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Ivory and feathers: St Jeromes across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

Stephanie Porras
orcid.org/0000-0001-9937-6347
Tulane University
New Orleans, Estados Unidos

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Email: sporras@tulane.edu

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Resumen: A ambos lados del Pacifico, los talladores de marfil en Manila y los artesanos del arte plumario en Nueva España del siglo XVII hicieron trípticos que representan a San Jerónimo: las obras novohispanas realizadas con plumas se basan en los marfiles hecho en Filipinas, que pueden estar basados en grabados flamencos. Estos objetos relacionados, hechos en papel, madera, plumas y marfil, revelan cómo funciona la globalización moderna, las formas en que la copia a distancia permitió una reordenación de economías de trabajo y materiales, produciendo oportunidades a los artistas para imaginar y responder a compradores distantes, y experimentar con actos de apropiación y reensamblaje creativo en un mercado de arte recientemente global.

Palabras clave: San Jerónimo, talladores de marfil, plumas, arte plumaria, Manila, Nueva España, Filipinas, China, blanc de chine, globalización, comercio de art.

Abstract: On both sides of the Pacific, seventeenth-century ivory carvers in Manila and feather workers in New Spain produced triptychs depicting St Jerome: the feather-backed triptychs made in Mexico are based on the Filipino-made ivories, which may be based on Flemish prints. These related objects made variously of paper, wood, feathers and ivory, reveal the mechanics of early modern globalization, the ways in which copying at a distance allowed for a realignment of economies of labor and materials, affording opportunities for artists both to imagine and respond to faraway consumers, and to experiment with acts of appropriation and creative assembly in a newly global art market.

Keywords: St Jerome, Ivory, Ivory carvers, feathers, featherwork, Manila, New Spain, Philippines, China, blanc de chine, globalization, art market

In 1590, Domingo de Salazar, the new bishop of Manila, wrote to the king of Spain praising the artistic abilities of the local Chinese immigrant population in the Philippines, a population who the Spanish called Sangleys. According to Salazar, Spanish artisans had ceased working in Manila as these Chinese immigrants could fashion anything according to the Spanish custom, and they could do so very cheaply. To illustrate this point, Salazar goes on to tell a short anecdote about a bookbinder from New Spain, who arrived in Manila looking to establish a business and employed a Sangley assistant. This assistant surreptitiously observed the bookbinder, learning the trade in only a few months. He then undercut his former employer on price, forcing him out of business, so that the bookbinder had to return to New Spain on the next galleon. Salazar writes that subsequently "everyone goes to the Sangley who does such good work, that there is no need for the Spanish artisan… I have in my hands a Navarro in Latin, bound by him, which in my judgment could not be bound better in Seville."[1]

[1] Seville, AGI, Filipinas, 74, n. 38, Carta de Salazar sobre relación con China y sangleyes to Philip II, dated 24 June 1590, fols. 185r–186v: "Lo que acá á todos nos á caydo en mucha graçia es que vino aquí un enquadernador de México, con libros, y puso tienda para enquadernar; asentó con un sangley, diçiendo que le quería servir, y, disimuladamente, sin que el amo lo hechase de ver, miró cómo enquadernava, y en menos de.... se salió de su casa diçiendo que ya no le quería servir, y puso tienda deste oficio; y certifico á Vuestra Magestad que salió tan exçelente oficial, que al maestro le a sido forçoso dexar el oficio, porque todos acuden al sangley, y haçe tan buena obra, que no haçe falta el oficial Español, y al punto que estas escrivo, tengo en mis manos un Nabarro en latín, enquadernado por él, que en Sevilla á mi juiçio no se encuadernara mexor."

Salazar's account of the local Chinese residents' rapid facility for imitation, in fact itself duplicates Spanish narratives from a few decades earlier, which similarly describe the mimetic faculty of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. The Dominican friar and chronicler of the conquest, Bartolomé de las Casas, described the images made by newly converted Mexica after European models "as perfect and as graceful as the most proper, official [images] of Flanders."[2] Fray Toribio de Benavente, or Motolinía, one of the first Franciscans to instruct the indigenous inhabitants of Central Mexico, recounted how a boy from Texcoco reproduced a papal bull so exactly "that there seemed to be no difference from the model."[3] His fellow Franciscan, Gerónimo de Mendieta wrote: "…after they [the indigenous] became Christians and saw our images from Flanders and Italy, there was no retablo or image, no matter what it is, that they cannot portray and reproduce."[4]

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[2] "…hacen tan perfectas y con tanta gracia cuanto los más propios oficiales [imagines] de Flandes," Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, *Apologética historia de las Indias* (Madrid: Bailly Bailliére é hijos, 1909), cap. LXI, 159–61.

[3] Toribio de Benavente*, Historia de los indios de la Nueva España. . . .* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1990*)*, III, 386: "dieron a un muchacho de Tezcuco por muestra una bula, y sacóla tan a el natural, que la letra que hizo parecía el mismo modelo, porque el primer renglón era grande, y abajo sacó la firma ni más ni menos, y un I.H.S. con una imagen de Nuestra Señora, todo tan al propio, que parecía no haber diferencia del molde."

[4] "…después que fueron cristianos y vieron nuestras imágenes de Flandes y de Italia, no hay retablo ni imagen, por prima que sea, que no la retraten y contrahagan," Fray Jerónimo Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana* (Mexico City: Díaz de León y White, 1870), 404. Cited by Manuel Toussaint, *Pintura*

These anecdotes reveal a number of commonalities. Together, they inculcate a fiction of the Indigenous/non-European copyist, either in New Spain or in the Philippines, as an automaton capable of collapsing temporal, geographic and cultural distances via the work of copying. Yet the inventive capacity of this non-European artist falls away in these accounts of colonial artistic production. Instead, mimetic aptitude synecdochally represents colonized subjects' potential for conversion and integration into the Spanish empire.[5] In a related fashion, for many years the standard art historical account of European prints' role outside of Europe has stressed printed imagery's role as a tool for Christian conversion. In this narrative, print serves as a model for local artists' instruction in both Christian doctrine and aesthetic conventions. This kind of reading is not unique to Spanish imperial orbits, and extends beyond these chroniclers of the mission in New Spain, to describe for example, the famous Jesuit gifts of prints to the Mughal ruler

colonial en México (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1965), 10. Yet another Franciscan, Juan de Torquemada, also described the reproductive abilities of local artitsts and like de Mendiata, he too describes the artistic models given to local artists as Flemish in origin. Juan de Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana,* ed. Miguel Leon Portilla (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1977), vol. V, book 17, 313–14.

[5] See Serge Gruzinksi and Heather MacLean, *Images at War: Mexico from Columbus to Blade Runner (1492–2019)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 72; Alessandra Russo, *The Untranslatable Image: A Mestizo History of the Arts in New Spain, 1500–1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), chapter 4; and Alessandra Russo, "An Artistic Humanity: New Positions on Art and Freedom in the Context of Iberian Expansion, 1500–1600," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 65/66 (2014-15): 352–63.

Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar and to the Ming emperor in Beijing.[6] Foundational art historical labor has undertaken the meticulous pairing of colonial paintings with European printed sources, as well as broader investigations of how European modes of building, learning and governance were inculcated and reproduced via printed models.[7] More recent work, by Aaron Hyman, Yael Rice,

[6] See Gauvin Bailey, *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul: Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of India, 1580–1630* (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian, 1998); Milo C. Beach, "The *Mughal Painter Kesu* Das," *Archives of Asian Art* 30 (1976-77): 34–52. See also Matteo Ricci's 1605 request for copies of the *Evangelicae historiae imagines*, the illustrated book depicting Christ's life, for use in the China mission: "…più utile è anco quell libro che questo della Bibbia per adesso, poichè con quello dichiariamo, anzi poniamo Avanti agli occhi quello che alle volte con parole non possiamo dichiarare." Matteo Ricci, *Lettere: 1580-1609*, edited by Francesco d'Arelli (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2001), no. 43, 406.

[7] To cite a few foundational examples, with further literature: Martin S. Soria, "Una nota sobre pintura colonial y estampas europeas," *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas* 5 (1952): 41–51; Jorge Alberto Manrique, "La estampa como fuente del arte en la Nueva España," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 50, no. 2 (1982): 55–60; Samuel Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion*: *Religious Architecture and Indian Artisans in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque : University of New Mexico Press, 2001); Oscar Flores Flores and Ligia Fernández Flores, "En torno a la *koineización* pictórica en los reinos de la monarquía hispánica: Identidad y variadades dialectales," in *Pinturas de los reinos: Identidades compartidas en el mundo hispánico*, edited by Juana Gutiérrez-Haces, 187–332 (Mexico City: Banamex, 2008-9); Christopher Heuer, "Difference, Repetition and Utopia: Early Modern Print's New Worlds," in *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence*, edited by Jaynie Anderson, 203–8 (Melbourne: Miegunyah press, 2009); Almerindo Ojeda di Ninno, "El grabado como fuente del arte colonial: Estado de la cuestión," in *De Amberes al Cuzco*, edited by Cécile Michaud and José Torres della Pina, 10–21 (Lima, Perú: Impulso Empresa de Servicios, 2009); Aaron Hyman, *Rubens in Repeat: The Logic of the Copy in Colonial Latin America* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2021); Alme-

myself and others, has productively explored how artists working outside of Europe critically mobilized the distance from the printed model to reflect on local conditions and to signal the ambitions of particular artists and patrons.[8]

In this essay, I want to focus on a slightly different set of questions emerging from these Spanish accounts of copying in New Spain and the Philippines. Namely, I'd like to consider how these narratives about the copying of prints allude to prints' status as an export good, the way that paper images were traded across oceans and continents, and were valued both as material objects and as artistic capital in the period of early modern globalization. I am particularly interested in the story of the doubly displaced bookbinder from New Spain, who moved to Manila to take advantage of what he thought was an uncontested economic space, only to be driven out by local competition. I use globalization here not just to describe the worldwide movement of goods and people but to examine how globalization functions as an epistemic shift, one that changes how one knows the world, and how artists

rindo Ojeda di Ninno, Project for the Engraved Sources of Spanish Colonial Art (PESSCA), 2005–2020 (https://colonialart.org).

[8] Aaron Hyman, "Inventing Painting: Cristóbal de Villalpando, Juan Correa, and New Spain's Transatlantic Canon," *Art Bulletin* 99, no. 2 (2017): 102–35; Hyman, *Rubens in Repeat;* Yael Rice, "Lines of Perception: European Prints and the Mughal Kitābkhāna" In *Prints in Translation, 1450–1750: Image, Materiality, Space*, edited by Suzanne Kathleen Karr Schmidt and Edward H. Wouk, 202–23 (London: Routledge, 2017); Stephanie Porras, *The First Viral Images: Maerten de Vos, Anwerp print and the early modern globe* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023).

approach the production of new forms and techniques.[9] The world is conceived as a market, where both labor and capital are highly mobile, and thus may lead to competition or collaboration between what had been separate zones of economic activity, amplifying perceptions of the local vis a vis the global. That is, I use globalization here not simply describe the fact that European prints were carried by all manner of individuals, across continents and oceans. Crucially, prints and other mobile artworks helped to establish globally shared strategies of visual communication and concomitant notions of value, rooted in processes of colonization, commercial expansion and conversion.[10] As what John Durham Peters calls "infrastructural media," these mobile goods were not only vehicular, relaying content and style across vast distances, but via their creation and movement such objects also produced shared systems of value and exchange, impacting how art was made, seen and bought on both sides of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.[11]

[9] Porras, *The First Viral Images*, 150; see also Stephanie Porras, "Forgetting how to see," in *Reassessing Epistemic Images in the Early. Modern World,* edited by Ruth Sargent Noyes (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 265–86.

[10] This can be related to Horst Bredekamp's observation that the techniques of mass reproduction are rooted in the fifteenth-century devotional art rather than the modern invention of photographic processes, as claimed by Walter Benjamin in his famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, (London: Fontana, 1999), 211–44. See also Horst Bredekamp, "Der simulierte Benjamin: Mittelalterliche Bemerkungen zu seiner Aktualität," in *Frankfurter Schule und Kunstgeschichte*, edited by Andreas Berndt et al., 117–37 (Berlin: Reimer, 1992), 129.

[11] John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of*

Figure 1.

St Jerome in Ivory

My first case studies are several related depictions of St Jerome. The first must date to around 1601. That spring, the Manila galleon the *Santa Margarita* was lost at sea, eight months after leaving the dockyards at Cavite. Nearly 400 years later, the remains of the ship were rediscovered some 1500 miles away, off the coast of the Mariana islands. Although the cargo of precious textiles had long since deteriorated, hundreds of ivory fragments, as well as porcelain, gold, hardwood, and mother-of-pearl objects remained on the sea floor; all the remains of the cargo sent from the Philippines to be sold in Acapulco. The cache contained a small ivory triptych depicting

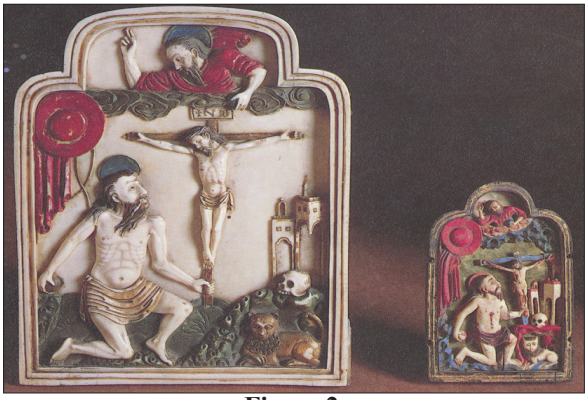

Figure 2.

Elemental Media. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2015), 37, 176.

St Jerome surrounded by four standing saints (Figure 1).[12] Though severely abraded from its time under water, the triptych is remarkably similar (Figure 2) to surviving ivory reliefs held in Mexican public and private collections, as well as in Spain (Figure 3) and Chile (Figure 4)[13] –

Figure 3.

[12] This object, now owned by IOTA Partners, was first published in Marjorie Trusted, "Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601," *Hispanic Research Journal* 14, no. 5 (2013): 446–462.

[13] The triptychs in Mexican private collections are illustrated in Beatriz Sánchez Navarro de Pintado, *Marfiles christianos del Oriente en Mexico* (Mexico City: Fomento Cultural Banamex, 1986), figure 88. A similar St Jerome is in the Museo Nacional de Historia, Chapultepec, Mexico City and was first published by Gustavo Obregón, "La colección de marfiles del Museo Nacional de Historia," *Anales Del Instituto Nacional De Antropología E Historia* 6, no. 7 (1955): 119–124, 122, figure 3, as well as by Margarita Estella Marcos, *La escultura barroca de marfil en España: Las escuelas europeas y las coloniales* (Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicias, Instituto Diego Velázquez, 1984), no. 764. Estella Marcos also refers to a smaller versión of this relief, also in the Museo Nacional de Historia (Estella Marcos, *La escultura barroca*, no. 765), but I have not yet seen this object. In Spain, there is another *St Jerome* in the Museo de América, inv. no. 06914, published by Estella Marcos, *La escultura barroca*, no. 766. Yet another version, to my knowledge unpublished, is found in the Museo de Artes Decorativas Garcés Silva, Santiago, Chile, inv. no. 24.83.271.

Figure 4.

the majority share a bell-shaped central register and all feature the kneeling figure of the hermit saint, whose left hand grasps the base of a crucifix and whose right hand is flung out beside him and carries a stone, there is also a lion is wedged into the bottom right corner in a cave-like recess; and the scene is always topped by the same parabolic arch formed by Jerome's discarded cardinal's hat and robes, typically with the figure of God the father.

Now we have not a single artist name associated with any of these objects, or indeed with any ivory carvings made in the Philippines in the sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries. But, based on the shipwreck evidence and their relation to a wide corpus of Philippine-carved ivory triptychs, it seems mostly likely that all of these St Jerome triptychs were made in Manila. These triptychs testify to the skills of those Chinese immigrant ivory

carvers called Sangleys, whose artistic and imitative abilities were powerfully described by Salazar. The presence of multiple extant versions of this iconography, suggests it was something of a staple product for at least one Sangley ivory workshop; the fact that one originates from the 1601 shipwreck suggests how, from a very early date, Manila's ivory carvers looked to New Spain as a lucrative export market.

Since the tenth century, Chinese carvers had used African ivory to produce sculptures of deities and revered figures.[14] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, artists working along the southeastern coast in Fujian province worked with ivory. Salazar's 1590 letter, quoted above, also describes how Chinese ivory carvers worked from imported European models in the Philippines by the end of the sixteenth century, claiming that "with these sculptors' ability to replicate those images that come from Spain, I understand that it should not be long when even those made in Flanders will not be missed."[15] The resultant sculptures were not only used in

[14] See Derek Gilman, "Ming and Qing ivories: figure carving," in *Chinese ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, edited by William Watson, 35–117 (London: British Museum, 1984); and Craig Clunas, *Chinese carving* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1996).

[15] Seville, AGI, Filipinas, 74, n. 38, Carta de Salazar sobre relación con China y sangleyes to Philip II, dated 24 June 1590, fols. 185r–186v: "En este arte que ansy en lo de Pinzel como de bulto an sacado maravillosas Pieças y algunos nyños Jesús que yo e visto Un marfil me pareçe que no se Puede hazer cosa mas Perfecta y ansy lo afirman todos los que los am bisto. Bense Proveyendo las yglesias de las ymagines q estos hazen de q antes havia mucha falta y segun la avilidad que muestran en retrartar y las ymagines q bienen de Spaña entiendo que antes de mucho no nos haran falta las que se hazen en flandes ...."

churches but also collected by powerful colonial administrators from an early date. Alonso Fajardo, governor of the islands from 1616 to his death in 1624, owned at least nine ivories.[16]

The Sangley community resided largely in a specially designated district outside Manila's city walls, called the Parián. The Dominican Order, who held ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Parián, expressed frustration with the slow rate of Catholic conversions within this community throughout the seventeenth century.[17] Baptism records from the 1620s include several Sangley artisans who did convert to the Catholic faith, and incentives to conversion included the possibility of marrying Tagalog women and moving outside the Parián, as well as decade-long exemptions from *repartimiento* labor and tributes.[18] After several uprisings by the Chinese immigrant population of the city (in 1603, 1639, 1662, and 1668), tributes from Christian Sangleys rose, a fact that suggests conversions were often forced upon those members of

[16] See the inventory published by Yayoi Kawamura, "Manila, ciudad española y centro de fusión. Un estudio a través del inventario del gobernador de Filipinas Alonso Fajardo de Tenza (1624)," *e-Spania* 30 (2018). (http://journals.openedition.org/e-spania/27950).

[17] See, for example, the conversions of Hyacinto, a silversmith, and two carpenters, Thomas and Raymundo, on May 21, 1626, or the conversion of Domingo the painter on July 22, 1627, recorded in Manila, AUST, Libro de Bautizos Siglo XVII 1626–1700, sección de Parián, roll 47, vol. 2. The discovery of this baptismal record book was first published in Joshua Eng Sin Kueh, "The Manila Chinese: Community, Trade, Empire," (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2014).

[18] Ryan Dominic Crewe, "Pacific Purgatory: Spanish Dominicans, Chinese Sangleys, and the Entanglement of Mission and Commerce in Manila, 1580–1620," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015): 337–65, 358.

the Chinese diaspora that remained in the archipelago.[19] Spanish administrators and Catholic missionaries often treated Sangley conversions with some skepticism and continued to treat the immigrant Chinese community as outsiders to the Spanish colony.[20] Yet this population, as noted continually in period sources, was essential to the operations of trade and the success of the Spanish outpost in Asia, providing nearly all the artisanal labor, foodstuffs and trading goods required of the small population of Europeans resident in Manila, as well as those needed to maintain the Manila galleon trade – the annual convoy of Asian goods sent to Acapulco in exchange for American silver. Sangley carvers were responsible for developing unique forms of ivory carving for export, both triptychs like our *St Jeromes* and large-scale figural statuary.[21]

One might ask: where did these Chinese carvers in Manila get ivory? Elephant ivory had been available in the Philippines since the tenth century; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, official embassies as well as merchant junks from the kingdoms of Siam (Thailand) and Cambodia made significant gifts of Asian elephant ivory to the Spanish administration in the Philippines.[22]

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19 Juan Gil, *Los Chinos en Manila: Siglos XVI y XVII* (Lisbon: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macao, 2011), 323–24, and Christina H. Lee, "The Chinese Problem in the Early Modern Missionary Project of the Spanish Philippines," *Laberinto Journal* 9 (2016): 5–32, 11.

20 Crewe, "Pacific Purgatory," 364.

21 For a longer discussion of the production of these larger ivories and their export market see Stephanie Porras "Locating Hispano-Philippine ivories," *Colonial Latin American Review* 29, no. 2 (2020): 256–291.

22 For references to the ivory goods (*marfiles*) sent as gifts by the kingdoms

There is also convincing material evidence that African ivory was available in the Philippines, likely brought across the Indian Ocean by South Asian and European merchants, or even given as gifts by Catholics in Goa to support the East Asian mission.[23] The apparent availability of ivory in Manila, and the market for export goods in the Spanish colony, encouraged the establishment of Sangley ivory carving workshops. These sculptors looked across the Pacific, as well as to local Spanish elites and missionaries, for their market. Both the material (ivory) as well as the models for the *St Jerome* triptychs (engravings) originated across multiple oceans. Not only did the ivory for these objects come from across the South China Seas (Thailand/Cambodia), the Indian Ocean (Indian or East African ivory traders), but the iconographic models

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of Siam and Cambodia to Manila, see Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas*, (Mexico: Gerónimo Balli, 1609), 18, 102. On the earliest evidence for ivory used in the Philippines, see Regalado Trota José and Ramon N. Villegas, *Power + Faith + Image: Philippine Art in Ivory from the 16th to the 19th Century* (Makati City: Ayala Museum, 2004). 41 pieces of ivory, including whole tusks, were recovered from the late fifteenth-century Lena Shoal shipwreck off the shores of northern Palawan, indicating the longstanding trade in ivory in the Philippine archipelago; these ivory remains are now in the National Museum of the Philippines, Manila.

[23] On distinctions between ivory derived from Asian and African elephants, see Anthony Cutler, *The Craft of Ivory: Sources, Techniques, and Uses in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 200–1400* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), 27–29. The difference between the two can only be confirmed via genetic testing, for example, see the analysis of an ivory by Maria Rozalen and Ana Ruiz Gutiérrez, "A Study of the Origin and Gilding Technique of a Hispano-Philippine Ivory from the XVII Century," *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 4 (2015): 1–7.

(predominantely Flemish prints) appear to have crossed both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

I have yet to identify a singular model for this iconography in either woodcut or engraving, but key elements of the composition echo details from engraved models of St Jerome, imported from Antwerp (Figures 5): the shirtless hermit saint, his arm flung out beside him, grasping a crucifix; the lion in a cavern like space below, and at left, the curiously floating form of Jerome's discarded cardinal's hat.[24] The ivory triptychs do not reflect a standard iconographic

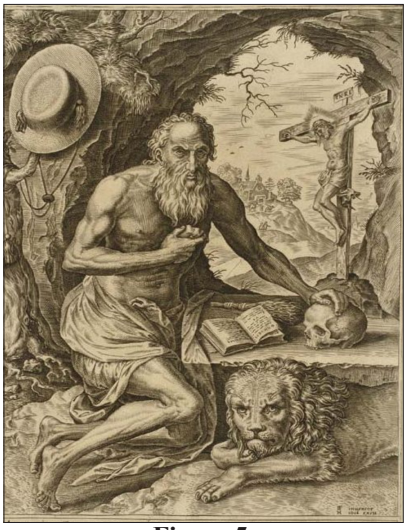

Figure 5.

[24] In addition to these sources would add the following sources for the *St Jerome*: Cornelis Cort after Frans Floris, *St Jerome*, engraving, ca. 1550–78 (Manfred Sellink and Huigen Leeflang, eds. *The New Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1750: Cornelis Cort,* [Rotterdam: Sound and Vision, 2000], no. 114); Jan Sadeler after Gillis Mostaert, *St Jerome*, engraving ca. 1575-90, (Dieuwke Hoop Scheffer and K.G. Boon, eds. *Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700*. all should italicized so it reads Vol. 22, *Aegedius Sadeler to Raphael Sadeler II*, [Amsterdam: Van Gendt & Co., 1980], no.370) and Johan Sadeler after Maerten de Vos, *St Jerome,* engraving, ca. 1585/6 (Christiaan Schuckman and D. De Hoop Scheffer, eds. *Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700*. Vols. 44–46, *Maarten de Vos* [Rotterdam: Sound and Vision Interactive; Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum], 1996, no. 1105). All three of these compositions were seemingly produced in considerable quantities, given the number of closely-related surviving versions.

Figure 6.

formula for the saint, this unique collage-like composition assembles key features of Jerome imagery into a single field. We see a very similar compositional arrangement in surviving Spanish or Flemish bronze plaquettes as well (Figure 6), which may respond to the sculpted portal in Seville's Cathedral by Jerónimo Hernández, executed around 1565/6. Seville, was of course the central point of departure for all merchants, missionaries, soldiers and settlers headed to Spanish America and in the Philippines. There very well may be a single as yet unidentified print source for this unusual composition, perhaps made in Flanders or Seville, or even possibly a three-dimensional model like these bronze plaquettes, which made its way to Manila's ivory workshops.

This was an established circuit of global artistic export, connecting Flanders, Seville, New Spain and the Philippines. In 1620, the Jesuit procurator in Manila, Francisco Gutiérrez, wrote to Alonso de Escobar in Seville, noting "the prints that I received are so excellent."[25] This correspondence suggests that religious orders specifically sent printed images from Seville to Manila via New

[25] "Los estampas recivi que son tan excelentes." Francisco Gutiérrez to P. Alonso de Escobar, August 4, 1620, Madrid, RAH, 9/2667, leg. 1, no. 36, fol. 1v.

Spain to meet the demand for devotional and instructional imagery. There are scattered references to prints, books, and other objects being sent to Manila from New Spain as gifts and bequests. The bishop of Puerto Rico, Pedro Solier, had been a missionary to the Philippines; in 1615, Solier sent a gift of fabric and a box of song books on the Manila galleon to the new Augustinian convent in the archipelago.[26] At the turn of the seventeenth century, the soldier-merchant Pedro de Zúñiga also imported books to the islands in partnership with a cleric from Mexico City.[27] Marjorie Trusted has identified important print sources for ivory plaquettes made in the Philippines, and I have traced the importance of this 1584 Antwerp print of *St Michael the Archangel* for the production of large-scale multi-part ivory sculptures in Manila.[28] The triptych format in particular, required the assembly of various figures of saints that could have been taken from multiple printed or sculptural models. It is possible that the central scene of the kneeling Jerome resulted from a similar cut and paste method of assembly, combining say the

[26] Memoria del maestro fray Pedro de Solier, Seville, AGI, Filipinas, 79, no. 117, cited in D.R.M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 45.

[27] Testament of Pedro de Zúñiga, February 23, 1608, Manila, Autos sobre los bienes del Alférez Pedro de Zúñiga, Seville, AGI, Contratación, 276, no. 1, r. 15, quoted in Antonio García-Abásolo, "The Private Environment of the Spaniards in the Philippines." *Philippine Studies* 44, no. 3 (1996): 349–73, 365.

[28] Marjorie Trusted, *Baroque and Later Ivories*. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2013), cat. no. 347 and 348, see also Margarita Estella Marcos, *Ivories from the Far Eastern Provinces of Spain and Portugal*. (Monterrey: Espejo de Obsidiana Ediciones, 1997), 44–45; and Porras, "Locating Hispano-Phillipine ivories."

Figure 7.

saint's pose from one printed source with the form of the lion from another engraving. Manila's ivory carvers were particularly adept at using both printed and sculptural models to fashion new types of artistic products, aimed both at the local devotional needs of the archipelago and at overseas export markets.

Feathers and faux ivory

The very same combination of iconographic elements found in these Philippine-made ivories were closely repeated in another triptych (Figure 7). Instead of utilizing ivory, this triptych is carved of boxwood and backed with hummingbird feathers. While also sculptural in form, the makers of this *St Jerome* triptych also relied on the knowledge of Indigenous Central Mexican practitioners of featherwork known as *amantecas*. Unlike other feather paintings and wearable objects like mitres, where complex figural scenes are rendered entirely in feathers,[29] the *St Jerome* triptych uses bands of blue and green hummingbird feathers as a decorative backdrop to a sculptural relief. The production of the Walters

[29] See the works collected in Alessandra Russo, "Inventory of Extant Featherwork from Mesoamerica and New Spain," in *Images Take Flight: Feather Art in Mexico and Europe, 1400–1700*, edited by Alessandra Russo, Gerdard Wolf, and Diana Fane, (Munich: Hirmer, 2015), 434–55.

triptych can be related to a number of microcarvings and prayer beads produced in New Spain in the seventeenth century that all use hummingbird feathers as ornamental backdrops for minute scenes exquisitely rendered in wood; however the scale of the Walters triptych is somewhat larger than these wearable objects; it is closer in size to the ivory triptychs we've just seen.

Both the ivory and the wood and feather triptychs appear to rely on a shared source, perhaps a print. Yet it seems just as likely that, in the case of the feather backed triptych, it was a direct response to the influx of Philippine-made ivory triptychs, exported on the Manila galleon. When these ivory triptychs were shipped to New Spain in the early seventeenth century, they became a new model for woodworkers. The existence of two further St Jeromes, one held in the Smithsonian American Art Museum, D.C. (Figure 8), and the other in the Guillermo Tovar de Teresa's House Museum in Mexico City, supports this theory. The first is smaller than the Walters triptych, but also pairs a central image of the hermit saint with that of the Four Evangelists.[30] In the Tovar

Figure 8.

[30] See Smithsonian American Art Museum, inv. no. 1929.8.241.3

de Teresa museum, there is a single panel that closely replicates the now familiar iconography of the hermit saint. The textured background to both of these objects suggests it was formerly gilded or otherwise decorated.[31] These objects have been discussed as part of a broader tradition of microcarving pendants, jewels and prayer beads in Central Mexico, likely drawing on both Indigenous and European models, and made primarily for export.[32]

The same Mexico City collection which holds this wooden St Jerome also has another, miniscule St Jerome triptych, this time with its figures in ivory, but mounted on wood. The form of the gilded frame replicates that of the Walters feathered triptych;

[31] I am grateful here to discussions with Allison Caplan (Yale University) who noted that extant colonial feather works typically have their feathers glued directly to the wooden surface. My thanks also to Geneva Griswold for sharing her conservation report on the triptych.

[32] On microcarvings see Theodor Müller, "Das Altärchen der Herzogin Christine von Lothringen in der Schatzkammer der Münchner Residenz und verwandte Kleinkunstwerke," *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte* 35 (1972): 69–77; Teresa Castelló Yturbide, "La plumaria en la tradición indígena," in *El arte plumaria en México*, ed. Teresa Castelló Yturbide , 143–215 (Mexico City: Fomento Cultural Banamex, 1993); Philippe Malgouyres, "Moines franciscains et sculpteurs indiens: à propos de quatre pendentifs mexicains conservés au musée du Louvre," *La Revue des Musées de France: Revue du Louvre* 4 (2015): 34–48; Pablo F. Amador Marrero, "De Flandes y lo flamenco en la escultura temprana de la Nueva España," in *Homenaje a la profesora Constanza Negrín Delgado,* edited by Carlos Rodríguez Morales (San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Spain: Instituto de Estudios Canarios, 2014), 33–35; Illona Katzew and Rachel Kaplan. "Like the Flame of Fire: A New Look at the 'Hearst' Chalice." *Latin American and latinx visual culture* 3, no. 1 (2021): 4–29; Brendan C. McMahon, "Divine Nature: Feathered Microcarvings in the Early Modern World." *Art History* 44, no. 4 (2021): 770–796.

but here the figural reliefs are formed of tiny pieces of ivory. The style of carving here also seems closer to Mexican exemplars than to those made in the Philippines, and the use of a wooden instead of an ivory support more typical of Manila production, also suggests this object was made in New Spain in response to the influx of Asian imported ivory. Another example of a small mixed technique St Jerome can now be seen at the Museu do Oriente in Lisbon (Figure 9), suggesting that this was perhaps a standard iconography. Given the fragility of ivory and its desirability on both sides of the Pacific, it is possible these small carvings were rendered from fragments of carved or raw ivory sent to New Spain on the Manila galleon. Sculptors in New Spain were particularly renowned for their skill in producing these micro carvings; this turn to a mixture of ivory and wood may have been a way to profitably export and repackage offcuts or damaged pieces of ivory sent across the Pacific. These minute mixed-media triptychs, both from the Guillermo Tovar de Teresa's House Museum and the the Museu do Oriente, open the possibility that ivory carving was a practice carried out on both sides of the Pacific.

Figure 9.

Ivory, as a fungible good

and artistic material, valued by merchants and consumers from the East coast of Africa, across the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic oceans, and it appears to be a material that encouraged practices of innovation, combinations of diverse techniques and stylistic sources intended to further enhance its material value. As we have seen, the 1601 shipwreck of the galleon *Santa Margarita* confirms that smaller scale ivories were being sent to New Spain in some quantity already by the turn of the seventeenth century.[33] This is half a century before the earliest known documented reference to the transpacific commercial trade in ivory sculptures is a 1655 *pleito* regarding the shipwreck of the *San Francisco Javier*, which lists prices for 11 ivory sculptures sold in Acapulco, ranging from 18 to 45 pesos each – that is considerable sums.[34]

The American taste for Asian-carved ivory sculpture was apparently considerable. To give a taste of the scale of this trade, consider a 1767 ecclesiastic inventory of a relatively minor parish church in Oaxaca, 14,000 miles away from Manila, which records at least ten ivory sculptures, likely all Philippine in origin, on a single altar.[35] This influx of carved ivory objects from Asia intersected with the development of local sculptural practices, despite the fact that unworked elephant tusks were not available at the same scale in the American viceroyalties as they were across the Pacific.

33 Trusted, "Survivors of a Shipwreck."

34 Porras, "Locating Hispano-Philippine Ivories," 256.

35 See the July 23, 1767 inventory of Our Lady of Solitude in Antequerra, cited by Estella Marcos, *Ivories from the Far Eastern Provinces of Spain*, 9.

Two surviving sculptural objects not fashioned from ivory, but both inscribed with the name Diego de Reinoso, consciously emulate Asian devotional ivory sculpture. In this plaquette in the Victoria and Albert museum, the figure of St Dominic, one of the saints regularly depicted in Asian export ivories, is carved from both walrus ivory and stone; the form of the saint's dog is evocative of Foo dogs, seen in larger scale Hispano-Philippine ivory.[36] Smaller in format, the sculpture exhibits both stylistic and technical similarities to Asian ivories, including small circular drilled holes typically seen on South Asian, and later ivories made in the Philippines. Yet this object is rendered in different materials, by an artist working on the other side of the Pacific, in the Americas. Another sculpture (Figure 10), now at the Denver Art Museum, also bears Reinoso's name and depicts the figure of St Michael. It is carved in alabaster, a material whose creamy white coloration evokes ivory; and its subject, the figure of the archangel Michael, was one of the most popular subjects for export ivory sculpture from Manila in the seventeenth century. As Julie Wilson Frick notes, the snail-shell shaped clouds surrounding the

Figure 10.

[36] See for example the Saint Michael in the Cathedral of Badajoz, discussed in Porras, "Locating Hispano-Philippine Ivories," 271.

archangel closely resemble Goan carving, while the "tree of life" motif on the octagonal framework can be found on South Asian *palampore* textiles.[37] It too bears drilled decoration akin to Goan and Philippine-made ivory sculptures.

Both the Denver and London sculptures are inscribed with the name Diego de Rienoso, and references to invention ('Diego Reinoso Inventor en Mxico 1696' and 'Diego de Reinoso Inbentor'). Yet we don't know much about the artist himself. In 1644, a Mercerdarian priest with same name published a vocabulary in Monterrey, northern Mexico; it has been suggested that this Reinoso was the same as the sculptor.[38] Alternatively it is possible the artist was a migrant from Asia, one of the many who crossed the Pacific on a Manila galleon ship.[39] Regardless of the ethnic origin of the individual named 'Diego de Reinoso' – the sculptures bearing his name reference the facture of Asian ivories, generating aesthetic value by invoking the subjects, material, and carving techniques of ivory, but utilizing different materials.

In a similar fashion, on the other side of the Pacific, the kilns of Dehua began to produce considerable quantities of *blanc*

[37] Julie Wilson Frick, "Double-sided carving of Saint Michael and the Virgin and Child with Saints Dominic and John the Baptist," The Denver Art Museum, February 5, 2024, https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/object/1991.1150a-b.

[38] Trusted takes this suggestion, following Pál Keleman, *Art of the Americas: Ancient and Hispanic with a comparative chapter on the Philippines* (New York: Bonanza, 1969), 250.

[39] Ramón María Serrera, "El Camino de Asia: La Ruta de México a Acapulco." In *Rutas de la Nueva España*, edited by Chantal Cramaussel, (Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 2006), 211–30.

de chine porcelain from about 1600 onwards; that is, precisely the moment when the trade in large-scale ivory sculptures expanded across the Indian and South China seas.[40] While porcelain had been made in Dehua for centuries, production scaled up in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and these objects became a desirable export good. Augustus the Strong had over a thousand pieces of this kind of porcelain at his palace in Dresden by the early 18th century.[41] Like the stone sculptures of Diego de Reinoso, these are white figural sculptures (Figure 11); but these ceramic figures are both in the same palette and larger scale as those ivory figural sculptures then being made in Manila, across the South China Sea. Viewing these various sculptural products alongside one another suggests how the littoral networks of the ivory trade, the oceanic circuits of production and exchange extended inland both in Asia and the Americas. More than just an exotic and precious substrate, ivory – its near universal

Figure 11.

[40] See the earlier dating for these figural works in John Ayers, "*Blanc de Chine: Some Reflections*" in *Blanc De Chine: porcelain from Dehua*, edited by Rose Kerr and John *Ayers*. (Richmond: Curzon, 2002), 19–34.

[41] Eva Ströber, "*Dehua* Porcelain in the collection of *Augustus* the Strong in Dresden," in *Blanc De Chine: porcelain from Dehua*, edited by Rose Kerr and John *Ayers*, (Richmond: Curzon, 2002), 51–8.

desirability – prompted artists working across several oceans to create new types of artistic goods, to combine stylistic and technical elements borrowed from artists working in different media, across land and sea.

The globe as a market

The relationships between these disparate artworks – European prints, Philippine ivories carved by Chinese immigrants, feather-backed triptychs made in Mexico and Chinese porcelain figures – suggest the ways in which artists and consumers across the globe responded to both the iconographic and material qualities of increasingly mobile early modern artworks. In the case of the *St Jeromes*, ivories carved in the Philippines could take the place of the European print as both an iconographic and material model for woodcarvers and *amantecas* in New Spain, decentering and destabilizing historical narratives about copying and invention in extra-European spaces. As Aaron Hyman has eloquently shown printed models imported to the Americas could also be read as distinctly local images – as when Rubens' compositions by virtue of their many iterations in Cusco, came to function as a cuzqueñan referent when taken up as a model across the viceroyalty of Peru.[42]

Artworks' mobility then troubles the distinction between the global and the local, art historical assumptions about context and referent. The mobility of European prints certainly epitomizes

[42] On the ways in which Rubens's iconography is remade in Cusco as both a local and regional modle, see Hyman, *Rubens in Repeat*, 37–118.

this shift, but these ivory and feather triptychs further complicate matters – helping us to see the processes of globalization not as solely Eurocentric (the movement of prints to the so-called 'global periphery' of Manila), but as evidence of a truly global early modern art market. From this view we see how Manila's ivory carvers influenced New Spain's featherwork export industry and also Chinese porcelain production – Manila is a global center not just for the reception of European artworks or the distribution of Chinese silk, but a generative locus of a newly global art market.[43]

When *amantecas* in New Spain substituted feathers for ivory, they not only swapped one precious material for another; by turning to ivory as a model, these woodcarvers and featherworkers responded to the import of a rival luxury good, one that had already mobilized European prints and the Indian Ocean's ivory trade. These feather-backed triptychs were bought both by elites in New Spain, and were likely exported overseas as precious commodities. I know of no surviving feather backed St Jerome triptychs in Spain or in Europe, but related feather-backed micro-carvings in European collections prove that there was demand for such artworks. The relation here between *St Jeromes* made in ivory and in wood and feathers, each made

[43] This reading contrasts with the dominant interpretation of these objects as 'cultural hybrids', evidence of syncretic religious beliefs, see for example Raquel Sigüenza Martín, "Pluma y marfil: materiales para el sincretismo religioso," in *España y la Evangelización de América y Filipinas (siglos XV-XVII)*, edited by F. Javier Campos y Fernández de Sevilla, (San Lorenzo del Escorial: Universidad María Cristina de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, 2021), 231–248.

an ocean away from one another, allows us to see how the very different materials of paper, ivory and feathers could become somewhat fungible (that is, exchangeable) within a global marketplace.

Prints were desired imports as aides to conversion and the imposition of colonial order, and as such were in high demand from missionaries. Writing to Giovanni Alvarez from China in 1605, the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci claimed that engravings were "of even greater use than the Bible in the sense that while we are in the middle of talking we can also place right in front of their eyes things which, with words alone, we would not be able to make clear."[44] The demand for printed images was not solely from ecclesiastics, but also from local buyers. Around 1600, Diego Ocaña, a Castilian Hieronymite friar who traveled to the viceroyalty of Peru, lamented that his Spanish monastic order did not respond to his repeated requests for more *estampas,* claiming that he could have sold twenty or thirty thousand prints at the fiesta held in honor of the Virgin in Potosí.[45] From these sources,

[44] "…più utile è anco quell libro che questo della Bibbia per adesso, poichè con quello dichiariamo, anzi poniamo Avanti agli occhi quello che alle volte con parole non possiamo dichiarare." Ricci, *Lettere*, no. 43, 406.

[45] "Y en esta ocasión no puedo dejar de quejarme del descuido, de la casa de Guadalupe, que tuvieron en enviarme algunas cosas que yo envié a pedir, en particular las estampas; que si a esta sazón tuviera yo en Potosí, sobre la mesa donde estaba, veinte mil o treinta mil estampas, todas las gastara, porque cada uno la llevara para tenella en su aposento. Y por cada una, lo menos que podían dar era un peso de plata, que son ocho reales. Ya lo envié a pedir muchas veces y no me lo enviaron." See Diego de Ocaña, *Memoria viva de una tierra de*

we get a sense of the utility of prints, but also something of their value as desirable material goods.

Prints were not just devotional aides for the Christian mission, but also served as commercial merchandise. So when in 1596, Dutch ships set sail looking for the fabled Northeastern passage to Cathay, they carried bundles of prints – not only of religious subjects but also costume prints, images of Roman emperors and standard bearers.[46] In 1602, Dutch traders in Patani recorded an inventory of some five to six thousand prints of an even wider variety.[47] In both the Arctic and South China Seas, these print caches document the material value of printed images as a currency of global trade. Engraved images were a European export good, used to broker favor with foreign courts – Ricci and his fellow Jesuits presented engraved religious imagery but also copies of Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* to Mughal and imperial Chinese courts. Engraved images were not produced outside of Europe in any considerable quantity before 1600; while letterpresses were sent to New Spain in 1539, Japan in 1590, and

olvido: relación del viaje al Nuevo Mundo de 1599 a 1607, edited by Beatriz Carolina Peña, (Barcelona: Paso de Barca, 2013), 486 (fol. 158v).

46 See J. Braat, J. P. Filedt Kok, J. H. Hofenk de Graaff, and P. Poldervaart, "Restauratie, Conservatie En Onderzoek van de Op Nova Zembla Gevonden Zestiende-Eeuwse Prenten." *Bulletin van Het Rijksmuseum* 28, no. 2 (1980): 43–79; and J.H.G Gawronski, J. Braat and J.B. Kist, *Behouden uit het Behouden Huys. Catalogus van de voorwerpen van de Barentsexpeditie (1596)* (De Bataafsche Leeuw: Amsterdam, 1998).

47 J.W. IJzerman, *Hollandsche prenten als handelsartikel te Patani in 1602*, (Hague: Nijhoff, 1926).

Manila in 1593 – the roller presses required for printing engravings did not arrive until considerably later. In other words, engraved images could be seen in much of the world as a somewhat exotic and precious good – technology that was difficult to replicate.

This essay has attempted to complex series of relationships between prints, ivory and feather-backed triptychs made in Manila and Mexico, Chinese porcelain and Mexican alabaster in order to demonstrate that this is not just the story of a singular iconography's popularity, or what I have called elsewhere, the viral capacity of earl modern print.[48] I have suggested here some of the ways in which this set of art objects – related via iconography and/or material qualities – demonstrated the efficacy of globalization's infrastructure. These artworks evidence the ways in which oceans and continents could be traversed by people and goods – but also the way in which the mobility of art works shifted how artists viewed the world. The ivory carver took printed objects made by an unknown maker wielding an unfamiliar technical process (engraving) and fashioned a new type of object to be sent back along these same networks. The featherworker in New Spain repeated this same process, responding to a new Asian export good – carved ivories – and fashioning a rival product in this global marketplace. Artists in Antwerp, Manila and New Spain then, made objects for imagined audiences, consumers one

[48] My own study of St Michael the Archangel can be understood as the tracing of such a singular viral image. See Porras, *The First Viral Images*.

would never meet, but whose presence was felt via the demands of ship captains, merchants, and missionary orders' procurators.

This was not a one-way process but one subject to recursive feedback – send more prints of the Virgin, more St Jeromes in ivory. The anecdotes with which I began this essay could be read as betraying some of the latent anxieties accompanying these processes – Salazar suggests imported Spanish goods would be displaced, much like the poor unsuccessful Mexican bookbinder in Manila, whose work was rapidly usurped by his Chinese assistant. Globalization, from an imperial perspective, was about the reassignment of labor, the extraction and reallocation of local resources in a global economic system controlled by the Spanish crown. But these Spanish anecdotes and the artworks discussed here, reveal how the local labor of copying, the material ingenuity with which artists responded to the mobility of prints and other objects, allowed the viral image to exploit and also, to occasionally escape such colonial control.

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Captions

Figure 1. Unknown Manila artist, *St Jerome triptych*, ivory. Photo: Bret Oliphant and IOTA Partners.

Figure 2. Unknown Manila artist, *St Jerome triptychs*, ivory with polychromy. Private collection, Published as figure 88 in Beatriz Sánchez Navarro de Pintado, *Marfiles christianos del Oriente en Mexico* (Mexico City: Fomento Cultural Banamex, 1986).

Figure 3. Unknown Manila artist, *St Jerome triptych*, ivory with polychromy. Madrid, Museo de América.

Figure 4. Unknown Manila artist, *St Jerome* plaquette (fragment of triptych?), ivory. Santiago (Chile), Museo de Artes Decorativas.

Figure 5. Cornelis Cort after Frans Floris, *St Jerome*, engraving, ca. 1560. Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus.

Figure 6. Spanish or Flemish, *St Jerome praying*, gilt copper alloy plaquette, 16th century. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 7. Unknown artist in New Spain, *St Jerome in Penance and the Four Evangelists*, boxwood with hummingbird feathers and polychromy. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum.

Figure 8. Unknown artist in New Spain, *St Jerome in Penance and the Four Evangelists*, boxwood. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly.

Figure 9. Unknown artist in New Spain (?), *St Jerome triptych*, ivory and wood with gilding. Lisbon, Museu do Oriente.

Figure 10. Diego de Reinoso?, *Saint Michael ,* alabaster, circa 1696, Denver Art Museum

Figure 11. Dehua, *Bodhisattva Guanyin*, porcelain with ivory glaze, 17th century. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.