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## **THOMA FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL ART OF THE SPANISH AMERICAS CONSERVATION GRANT RECIPIENTS**

DALLAS, TX, JUNE 17, 2024 – The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation today announced its inaugural Art of the Spanish Americas Conservation Grant recipients: Rodrigo Villalobos Ruiz, a cultural conservator and restoration specialist in Querétaro, México, and the Research Center for Heritage Conservation of the Universidad de Ingeniería y Tecnología (UTEC), in Lima, Peru.

The Thoma Foundation Art of the Spanish Americas Conservation Grant awards up to \$50,000 to projects selected by an international jury composed of Spanish American art conservation experts. Inspired by the Thoma Foundation's collection of over 230 works of art from South America and the Spanish Caribbean spanning the 17th to 19th centuries, these grants seek to promote and support conservation projects and research initiatives to advance the professional restoration and study of Viceregal works of art.

"We are thrilled to celebrate Rodrigo Villalobos and the Research Center for Heritage Conservation at UTEC, our inaugural recipients of the Thoma Foundation Conservation Grant. Their conservation projects will expand our knowledge and the public's awareness about Spanish American art and the importance of its conservation," said founder Marilyn Thoma. "As collectors, we feel a responsibility to support the preservation and restoration of culturally significant works. We hope these Conservation Grants will allow future generations to enjoy and learn from these pieces as the generations before us did."

Rodrigo Villalobos Ruiz is the current head of the Zacatecana House Museum's conservation department in Querétaro, where he is responsible for the conservation of pieces in the museum's collection and advises on museum exhibitions and cultural proposals. Villalobos also works as a private conservator for Lepus Collections Care, managing and executing conservation and collection management projects.

As a conservation grant recipient, Villalobos and his team will research the life and works of Pedro Jose Noriega, a Querétaro artist active in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, whose work and life we know very little of. Along with his research, Villalobos will restore Noriega's oil on canvas, *Vía Crucis. Tercera Caída de Cristo* (1723), 300 years after its creation. Current research and knowledge of viceregal art in New Spain are limited to specific centers of artistic production, including Mexico City, Puebla, Guadalajara, and Oaxaca. Villalobos' work will lay the groundwork for 18th-century regional painting studies in Querétaro.

The Research Center for Heritage Conservation at UTEC is a platform that fosters collaboration across disciplines. From construction techniques to historical and artistic



analysis, the center delves into collections management, conservation methods and materials, and even museography.

Supported by the inaugural Thoma Foundation Conservation Grant, the center will undertake a detailed diagnosis of the Viceroy Chapel within Lima's Santo Domingo de Guzmán temple. During the grant period, the team will restore two paintings. To raise public awareness, the project culminates with an exhibition at the Santo Domingo Museum showcasing the restored canvases alongside a detailed explanation of the diagnostic and conservation work. This initiative by the Research Center for Heritage Conservation promises to significantly impact the understanding of colonial Lima's religious art.

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