Colonial Portrait was a Symbol of Identity
viernes, 20 de noviembre de 2009

A journey through Colonial portrait history, from the earliest pictures, which recovered particular features of the portrayed
ones, to those that remarked their power and status, and the ones that broke academic cannons, was offered by Spanish
and Mexican specialists at the conference series, La pintura de retrato entre el siglo XVIII y el XIX (Portrait Painting
between 18th and 19th centuries).
These activities accompany the exhibition De novohispanos a mexicanos. Retrato e identidad colectiva en una sociedad
en transicion (From Novohispanos to Mexicans. Portrait and Identity in a Transition Society), to be opened at the
National Museum of History “Castillo de Chapultepec” by the end of November 2009.
At the forum inaugurated by Salvador Rueda, director of the National Museum of History (MNH), representing the
National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) general director, Alfonso de Maria y Campos; Dr. Tomas Perez
Vejo, coordinator of the event and curator of the show, and Clara Lida, from Colegio de Mexico (COLMEX), the
academics remarked that portrait painting reflected changes of Mexican and Spanish societies during transition times.
“The encounter brings in studies that allow unraveling rich and complex relations between Mexico and Spain
during that period, analyzing the socio-political and cultural situation of 2 societies with similar problematic, and mainly,
how the person concept was modified”, declared Perez Vejo.
He recalled that there was not a concept of identity in the New Spain, since it congregated groups with diverse interests.
The need of identity was shown through symbols such as portrait painting.
Paula Mues Orts, scholar at Universidad Iberoamericana (UIA), presented the conference Atributos, efigies, cuerpos y
corporaciones: el retrato del siglo XVIII en la Nueva España (Attributes, effigies, bodies and corporations: portrait in New
Spain during 18th century), where she explained that the first aim of portraits was to be as realistic as possible, but later
the creation of idealized prototypes to represent a person and its status dominated.
“The idea that portrait imitated reality was the most common definition, yet, its significance changed gradually. In
New Spain, this painting genre became more complex and variable; earliest portraits resembled particular features and
gestures, while subsequent ones were linked to the representation of power, looking forward to transmitting the status of
characters portrayed”.
Paula Mues commented that during 18th century, different kinds of portraits flourished, among them, “tutelary or
sponsorship portraits”, which represented the Virgin, Jesus or other patron saints.
“Historical portraits” were common, portraying characters already dead, emphasizing their virtues, as well
as “religious portraits”, which represented the life of characters whose behavior was exemplary.
Finally, there were also “corporative portraits”, which remarked that an individual belonged to a collectivity,
being this religious, civil or governmental.
Jose Luis Sancho Gaspar, National Heritage researcher at Palacio Real de Madrid, Spain referred to Novohispano or
Colonial portrait as a complex allegory of images that denote a discourse about identity.
At his presentation named Caras y pinceles de la Ilustracion en España (Faces and brushes of the Illustration in Spain)
he pointed out that several Spanish painters detached from academic execution, denoting their work a Baroque
influence, using a loose brushstroke similar to Goya paintings.
He mentioned that many painters followed new routes, “reflecting Spanish painting a pluri-national world. More
research is needed regarding these little- known artists”.

Maria Jose Esparza, from National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) Institute of Esthetic Investigations; Rafael
Gil, from Universidad de Valencia; Carlos Reyero, from Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, and Angelica Velazquez, from
UNAM Institute of Esthetic Investigations participated in the subsequent worktables.
Bienvenido al INAH
http://dti.inah.gob.mx
Potenciado por Joomla!
Generado: 29 July, 2010, 23:33

Bienvenido al INAH
http://dti.inah.gob.mx
Potenciado por Joomla!
Generado: 29 July, 2010, 23:33