

# The Artworks at Historic Mission San Antonio de Padua



*Our Lady of Carmel - 18th Century Mexican painting in arched lunette style*

CALIFORNIA'S twenty-one Spanish Missions contain two unique types of art:

One type is primarily comprised of religious pieces employed by the Spanish priests to instruct Catholic bible lessons to the mission population utilizing visual learning tools.

A second type of artistic expression was comprised of pieces created by local neophytes under the direction of the priests. These primarily included utilitarian items used in everyday life, such as furniture and clothing.

This brochure highlights a few facts about some of the iconic pieces that remain on the premises at Mission San Antonio. For more information on these pieces, or for additional facts on this important historical place, go to: [www.missionsanantonio.net](http://www.missionsanantonio.net)



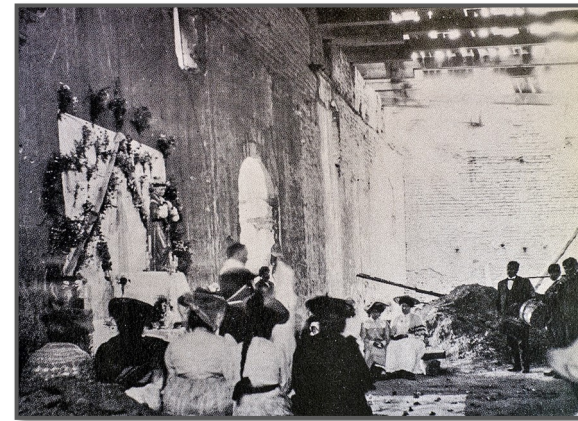
*At Mission San Antonio, there are six 18th century Mexican statues located on the church's altar*

## Theaters of Conversion

The religious indoctrination of the neophytes included dramas, processions, tableaux, and pageants. All played to spiritual needs. Statues, gilded and painted altars (*reredos*) were found in all missions. Abundantly decorated articles were utilized during church services.



*Hymns, music and dramas were required for a mission's functions. Two choir books remain in San Antonio's collection.*



*Instruments included strings, flutes, horns, guitars, drums and triangles. Mission San Antonio had both a neophyte choir and band.*

Spanish priests developed Mexico City workshops and trained local artisans in the Spanish Colonial style of art. As the padres built the California Missions they would contact Mexico to order particular artworks. Over the years, many of these pieces moved with the parish priest as he traveled between missions and some were traded.



*Archival drawing found at Mission San Antonio*

The women's dress was more brightly colored, with a full skirt gathered at the waist and a plain blouse with short sleeves and a round neck. Many women and men wore kerchiefs around their necks.



*Salinan Indian baskets were made with coiled blackened white fibers with glass*

You are welcome to visit all the paintings, statues, artwork, and other artifacts in the church, museum, and on the walking tour of the grounds of Mission San Antonio.



## Paintings

Numerous 18th century paintings line the walls of Mission San Antonio's church.

During the secularization, a period of time when the Mexican government controlled Alta California, the Mission was abandoned. All paintings were removed from their wooden support systems and folded in attempts to store and save them. Because of the organic components included in an art object's construction, some deteriorated. Leaky roofs, rough handling and insect infestation contributed towards damage, now requiring preservation and conservation treatments. The Our Lady painting was removed from the Masonite, the paint lost from folds restored (visible below on lower left image), and the surface conserved.



*Our Lady of Refuge painting restoration (top before / right after)*



Current works within the mission collection include the 20th century Fourteen Stations of the Cross now seen on the church's walls.

Paintings were generally done on canvas or wood panels. A special type of painting, the "enrollado," was painted on canvas. It was then rolled up and placed into a tube for transporting by a priest as he traveled between Missions. Some of the most popular themes were "Our Lady of Guadalupe" and the "Virgin of the Immaculate Conception."

Two of the many art works having received conservation treatments include the San Antonio painting and the Saint Joseph statue.

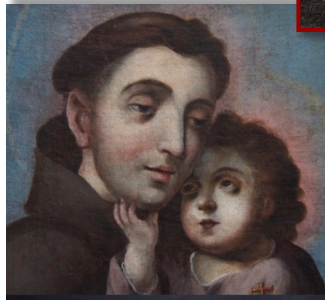
Each Mission displayed a likeness of their patron saint. One of this mission's historically important paintings is the portrait of its Patron Saint, San Antonio.

He was painted by a noted 18th Century artist, Jose de Paez. Born in Mexico City in 1720, he died in 1801. Fr. Serra met Jose in 1764.

Today you can find a portrait of a patron saint by de Paez in most California Missions.



*Paez's work is recognized by delicate features, pastel colors, and sweet sentiments his subjects reflect.*



The oil painting of Patron Saint San Antonio was done on canvas and attached to a wooden support frame. Through the years the canvas deteriorated and sagged from its support system, developing several small holes. The surface was covered with smoke from candles, dirt and deteriorated varnish.

In mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the painting was incorrectly glued to Masonite. Paint film losses were over-painted.

Several years ago it was taken to a conservation studio, cleaned, and the canvas lined to a new support system. Damaged areas were repaired. Care was taken to not cover over any of the original painting. A coat of non-yellowing acrylic varnish was applied to protect its surface.

## Sculpture

Each artisan was responsible for a specific portion of the art being produced: carving the wood, preparing gesso (the base coat required to gild), burnishing gold leaf, or painting the richly colored robes and fine skin tones we witness today.

The 18th century Mexican statue of Saint Joseph was also conserved. Its construction is composed of carved wood, gesso (hide glue, water and calcium carbonate), gilding and oil paint creating his fine skin-tones and richly colored robes. He has hand-blown glass eyes (some statues even had glass teeth), which were broken and recreated. His painted and gilded surface had been damaged. Fingers were broken and over-painted, a condition very common in older art works. Likely due to heavy insect infestation, the base he stands on was replaced, but, even though it is not original, it was decided there was enough history to retain it.

The surface of the statue was chemically cleaned, removing all over-paint, dirt, deteriorated varnish, or anything not original to the statue. Damaged areas were repaired; missing parts recreated, painted and gilded to match the original surface. As with paintings, following the conservation treatment, a layer of acrylic varnish was applied.

Another one of the statues that received a conservation treatment (not pictured) is the statue of San Miguel that sits atop the *reredo* behind the altar. *Reredo* is a Spanish term for the decorations associated with the altar.



*St. Joseph Statue - 18th Century Mexican*

The design of this brochure was donated by:



*There are other brochures at the museum gift shop on the cultural, culinary, and medicinal uses of plants during the mission era, as well as a newly revised walking tour brochure of the mission grounds.*

**PHOTO CREDITS:**  
Fred Kenyon & The Mission Archives