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CARL & MARILYNN THOMA FOUNDATION

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Thoma Foundation Awards \$160,000 to Scholars of the Art of the Spanish Americas

Unrestricted project funding awarded to one Marilynn Thoma Fellow and two Thoma Foundation Research & Travel Awards winners



From left to right: Laura Vargas Murcia, Vanina Scocchera, and Yessica Porras (photo by Chris Puttere Photography)

CHICAGO, IL - The Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation will award nearly \$160,000 in fellowships and grants to support scholarship on the art of the Spanish Americas. This year, the Foundation is pleased to award three scholars whose work advances our knowledge of mural painting, conventual art, and portable altars in early modern South America. The Foundation is particularly pleased to support projects that advance our knowledge of art produced in what is now Ecuador, Colombia, and Bolivia.

Now in their third year, the **Marilynn Thoma Fellowships** and **Research & Travel Awards** are the only unrestricted research funding in the United States devoted exclusively to the field of art of the Spanish Americas. Inspired by the Thoma Foundation's collection of over 170 works of art from the 17th to 19th centuries from South America and the Caribbean, these fellowships and awards promote original scholarship that significantly contributes to the understanding of the field. Awarded scholars broadly share their research in museum exhibitions, dissertations, book publications, scholarly essays, and lecture series.

Dr. Laura Vargas Murcia, independent scholar of Colombian art history, has been awarded a two-year Marilynn Thoma Postdoctoral Fellowship in the amount of \$120,000 to complete a book manuscript on the *cajones* (portable altarpieces) of Colombia and Ecuador. Vargas Murcia's work will combine extensive archival and collections-based research with scientific analysis to produce a catalogue of extant *cajones* that will be available in both English and Spanish.

In addition, the Thoma Foundation has granted two Research and Travel Awards totaling nearly \$40,000. **Dr. Vanina Scocchera**, postdoctoral fellow at the National Research Council of Argentina and Assistant Professor of Spanish American Art History at the University of Buenos Aires, will undertake research in Bolivia related to images and devotional objects in the Carmelite convents of Potosí and Sucre (formerly La Plata).

Yessica Porras, PhD candidate at the University of California, Berkeley, has received an award to complete collections and archival research for her dissertation “Colonial Mural Palimpsests in the Northern Andes: Layers of Memory and Meaning.” Attending particularly to “mural fragments that emerge from the corners of retablos, wall fissures, and whitewashed surfaces” in churches and convents, Porras’ project explores “the overlap of mural painting and human interaction” in Colombia and Ecuador.

We celebrate the accomplishments of these awardees and take pride in supporting their scholarly endeavors. The fellows and award winners were selected from a competitive pool of international applicants on the basis of their academic accomplishments, their scholarly commitment to the art of the Spanish Americas, and the relative merit of their projects. All awardees were chosen by a jury of three undisclosed experts in the field.

2022-23 Fellowships and Research Awards application period announced

Later this summer applications will open for the 2022–23 Marilyn Thoma Fellowships and Thoma Foundation Travel & Research Awards in Art of the Spanish Americas. Fellowships and Research Awards are portable and funds may be used in any reasonable way the applicant sees fit to accomplish the research project. Applicants will be encouraged to propose flexible project timelines.

Please visit our website for more information about these [grants](#) and to explore our collection of [Art of the Spanish Americas](#). To stay updated with the Foundation’s grants activities, sign up for our [quarterly grants newsletter](#).

Exploratory Travel Award announced

The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation will offer awards of up to \$5,000 to PhD students to travel to Latin America to visit archives, museums, and art collections and connect with local scholars. The Exploratory Travel Awards will enable students to develop viable and innovative research projects for future application to pre-doctoral fellowships including the Marilyn Thoma Pre-doctoral Fellowship in Art of the Spanish Americas.

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