9.5: Mexican Baroque (1640 – mid 1700s)

The Mexican Baroque period found its way to Mexico with the Spanish immigrants, and in concert with the indigenous artists, architecture, sculpting, and painting flourished. The wealthiest province of New Spain, Mexico, produced extravagant architecture known as Mexican Churrigueresque (ultra-Baroque), the ornamentation, use of bright, vivid colored tile and gold leaf against the white interior stucco, moved Mexican Baroque in a new direction. The focus on filling in all the space was the signature differentiating Mexico's style from European style.

Jerónimo de Balbás (1680-1748) was a Mexican architect and sculptor known for his estipite columns shaped as an inverted cone covered with elaborate and ornate decorations. One of the main altars, the Altar of the Kings in the Cattedral Metropolitana, Mexico City's central cathedral, resembles a gold-plated grotto. Space was divided into sections separated by the unusual columns inset with statues and paintings depicting religious stories (9.21). The design and architecture of this altar quickly spread to become the standard in churches around Mexico.
Lorenzo Rodríguez (1704-1774) was another Mexican Baroque architect and the originator of the Churrigueresque style. Rodríguez built a small church next to the cathedral in the ornate baroque style, adding his ideas of complexity and richness of details. The Sagrario Metropolitano (Metropolitan Tabernacle) section (9.22) (the smaller building is seen below to the right of the cathedral) built by Rodríguez displays his zoomorphic reliefs along the main façade, including lions, eagles, anthropologic reliefs as well as the coat of arms of Mexico. Details demonstrate his ability to richly decorate with fruits, floral, and pomegranates representing iconic symbols of the Catholic religion.

Sebastián López de Arreaga (1610-1652) was a Mexican Baroque painter adopting the customary tenebrism and...
Arreaga used contrasting colors to illuminate the figures similar to the style of Caravaggio; however, he painted standard religious figures instead of ordinary people. The *Betrothal of the Virgin* (9.23) has flat elongated figures seen in many renaissance paintings, painted with the traditional ornate baroque style.

![The Betrothal of the Virgin](image_url)

9.23 *The Betrothal of the Virgin*

**Cristóbal de Villalpando** (1649-1714) was another baroque painter known for his luminous and ornate two-dimensional paintings in churches. Using artificial light sources to illuminate and highlight his message, Villalpando painted with meticulous brushstrokes, adding a touch of drama. The semi-circle of angels, in *Lady of Sorrows* (9.24), clad in red or gold, provides a startling contrast with the static, central figure dressed in dark clothing, symbolizing her sorrow. Villalpando illuminates the faces from multiple directions illustrating his use of light from unknown places.
9.24 Lady of Sorrows