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Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World. Edited by ILONA KATZEW (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011; pp. 319. \$70).

In 2011-12, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico jointly organized an acclaimed exhibition on *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*; this collection of essays (along with a three-day symposium and other events) was produced to accompany the exhibition. Beautifully illustrated, the volume explores the significance of indigenous people in the viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru, and considers 'the multiple roles played by the arts in negotiating a sense of place in the fractured worlds of late pre-Columbian and colonial Latin America' (p.10). This is explicitly not a catalogue, though many of the works in the exhibition are discussed, and it stands alone as a work of scholarship. As someone who was unable to attend the exhibition, however, it is just a slight disappointment that it does not have an accompanying catalogue; bearing in mind this omission, I would have liked to see a list of the exhibits included.

The collection spans the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, opening with a skillful synthesis of the pre-conquest Aztec and Inca world by Cecelia Klein. This chapter exemplifies the careful balance of the collection between accessibility and specialism. Showcasing a wide range of visual culture, including architecture and textiles alongside art and archaeology, Klein manages to give both an introduction to indigenous Andean and Mexican cultures, and also to demonstrate the visual strategies deployed by elites to promote official ideologies, and diminish opposition to their rule.

The understanding of visual languages in the book is diverse and wide-ranging, incorporating not only art and archaeology, but ritual, genealogy, heraldry, pictorial and alphabetic writing. Aided by excellent illustrations, the authors succeed admirably in conjuring up the vibrancy and diversity of the colonial world. The visual culture here is placed firmly in the context of physical experience and individual identity, seeing these works as manifestations of 'the collective memories and concerns of the societies that produced them' (pp.75-6).

In two fascinating chapters, Carolyn Dean and Ilona Katzew consider the strategic deployment of indigenous identities which took place in Peruvian and Mexican ritual respectively. For Dean, the focus is on martial theatre as an outlet for the point of view of Andean populations; Katzew, whilst also highlighting the ambiguous nature of indigenous performance, places the emphasis on ritual as a space for promoting social cohesion and providing comforting semantic distance from a potentially threatening past. This consideration of the active role of visual culture is also epitomised by Thomas B. F. Cummins' article on prints in the New World. Challenging the traditional approach, which most often focuses on the images in prints and printed books as merely representations of America and the colonial world, Cummins examines the more complex and tangible importance of prints as physical objects which affected the way the world was created and understood.

In her chapter on indigenous heraldry, Mónica Domínguez Torres' argues that visual languages were explicitly used and manipulated for the purpose of self-

representation and political negotiation. 'Visual manifestations of the process of acculturation undergone by the native communities of the New World' (pp.97-8), these coats of arms were also the ground for the contestation and demonstration of privilege and power. Eduardo de Jesús Douglas demonstrates a similar process of negotiation in genealogical documents, but also highlights the multiple ways in which such sources may be interpreted. The flexible nature of symbols is emphasized: what a twenty-first viewer might see as signifiers of race and ethnicity, would have been interpreted in the colonial world 'as symbols of class or status, symbols shared across de facto, if not de jure porous, cultural, ethnic, and racial lines of New Spain' (p.131).

In one of the most richly illustrated chapters, with several beautiful double-page images, Ramón Mujica Pinilla examines images of hell created in viceregal Peru, placing them in a social historical context which considers patrons, artists, and audiences. This provides an interesting complement to Luisa Elena Alcalá's study of the way in which ideas about devout Indians as exemplary Christians were constructed and codified in visual formulas, becoming part of a larger project to affirm Spanish American identity. In a point of wider relevance, Alcalá notes that, although celebrating indigenous participation, images also tended to standardize 'in a way that masks the complexity and richness of actual lived experience' (p.228). This is an important caveat, and one which many of the authors are mindful, using the material culture as a window onto the realities and controversies of life in the colonial world.

Although Diana Megaflop Kerpel's essay is entitled 'History Under The Rainbow: The Conquest of Mexico in the Florentine Codex', in fact Book 12 of this famous sources serves as the starting point for a wide-ranging study of the *mélange* of Nahua and Christian knowledge systems. For Kerpel, the blend of Biblical and indigenous concepts is an example of a 'remarkable yet subtle intelligence' (p.95), which shows indigenous painters engaging with and intellectually structuring the new colonial world in which they found themselves.

One of the key themes of the book is the strength and variety of indigenous agency in both the creation and manipulation of visual culture. This is most evident in the concluding article by Luis Eduardo Wuffarden, which puts indigenous influence to the forefront, examining native artists in colonial Peru and tracing the way in which their role evolved from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Evident in this chapter is the diversity of tradition and participation in artistic production, and Kevin Terraciano's article on 'Competing Memories of the Conquest of Mexico' also emphasises the multiplicity of indigenous viewpoints and agendas, resisting the temptation to present a single 'Indian' view. The political and ethnic complexity of the Americas, both before and after the conquest, is evident throughout the collection, and the authors show sensitivity not only to their sources but also to lived experience. With wonderful illustrations and expert, yet accessible, commentary, this absorbing volume, deserves to be read by a wide audience.