanic hierarchy through political-religious rituals that included public spectacle, architecture, city planning, literature, and various forms of visual culture. All of these cultural forms worked in conjunction to project how the elite desired to define colonial history, territory, and peoples.

Unfortunately for the elites, the tension within their class, especially between the *peninsulares* and *criollos*, was often just as contentious as that which existed between the nobility and the common population. Scholars have indicated the lengths to which Novohispanic elites went to display the legitimacy of colonial rule. Yet, generations of scholars have also indicated the rivalry between Spanish and creole. In light of the strain between factious elite groups, how would elites have built cohesion and come to a consensus about the public image of colonial dominance? I would speculate that the local elites first needed to become a consolidated and seemingly legitimate political force first in order to assert their authority over the larger population. It is clear that both secular and religious visual culture played a role in public display of political policy. If material objects were the permanent props and backdrops for the quotidian, did they play a role in the performance of elite identity, and if so, how? This question frames my following investigation of the *BFM*.

Folding screens are objects rarely discussed by art historians, and they are ascribed an ambiguous position in the Eurocentric hierarchy of fine arts upon which the discipline is based. Further, in today's art market folding screens are considered to be "decorative" objects, fit for collection and exhibition but not subject to the critical scrutiny of "high art." For this reason, *biombos*, like the *BFM*, have yet to be studied with analytical, critical depth. According to James Naremore and Patrick Bratlinger's

Modernity and Mass Culture, there are at least six identifiable “artistic cultures,” which are ranked in hierarchical order.¹² Over time, the imposition of these artistic cultures “have generated ideologies” and “forms of subjectivity through which art can be received or understood,” or discrete contexts within which each artistic culture should be circulated and propagated.¹³ The discipline of art history has established as its object the “artistic culture” identified as “high art.” As Naremore and Bratlinger suggest, “high art” is tied to the institution of the academy, and for this reason, *biombos* have only been cursorily examined in the literature, though they have been favorites for display in colonial exhibitions because of their impressive formal qualities. *Biombos* are, no doubt, elite objects; however, as they do not fit neatly into the prescribed academic artistic categories of architecture, sculpture, or painting, they have not been critically examined. As furniture, they have been inextricably identified and approached as decorations, and therefore lacking in intellectual content.

Recent developments in the art history of the Ibero-Americas have concentrated on the Ibero-American production of a distinctive colonial visual and material culture. This focus moves art historical scholarship away from its foundational understanding of the arts of the Ibero-Americas as provincial imitations of European arts. This shift from a European focus has brought attention to artistic influences from other areas including those that emerged from Asian trade, including objects like *biombos*. These changes have brought about the publication of surveys that are specifically focused on Novohispanic *biombos* or publications that include them as an important product within the arts of the

¹² Naremore and Bratlinger, 8–13. At the top of this perceived hierarchy is “high art,” followed by such classifications as “modernist art,” “avant garde art,” “mass art,” “folk art,” and “popular art” in that order.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

Ibero-Americas. However, this broadened perspective has not necessarily allowed for a more critical interpretation, nor has it dissolved the interpretive barriers between the “fine” and “decorative” arts—distinctions that do not even make stylistic sense at all times. For example, objects from the Novohispanic period are considered Baroque—a stylistic period often characterized by the suspension of perceived differences between media and space. In other words, Baroque period art is frequently said to include forms and techniques of differing media within a single object. This is meant to blur and/or obfuscate the sensory barrier between the object of art and the viewer’s space.¹⁴

The literature on Novohispanic folding screens and the *BFM* has been limited to three investigative formats: exhibition catalogues, survey texts, and topical works whose themes relate to certain *biombos*. Reflecting the goals of the authors and editors, each format has particular strengths and weaknesses for analysis and interpretation of the *BFM*. Two distinctive ideological camps of scholarship within these formats have developed, one of which describes the *BFM* as an object that foreshadows the movement for Mexican independence, and another, more current stance, that describes the *BFM* as one of many viceregal objects conveying the influence of the Spanish monarchy on overseas kingdoms. The *BFM* is often included in books and articles because it stands out as an object that comprises part of a prominent museum collection, is visually stunning, well preserved, and one of a few remaining of its type. Although Mitchell Coddington notes in his section on decorative arts in the exhibition catalogue *The Arts of*

¹⁴ I recognize the problems with the definitions for “Baroque,” since the style exhibits clear variations between regions, time period, religious-political ideology, ethnic, and cultural milieus. My intent is not to delve into the history of the scholarly debate on this subject, but to settle for a concise explanation that allows for the inclusion of all forms.

Latin America that the *BFM* and others like it could be “counted among the most important decorative objects in palaces of Mexico and Spain,”¹⁵ its treatment has always remained superficial with little discussion of the object within its original provenance.

Numerous other sources that discuss the *BFM* and/or other folding screens repeat similar information without questioning previous literature, noting that the prototypes derive from Asian folding screens imported to New Spain via the Manila Galleon. Scholarship also claims that in the context of New Spain the media, style, and subject matter was adjusted to meet the needs of the Novohispanic audience. Established literature focuses on the importance of screens as decorative objects, and often lists common themes (allegory, history, etc.) found in the Novohispanic screens.¹⁶

Sources that include more comprehensive analyses include the exhibition catalogue, *The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico*, as well as other thematic books that focus on subject matter found in the *BFM*.¹⁷ The former is useful for placing folding screens within both their specific context as well as in a global context. Based on the nature of the exhibition, its authors note the complexities of colonial socioeconomics within private and public practice. The latter works provide for more detailed theoretical analyses, but emphasize certain aspects of the *BFM* at the expense of a holistic interpretation. There is

¹⁵ Rishel and Pruitt, 105.

¹⁶ This type of treatment is found in the exhibition catalogues *The Arts of Latin America*, and *Siglos de Oro* as well as in colonial survey texts like that of Gauvin Alexander Bailey and Kelly Donahue-Wallace. Expanded, but equally uncritical, versions of this can be found in *Biombos Mexicanos* and *Viento Detenido*.

¹⁷ Richard Kagan uses the *BFM* to describe representations of urban space, Schreffler uses it to describe the colonial relationship to the non-present Spanish king, and the depiction of natives in the Conquest narrative is discussed in *Imágenes de los naturales...*

clearly a gap in scholarship, which I will begin to address later on in this thesis. The following sources are those that provide the most in-depth information on the *BFM*.¹⁸

The *BFM* first became open to critical interpretation alongside other Novohispanic arts within exhibitions and their corresponding catalogues. Exhibition catalogues are written as a permanent record of a temporary installation, and focus on conveying the themes and/or organizational principles proposed by the curator(s), and the relationships between objects chosen for exhibition. They elaborate upon the concise, descriptive didactic text panels that were found in the physical display, focusing on the formal elements, subject matter, and connoisseurship of the object. Often it is only in exhibitions and their catalogues that certain objects, those considered utilitarian or decorative, are showcased alongside those more commonly found within academic discourse—for example, paintings produced by known artists.

Two exhibition catalogues prominently feature the *BFM*, *Los Siglos de Oro en los Virreinos de América: 1550–1700* (1999), and *The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico: Treasures from the Museo Franz Mayer* (2002). *The Arts in Latin America: 1492–1820* (2006) includes the *BFM* briefly, but only as a visual example of *biombos* in general. These recent exhibitions were influenced by new perspectives regarding the interpretation of the Viceregal period. Both were also formed from the perspective that the arts of the Americas were not derivative forms of European art, as they had originally been

¹⁸ There are others that include generalized discussion on Novohispanic *biombos* or have used the *BFM* as a visual example or comparison, such as: Clara Bargellini's *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life, 1521–1821*; Javier Pérez de Salazar's *Pintura Mexicana siglos XVI & XVII*; and Leopoldo Zéa's *Sentido y proyección de la conquista*.

perceived, but had instead developed in a unique American context from the “confluence of cultures in the colonial era.”¹⁹ With this focus on the American context, these exhibitions have included objects of all available genres and media, exemplifying the interrelationship of all forms of visual culture.

Before these exhibitions, there were few temporary exhibitions of viceregal art in general, nor would one find the *BFM* included alongside other colonial paintings. These exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues prompted a great shift in the reception of all forms of colonial art as they were made available to a broader-based audience. The reception widened from the limited audience who had the ability and interest to travel to Latin American museums and colonial period architectural spaces. Furthermore, the curatorial interest was not simply to display a chronology of Novohispanic painting, most often religious in subject and based on public collections, as one would have seen previously. This earlier format was appended from European art history, but did not always fit the historical reality of New Spain. The public exhibitions, instead, initiated the discussion of common themes found in the visual culture of colonial Latin America.

Los Siglos de Oro en los Virreinos de América, presented by Madrid’s Museo de America, was one of the first exhibitions, held in the late 1990s that critically explored the nature of Ibero-American colonial art production within its own context. Joaquín Bérchez, the exhibition’s curator, explained his goal was to reassess the nature of colonial Ibero-American art production, since the term “colonial” as Ilona Katzew notes in her review of the exhibition, “implies an unequal relation between colonizers and colonized;

¹⁹ Rivero Borrell M., vii.

applied to art, the term has also been associated with ‘derivative’ and ‘inferior.’”²⁰ This exhibition became one of the first art historical attempts—particularly in Europe—to present Ibero-America as a significant center of artistic production and innovation.

The exhibition and corresponding catalogue were organized around themes relevant to the social and historical milieu of the early modern Ibero-Americas. Folding screens, including the *BFM*, were displayed in the section entitled, “*entre el documento y el género artístico.*” This topic included works of varied media, such as books, “decorative” objects, maps, and items of “high” art, like paintings. As I mentioned earlier, the *BFM* and other folding screens have not been placed into a particular category of art based on genre, media, or function. However, the exhibition’s focus on themes and the blurring of categories between forms of material production allowed for a more accurate understanding of the interrelated functions and uses of different visual and material culture, especially for works that span boundaries. Unfortunately, because the *BFM* was only one of many works in this catalogue, the object was not focused on it specifically. However, we may utilize the thematic model of this exhibition to interpret the *BFM* with greater depth and accuracy. Influenced by this exhibition’s thematic model, this thesis will approach the screen with the understanding that contemporary, academic categorizations of artistic genres were often irrelevant within the *BFM*’s original context.

The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico was an exhibition and catalogue based on the holdings of the Museo Franz Mayer in Mexico City. Franz Mayer, the museum’s founder, primarily collected Novohispanic “decorative” arts, although the museum

²⁰ Katzew, 299.

collection includes a wide variety of Novohispanic art. It can be said that the museum contains one of the best collections of secular art and/or elite material culture because the objects were donated by Franz Mayer, who had acquired objects from private collections throughout Europe and the Americas. Because of the nature of the museum's collection, the catalogue focuses upon the abundance of elite material culture of the Viceregal period. This catalogue offers one of the few explorations of elite, colonial material culture, especially as it relates to larger socioeconomic factors. Not only does the catalogue entry for the *BFM* provide one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the object, Chapter Three enumerates the ways in which representations of material culture, including *biombos*, can inform us of the rituals of elite, colonial life. This publication is an influential starting point that has allowed me to interrogate the relationship between material culture and Novohispanic society within the elite domestic space.

Each chapter of the catalogue emphasizes that during the colonial era cultural production reflected and was greatly influenced by international economic relations; these included an influx of wealth, and a growing, diverse, stratified society in New Spain. Although the chapters of the catalogue indicate the interrelated production and use of material culture, the catalogue of items is indexical — with objects divided based on media and/or place of production. However, the catalogue does not note that certain works cross the demarcations of media, as is the case with *biombos*, which have been considered both furniture and painting. Other items in the catalogue transcend geography, for instance Chinese ceramics that were made expressly for Novohispanic use. The divisions of the catalogue circumscribe the important discussions possible of the complex cultural, ethnic, and visual diversity found in New Spain.

Exhibition catalogues provide some of the most comprehensive sources for information specifically about the *BFM*. Unfortunately, catalogues only allow for a cursory introduction and brief descriptions related to the overarching theme of the exhibition; plates are favored over lengthy textual description. For this reason, this thesis will specifically focus on the *BFM*, noting this screen is worthy of a singular analysis.

Survey texts have become important sources of information on *biombos* and Novohispanic art in general. Originally, survey texts often discussed Novohispanic art as though it developed within a vacuum wherein only the visual elements of content, design, medium, etc. were necessary for complete investigation. Manuel Toussaint contributed the seminal study of Novohispanic art in the early twentieth century, based upon a formalist approach characteristic of the historiographic period in art history. In the formalist approach taken up by Toussaint, there was little to no attempt to include rigorous theoretical frameworks or to connect the development of art to sociopolitical influences. Even when a survey centered on a particular topic or type of object, it remained formalist in method. Earlier surveys of or including *biombos* gave little more information than exhibition text panels.

More recent surveys of colonial art have become more comprehensive and critical. These surveys now include more forms of visual and material culture with works representing a wide variety of genres, media, influence, and provenance. Additionally, these new survey texts have been written with attention to a social-historical framework that includes an understanding of the development of Novohispanic visual culture as reflecting social, political, and ideological trends at the local and global levels. More frequently these surveys describe themes that were important in the trajectory of the Latin

American colonial period. Nonetheless, *biombos* are often not rigorously analyzed in general colonial surveys. As a rule, surveys have a great deal of information to cover, and generally do not cover any one genre in depth. However, surveys of *biombos* or the subject matter they represent are still illustrative of superficial critical analysis.

The first survey to concentrate on Novohispanic folding screens was published in 1970 and titled *Biombos Mexicanos*. The study was co-authored by Teresa Castelló Yturbide and Marita Martínez del Río Redo.²¹ This book catalogues most of the known *biombos* from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with a brief introduction about the types and uses of *biombos* in New Spain. The authors group chapters by subject matter or media; for example, there is a chapter on imagery of the Conquest of Mexico and a chapter on *enconchado*, or shell-encrusted painting, although the overlap in subject matter and medium is not discussed (one of the best-known *enconchado* screens features the Conquest of Mexico). The Castelló and Martínez survey describes the content of each *biombo* for several paragraphs, focusing on the subject matter of one of the sides of each *biombo*. There is little description of the other side of each *biombo*, and often this imagery is not present. When applicable, Castelló and Martínez have fully transcribed the inscriptions.

As one of the first to present folding screens as a meaningful topic of discussion, *Biombos Mexicanos* signaled a shift of emphasis in the study of the arts of New Spain. This work helped spread an awareness of most of the existing screens and it indicated the beginning of an interest—only developing now within colonial Latin American studies—in non-European origins for artistic models in Novohispanic art. A catalogue of

²¹ See Castelló Yturbide and Martínez del Río Redo.

biombos in survey form provided the means for comparative analyses, especially since many of the screens are found in disparate collections, often privately held. An excellent source for researchers, *Biombos Mexicanos* indicates the current location of each screen and lists any inscription found in their imagery. This work provides the intellectual bedrock to build a study of interactions between Asia and America, and the specific material objects that this interaction fostered.

While providing a baseline for studying *biombos* in New Spain, this work is lacking or problematic in several respects. *Biombos Mexicanos* indicates that it is ideal to make visual comparisons between similar artistic forms; for this reason, Castelló and Martínez's attempt to make comparisons across genres or forms is often unsuccessful. Castelló and Martínez do not clearly indicate whether they are discussing one of the *biombos* pictured or one that does not have a printed image, or another that is not even described by the authors. When Castelló and Martínez are describing one of the screens with a corresponding image, they do not indicate where in the book the figure is located. They have also included long explanations of each screen that are not pictured in the work, leading to confusing comparisons.

Biombos Mexicanos remains one of the few sources to enumerate the use of *biombos* in the private Novohispanic context, but this discussion is relegated to only a few paragraphs. The authors infer that sources for the screens derive from Asian trade, but they show little interest in exploring the issue further. The work briefly discusses types of screens and indicates the use of different screens, but does not express the relevance of their function within the Novohispanic home. Other forms of Novohispanic *biombos*, for example *biombos de cama*, are also left out of the survey. Finally, chapter

divisions are based on “types” of *biombos*, as created by the authors. These chapter divisions imply that these demarcations existed to contemporaneous Novohispanic audiences. The chapter divisions are also problematic because they do not correspond to a consistent theme. Some chapters are based upon media and others on subject matter, without a recognition that these often overlap. In more current surveys authors have begun to elaborate on many issues left out of *Biombos Mexicanos*.

One of the first works to place emphasis on the historical context and visual milieu within which Novohispanic *biombos* were created was *Namban Art in Viceregal Mexico* by Rodrigo Rivero Lake, published in 2005. Rivero Lake is a collector and independent researcher who indicates his interest in placing the Novohispanic *biombos* in their wider historical context. The book is an historical survey of the Manila trade that influenced Novohispanic art and a comparative look at the folding screens in New Spain and their Asian counterparts. In relating the history of *biombos* in New Spain, the author chooses to focus on the works that “retain a Mexican character.”²² In other words, Rivero Lake focuses on the folding screens that have either a Mexican provenance or a supposedly typical Mexican subject matter, for example, the Conquest of Mexico. The accuracy of the author’s approach can be contested, particularly in that his definition of the Mexican characteristic of such art is never clearly defined. Rivero Lake’s focus on the relationship of the arts between Asia and New Spain is one that is necessary for the study of *biombos*.

Even with an art collector’s background, Rivero Lake often takes a historical turn, focusing on particular events or chronology. As this socio-historical background had

²² Rivero Lake, 11.

often been overlooked by previous art historical sources, *Namban in New Spain* provides much needed contextual evidence. Rivero Lake's work is particularly helpful in clarifying a sense of the term "*namban*," a term that is often used, yet rarely defined, in the study of Novohispanic art. In my experience, *namban* has generally referred to the arts of Asia that were sources of inspiration for Novohispanic material culture.

Throughout the book, Rivero Lake explicates that *namban* is actually a complex term, originally used by Japanese to describe the arts that European missionaries brought to the archipelago of Japan. As missionaries converted people in Japan, they instructed new converts in the European styles and techniques — these often melded with the artistic experience of the Japanese producers. Thus based on Rivero Lake's discussion, *namban* in New Spain refers to products of the amalgamation of Asian and European arts that were transferred to New Spain and influenced art production there. Clearly, this clarifies the historical background of European-influenced Japanese arts, as it further explores the evolution of folding screens in Asia and their influence on New Spain. This work also defines stylistic schools within *namban* arts, and also elaborates on the formal qualities and material production of folding screens.

From an art historical, and a generally academic point of view, there are many problems that arise within Rivero Lake's study. The most glaring problem with *Namban in New Spain* is that it displays a lack of scholarly rigor; Rivero Lake makes important claims that he does not back up with footnotes. This is not to say that the author does not provide a bibliography of works cited, but his chapters lack in-text citations. This creates difficulty for the reader as well as the community of scholars because although the reader is able to search Rivero Lake's source material, one is not able to identify the

author's exact reference when making noteworthy points. This was particularly problematic for this study because Rivero Lake makes critical speculations about the identity of the producer(s) of the *BFM* as well as José Sarmiento de Valladares, the viceroy who is generally accepted as the commissioner of the object. No one, as of yet, has been able to provide conclusive evidence in these areas, and the information on which Rivero Lake bases his claims would have been significant for my research and the work of other scholars of Novohispanic art.

As mentioned previously, in Rivero Lake's introductory notes, the author indicates his interest in focusing his study on objects that retain a "Mexican character."²³ Not only does a great portion of his book describe the development of *namban* art in Japan, the author chooses to ignore the transcultural production and usage of these works. This is ironic, since he describes the production of *namban* art as the result of complex intercultural interactions. It would seem that the transportation of the already syncretic art form would result in an even more complex product within the Americas. Rivero Lake does not recognize the cultural complexity of both Asian and Novohispanic society, wherein *biombos* would surely have transcultural meanings rather than a decidedly "Mexican" or "Asian" character.

On a lesser note, Rivero Lake's approach, which emphasizes historical development, utilizes objects and imagery uncritically, in ways that those familiar with the interpretation of the material record would avoid. The author utilizes the material record, like folding screens and other objects, as evidence of the historical events his text recounts. This is particularly obvious in his chronicle of the Conquest of Mexico, where

²³ Ibid., 11.

he describes objects depicting the scene as though they are illustrations of historical moments rather than pictorial representations of events imagined with particular biases.²⁴ Those who are visually literate and regularly interpret objects and imagery, generally understand objects to be another form of text, subject to critical scrutiny in the same way as written texts are, part of a historical record. Material culture, like literary culture, contains the biases, perspectives, and backgrounds of the authors and audiences, and should all be viewed with scrutiny, not as facts or evidence of a greater truth.

With more recent attention being focused on *biombos*, with the abovementioned surveys focusing exclusively on this medium, general surveys of colonial Latin American art have, in turn, begun to include these objects as significant components of the art historical canon. Within these, the *BFM* has become the paradigm. Although the *BFM* is the prototypical *biombo* used in surveys, such texts do not allow for thorough explications of the content, use, and context of the *BFM*. For example, in the most current survey, *The Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America, 1521-1821* by Kelly Donahue-Wallace, the explanation of the *BFM* consists of two brief paragraphs, while *biombos* are described for little more than two pages in the chapter on seventeenth-century painting. Donahue-Wallace provides no more information than can be found within exhibition didactic texts. Like those, she briefly describes the subject matter, form, and development from Asian models.

On the other hand, *Art of Colonial Latin America* by Gauvin Alexander Bailey allowed for an extensive examination of the *BFM* because of the author's thematic organization. Published in 2005, it provides a survey of colonial Latin American art

²⁴ Ibid., 45–51.

whose organization was influenced by visual culture and postcolonial studies, both of which explain American material production within its own context, rather than the traditional, hierarchical, and Eurocentric art-historical bias. The result was a series of chapters that presented issues relevant to the development of Latin American culture, rather than the typical chronological organization with “end dates” provided by political events and categories of art based on European canons.²⁵ Bailey’s work still stands out in this way, as Donahue-Wallace most recently presented her survey based on chronology, differentiating between religious and secular arts and architecture of each century. As Bailey points out, it is difficult to group these works in a traditional way, since Ibero-American art was produced “thousands of miles and many climatic zones away from the birthplace of [European] styles” such as the Baroque style, producing “art and architecture [that] are characterized by what has been termed ‘chronological anarchy.’”²⁶ Bailey notes that most scholars have described Latin American colonial art as visually confusing because compared to contemporaneous European art, it appears to incorporate styles from several periods in a seemingly haphazard way. By approaching his survey in this manner, Bailey hopes to explicate the arts of Latin America within their own circumstance, rather than comparing them to products of a European framework. His thematic survey, therefore, touches on complex issues that span the diversity of colonial Latin American visual and material culture.

²⁵ Although Donahue-Wallace’s text is the most recent in the field of colonial Ibero-American arts, she follows this traditional survey format. Her text chronologically divides art by century and then into categories based on media (like architecture or painting) and content (religious versus secular).

²⁶ Bailey, 16.

A thematic presentation of visual and material culture has many advantages, yet they are not without problems. Bailey's survey includes the *BFM* in the chapter "Image of Empire — Arts of the Viceroys." This chapter is a great contribution in that incorporates the great diversity of imagery utilized by the elite groups in central Mexico, with a focus on the secular. He begins with an analysis of viceregal visual culture, describing the reverse image of the view of Mexico City as a representation of Novohispanic architecture and city planning. Later in the chapter, Bailey utilizes the obverse of the *BFM* to note the importance of the Conquest of Mexico as a topic that was used to legitimize the history of the *criollo* population with Cortés as the prototypical viceroy. Similar to other works to be described following, Bailey takes apart the *BFM* rather than interpreting it as a holistic object. Instead of investigating the *BFM* as a complex work composed of various media, subject matter, and styles, the author chooses to focus on the content of each side separately in relation to particular trends raised in the chapter. The notion that viceregal material culture reaffirmed Spanish political control and acted as an acknowledgment of the authority of the creole elite in New Spain is a point that could not be made outside of this thematic, contextual format. However, without interpreting the *BFM* in its entirety, we can come to different conclusions about one object.

Bailey begins by describing the arts of the viceregal court, as "intended to project an image of empire related to the distribution of power and control of knowledge in colonial society."²⁷ Nevertheless, Bailey recognizes some of the complexities of this colonial stratification, noting that all groups participated in this project with different agendas. Framing his chapter in this way Bailey utilizes the *BFM* to come to two points:

²⁷ Ibid., 112.

on the one hand, he claims the *BFM* was a visual form promoted by the viceroy, or a creole expression that emphasized creole heritage while also supporting the viceregal hierarchy. According to his previous statement, these points are not contradictory, but Bailey also does not discuss how the imagery on one side of the *BFM* works in tandem with the imagery on the other. He likens the *Vista*, a representation of space, to the viceregal construction of actual architectural spaces. The Conquest scene is linked to other images of Cortés, understood to be the original viceroy, and otherwise not specifically discussed for more than a few lines. Bailey never indicates within this chapter how the meaning could change should he discuss both sides as making up a whole work. I will take up this gap, assessing new interpretations of the two sides in tandem in Chapter Three.

The greatest sources of information regarding *biombos* in general, and the *BFM* in particular, are topical works. By topical works, I mean those sources based on a particular theme or motif found in the arts of New Spain. Topical works have focused on recurring subject matter found in imagery, such as depictions of urban space. These works often detail the *BFM* in depth, but separate its parts in order to describe the elements relevant for the thematic point. Topical works are advantageous to developing an understanding of the relationship between sociopolitical trends and material culture production, but these works tend to oversimplify audience reception to particular objects and the object's relationship to other forms of material culture.

In *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493–1793*, Richard Kagan offers one of the first in-depth analyses of the *BFM*. Kagan describes different representations of space in Iberia and the Ibero-Americas, noting the differences between “chorographic”

and “communicentric” views of space. Chorographic views refer to the *urbs*, the edifices that make up the architectural space.²⁸ Communicentric views are representations of the *civitas* or the community bounded together within the *urbs*. Such scenes are often metaphorical and are not visually accurate.²⁹ Kagan defines and gives examples of the basic differences between such representations, noting that they are not always clear-cut. He also compares chorographic and communicentric views created by and for Europeans, indigenous Americans, and *criollos* in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.

Kagan’s work is important because it describes the ways in which cities and communities represented themselves in two-dimensional imagery. He provides an excellent survey of European, indigenous American, and colonial Ibero-American cartographic and landscape imagery. As the first to tackle this topic, he covers a wide expanse of time and geography; Kagan speaks broadly about imagery of the peoples of Iberia and the Ibero-American territories. He spends a great deal of time discussing and comparing representations of certain Ibero-American cities, including Mexico City, where he discusses the *BFM*. In terms of Mexico City, the author discusses it as a place that for the purposes of *criollismo* (those from the first generations born after the Conquest) Spaniards chose to downplay the indigenoussness of the city.³⁰ As such, Kagan describes the socio-historical context of the *BFM* as a period of growing polarization between the *criollos* of America and the Spanish *peninsulares* that began to develop in the late sixteenth century but became a major part of cultural production in the seventeenth century.

²⁸ Kagan, 15.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 151–52.

Kagan tries to address the complication of the colonial situation by explaining the intersection and synchronicity of indigenous and European traditions found in Novohispanic imagery, but his treatment still oversimplifies the cultural production that was responding to this complex social situation. For example, the *criollo* identity, like all personal and group identities, was dependent on context. Creole identity changed across the Ibero-Americas and with each sociopolitical shift. Personal and group identities were fluid, sometimes changing within the span of a lifetime. Douglas Cope, quoting Denis Nodin Valdés, notes that in terms of racial identification in court documents, ““there was a great deal of confusion about race in Mexico City’ ...that categorization by skin color was ‘subject to personal whim,’” and often contradictory during the colonial period.³¹ In addition to race, we cannot assume that other personal or group identities were static. Therefore, the *BFM* cannot simply be understood as an object that only indicates the growing sense of *criollo* identity, in opposition to Spanish *peninsulares*, as Kagan seems to suggest. For Kagan, both sides of the *BFM* worked together and “offered a view of the city in which the Mexican *urbs* served—quite literally in this instance—as the screen through which the birth of its *civitas* could be seen.”³² To Kagan, the *BFM* exemplifies the transformation from pagan Tenochtitlan to Christian Mexico City and the sense of pride felt by creoles for the city around which they built their differentiated identity. In other words, the scene representing the Conquest commemorated the destruction of the pagan Tenochtitlan, which resulted in the foundation of the Christian Mexico City. While this is certainly an important layer of meaning within the *BFM*, the author seems to see the Ibero-American world generally as an “either/or.” He fails to recognize the many

³¹ Cope, 51–52.

³² *Ibid*, 156.

or layered ways in which communicentric views are created or utilized during the colonial period, the polysemous imagery, and the multifaceted nature of identity construction. For Kagan, the *BFM* is about social transformation through urban transformation. He does not recognize the complex nature of social and cultural changes that occurred during the period and manifested in visual culture.

In contrast to Kagan's creole versus peninsular identity model, Michael Schreffler in his article, "'No Lord without Vassals, nor Vassals without a Lord': The Royal Palace and the Shape of Kingly Power in Viceregal Mexico City," and his recent book, *The Art of Allegiance*, argues that seventeenth-century works represent Spanish royal power abroad and elite Novohispanic allegiance from afar. In his formal analysis of the *BFM*, Schreffler explains that it, and other *biombos* like it, "[suggest] an understanding of imperial allegiance in terms of a community of viewers — a social group united in its visual access to a shared corpus of imagery that, in effect, superimposed its viewers onto the king's viewing body politic and interpolated them within an imperial visual and spatial order."³³ In other words, this object visually represents the vassalage of the Mexican nobility, who he identifies as the community of viewers, to the King of Spain by drawing the gaze of the viewing audience into the urban and architectural manifestation of Spanish royalty in New Spain. For Schreffler, the *Vista* of the *BFM* is centered on the Viceregal Palace in the Plaza Mayor, which is the architectural representation of the King's authoritative "face/façade" in New Spain. Schreffler sees this object as representing an interdependence and dialogue between the nobility of New Spain, which utilized this *biombo* as a stand-in for the symbolic presence of a king that resided across

³³ Schreffler, "No Lord without Vassals," 167. I am currently working with Schreffler's article that became part of his recently published book, *The Art of Allegiance*.

the Atlantic. Schreffler expounds upon this point in his book, noting that the implied viewer would be the viceroy, as the palace is symbolic of the King's presence. He describes,

“[t]he view of Mexico City on the *biombo*, then, can be conceptualized as the Viceroy's view of the city—the city as seen by the King's representative and, by extension, by the King himself. That the civic space is here conceived as revealing itself to the Viceroy's and, ultimately, the King's gaze is further indicated by a title in the legend at the screen's lower left corner, which identified it in imperial parlance as the ‘Very Noble and Loyal City of Mexico.’ The ‘loyalty’ referenced in the legend is the city's loyalty to the crown, a relationship of political allegiance and obedience rendered here in terms of surveillance and panoramic spectatorship.”³⁴

According to Schreffler, the king through the viceroy's eyes surveys the city as the ideal and/or symbolic viewer. Focusing upon the Royal/Viceregal Palace, it is as if the viceroy/king looks at himself in the reflection of the mirror of the edifice.³⁵ Thus, the *BFM* and similar objects represent the reflexive relationship between the Spanish king and his vassals in New Spain. Schreffler is the first to expound upon how artistic production responds to ideas circulating in the seventeenth-century Hispanic world about royal power in relation to the act of viewing and ideal subjectivity. During this period, the subjects of the king would have viewed the king as a model personage, representing their ideal collective self, while the king would have seen himself as being made up of the entirety of his kingdom. Unlike most scholars, Schreffler also indicates that the image of the Conquest on the reverse side of the *BFM* also describes the power of the king and the allegiance of New Spain.

³⁴ Schreffler, *Art of Allegiance*, 25.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

Schreffler believes that the rising creole identity model is not accurate in the case of the *BFM*, and is based upon a reading of the object that juxtaposes each side rather than reading them in relation to each other. He notes in both his article and book that the representation of the space depicted in the reverse of the *BFM* “may or may not reflect the physical positions actually occupied by people in the seventeenth-century Plaza,” but that it “document[s] the operation of a spatial order in which space was understood to be segregated.”³⁶ Furthermore, he accurately points out that the events of the Conquest are not depicted in terms of a chronological sequence but rather in terms of the space in which they occurred, relating the events to the places depicted on other side of the screen.³⁷ Spatially ordered, the places where the Conquest events occurred are linked to the ideal, noble, and loyal city that eventually came into existence throughout the Hapsburg period.

Michael Schreffler is the first scholar to approach objects like the *BFM* in new ways that move away from the *BFM* as a depiction of opposition to Spanish authority. Unfortunately, the author has the tendency to overemphasize the allegiance of the Novohispanic population to the Spanish monarchy. This could be a result of the need to link the objects he discusses throughout his article and book, namely the secular art of seventeenth-century New Spain. It is clear that these objects all depict the relationship between the monarchy and the peoples of New Spain, most often in terms of the power of the king and the vassalage of those in New Spain. However, like his predecessors that professed contrary readings, he oversimplifies this relationship. The *BFM* is described as an object whose ideal spectator, the king, would view himself in terms of the Viceregal

³⁶ Schreffler, “No Lord without Vassals,” 161

³⁷ Schreffler, *Art of Allegiance*, 32; “No Lord without Vassals” 168–69.

Palace. Unfortunately, as Schreffler recognizes, the Spanish royalty seemingly never utilized these items. They are rather linked to collections elite Latin American families, although some did end up in European private collections.³⁸ Even if the spectator was “the king” through the viceroy’s eyes, the author overlooks several related problems.

First, he does not think about the circumstances of the screens’ use — by whom and where. Particular interior spaces held symbolic meaning for those who utilized them, as he notes in later chapters.³⁹ He does not answer how the space within which the *BFM* was displayed would have affected its reception. Also, although Schreffler makes a point of incorporating, rather than juxtaposing, both sides of the *BFM*, he assumes that the viewer would find the Palace to be the most important element in the *Vista*, as the Temple (“where today the Palace is”) is the most important element in the *Conquest* scene on the obverse. Finally, he notes the spectator was not the king (although this would have been the ideal), but rather elite creoles or peninsulars, possibly the viceroy. For this reason, we must recognize the complex nature of the audience for the *BFM* and consider how the relationship to the king’s gaze could potentially shift if the viewer was not the king or viceroy.

Because he does not holistically compare the two sides of the *BFM*, Schreffler overlooks aspects that may have shifted the outcome of his interpretation. For example, he believes that the focus of the *BFM* is the Viceregal Palace, the symbolic presence of the King of Spain within the city. I agree that the aqueduct draws the viewer’s eye into the Plaza Mayor in the center of the image, but my opinion diverges in that Viceregal Palace is not the only important edifice to which the viewer’s eye is drawn at the center

³⁸ Schreffler, *Art of Allegiance*, 27–28.

³⁹ Schreffler discusses this point mainly in Chapter Two.

of the painting. Unlike other seventeenth-century *biombos*, the *BFM* depicts the entire city, rather than focusing solely on the metonymic qualities of the façade of the Viceregal Palace. There is little reason to believe that the Viceregal Palace is the main focus of the *Vista*, as Schreffler indicates. If one follows the exact line of the aqueduct, it leads to a street that ends at the Cathedral, depicted in larger scale and slightly in front of the palace. In addition, the Cathedral is labeled as number 1, whereas the Palace is number 55. The Cathedral, as we see it here, had recently been completed, and was a locale where all levels of colonial society could gather, similar to its use today. It was not purely a religious center, but an important political center that was more inclusive than the Palace. The Palace, on the other hand, had certain spaces quarantined, even from local nobility. It can be said that the ritual space of the Cathedral was where “politics and ideology blended into one single structure,”⁴⁰ much like the ceremonial precinct of the Templo Mayor of the Mexica (Aztecs) that preceded it. I believe the Viceregal Palace, therefore, remains only one word in the visual text that makes up the *BFM*’s discussion of Hapsburg Mexico City.

During the Hapsburg period in the seventeenth-century, many within Mexico City’s Novohispanic nobility saw themselves as having a localized identity, differentiated from but equivalent to the Spanish peninsular nobility, even as they remained loyal vassals to the viceroy and thus to the king. Many noble creoles in the capital imagined themselves as being superior to and ethnically unrelated to the indigenous and mixed castes that occupied the lower social ranks in the colony, even as they utilized indigenous myth, history, and material and visual culture to legitimize their claim to local territory

⁴⁰ Broda, 64.

and wealth.⁴¹ While most imagined themselves as unrelated to laboring indigenous, many elite creoles gained their noble lineage through descent from noble indigenous lines. From the Conquest on, the Spanish monarchy lawfully recognized the status of indigenous nobility, and through marriage absorbed these groups into the Novohispanic elite class.⁴² Therefore, *criollo* nobles acted as vassals to the viceroy and king, as Schreffler argues, but I would also add that they were also the group that competed with each other and the *peninsulares* for the top religious-political posts within the land they often understood as their indigenous homeland.

Should various elite creoles or even elite peninsulars have been the audience of the *BFM*, the difference in spectatorship could have changed the author's ideal interpretation of the reflexivity of the king's act of viewing. In addition, he sees all Novohispanic elites as being a "community of viewers" that exist on a more or less equal plane. I would recognize the complicated relationship between the *criollo* nobility in New Spain and the peninsular Spanish officials, like the viceroy and archbishop, who controlled the top colonial posts throughout the colonial period. Creole political authority was continually undermined through royal decree implemented by foreign viceroys, judges, and archbishops. Noble families, whether born in the Americas or in the peninsula, often competed amongst each other for resources, and/or political and religious authority. This is not to say that the *BFM* indeed reflects an emergent and contentious creole identity, but, as Schreffler notes in later chapters, there was a complex creole consciousness marked by "shifting loyalties of Creoles in seventeenth-century

⁴¹ Poole, 371

⁴² See Chipman, 53. Chipman indicates that in terms of Moctezuma's heirs, Spain claimed they were "natural monarchs with inherent rights."

New Spain,” perhaps reflecting, “the contested nature of history itself in the complex political environment.”⁴³ Therefore, I note that all seventeenth-century cultural production, not just certain themes, should be understood as developing from and interacting within this “multifaceted” sociopolitical environment. If the sociopolitical environment was shifting, multifaceted, complex, and contested, as Schreffler indicates, I offer a reminder that the *BFM* should also be read in this way.

⁴³ Schreffler, *Art of Allegiance*, 92.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Modes of Analysis and Interpretation

As noted in the review of literature, it is only recently that colonial scholars have begun to research the impact of Asian trade on Novohispanic visual culture and consequently on objects of Asian derivation, like *biombos*. Yet even this expanded view of colonial art historical studies has not sufficiently opened the discussion to a critical evaluation of objects previously understood as decorative or utilitarian. The Conquest of Mexico became an increasingly frequent motif in the seventeenth-century, a point which I would like to address. Neither do scholars explore why the subject appears in particular media of the period. More recently, methodologically rigorous scholars have begun to assess colonial identity construction in terms of actual and representational space, but they often forget to discuss the ways in which objects within the private Novohispanic space may have mediated identity formation or promoted political agendas.

By focusing specifically on the *BFM*, I will be able to incorporate the “decorative” object into a broader discourse in order to clarify the ritual importance of objects in the elite, private sphere. This approach effectively breaks down traditional art-historical classifications that exclude these so-called decorative objects from critical study. Through my analysis of the material and subject of the object, I will shed light on the complexities of colonial visual and material culture production. I will highlight the intricacies of the object’s interpretation if we are to recognize that this *biombo* was of Asian derivation, (possibly) commissioned by a peninsular, and reflected a very local

subject matter and style. Finally, my reading will concentrate on the object as a whole, making sure both sides are understood in relation to each other. This analysis will elucidate the ways in which private objects not only reflected, but impacted the visual and sociopolitical culture of New Spain in the late seventeenth century. My approach to this object incorporates several complementary methodologies necessary to an accurate interpretation of the object. The formal and comparative analysis, presented below, is basic to traditional art-historical approaches, and is the crux of this initial study. This will provide a platform from which to elucidate larger socio-historical issues, like those of presentation, representation, production and reception.

Through a material and visual culture studies approach, this object, and others like it, will no longer be relegated to the “decorative arts,” which are only superficially interpreted, but will be analyzed as objects that are a relevant part of human experience. This object will be understood as an aesthetic object that has “a ‘life,’ ... possessed of agency,” that communicates meaning on its own, rather than an “inert vehicle for the transport of ideas,” as a tool to illustrate the larger theoretical points Richard Kagan and Michael Schreffler attempt to prove.⁴⁴ As Naremore and Bratlinger note, “high art” is “given sanction and authority by the written word,” by its validating discussion in literature in the discipline of Art History.⁴⁵ Therefore, *biombos* can be added to the art-historical canon when the relevancy of these “artistic cultures” upon which the canon is based are reformed to encompass all forms of visual and material culture. This change will only occur as these objects are explored in art-historical literature, as is beginning to occur with recent scholarship, including this M.A. thesis.

⁴⁴ Moxey, 142.

⁴⁵ Naremore and Bratlinger, 9.

Formal, Iconographic and Comparative Analyses

While I critique both aspects of traditional Art History as a discipline, and previous approaches to the *BFM*, my approach stems from traditional art historical practice.

Namely, these approaches will be a formal, iconographic, and comparative analysis of the object. While analysis of color, line, balance, composition, shape, and media often seem superficial when there are more “interesting” topics of discussion, the lack of attention to these minor points have prevented the *BFM* from being understood as a holistic object.

The formal analysis provides a clear and detailed base from which to delve into deeper issues found within the work. I intend to take this formal analysis in a new direction that underscores the importance of the formal qualities in relation to object’s reception. I

believe that the material elements of objects are integral to the construction of meaning.

The choice of medium is always significant for the production and reception of the object — it is an aspect of visual language — although this form of communication is often overshadowed by the more obvious visual message — the content. As mentioned above, the disinterest in analyzing the formal aspects of the *BFM* has allowed scholars to amputate respective parts of the object, reflecting a detailed but limited diagnosis of only one part rather the entire body of the work.

In general, iconographic analyses are concerned with the interpretation of the subject matter of an image. My iconographic analysis of the *BFM* elucidates the symbolic meaning of the subject matter of the paintings to the audience. It is understood that this object was, like any other object, created with a particular purpose and the ways in which the *Conquest* and *Vista* are represented are not accidental. While there have

been many studies of the representation of the Conquest of Mexico in Novohispanic art, there have been few that connect it to iconographic tropes.⁴⁶ Furthermore, I offer an iconographic analysis of the representation of Mexico City. In other words, the space itself was loaded with a palimpsest of meaning for those that inhabited the city. People living in these areas identified particular locations as imbued with historic, cultural, or social values. Thus, I believe that painted images of these places became symbolic of the values these places represented. This perspective has been lacking in the foundational literature, especially since it is only recently that studies have been published on the symbolic nature of urban space in New Spain.

Finally, I compare the *BFM* to similar objects in terms of form, content, media, and/or use. The *BFM* has been likened to other folding screens of Asian derivation, but never compared to particular genres of Asian screens. Further, the relationship of the *BFM* to its models is quite complicated. With closer inspection, one finds certain elements within the screen that indicate sources deriving from diverse media and styles from several cultural zones. This point raises questions that have not yet been explored. For example, what visual languages are being exploited in Novohispanic material culture and for what reasons? In this thesis, I intend to base the interpretation of the *BFM* on what can be gleaned from formal, iconographic, and comparative analysis of the object first, rather than fitting the work into interpretations of other themes in Novohispanic arts. With the completion of this analysis, we can only begin to interpret the *BFM* through other theoretical approaches.

⁴⁶ One of the first to attempt this approach is Hernández-Durán's "El Encuentro de Cortés y Moctezuma" in *Woman and Art in Early Modern Latin America*.

As mentioned above, the bulk of analysis will be formal, iconographic, and comparative; this thesis is only a preliminary study of the *BFM*. Nevertheless, my approach is influenced by the developments within the related cultural studies: material culture, ritual and performance studies, and visual culture. This thesis is not intended to delve deeply into the benefits and challenges of applying these methods to the study of the *BFM* at this point in time. Nevertheless, the impression these approaches have made on my perspective deserves mention. Cultural studies have developed in academic discourse to deal with the complexities of human experience. It became clear to scholars, particularly those who dealt with cultural artifacts, that the methodologies of their particular discipline could not justify the “naturalness” of culture. Out of the disciplines including anthropology, archaeology, history, art history, performance arts, sociology, and philosophy, among others, movements developed towards interdisciplinary study or even non-disciplinary study.

The study of material culture has a long and varied history. As material culture developed within the discipline of archaeology, many definitions have been put forward. In my research, I follow postmodern-influenced definitions of material culture that explain there is “a strong interrelation between physical objects and human behavior,” so that material culture “simultaneously refers to both the subject of the study, material, and its principal purpose, the understanding of culture.”⁴⁷ Material culture studies allows the scholar to come to a more complete understanding of how objects are shaped by human actions, as well as how these objects influence human interaction with their environs and each other.

⁴⁷ Ames, Schlereth, et al., 3.

In material culture studies, any object changed by human action, intentional or unintentional, becomes an artifact and subject to study. This definition allows for the inclusion of objects as mundane and small as a needle or as expansive as an entire landscape. What defines material culture studies generally is its focus on things that are tangible cultural objects or artifacts. Objects are shaped by their interaction with human life and are experienced by bodily senses, just as humans experience the objects and the world around them through all five senses. Thus, material culture has a greater tendency to pay more attention to the multi-sensory experience of objects in the world, with express significance placed on the tactile and visual components of objects.

Similarly, human movements, use, and perceptions of space are important components for ritual and performance studies. While material culture often emphasizes those aspects of human culture that are tangible, ritual and performance studies place emphasis on those cultural patterns that are ephemeral because they are enacted. As S. J. Tambiah explains:

...[r]itual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in multiple media, whose content and arrangement are characterized in varying degree by formality (conventuality), stereotypy (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy (repetition). Ritual action in its constitutive features is performative in these three senses: in the Austinian sense of performative, wherein saying something is also doing something as a conventional act; in the quite different sense of a staged performance that uses multiple media by which the participants experience the event intensively; and in the sense of indexical values... being attached to and inferred by actors during the performance...⁴⁸

In other words, although ephemeral, ritual performance is a system of communication that is repeated and arranged to create long lasting symbolic meanings. It can be said that

⁴⁸ Tambiah, 128.

ritual and performance are a part of the human behavior around which material culture is utilized. Conversely, material culture is part of the “multiple media” employed by the actors and participants in the ritual performance. If we wish to gain more accurate interpretation of objects in the world, we need to recognize when they are used as media within constructed patterns of behavioral communication.

The study of visual culture, therefore, is a discipline that has the potential to encompass both abovementioned approaches. Visual culture, in the most generalized sense, can deal with anything that can be seen or perceived, whether in actual experience, or that which is in the mind — imaginary, or subconscious. Visual culture at times has a tendency to overemphasize the visuality of the world, not recognizing that not all people share the same ability to view or see while downplaying other sensorial experiences. However, it can be said that visual culture studies have the potential to be limitless.

Since the development of visual culture studies, there have been several approaches furthered by scholars, none of which make the other obsolete. As Keith Moxey notes, “it is clear that the possibilities [of the different approaches in visual culture studies] are as infinite as the objects themselves... The ‘iconic turn’ reminds us that visual artifacts refuse to be confined by the interpretations placed on them in the present. Objects of visual interest will persist in circulating through history demanding radically different methods of analysis and engendering compelling new narratives as they wander.”⁴⁹ Thus, as Moxey describes, the study of visual culture is open to all possible interpretations of the object of perception, whether tangible or ephemeral, perhaps even those perceptions that belong to other senses. It is precisely this

⁴⁹ Moxey, Keith. “Visual Studies and the Iconic Turn,” *Journal of Visual Studies*. 7:2 (2008): 144.

disciplinary and methodological openness that allows for more expansive interpretations of the *BFM*.

All of these branches of cultural studies are intended to cross boundaries of academic disciplines, yet the studies have developed slightly different emphases. Each have influenced my perspective in their own way, most notably in the fact an object such as the *BFM* is a selection considered for intensive art historical study. Bringing together these studies allows me to indicate a fuller range of human experience in which the *BFM* was once a part. As mentioned above, the *BFM* has been understudied because its complexity crosses demarcations of traditional art-historical classification. This gives one reason to believe that its original audience received the object in a multivalent way, necessitating theoretical and methodological approaches that acknowledge the complexities of and interworkings between people and objects in the world. The remainder of the thesis will introduce ideas regarding the presentation and reception of the *BFM*, which I hope to explore in greater depth in future research. This work is to be understood as an extended proposal for further investigation; therefore, I will explicate preliminary interpretations and offer speculations that I hope to confirm through extended exploration with primary documents.

CHAPTER THREE

OBJECT OF STUDY: FORMAL, CONTEXTUAL, AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Introduction

The *Biombo Franz Mayer*, alternately entitled, *Biombo de la conquista de México y vista de la Ciudad de México*, is a painted folding screen and currently resides in the collection of the Franz Mayer Museum in Mexico City. The media consists of ten conjoined, hinged panels covered in oil-painted canvas. The exact dimensions of the entire work are 2.13 x 5.5m or 6' 11 7/8" x 18'6". The *BFM* is one of four screens related in topic and style with other examples now residing in public and private collections in Mexico and Spain. As previously noted, the *BFM* portrays the Conquest of Mexico on the obverse and a panoramic view of "*la muy noble y leal Ciudad de México*"⁵⁰ or the very noble and loyal Mexico City, as indicated within the inscriptions on each side of the screen. The Conquest scene focuses solely on the events that occurred in and around Tenochtitlan, not including the Conquest events that occurred before the arrival of the Spanish in the Valley of Mexico. The view of Mexico City portrays the urban space between the mid-to late seventeenth century on the reverse.⁵¹

According to Richard Kagan and Michael Schreffler, the *BFM* was produced in New Spain during the late seventeenth century, but acquired in Spain in the middle of the

⁵⁰ This is the title of the key inscribed on the side of the view of the city.

⁵¹ Detailed discussion of the subject matter will follow later in the chapter.

nineteenth century.⁵² The artist is unknown, as is the identity of the patron(s); however, Richard Kagan and Gauvin Alexander Bailey speculate that the work was likely commissioned by the Counts of Moctezuma, the descendents of Moctecuhzoma Xocoyotzin, the last Mexica *tlatoani*, or chief ruler of the confederacy. Based on the provenance, it seems likely that the *BFM* was created for José Valladares de Sarmiento, Conde de Moctezuma y Tula, the final Hapsburg viceroy who ruled New Spain at the end of the seventeenth century and became the most prominent of Moctecuhzoma's descendents during the period.⁵³ Although there is no real indication that the Count of Moctezuma commissioned this particular *biombo*, most scholars agree he did.⁵⁴ The identity of the artist(s) remains unknown; however, Francisco de la Maza attributes these four works to the artist Diego Correa, while Rodrigo Rivero Lake believes they were created within the González family workshop.⁵⁵ The Gonzálezes, according to Rivero Lake, were a well-patronized family of Japanese-descent artists. As for the attribution,

⁵² Kagan, 217, note 6.12, purchased by José Fernando Ramírez in 1859 in Europe. Schreffler, *The Art of Allegiance*, 154, note 1.36, states that there are three other screens that have a similar subject matter and derive from the same period. One is located in the National Museum of History in Mexico City, and two in private collections—one in Mexico and another in Spain.

⁵³ Sarmiento was not a bloodline descendent of Moctecuhzoma II, but his marriage to the Countess of Moctezuma, Gerónima María de Moctezuma Loyasa de la Cueva, a blood descendent, gave him the title and legal rights to the estates of his wife and daughters. See Chipman, 132–39.

⁵⁴ Scholars use speculative evidence to conclude the commission derived from Sarmiento de Valladares. See Bailey, 159, where he states that this painting belonged to the Count of Moctezuma and Tula, José de Sarmiento, who was married to a descendant of Motecuhzoma II. However, Kagan in endnote 6.15 states that it resembles a *biombo* from Museo Nacional de Historia that was commissioned by the family Bailey mentions. In addition Kagan places the date of the work between 1690–92. Schreffler, 176, note 23, believes that “Kagan... speculates that the Countess of Moctezuma may have commissioned it [*BFM*].”

⁵⁵ De la Maza, 22–23, in Pérez de Salazar, Javier. *Pintura Mexicana siglos XVI & XVII*. México, D.F.: Grupo Editorial Proyección de México, 1996.; Rivero Lake, 299–300.

there is no definitive answer at this point. For this reason, this chapter will elaborate upon the known elements of this object. These elements, plain to the eye, are often disregarded in scholarship.

Because most scholarship on the *BFM* and other *biombos* occurs within the context of museum exhibitions, only a brief overview of the formal qualities of the work is generally provided.⁵⁶ As mentioned before, some scholars have offered a clearer formal analysis by focusing on only one side of the work.⁵⁷ It is not enough to describe these scenes in relation to each other, fulfilling typical conventions for classifying paintings (as is often done in the text panels accompanying this image in exhibition catalogues), nor is it sufficient to merely discuss the subject matter. Further, this chapter is not intended to provide a formal and iconographic analysis as a means to place the *BFM* within a linear progression of stylistic categories of art history. This chapter is intended to be a closer, holistic look, paying attention to the material qualities of the object that remain available.

The *BFM*'s viceregal context was influenced by local and transoceanic trade. Thus, the object necessitates wide ranging comparative analyses and broader categorizations of visual and material culture for its interpretation. With such objects scholars cannot ignore the impact of the dialogue between the visual traditions of several cultures, particularly the strong local artistic traditions of the indigenous groups of the Valley of Mexico—traditions that did not die, but were only transformed, with the

⁵⁶ This treatment is found in exhibition catalogues like *La grandeza del México virrenal*, *Los siglos de oro en los virreinos de América*, and *The Arts in Latin America*.

⁵⁷ Kagan, Schreffler, and Baily offer the most comprehensive analyses of this object. While they analyze both sides, they either discuss them individually or emphasize one over the other in lieu of interpreting the object holistically.

European conquest. Therefore this section will provide a detailed discussion of the form, media, subject matter, symbolism, visual sources, and comparative objects. As mentioned previously, this type of analysis is particularly necessary because we currently have little more information about the object than the object itself. Until more concrete evidence is provided regarding its provenance, we must draw our conclusions from the formal qualities of the work.

Formal Analysis

Since the provenance, artist, and patron are not known, we cannot pinpoint concrete contextual information for the *BFM*. Therefore we must be mindful to utilize all available visual evidence, even if it has previously been considered insignificant, such as the size or material makeup. The *BFM* is constructed of ten panels that bend back and forth upon their wooden frame in order to distribute the weight. The *BFM* is slightly taller than an average human, standing at nearly seven feet. It spans nearly twenty feet in length at its maximum, when flattened. Whether flattened or folded, the screen would have necessitated a large area with tall ceilings and wide expanses. By paying closer attention to this detail we can already narrow the location in which such an object would have belonged in the home. In fact, shorter and wider screens, like the *BFM* suggest it was a *biombo de rodeastrado*, or a screen that would have surrounded the *estrado*, or dais. Daises were located in the *salón de estrado*, or the “dais room”—the room in which to receive guests, like a formal parlor⁵⁸ (fig. 4). In contrast, taller *biombos* that had fewer

⁵⁸ Martinez del Río Redo, 133, in *Juegos de Ingenio y Agudeza: La Pintura Emblemática de la Nueva España*. Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, Consejo Nacional para la

panels were generally used within the bedrooms, as *biombos de cama*. In this instance, we can see that the form of the object allows us to narrow the context within which it was placed and gain greater insight into its probable site of display. Such close attention to visual evidence is required to interpret the entire object, not only the subject matter.

Cultura y las Artes, 1994. The function of the rooms and the objects within them will be discussed further below.



Figure 4
Salon de estrado

The media of this object, when considered within its historical context, also indicates more than previously explored. The *BFM* was constructed of canvas that covered its wooden frame. Canvas was one of the commonly used materials for Novohispanic painting, in addition to wood panel and copper plate. Being lightweight, it was also a material that was easily transported. An example is the painted canvas altarpiece by José de Alcívar that was rolled up and carried along the *Camino Real* from Mexico City to Santa Fé in the northern province of *Nuevo México* later in the eighteenth century (fig. 5). The use of canvas here, as opposed to another material, suggests that the object would have been moved from one area of New Spain to another, or that it made for a screen that was so lightweight it could more easily move around the room. Canvas is also a material that remains delicate, but more durable than the folding paper screens often found in Asian arts. Thus, we can speculate that a canvas folding screen would have been more durable for household use.

The use of oil paint also indicates more durability than other pigment choices that may have been used. This choice would attest to the utilitarian function of the screen within the home. The qualities of oil paint also allow for a translucent, light-reflective effect that creates the appearance of depth and naturalism that does not occur in other types of pigment. For example, should the artist wish to give the appearance that the viewer was looking as if from a window to a scene below, oils would provide a sense of realism that is more effective than with other painting mediums. This difference is clearly seen when comparing the *BFM* to other Novohispanic screens of differing media, or some of their Asian counterparts, which were often made of ink on paper.



Figure 5
José de Alcívar, *Retablo, Santuario de Guadalupe, Santa Fé, NM, o/c, 1776-1796*

Contextual and Comparative Analysis

As can be seen, the *biombos enconchados*, or shell encrusted, offer a different effect with the play of light (fig. 6). The examples are reflective, ethereal, and monochromatic, as opposed what we see in the *BFM*. Further, the shell encrusting that was attached to panels resulted in a heavier, less mobile screen compared to the *BFM*. The material makeup of the *BFM*, while sharing an overall form of their Asian models as well as many Novohispanic correlates, also departs in the use of these materials. More so than the material makeup, the *BFM* differs from many screens in its style and composition. A clear example is the media and construction of Asian screens in comparison to Novohispanic screens.

Japanese screens were often constructed of paper or silk on a light wooden frame. Traditionally, the pigments would not consist of oil on canvas, nor shell encrustation, for that matter. Most often, Japanese screens would be painted with ink, gold, and other pigments. The fact that Japanese *byo-bu* had several specialized purposes, the variety of which we do not seem to find within New Spain, influenced changes in media. The materials used for these screens often depended on the way in which these would be used in the interior spaces. Utilitarian screens, unlike those used to create the delicate backdrop to important sacred or secular rituals, would not have been constructed of refined material like lightweight paper. It is clear that the material qualities of the object, in addition to the formalistic elements of line, color, composition, etc., must be taken into account as important and informative aspects of screens like the *BFM*

The *BFM* is not the only Novohispanic screen to display the Conquest of Mexico or a view of Mexico City, even within the same object. The way in which the scenes are

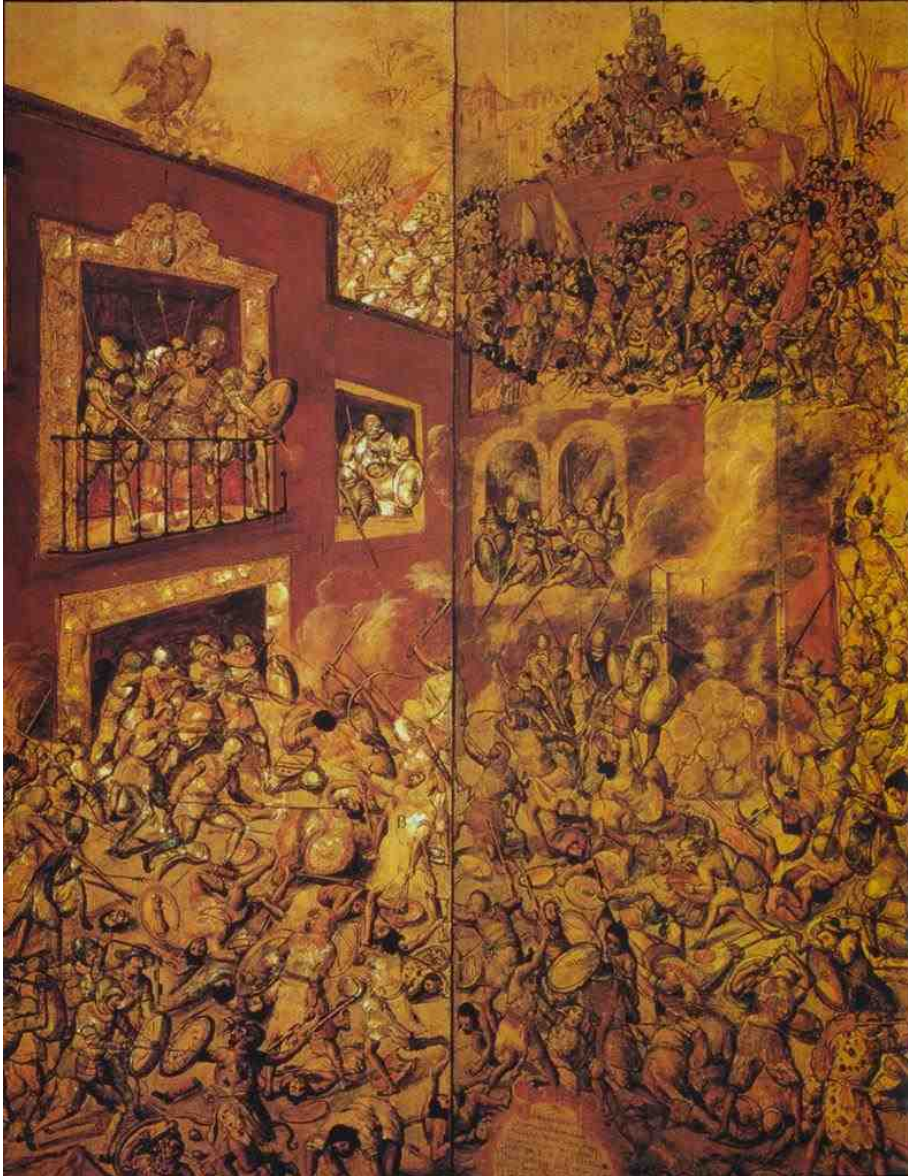


Figure 6
Miguel González, *Biombo de la conquista de México*, o/panel with shell inlay, 1698

portrayed on the *BFM* reveal some similarities and differences with other Novohispanic representations. The compositions on both sides of the *BFM* are horizontal and balanced. The linear perspective is implied rather than mathematically composed, and the implied lines provide the viewer with a centralized focus in the middle two panels of both sides. This centralized focus features the Plaza Mayor, or the central district of both Aztec Tenochtitlan, pictured on the obverse, and of viceregal Mexico City, depicted on the reverse; both are bordered on the left and right by Lake Texcoco. Finally, each side is framed with a decorative border that is meant to set this object off as one which has a practical function as a luxury object within an elite home, that is, a room divider. Interestingly, however, the border on the obverse is located only above the scene, while on the reverse it is only on the top and sides. The bottom edge of each scene is painted with what seems to be a ledge or a wall, rather than a border that corresponds to the painted frame on each side. Both sides have vegetation on the lower section of the composition, which includes hills and trees. The composition of each scene, with its implied lines drawing the viewer's gaze toward the center, suggests a magisterial gaze, or an omniscient viewpoint that looks at the scene or activity taking place below.

Several items in each scene of the *BFM* are labeled in Castilian, and their identifications are located in the rectangular key at the bottom left corner of each side. The inscriptions on the obverse side are organized alphabetically, whereas those on the reverse in numerical order.⁵⁹ The fact that inscriptions occur within the object is significant, and even more so is the language they are in. It can be said that the inscriptions in the image explain to the viewer exactly how the imagery on each side

⁵⁹ See Appendix A and B for the list and translation of inscriptions.

should be “read,” correcting any stray interpretations. Castilian was the language of the Spanish Empire, the language that was intended to unite the linguistically and culturally plural Iberian Peninsula and its global territories since the Iberian re-conquest in 1492. Coeval with the unification of the Iberian kingdoms of Castilla and Aragón, was the publication of Antonio de Nebrija’s *Gramática de la lengua castellana* in 1492. Nebrija’s *Gramática* was produced, in part, to consolidate the Spanish Empire. As Walter Mignolo notes, Nebrija believed “alphabetic writing could tame the voice.”

...[O]ne can argue that taming the voice was implicit in the very invention of the alphabet, it was during the European Renaissance, at the fringes of Occidentalization and colonial expansion, that writing was first theorized and conceptualized as an instrument for taming (not representing) the voice and language, conceived in connection with territorial control. Nebrija’s Castilian grammar became a cornerstone for the politics of language, implemented by the Crown for the purpose of expanding the Castilian empire in what was called the (West) Indies... Nebrija’s Latin grammar was widely used in the Spanish colonies (the New World as well as the Philippines) to write grammars of Amerindian languages and, directly or indirectly, to replace the Amerindian writing systems with European ones...⁶⁰

Therefore, in utilizing the Castilian language for the inscriptions in the *BFM*, language was used to “tame the voice” and eliminate variant interpretations of the image. Further, the use of Castilian for the inscriptions conveys the cultural and political dominance of Spain in Mexica land. Nevertheless, it can be said that the cultural and political dominance as seen in the *BFM* was not one derived from the Iberian Peninsula itself, but from the collective experiences (and aspirations) of the Novohispanic elite within Valley of Mexico.

⁶⁰ Mignolo, 294–95

In each word written in Castilian, the label and corresponding identification is painted in red and black, colors loaded with symbolic meaning that possibly refer to either or both indigenous and Euro-Christian writing metaphors. In the Euro-Christian context, bibles and calendars were often printed in red and black letters. Red letters were utilized in calendars for high holy days, and for important passages in the Bible. Black letters were reserved for the more mundane cyclical occurrences or Biblical passages as well as for writing about secular affairs like law, history, and business. In the Conquest scene in the *BFM*, red letters are utilized for the title of the scene, and the first letters of each episode and important names like *Cortés* or *Noche Triste*. In the reverse, red letters correspond to the title of the key and the first letter of every inscription, with a few exceptions.⁶¹

For the Mexica, red and black was a metaphor for their system of pictographic writing.⁶² To the Mexica elite, “*in tlilli in tlapalli*” or “painting in red [ink] and black [ink],” identified the documentation of imperial information such as history, tribute, and ritual or calendrical celebrations. Further, as Elizabeth Boone indicates, “the black, the red was also the metaphor for knowledge or wisdom.” She continues by describing that such painting/writing was inextricably related to poetry and the spoken word. She concludes, “it is clear that the spoken word is inextricable from and complimentary to the painted document and that both together fill the category of knowledge that is history.”⁶³ The link to Mexica knowledge that is oral and written history is an interesting insight into this work, particularly as the subject matter deals with a historical event. While it is clear that the *BFM* helps to assert the dominance of Spanish political authority and

⁶¹ It appears that number 1, the cathedral, is mostly painted in red, and numbers 7 and 20 are painted completely in red. (See appendix for listing.)

⁶² Boone, “Pictorial Documents,” 437.

⁶³ Boone, *Stories in Red and Black*, 21.

Novohispanic allegiance to the Spanish state, there is also a strong connection to history and culture that is in part a product of local experiences. I believe the color choice is significant and the red and black inscription would have conveyed to the audience that what is depicted on each side should be considered to be accurate and true for both peninsular and creole audiences. The color and language utilized in the inscriptions convey the polysemic nature of Novohispanic visual culture.

Without the inscriptions placed upon each scene the imagery would not be as self-evident. Rather than describing the consecutive sequence of events that make up the Conquest narrative, the obverse depicts the Conquest of Mexico. The inscriptions place emphasis on particular urban spaces where events occurred. For example, the inscription that corresponds to the letter “F” states, “*Palacio de Moctezuma y casas que son hoy del Marqués,*” or “Moctezuma’s palace and houses that are those of the Marquis today.”⁶⁴ As the inscription attests, there is an interest in connecting the place where the events of the Conquest occurred to the contemporary locales of seventeenth-century Mexico City. Many of these places are also identified on the reverse side of the *BFM*. Like sixteenth-century indigenous cartographic histories, which this work may reference on some level, the events of the historical narrative are made important by the place within which they occur, just as the places become spaces of memory because of formative historical events.

Indigenous pictographic and cartographic histories, recording the origins of particular groups, were often used to document the ways in which origins justified the community’s sacred right to dominate a particular space. This is conveyed in the Codex

⁶⁴ Inscriptions reprinted in Yturbide and Río del Redo, 37. My translation.

Xolotl, an example of a central Mexican cartographic history (fig. 7). It seems clear that these histories were created during the Pre-Columbian era, but surviving post-conquest indigenous histories produced throughout the colonial period continued to record formative events of a particular community within a particular environment, often at the request of Spanish officials. Because these formative events occurred in a particular place, it made the specific landscape wherein these events occurred significant to that community; it visually configured group identity. As Elizabeth Boone and Walter Mignolo indicate, within indigenous cartographic histories “geography (or more accurately space) provides the organizational structure, with event and time arranged around location.”⁶⁵ The same can be said of the *BFM*, though it utilizes different media, different subject matter, and was commissioned by a different socioeconomic group. Even at the end of the seventeenth century, Novohispanic elites would have been familiar with indigenous visual culture.

Indigenous communities continued recording events in such a fashion throughout the colonial period and beyond. Oftentimes, cartographic histories were allowed as evidence in the courts to settle land disputes. While not all cartographic histories are in the screenfold fashion of many indigenous Mesoamerican codices (the Codex Xolotl being one), community histories/maps were often found in this format. Delineating a collective history in a screenfold format would not have been an unfamiliar model for elite patrons in seventeenth-century New Spain. It would seem that based on the subject matter the *BFM* recalls more than just the folding screen of Asian art, but also the

⁶⁵ Bailey, 60

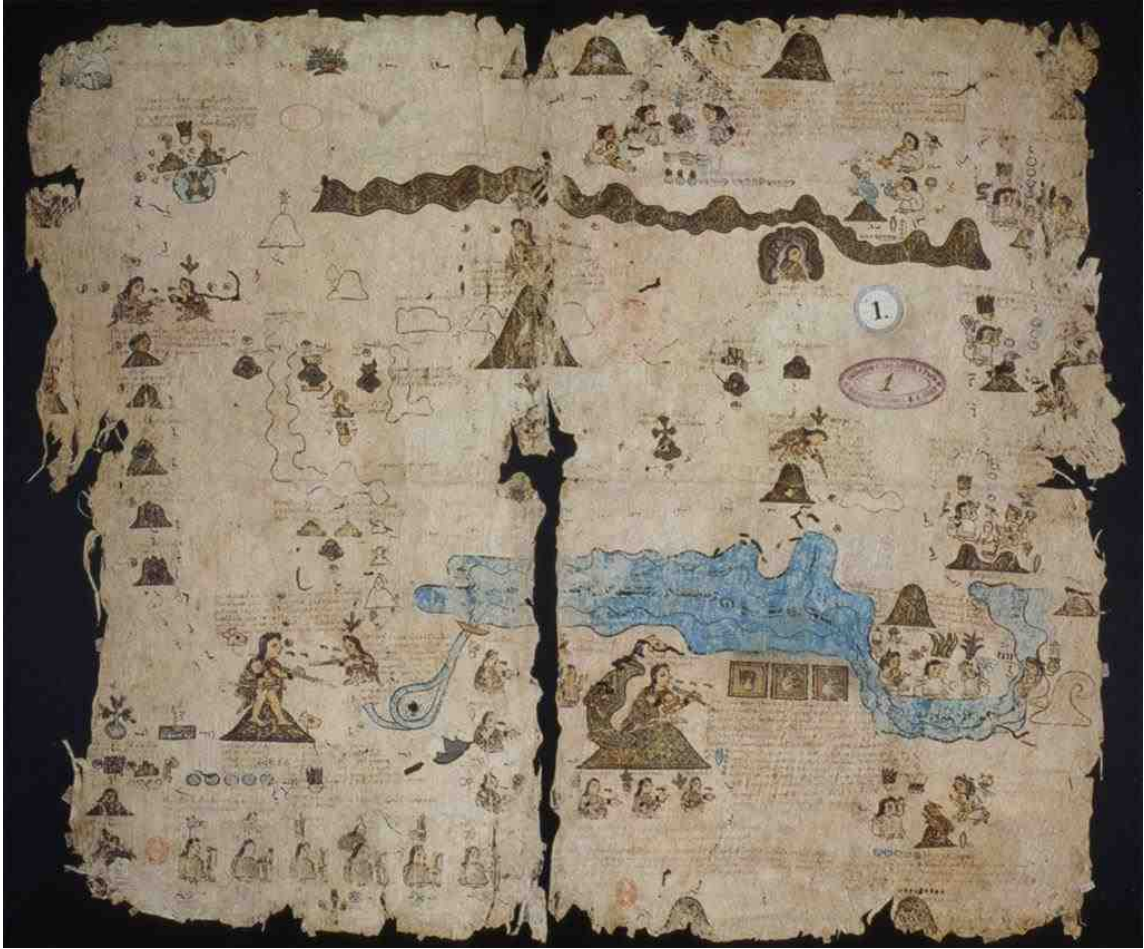


Figure 7
Anonymous, *Codex Xolotl*, pigment on amate, 16th cen.

screenfold format of indigenous Mesoamerican community histories. It is not that the *BFM* referenced one model over another, but successfully combined formal and stylistic qualities adopted from Asian, indigenous, and European models at once. This attests to the power creole patrons had – a familiarity with the myriad cultures they were in contact with and utilized to their advantage. This was a level of knowledge, and a means of control, their peninsular counterparts did not achieve.

Unlike many European history paintings, the composition of the narrative is not ordered in a sequential manner from background to foreground or left to right. Gauvin Alexander Bailey compares paintings of the Conquest of Mexico to paintings of battle scenes, such as the northern Renaissance painting of *The Battle of Darius and Alexander* by Albrecht Altdorfer painted circa 1529 (fig. 8).⁶⁶ However, the composition of this battle scene allows the storyline to unfold in a linear fashion. In the Altdorfer, the narrative advances from the background to the foreground. The representation of the Conquest, on the other hand, is managed by the urban space wherein the events occur. The viewer would not easily be able to understand the sequence of events solely by the placement of figures within the composition of the painting without the aid of textual labels. Elsewhere the narrative sequence is described as being divided between each panel, beginning at the top right.⁶⁷ Although it is true that the *Entrada de Cortés* occurs at the top right, the following inscription occurs at the far left panel and the rest of the narrative does not follow in the linear top right to left sequence described. The scene actually corresponds to the colonial understanding of both the layout of Tenochtitlan and the locations of the Conquest events. The sequential order comes from knowledge of the

⁶⁶ Ibid., 159.

⁶⁷ See *Imágenes de los naturales*, 105–09.



Figure 8
Albrecht Altdorfer, *The Battle of Darius and Alexander*, o/c, ca. 1529

space within which the Conquest occurred and is clarified for the viewer by the inscriptions.

A golden painted frame surrounds the Conquest scene, forming horseshoe arches around each panel and creates a painted arcade. Although *biombos* are derived from East Asian painting conventions, this painted arcade almost seems to recall the architecture of the Middle East and Mediterranean (often inaccurately termed “Islamic” architecture), which would include structures found in southern Spain. The form of the frame suggests a *mirador*, or lookout point, often found in palatial architecture of medieval and Renaissance southern Spain as seen in the arch over the Alhambra Palace’s *mirador* in Granada (fig. 9). *Miradores* are often the place in which the ruler was able to look out and survey the land over which he dominated. The arcade that tops the *BFM* imparts the sense that the viewer is looking through a window out over the battle scene that is taking place. The golden arcade recalls another model from so-called “*mudejar*” art of Spain, the fine working of Cordovan leather.

Throughout the middle ages of Spain and into the present day, the working of leather in the fashion of *cordobanes* was globally popular. *Cordobanes* were the working of fine leather, dyed, molded, and painted with gold and pigments into floral, vegetal, geometric, and often figural patterns (fig. 10). *Cordobanes* originated in the Muslim world, which included Spain in the middle ages. After the *Reconquista*, Córdoba became the center of such production. *Cordobanes* were considered a luxury item, often exchanged as gifts between royalty. They were used throughout Spain and exported throughout Europe and Spain’s empire, particularly from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Guilds were set up in the colonial Ibero-Americas and several cities have or



Figure 9
Mirador, Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain, 13th-15th cen.



Figure 10
Anonymous, *Cordoban*, leather, dye, gold, n.d.

had streets titled, *Calle de los cordobanes*, or “Street of the *cordoban* makers.” Mexico City’s *Calle de cordobanes* is now called *Calle Donceles*, and is one of the streets pictured on the reverse of the *BFM*. *Cordobanes* were used for revered items like *retablos* for churches and *mihirabs* in mosques in addition to household items like chests, furniture, *biombos*, and *guademecies*. *Guademecies* were a type of leatherwork that was created to surround the dais in the *salon de estrado* in order to block drafts and provide decorative elements. According to Marita Martínez del Río Redo, *biombos rodeastrados* received their name from *guademecies* which would also “*rodear el estrado*,” or surround the dais.⁶⁸ Although made of painted canvas, the arcade form includes a gessoed relief that harkens to the *guademecies* and other Cordovan leatherwork. This model for *biombos* is rarely considered, but may hint at the value such objects had for their patrons and audience—an importance that suggests nobility. In addition to the connections to late medieval and Renaissance southern Spanish models the Conquest scene suggests, it also conveys a connection to Flemish tapestries.

Tapestries were often hung in arcades around the dais in elite European salons, but could easily be moved from room to room according to occasion. Like Novohispanic and Asian folding screens, tapestries were hung as insulation from drafts and for decorative purposes, as well as didactic moralizing displays. We see this over the dais in the salon designed by Charles LeBrun (fig. 11). Tapestries, like Novohispanic *biombos* or Spanish *cordobanes*, seem to have been one of the most highly prized objects in the elite home, placed around the dais above the seats of important figures. Tapestries often portrayed allegorical images, classical mythology, battle or conquest, and courtly scenes.

⁶⁸ Martínez del Río Redo, 133.



Figure 11
Charles leBrun, Vaux-le-Vicomte, Salon of the Muses (interior), Maincy, France, 1661

In New Spain, however, Flemish tapestries were costly and more difficult to acquire.⁶⁹ It appears that Novohispanic *biombos* substituted for the lack of costly tapestries for elite residences. Like tapestries, *biombos* surrounded the dais, blocked drafts, and were portable. Novohispanic screens shared the same genres of subject commonly found in tapestries. For example, as Gustavo Curiel notes, “the most common themes were geographic allegories, historical events, cityscapes, inaugural ceremonies held in honor of different viceroys, ethnographic illustrations of American cultures, episodes from classical mythology, and any number of Oriental motifs.”⁷⁰ Therefore, it seems likely the arcade on the Conquest side would be imitating arcades from which tapestries would have been hung. The *Vista* side of the *BFM* also bears a formal relationship common to tapestries. The painted floral frame could initially appear as *chinoiserie* but clearly recalls floral borders that appear in several European tapestries as seen in the *Conquest of Carthage* tapestry from the Gobelins workshop (fig. 12). The appearance of these motifs could indicate further symbolic importance.

Placing any type of border around the image frames the image. Framing images has a practical importance of capturing the image in its site of display. When there is no space in which the image needs to be secured, the framing element can have a simple decorative function. However, decorative elements may not be as vacuous in meaning as they appear. In the act of placing a frame around the imagery on each side the artist has already created a schema for a particular interpretation. The frame delineates the interpretation, and the frame on each side invokes particular moods in the viewer. The

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See Gustavo Curiel in Rivero Borrell M.'s *The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico*, 28.



Figure 12

After Giulio Romano, Gobelins, *The History of Scipio, Conquest of Carthage*, wool and silk tapestry, 1688-89

arcade placed around the Conquest gives the appearance of drama, like a theatrical performance. Conversely, the *Vista* is framed in flowers, suggesting a natural harmony in the ordering of this space.

Below the golden arches that frame divide each panel of the *Conquest*, we witness a scene depicted in a painterly style with a dark palette. Although the inscriptions focus on the places in which each event occurred, there is clear attention to the figures that populate the scene. Certain figures are labeled with names, like *la Malinche*, identified here as “La Malitz.” The scene is densely populated with Cortés’ and Moctezuma’s armies, in addition to the general populace caught up in the skirmish. Figures of soldiers and civilians are grouped in clusters around edifices or within the landscape. The clusters of figures give the scene a sense of flow that corresponds to the fold of the screen; the painting style makes use of the form of the object. In photographic reproductions, the *BFM* is deceptively depicted stretched out in order to display the details of the painting. Since the screen would have been at least partially folded in order for it to stand properly, it is important to recognize the design of the painting as corresponding to the folds of the screen. Thus, certain areas of the painting would have been receding while others would have been advancing toward the viewer, creating an even greater sense of motion. In fact, all but one (*La Noche Triste*) of the inscribed scenes takes place on a panel that extends toward the viewer.

Dark colors and numerous grouped figures make the obverse of the *BFM* appear ambiguous and chaotic. Although it appears to be due to the light blue value of the sky above, there is not only a conflation of consecutive events, but also a conflation of temporal periods. Certain areas near the bottom of the painting are darkly colored; thus,

the depiction of the *Noche Triste*, or Cortés's retreat, suggests that the event occurs in the evening hours. Figures advance and retreat in different directions; there is no sense of time or linear sequence, and the composition is crowded with figures, edifices, and landscape elements. This conflation of time seems to be congruent with allegorical typological tropes. Typology was originally a form of Biblical exegesis that synthesized past events of the Old Testament as foretelling the events of the New Testament.⁷¹ In typological allegory, past events herald current or proceeding events. In other words, the Conquest of Mexico appears visually as "a self-fulfilling prophecy." As soon as Cortés is welcomed into Tenochtitlan, the city is destined to fall. Furthermore, "conquest" derives from the Latin word, *conquirere*, which can mean "to seek" and "to complete."⁷² Interpretation of seventeenth-century Novohispanic poetry further corroborates this visual typology. Rafael Catalá describes the baroque literary metaphor of sleeping and/or dreaming, which can be directly related to the *BFM*'s depiction of the *Noche Triste*, letter H. According to Catalá in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz' "Primer Sueño,"

...La noche como espejo del día si recordamos que el poema de Sor Juana acaba completando un ciclo, esto es, un nuevo comenzar, ya que la palabra giro ... viene del griego 'gyros' y del latín 'gyrus' = círculo. Este círculo o giro es completado por otro círculo, el sol... El día solar es un ciclo especial y cinético que se repite sincrónicamente en un período diacrónico de tiempo: la semana, el mes, el año, etcetera (The night as a mirror of day if we remember that the poem of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz just completed a cycle, that is, a new beginning, now that the word "turn" ... comes from the Greek word "gyros" and the Latin "gyrus" which is a circle. This circle or turn [of events] is completed by another circle, the sun... The solar day is a special and kinetic cycle that repeats simultaneously in a diachronic period of time: the week, the month, the year, etc.)⁷³

⁷¹ For example, the Old Testament story of Jonah and the Whale is understood to prefigure the death and resurrection of Christ in Christian exegesis.

⁷² Oxford English Dictionary, "conquer."

⁷³ Catalá, 158. Author's translation.

Therefore, I posit that because the day and night cycle into months, days, and years, the symbolic trope of the “Sad Night,” of Cortés was simply a prognostication of the fall of the Aztec forces and the dawning of Christian Mexico City, as seen on the reverse. Since night is the mirror of day, the time of metaphorical illumination, night is the time of illusion. The darkness pictured in the Conquest scene is the foil of the *BFM*'s reverse. Catalá concludes by indicating that as pagan Europeans awoke with the “dawning” of Christianity, so too did the indigenous Americans with the Christianity brought by the Spanish.⁷⁴

The *BFM* is clearly a representation of conquest and destruction, as the subject matter indicates. This is also not the only object from this era to depict the Conquest of Mexico in such a way. Works from the González workshop are also labeled and have a narrative that is based upon the space rather than chronology. However, unlike the *BFM*, these scenes are not oriented in the same direction, nor do they place the same amount of emphasis on the particular places where the events occurred. They also differ in that they show the Conquest of Mexico from the moment Cortés lands in Veracruz. Like the *BFM* each army is equally matched in strength and numbers within each of these works, and it is difficult to discern the victors. Conversely, in addition to the differing media, the format of the *enconchado* panels includes many more scenes separately and the *biombo enconchado* does not include the view of the city on the reverse. As Richard Kagan notes, “the *biombo* narrative” in the *BFM* “commemorated those myths and stories that led to the foundation of Mexico City, and ultimately to the monumental Christian city

⁷⁴ Ibid., 204.

pictured on the other side.”⁷⁵ In other words, there is at once the acknowledgement of a defeat, but with the understanding that this is also the birth of the kingdom of New Spain and the Mexican people — in particular the birth of the elite who saw themselves as the legitimate heirs to both groups portrayed in the image: Moctecuhzoma and the indigenous nobility, as well as Cortés and the Spanish *conquistadors* with their indigenous allies.

In examining the reverse, the viewer’s eyes are drawn towards the central part of the *biombo* by the aqueduct that runs toward the Plaza Mayor, or the main square where the cathedral and viceroy’s palace are located. The view looks east across the city from the palatial park of Chapultepec, which is both intentional and meaningful because of the importance this location had for Pre-Colombian and Colonial peoples in the Valley of Mexico. Chapultepec was the site of the royal palaces and burial sites from before the time of the Mexica, through the colonial period and into the nineteenth century. The springs of Chapultepec were also vital to the survival of Tenochtitlan and later Mexico City. While Tenochtitlan was built in the middle of the lake, most of the lake was salt water. In Pre-Colombian times, those who controlled the freshwater springs of Chapultepec had power over the livelihood of the residents of the Valley of Mexico. According to Mexica history, they had been vassals to the Tepanec rulers who controlled Chapultepec until they won control the Valley when they conquered their Tepanec overlords by first taking and defending Chapultepec. In the Viceregal period, incoming Viceroy stopped first at their *ex-urbis* palace of Chapultepec before beginning their viceregal procession through Mexico City. The viceregal procession repeated the same

⁷⁵ Kagan, 156.

route taken by Cortés from Veracruz to Tenochtitlan, with the addition of this stop in the journey — one that was integral to the Mexica origin myth.

The inscriptions indicate numerically important structures in the city, beginning with the cathedral and ending at number 70, Chapultepec.⁷⁶ The city of Mexico in this representation is depopulated, lacking any human presence. The only human intervention in the scene is that of the viewer and his/her memory of the historical events that occurred in the space shown on the obverse. The new structures of the city become the focal points of this image, particularly those that were the most meaningful to the elite urban population of the imperial capital. The inscriptions place emphasis on religious structures, beginning with the cathedral and the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Although most of the edifices numbered are “religious,” rather than “secular,” it is important to note that at the time there was no political division between Church and State. Although these institutions were technically separate and often competitive entities, religion and politics in Novohispanic society were not differentiated in practice. Therefore, it is difficult to say that religious structures were not also civic structures.

It seems that although most of these locations were religious structures, many of them were associated with Cortés, the events of the Conquest, or the early transition of Tenochtitlan to Mexico City. For example, number two is the Villa de Guadalupe, a location that has further importance aside from the location of the miraculous image of the Virgin. Pictured in the obverse as letter I, the *Calzada* or causeway of Guadalupe was the location from which Cortés staged his final attack on the Mexica army. During the colonial period, this became the second stop, after Chapultepec, once the viceregal

⁷⁶ The viceregal palace is labeled as number 55.

procession reached the Valley of Mexico. San Francisco, number 35, was a church that was founded by Cortés in 1525. While the site of Cortés's burial seemed to have moved from place to place over the centuries, his body lay in this church between 1629 and 1724, during the period when the *BFM* would have been created. There are two churches that are purported to be the site of the *Encuentro*, letter A on the obverse, numbers 44 and either 32 or 35. Even the volcanoes, number 59, were significant to the Conquest geography, as the valley between was known as "El Paso de Cortés" since he traveled through this pass to arrive below in the Valley of Mexico.

Many of these locations are depicted in other views of Mexico City, but not entirely in the same way. The clear model for this image lay in the architectural drawings of Trasmonte, created to convey the progress of the *desagüe*, or the drainage of the surrounding lakes (fig. 13). The other *biombos* that seem to be related to the *BFM* also have a similar depiction of the city. However, the inscriptions in the *BFM* and other inscribed views are never quite the same. More extensive research must be undertaken until there is more information for interpretation about why such locations were highlighted. However, I feel sure that the sites were specified because they were monuments that stood to legitimate the continuity of viceregal authority. This authority was based primarily on the events of the Conquest as they occurred within the Valley of Mexico, but sites that had been previously significant to Pre-Colombian peoples of the Valley had further colonial identifications appended to them.



Figure 13
Juan Gómez de Trasmonte, *Map of Mexico City*, painted engraving, ca. 1628

Trasmonte's view of Mexico City is clearly the model for the Vista as portrayed in the *BFM*, but there may be another model. While Asian screens are recognized as the formal models for Novohispanic screens, the subject matter of Asian screens necessitates further scrutiny. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, or Edo period in Japan, the political system went through a period of upheaval comparable to seventeenth-century New Spain. During that period in Japanese art, a particular subject gained popularity and appeared often within folding screens—the so-called Kyoto “Capitalscape” Screens (fig. 14 & 15). As Matthew Phillip McKelway notes, the sixteenth century in Japan was a turbulent period, but “portraits” of the capital city of Kyoto “are astonishing for the grandeur of their vistas and complex detail and unmatched for the visual information they provide... the Kyoto screens provide visions of the city that are selective, idealizing, and ultimately celebratory.”⁷⁷ In the screens, Kyoto is often portrayed from afar, depopulated and organized, “aided by inscriptions or identifying labels affixed to the screens’ surfaces,” which often indicate physical changes in the city, particularly the architectural changes in palace and temple architecture.⁷⁸ Significant in these screens is what is omitted and what is included. Much like the *BFM*, the views of Kyoto “present optimistic images of stability and peace,” that was not neutral, but politically motivated. The views of Kyoto and Mexico City, “[consisted] of a collection of elements that depended heavily on the appropriation of visual signs of ‘tradition’... and cultural memory. Political messages in these earliest Kyoto screens often lurk beneath the surface, remaining hidden until we delve deeply enough to discover the

⁷⁷ McKelway, 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.



Figure 14
Anonymous, Kyoto View Screen, left screen, ink and gold on paper, Edo Period, 17th cen.



Figure 15
Anonymous, Kyoto View Screen, right screen, ink and gold on paper, Edo Period, 17th cen.

relationships between people and places that are represented.”⁷⁹ These screens, however, are not about portraying the quotidian or a realistic image of Kyoto.

By depicting the capital in such a way, the artists give legitimacy to particular, aristocratic political interests, which, though not pictured, are identified by the relative placement of sites on the screens. Aristocratic political legitimacy was dependant on the control of particular areas. Their absence from representation conveyed their position as apart from the quotidian, their presence only visible through their monuments. These monuments, though recently constructed, are meant to express a feeling of permanence and continuity. As in the BFM, the depicted monuments are overwhelmingly religious—temples and shrines—indicating the location as a spiritual center. Further, the palaces indicate the power of the aristocracy in the city. Kyoto, like Mexico City, was cosmologically placed within its environment. The changing urban spaces in these works are shown as coexisting with the natural elements. In the BFM, natural elements are indicated as important sites within the Vista, such as el peñol and los volcanes. Through all of the real changes occurring within these cities, the screens express endurance. The BFM can be read as depicting the continuity of the aristocracy, even through conquest and destruction. As McKelway indicates, these screens, “never present totally physically realistic or accurate views. Rather, they should always be considered as vistas derived from visual experience and from tradition, memory, and imagination,” the screens, “present panoramas of noted places both remembered and forgotten, weaving them together in intricate urban landscapes.”⁸⁰ I would argue that Kyoto “capitalscapes” were the most informative models for the BFM and the other Novohispanic screens that

⁷⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 10.

include such a view. It would not be an unreasonable speculation since there were strong economic ties through New Spain's Viceregal period and Japan's Edo period.

As opposed to the obverse, the painting style in the *Vista* image is less painterly with more focus on the lines, and the light palette primarily consists of warm colors as opposed to the cool blues and greens generally utilized in the obverse. Unlike the ambiguous time depicted in the obverse, it is clear that this chorographic scene is set during the day. The atmosphere is clear and bright, and the pinks of the sky make it seem like dawn. If it were depicting dawn, this may explain the lack of human presence in the city. As mentioned previously, in Baroque iconography the dawn is symbolic of the beginning of a new era. Thus, this image symbolically constructs the awakening of the emergence of the newly restructured Mexico City. As night turns into the dawn, the ancient is replaced by the modern—in this case the ancient to modern urban space. The view is a celebration of the massive development that occurred throughout the seventeenth century, including the building up of *La Traza*, the part of the city pictured here, made possible by the *desagüe*. Nevertheless, the urban space of Mexico City was an architectural palimpsest; the streets echoed Mexica roads and causeways, ruined palaces were replaced by Renaissance and Baroque development, and ancient temples and ritual spaces were converted into Christian churches. As day is never separate from night, the experience of life within colonial Mexico City was layered on top of the memory of Tenochtitlan and the events that occurred there. As Susan Gillespie notes in “The Aztec Triple Alliance: A Post-Conquest Tradition”:

...The ultimate conclusion is that the disruption of the conquest required a response, a re-argumentation which remodeled (not “invented”) history as

people jockeyed for positions of status in the construction of a new society. The past was transformed, but it is yet possible to discern in the reconfigured past the preservation, perhaps for the first century, of the indigenous symbol system that structured the Aztec world. Its expression and manipulation in the native traditions persisted in the colonial era in the guise of “history” (a form acceptable to and encouraged by the Spanish) because of the advantage it conferred in arguing for an identity and legitimacy in the search for order out of disorder...⁸¹

The *BFM* thus presents a form of cartographic history that includes long standing perceptions of the space within the Valley of Mexico layered with a colonial remodeling. This remodeling reaffirmed the legitimacy of the Novohispanic elites and their supposed history, who in surveying the *Vista* from the top of the mountain of Chapultepec, first took visual and symbolic possession of their realm before they could legitimately claim actual possession. Comparable in format to the Kyoto screens, the elites were not represented in the *BFM* since they were above representation. Their absence indicated that their legitimate authority over this territory could not be harnessed or removed by the general populace or even outside elites, for that matter. However, elites had the power over others in order to attain sites of cultural memory, and reconfigured them for their own profit.

With this aerial view of the city, a sense of order and harmony is conveyed from the organization of the urban space. The focus on architecture, and the building projects that occurred throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, indicate human control over nature, particularly over the indigenous people and nature depicted in the scene of the Conquest. Even the landscape elements shown in the foreground and background of this image appear to be under the control of the elites absent in the image; they are

⁸¹ See Gillespe’s “The Aztec Triple Alliance: A Postconquest Tradition,” in Boone *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World, A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks*, 256.

labeled with a textual inscription and are not free of architectural structures.⁸² Thus, as Angel Rama notes, Novohispanic administration created an ideal city through written and urban texts, exemplified in this image, to “order” their environment. In this way, residents could be “organized to meet increasingly stringent requirements of colonization, administration, commerce, defense, and religion.”⁸³ This further corroborates that which we have seen in the comparison to Kyoto screens.

The history, or the Conquest pictured on the obverse, that occurred in this location was a fulfillment of the inevitable for the Novohispanic nobility. The inevitable was the restructuring of the spatial memory of Tenochtitlan into Mexico City, pictured on the reverse. In a place where elites were the minority and their claims easily contested by the general populace, as well as amongst themselves, there was a need to construct their rule as cohesive. If the restructuring space legitimated colonial authority, elites needed to create visual evidence of an imagined harmony in their kingdom and a sense of permanence through the reorganization. If factious elites could agree on a reading of their past, or a “re-argumentation,” that would lead to their imagined urban ideal, their power could become consolidated and actual.

⁸² For example, “59. los volcanes,” or Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl. Interestingly the pass between these points is where Cortés traveled to enter into the Valley of Mexico; and “70. Chapultepec” was the pre-Colombian palatial park and royal burial ground.

⁸³ Rama, 1.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Synthesis

The *BFM* and other elite objects are often interpreted in scholarship as conveying ideologies of power. However, there is little interest in describing to whom this power would be displayed. In other words, scholars tend not to describe the ideal audience(s) for or the viewer's reception of the screen. As mentioned, the subject matter of the *BFM* has been interpreted as an image of the nascent creole national identity borne of the resentment towards the *peninsulares*, which developed through the eighteenth century and spawned the nineteenth-century independence movement. Michael Schreffler has recently critiqued the "burgeoning creole identity" model as the interpretative framework for the *BFM* and related objects. He relates the visual culture to documentary evidence from this period and concludes that creole elites intended to fashion themselves as the perfect vassals for the Spanish king. As he indicates, "the adoption of this master narrative [the creole patriotism model] runs the risk of masking the complex and multi-vocal economy of the forms of representation that were produced and circulated there."⁸⁴ Indeed, elites in the kingdom of New Spain, like those throughout the Spanish empire, had their motivations for and methods of asserting their allegiance to the Hapsburg court in Madrid. We cannot underestimate the complex interactions of politics, economics, social identity, and individual agency in the production and diffusion of visual culture.

⁸⁴ Schreffler, *Art of Allegiance*, 3.

With either interpretation the assumption persists that elites who supposedly had sociopolitical power used visual culture to demonstrate their status in Novohispanic society. It is supposed that non-elites lacked sociopolitical agency and would passively view and accept these visual testaments to elite authority. Yet, based on the original site of display—likely the dais of an elite home—it is clear that very few non-elites would have been able to view the *BFM*, aside from servants or domestic workers. If such interpretations are accurate in that objects like the *BFM* would have prompted wide acceptance of Novohispanic hierarchical power—be that creole pride or the eminence of the Spanish monarchy — why would this information be presented to other elites that would have supposedly agreed with the arrangement of the system?

In Hapsburg New Spain, status was displayed ostentatiously. Some of this unrestrained extravagance would have been made clear to the common populace; groups from several ethnic or economic strata came into contact through public ritual or commerce (including servitude within elite households). Nevertheless, not only was the structure of society based upon a hierarchical order, the movement of people within actual and symbolic space was mediated using this structure. Access to elite interior spaces, like the *salón de estrado* where the *BFM* would have been located, was limited to certain groups. Furthermore, those who would have even had the ability to view the *BFM* would have needed a particular cultural literacy in order to comprehend the imagery within the screen. With this in mind, it is clear that objects of elite material culture were not to prove elite authority to non-elites, but to provide a sense of security to elites whose position could be undermined by non-elites and other elites alike.

There existed an animosity between *criollos* and *peninsulares* from the beginning of the Viceregal period. Although the peninsular Spanish held the top political and clerical positions, they often depended on the finances of the creoles. Creoles, who had a great deal of control over the markets, were often undermined and experienced the “contemptuous attitude of certain Peninsular Spaniards who viewed them as weak lazy, and inept.”⁸⁵ Nevertheless, elites of European heritage, whether born in the Americas or not, recognized the necessity for their *interdependence* to achieve their sociopolitical and economic objectives.

Many scholars agree that creoles “created a set of symbols of identity that were represented in images, words, plays, fiestas, and dances,” and “painted themselves as a chosen people with roots that went back as far as any European culture... [i]n addition to deeming themselves the inheritors of two glorious kingdoms—Spain and Tenochtitlan.”⁸⁶ This does not necessarily mean that creole elite engendered a quasi-nationalistic pride that was in contrast to peninsular elites. If objects such as the *BFM* were “symbols of identity,” we should first define “identity.” According to the Oxford English Dictionary, identity is “a close similarity or affinity,” and in mathematics it is “a *transformation* that leaves the object *unchanged*” deriving from the Latin, *idem*, “same.”⁸⁷ The utilization of objects to build identity would then indicate the promotion of similitude in the imaginary where it may not have existed in reality. Shelly Hales describes this phenomenon in terms of the “art of impression” found in the structure of elite homes in the Roman Empire. She notes that during a time that anyone can become Roman there is a “freedom

⁸⁵ Rubial García, 18.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 18–19.

⁸⁷ My emphasis.

of art to invent a reality for those for whom it was commissioned, to help them assume an identity and to create fantasies of status in order that they [non-Roman citizens of the Empire] might participate successfully in the Roman world.”⁸⁸ Similarly, the elite Novohispanic home was the forum where objects that put forth symbols of identity were utilized.

The *salón de estrado*, in particular, was a symbolically important space. This was the space in the elite home where the most valuable luxury goods were displayed, including *biombos de rodaestrado*. As Gustavo Curiel indicates, “[d]aily life in viceregal New Spain was governed by a complex system of customs and rituals” wherein “[m]any aspects of private life were affected by the use of luxury goods.”⁸⁹ This particular space was used to receive the most important guests, and was considered to be “an emphatically feminine space where the lady of the house was sovereign, and her absolute authority was enforced by the strict observance of certain rules of etiquette... Here, the hostess and her guests,” which included both ladies and gentlemen, “would engage in polite conversation on a variety of topics: current events, politics, religion, the latest fashions” among other things.⁹⁰ Very often the objects found within the space served as stimulus for conversation between the elite hosts and guests. The *BFM* the object that surrounded the raised platform on which the company would have been seated would have undoubtedly served such a purpose.

If the imagery found in the *BFM* was indeed used to construct a sense of identity, a similarity, it would have been one that created group cohesion. Whether the group

⁸⁸ Hales, 6.

⁸⁹ Curiel, 40.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

consisted of creoles or peninsulars, colonial administrators or landed nobility, the imagery of the object was constructed to attest to shared experiences. Elite *peninsulars* and *criollos*, although exhibiting animosity at times, both found themselves within the space of Mexico City through the events of the Conquest. Many elite creoles believed themselves to have been (and often were) descendents of royal indigenous and *conquistadores*, while the figure of Cortés was often understood as representing the establishment of Spanish rule and Christian religion. The imagery clearly has localized and personal meanings, which would have made little impressions outside of New Spain, yet the *BFM* has multiple layers of meaning. Certain details would have resonated with persons whose experience was closely tied to a long-lived history in the region, while the demarcation of events and places would have opened the discourse to those with limited knowledge. The *BFM* in the *salón de estrado*—a very limited and particular space—was utilized to bring together, in ritualized discourse, persons of often contentious positions.

The placement of the *BFM* in the elite Novohispanic home is rarely investigated by scholars. The *salón de estrado* is often described as one of the most important elite interior spaces. There is some discussion of the material culture found and the general activities that occurred within such a space. However, there is no investigation of how material objects influenced interactions within the space. There is also no indication of what form the structured formal gatherings took. The word “salon” indicates more than just a word for a particular room; it also describes the type of gathering that takes place within this room. A “salon” is also “a regular social gathering of eminent people (esp. writers and artists) in the house of a woman prominent in society,” or “a meeting of

intellectuals or other eminent people at the invitation” of someone equally important.⁹¹

In other contexts that have been investigated in greater depth, like France, salon culture was where the females had strong influence over society. During the seventeenth century in France, according to Dena Goodman, salon culture was based upon the integration of certain persons into the aristocracy and promoted the values of the monarchy.⁹² These meetings later developed into discussions between leading intellectuals proclaiming Enlightenment values. It would be beneficial to find how prominent members of Novohispanic society came together in similar discursive situations and what these gatherings achieved. In this study the role of women and visual culture should be emphasized. In further investigations of the *BFM*, the author intends to make these key points.

Further Research

At this point, the role of the *BFM* within its particular context can only be touched upon. We can place it in the *salón de estrado* of the elite home, but can we narrow down whose home within which it was used? Would the *BFM* have been part of a series, utilized in tandem, which included the other screens that are similar in form and subject matter? Can we decipher how the objects within the space would have shaped the outcome of the discourse that occurred within the *salón*? It seems clear that the imagery in the *BFM* indicates an elite desire to imagine their position as continuous, legitimate, and stable, but there remain several more lines of inquiry. Further investigation would clarify why particular elites would have felt the need to build such an identity, how this was

⁹¹ Oxford English Dictionary.

⁹² Goodman, 330.

accomplished through visual culture, and how this identity would have served this individual or group.

In order to answer such questions and corroborate speculations about the use of the *BFM*, further research in Mexico City must be conducted. When this research is undertaken, I intend to gain access to any records the Museo Franz Mayer has regarding this screen. This will assist in the discovery of further information about the social history of the object (e.g., the pattern of movement of this object, and/or who obtained it and how). I would also speak further with the curator of the Museo Franz Mayer to discuss how this object was acquired, and how it has been utilized by the museum. It will be beneficial to interview Jaime Cuadriello and Gustavo Curiel, both UNAM faculty members. Both have researched this particular object, or similar objects, and have an extensive knowledge of elite Novohispanic material culture. They are some of the few that describe how material objects were used in the elite home, including *biombos*.

In addition to researching the immediate object, I intend to undertake further primary comparative analysis through visits other museums to find works similar to the *BFM* or objects; through this research, the Novohispanic material culture and the rituals surrounding such objects would be greatly elucidated. In particular, I would view and undertake archival research to learn more about the three other screens that seem related to the *BFM*. Collections to investigate will include the Museo Nacional de Historia Castillo de Chapultepec, and the Museo de la Ciudad de México, the Museo Nacional del Virreinato. I would also like to visit the Museo de América in Madrid, Spain, in addition to contacting the private collectors who own the screens that are most similar to the *BFM*. If evidence continues to confirm Viceroy Sarmiento y Valladares as the patron, I will

conduct archival investigation regarding his conduct before and during his reign as viceroy. In relation to the matter of possible salon culture, I would also research his wives and daughters, who would have been the hostesses in the *salón de estrado* where the *BFM* was placed. These are simply a few of the ways in which this object needs to be investigated further. There are several other related issues that further study would raise which include: the role of women in Novohispanic elite society, the symbolic use of interior space, the relationship between the public and private sphere, the dissemination of viceregal policy, and the structure of ritual within the interior domestic space.

What is clear at this point is that the *BFM* functioned as a mediating object, literally and symbolically occupying a place between actual and symbolic space, permanence and change, past and present, private and public, and lived and desired social reality. Utilized by the Novohispanic nobility, this object reflected, promoted, and made tangible through its form, content, and use, the supposed legitimacy of elite groups that realized their tenuous position at the apex of the local Novohispanic hierarchy and yet under foreign Spanish imperial authority.

APPENDIX A

Inscriptions in *Conquest of Mexico*

- A) Entrada de Cortés y recibimiento de Mocthesa [Entrance of Cortés and his welcome by Moctezuma]
- B) Los Bergantines q hisieron los Españoles [The brigantines that were built by the Spanish]
- C) Casa y balcon dond dieron la pedrada a Moctheza [The house and balcony where they stoned Moctezuma]
- D) Cue q estaba en la plaza d Mexco dond oi esta Palacio [Temple that was in the plaza of Mexico where the palace is now]
- E) Cue q estaba en S.tiago Tlatiluco dond. Est. oi la Ygla. [Temple that was in Santiago Tlatelolco where the church is today]
- F) Palacio de Mochza y casas q son oi del Marques [Mocthezuma's palace and houses which now belong to the Marquis]
- G) Tesoro de Mochza dond pegaron fuego los inos [Moctezuma's treasury to which the Indians set fire]
- H) Quando se salio Cortés con sus soldados en la Noche Triste [When Cortés fled with his soldiers on the Noche Trist]
- I) Calzada de Guadalupe por donde entraron los Españoles y los indios de Tlaxcala en su favor [Causeway of Guadalupe where the Spanish entered with their allies, the Indians of Tlaxcala]

APPENDIX B

Inscriptions of the *Vista de la Ciudad de México*

- 1) La catedral
- 2) F.I. Dguadalupe
- 3) Santiago
- 4) Santa María
- 5) Santa Ana
- 6) El Carmen
- 7) Parroquia d Sa. Caterina Martir
- 8) Santo Domingo
- 9) Lamiçericordia
- 10) S. lorenço d Relig.
- 11) La conçeusion de re..
- 12) S. Juan de Dios
- 13) San Hipolito
- 14) S. Sebastian
- 15) S. Pedro i Pablo
- 16) Sta. Catarr. Dsenad..
- 17) La encarnacion
- 18) Colexio d. S. Andr.
- 19) Sa. Clara d relig.
- 20) Parroquia de la S. Beracruz
- 21) (blank)
- 22) San Diego
- 23) Osspi. De los Convalecientes
- 24) Sa. Ysanct d relias
- 25) Sa Cruz
- 26) Ospal d S Lasaro
- 27) La sma trenidad
- 28) Ospal d las bubas
- 29) Sa Ynes d relias
- 30) Sa. Teresa d relias
- 31) Jesús MR de relias
- 32) Sa Cruz
- 33) Lacompañia
- 34) Elespiritu Santo
- 35) S Francisco
- 36) Colegio d niñas
- 37) S Juan d letran
- 38) Lamerçe
- 39) Balbaneda d relias

- 40) Portaceli
- 41) Ss Jose d grades
- 42) S Bernardo
- 43) Las capuchias
- 44) Osp d Jesus nano
- 45) S Agustin
- 46) Osp Real
- 47) S Pablo
- 48) S. Geronimo
- 49) Monsarate
- 50) Regina d reas
- 51) S Ju d la penitencia re
- 52) S Anton
- 53) Belen
- 54) Lapieda
- 55) Palaçio
- 56) Lainquiçion
- 57) Los caños
- 58) Las calçadas
- 59) Los bolcanes
- 60) El peñol
- 61) (blank)
- 62) S felipe neri
- 63) S Cosme
- 64) Elcalvario
- 65) Lalameda
- 66) Las escuelas
- 67) Casa arsobispes
- 68) El Campo Santo
- 69) El Rastro
- 70) Chapultepec

REFERENCES

- Ames, Kenneth and Thomas J. Schlereth, et al. *Material Culture: A Research Guide*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, c1985.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1983
- Bailey, Gauvin Alexander. *Art of Colonial Latin America*. New York: Phaidon Press, 2005.
- Baird, Ellen. "Adaptation and Accommodation: The Transformation of Pictorial Text in Sahagun's Manuscripts." *Native Artists and Patrons in Colonial Latin America*. Emily Umberger and Tom Cummins, eds. University of Arizona: Phoebus – Journal of Art History, 1995.
- Bal, Mieke. *On Meaning Making: Essays in Semiotics*. Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1994.
- . *On Storytelling: Essays in Narratology*. Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1991.
- Bal, Mieke and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History: A Discussion of Context and Senders," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*. Donald Preziosi, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Bargellini, Clara et al. *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life, 1521-1821*. Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2004.
- Baxandall, Michael. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Belting, Hans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Boone, Elizabeth Hill. *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztec and Mixtec*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.
- Boone, Elizabeth Hill and Tom Cummins, eds. *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World, A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks*. Dumbarton Oaks: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1992.
- Broda, Johanna. "Templo Mayor as Ritual Space." *The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan: Center and Periphery in the Aztec World*. Johanna Broda, David Carrasco, and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, eds. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1987.

- Carrasco, David, Lindsay Jones, and Scott Sessions, eds. *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacan to the Aztecs*. Niwot: University of Colorado Press, 2000.
- Carrera, Magali. *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Painting*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.
- Castelló Yturbide, Teresa and Marita Martínez del Río Redo. *Biombos Mexicanos*. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1970.
- Catalá, Rafael. *Para una lectura americana del barroco mexicano: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz & Sigüenza y Góngora*. Minneapolis: Prisma Institute, 1987.
- Chanfón Olmos, Carlos, ed. *Historia de la Arquitectura y el Urbanismo Mexicanos*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2004.
- Chipman, Donald E. *Moctezuma's Children: Aztec Nobility Under Spanish Rule, 1520–1700*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005.
- Cline, S. L. "Church and State: Bourbon New Spain." *Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society and Culture Vol. I*. M. S. Werner, ed. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, (1997) 250–53.
- Cope, Douglas R. *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico City: 1660–1720*. Madison University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.
- Cummins, Tom. "The Madonna and the Horse: Becoming Colonial in Spain and Peru." *Native Artists and Patrons in Colonial Latin America*. Emily Umberger and Tom Cummins, eds. University of Arizona Press: Phoebus – Journal of Art History, 1995.
- Cummins, Tom and Joanne Rappaport, eds. "The Reconfiguration of Civic and Sacred Space: Architecture, Image, and Writing in the Colonial Northern Andes." *Latin American Literary Review*. 26: 52 (174-200) 1998.
- Curcio-Nagy, Linda Ann. *The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.
- Deans-Smith, S. "Bourbon Reforms." *Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society and Culture Vol. II*. M. S. Werner, ed. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers. (1997) 152-157.
- Fane, Diane, ed. *Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America*. New York; Harry Abrams, Inc., 1996.

- Florescano, Enrique. *Memory, Myth and Time in Mexico from Aztecs to Independence*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Gallagher, Winifried. *House Thinking: A Room-by-Room Look at How We Live*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006.
- Glassie, Henry. *Material Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Goodman, Dena. "Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions." *Eighteenth Century Studies*. 22:3 (1989) 329–50.
- . "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime." *History and Theory*. 31:1 (2001) 1–20.
- Grilli, Elise. *Golden Screen Paintings of Japan*. New York: Crown Publishing, 1960.
- Gruzinski, Serge. *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th – 18th Centuries*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.
- . *Painting the Conquest: The Mexican Indians and the European Renaissance*. Paris: Flammarion, 1992.
- Hales, Shelley. *The Roman House and Social Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Hatt, Michael and Charlotte Klonk. *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.
- Hernández-Durán, Raymond. "El encuentro de Cortés y Moctezuma: The Betrothal of Two Worlds in Eighteenth-Century New Spain." *Woman and Art in Early Modern Latin America*. Kellen Kee McIntyre and Richard E. Phillips, eds. Leiden: Brill Academic Press, 2006.
- . "Visual Arts: Seventeenth Century." *Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society and Culture Vol. II*. M. S. Werner. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers (1997) 1558–68.
- Iconología y Sociedad Arte Colonial Hispanoamericano: XLIV Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, University Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1987.
- Imágenes de los naturales en el arte de la Nueva España: siglos XVI a XVIII*. México, D.F.: Grupo Financiero de Banamex, Fomento Cultural Banamex, 2005.
- Israel, Jonathan Irvine. *Race, Class and Politics in Colonial Mexico, 1610–1670*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.

- Juegos de Ingenio y Agudeza: La Pintura Emblemática de la Nueva España*. Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1994.
- Kagan, Richard. *Urban Images of the Hispanic World: 1493–1793*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Katzew, Ilona. "Exhibition Review: *Los Siglos de Oro en los virreinos de América*." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review*. 9:2 (2000) 299–307.
- Koontz, Rex, Kathryn Reese-Taylor and Annabeth Headrick. *Landscape and Power in Ancient Mesoamerica*. Boulder, Westview Press, 2001.
- Lara, Jaime. *Christian Texts for Aztecs: Art and Liturgy in Colonial Mexico*. South Bend: Notre Dame, Inc., University of Notre Dame Press, 2008.
- Lockhart, James. *The Nahuas after the Conquest: The Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.
- Loreto López, Rosalva, ed. *Casas, viviendas y hogares en la historia de México*. México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2001.
- McKelwey, Matthew Phillip. *Capitalscapes: Folding Screens and Political Imagination in Late Medieval Kyoto*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006.
- La memoria y el olvido: Segundo simposio de historia de las mentalidades*. México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, 1985.
- Meyer, Michael C. et al. *The Course of Mexican History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Mignolo, W. *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.
- . "Signs and Their Transmission: The Question of the Book in the New World." *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica & the Andes*. E. Boone and W. Mignolo eds. Durham: Duke University Press (1994) 220–70.
- Mínguez, Víctor, ed. *Del libro de emblemas a la ciudad simbólica: Actas del III Simposio Internacional de Emblemática Hispánica*. Barcelona: Universtiat Jaume I, 2000.
- Mitchell, W.T.J. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986.

- , ed. *Landscape and Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- . *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Moxey, Keith. "Visual Studies and the Iconic Turn." *Journal of Visual Studies*. 7:2 (2008) 131–46.
- Naremore, James and Patrick Bratlinger. *Modernity and Mass Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Norton, Marcy. "Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics." *American Historical Review*. 111: 3(2006) 660–91.
- Peirce, Charles Saunders. "What Is a Sign?" *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Vol. II (1893-1913)*. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (1998) 4-10.
- Pierce, Donna, ed. *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life 1521–1821*. Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2004.
- Pérez de Salazar, Javier. *Pintura Mexicana siglos XVI & XVII*. México, D.F.: Grupo Editorial Proyección de México, 1996.
- Poole, Stafford. "Criollos and *Criollismo*." *Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society and Culture*. Vol. I. M. S. Werner, ed. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, (1997) 370-374.
- Rama, Angel. *The Lettered City*. Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1984.
- Read, Kay. "Sacred Commoners: The Motion of Cosmic Powers in Mexica Rulership." *History of Religions*. 24: 1 (1994) 39-69.
- Rishel, Joseph J and Suzanne Stratton Pruitt, eds. *The Arts in Latin America: 1492–1820*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Rivero Borrell M., Héctor, et al. *The Grandeur of Viceregal Mexico: Treasures from the Museo Franz Mayer*. Mexico City: Museo Franz Mayer, 2002.
- Rivero Lake, Rodrigo. *Namban Art in Viceregal Mexico*. Madrid: Estiloméxico Editores, 2005.

- Rodríguez Moya, Inmaculada. *La mirada del Virrey*. Barcelona: Castelló de la Plana, Universtat Jaume I, 2003.
- Schreffler, Michael. “‘No Lord without Vassals, nor Vassals without a Lord’: The Royal Palace and the Shape of Kingly Power in Viceregal Mexico City.” *Oxford Art Journal*. 27:2 (157–71) 2004.
- . *The Art of Allegiance, Visual Culture and Imperial Power in Baroque New Spain*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007.
- Sears, Elizabeth. “‘Reading’ Images,” *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*. Elizabeth Sears and Thelma K. Thomas, eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- Seed, Patricia. *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492–1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Los Siglos de Oro en los Virreinos de América: 1550–1700*. Madrid: Museo de América, 1999.
- Tambiah, S.J. “A Performative Approach to Ritual.” *Culture, Thought, and Social Acts*. S. J. Tambiah. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (1985)123–66.
- Taylor, R. “El Arte de la Memoria en el Nuevo Mundo.” *Iconología y Sociedad Arte Colonial Hispanoamericano, XLIV Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 43–76, 1987.
- Toussaint, M. *Colonial Art in Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967.
- Upton, Dell and John Michael Vlach, eds. *Common Places: Readings in Vernacular Architecture*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986.
- Viento detenido: mitologías, e historias en el arte biombo: colección de biombos de los siglos XVII a al XIX de Museo Soumaya*. México, D.F.: Museo Soumaya, c1999.
- White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in the Nineteenth Century*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, c1975.
- . *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, c1987.
- Wood, Marcus. *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Yates, Frances. *The Art of Memory*. London: Pimlico, 1992.

Zéa, Leopoldo. *Sentido y proyección de la conquista*. México, D.F.: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993.