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MEDIA CONTACTS:
Carlotta Stankiewicz, 512.475.6784, carlotta.stankiewicz@blantonmuseum.org
Penny Snyder, 512.471.0241, penny.snyder@blantonmuseum.org
L.E. Brown, 505.995.0231, le@thomafoundation.org

Blanton Museum of Art Announces Landmark Endowment for Curator in Art of the Spanish and Portuguese Americas Underwritten by Thoma Foundation

$2 million endowment for curatorial position will further support visionary program devoted to art of the Spanish Americas

Austin, Texas—May 7, 2019—The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin and the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation announce the permanent endowment of a curatorial position devoted to art of the Spanish Americas, a growing field of art historical research. The Marilynn Thoma Associate Curator, Art of the Spanish Americas position is currently held by Dr. Rosario I. Granados and will solidify the museum’s commitment to the study of art from the Spanish and Portuguese Americas. Funded by the Thoma Art of the Spanish Americas Endowment, the position is the second endowed curatorial position for Spanish American art in the United States, and the first named, endowed position at the Blanton Museum of Art.

“The Blanton is immensely grateful to the Thoma Foundation—Carl and Marilynn Thoma and their children Mark Thoma and Margo Thoma—for their extraordinary gift to the museum. In particular, I want to acknowledge Marilynn Thoma, who has been a passionate champion of the scholarly value and artistic quality of colonial Latin American art,” said Blanton director Simone Wicha. “It is a great honor to have worked with Marilynn so closely over the years and to have this position now bear her name.”
Carl and Marilynn Thoma have been involved at the museum for over a decade and are active members of the Blanton National Leadership Board. The collaboration between the Thoma Foundation and the Blanton began with the museum’s presentation of *The Virgin, Saints, and Angels: South American Paintings 1600-1825 from the Carl and Marilynn Thoma Collection* in 2008. In 2016, along with a long-term loan of works from their esteemed collection, the foundation made a three-year grant to support this emerging area of curatorial and scholarly research. This enabled the Blanton to found a robust, cross-campus program that facilitates object-based teaching, research, and scholarship on visual and material culture from this period in partnership with LLILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections at UT. Granados, who leads the initiative, is a recognized expert in the field who has been pivotal in shaping this program since joining the Blanton in 2016.

Wicha further commented that “This visionary endowment will sustain and elevate the Blanton’s role as a hub for interdisciplinary collaboration, research, and programming around Spanish American art on the UT Austin campus. To have the position fully endowed in perpetuity establishes the Blanton as the leading institution for the study of Spanish American art and visual culture, guaranteeing that this meaningful work will continue for years to come.”

“The Blanton has demonstrated meaningful and sustained commitment to the study of the history of art of Latin America,” said Marilynn Thoma. “Carl and I are proud to grow our relationship with the museum by endowing this position. Rosario is a devoted scholar, and we look forward to following her continued contributions to the field.”

The Blanton’s role on The University of Texas at Austin campus offers extensive resources for the study of Spanish American art. UT is home to the one of the country’s oldest Latin American studies programs, the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies (LLILAS), as well as the largest university research collection with holdings focused on Latin America in the United States, the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection. The curatorial endowment will further advance the cross-campus Colonial Initiative, which brings together faculty from diverse disciplines including history, anthropology, art history, architecture, and Spanish and Portuguese to research and teach material from the period.

"Our ability to bring together both scholars and curators around world-class collections makes UT Austin a remarkable engine for knowledge and discovery," said Maurie McInnis, executive vice president and provost. “The university’s leadership in Latin American studies, as well as these renowned collections, offer unparalleled resources to further scholarship on Spanish and Portuguese American art. We are deeply grateful to the Thoma Foundation for their commitment to the university and this program, which will ensure that meaningful research, scholarship, and exhibitions related to this period will continue for generations."

The Blanton has one of the oldest programs in collecting, researching, and exhibiting Latin American art in the United States. With a particular strength in modern and contemporary Latin American art, the Blanton’s commitment to exhibiting art from the Spanish Americas dates to the late 1960s. In 1986, the museum presented *Gloria en Excelcius: The Virgins and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia*, organized by Barbara Duncan, art historian and long-time supporter of the Blanton’s Latin American collection and program. Catalyzed and inspired by support from the Thoma Foundation, the Blanton’s collection has continued to expand with a gift of 83 works from colonial-era Venezuela from the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros in 2017 and the museum’s purchase of the Huber Collection of 119 works in February 2019.
“The artistic production of the Spanish Americas is both culturally complex and extraordinarily beautiful; it demonstrates the melding of visual cultures during a time of change and flux,” said Granados, Marilynn Thoma Associate Curator, Art of the Spanish Americas. “The Blanton’s leadership in this burgeoning field is grounded in our long tradition as one of the first institutions in the United States to seriously champion the study of Latin American art. I am grateful to the Thoma Foundation for their renewed commitment to our program.”

Granados has organized several exhibitions related to this period including Mapping Memory: Space and History in 16th-century Mexico, featuring 20 maps from the 16th century drawn from the Benson Collection. These rarely exhibited maps illustrate the melding of European and indigenous visual traditions during the early years of contact between indigenous groups and colonizers. Mapping Memory will be on view at the Blanton in the Glickman Galleries from June 29 to August 25. She is also organizing a forthcoming exhibition, Painted Cloth: Fashion and Ritual in Colonial Latin America. With lead funding from the Thoma Foundation, Painted Cloth examines the social role of textiles and their visual representations in different media produced in Bolivia, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela during the 1600s and 1700s.

Granados’ collaborations with faculty and leaders on campus further scholarship and teaching around art from the Spanish Americas. In 2018, she co-organized Ink and Memory: A Documentary History of the People and Things of the Spanish Americas, co-curated with Christina M. Bleyer, former head of special collections and senior archivist of the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, which accompanied the 2018 Lozano Long Conference: People and Things from the Spanish Americas, co-organized with Susan Deans-Smith, associate professor in history, and Paloma Díaz-Lobos, scholarly programs director, LLILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections. She also organized the Distinguished Visiting Speakers in The Art of the Spanish Americas with Susan Deans-Smith, which brings leading scholars and specialists in the field to give talks and teach students on campus.

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About the Blanton:
Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin is one of the foremost university art museums in the country and holds the largest public collection of art in Central Texas. The museum is recognized for its Latin American holdings, modern and contemporary American collection, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, an encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, and Ellsworth Kelly’s Austin. Through exhibitions, educational outreach, and public programs, the Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

About The Thoma Foundation:
Carl and Marilynn Thoma have been collecting art since the 1980s. They believe passionately in the power of art to enrich life and deepen our understanding of the cultures, places, and times of which we are a part. Inspired to make contributions with broad yet personal impact, the Thomas established a family foundation with the goal of supporting innovative individuals and pivotal initiatives in the fields of art in which they collect. As their collections have evolved, they have contributed increasingly with their personal involvement and financial support to the development of exhibitions, symposia and publications, and the formation of fellowships, awards, endowed professorial chairs and curatorial positions.

About Rosario Granados:
Rosario Inés Granados is a Mexican art historian who studies religious material culture. As the Marilynn Thoma Associate Curator, Art of the Spanish Americas at the Blanton Museum of Art, she creates exhibitions that place the art of the Spanish Americas at the intersection of multidisciplinary conversations. Before coming to UT Austin, she taught undergraduate and graduate seminars on religion, gender studies, cultural heritage, and Latin American art at the University of Chicago and Skidmore College. She holds a BA from Universidad Iberoamericana, an MA from the Courtauld Institute of Art (University of London), and a PhD from Harvard University.