



**The Casa del Deán: New World Imagery in a
Sixteenth-Century Mexican Mural Cycle (Joe R.
and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American
and L)**

Penny C. Morrill

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The Casa del Deán in Puebla, Mexico, is one of few surviving sixteenth-century residences in the Americas. Built in 1580 by Tomás de la Plaza, the Dean of the Cathedral, the house was decorated with at least three magnificent murals, two of which survive. Their rediscovery in the 1950s and restoration in 2010 revealed works of art that rival European masterpieces of the early Renaissance, while incorporating indigenous elements that identify them with Amerindian visual traditions.

Extensively illustrated with new color photographs of the murals, *The Casa del Deán* presents a thorough iconographic analysis of the paintings and an enlightening discussion of the relationship between Tomás de la Plaza and the indigenous artists whom he commissioned. Penny Morrill skillfully traces how native painters, trained by the Franciscans, used images from Classical mythology found in Flemish and Italian prints and illustrated books from France—as well as animal images and glyphic traditions with pre-Columbian origins—to create murals that are reflective of Don Tomás's erudition and his role in evangelizing among the Amerindians. She demonstrates how the importance given to rhetoric by both the Spaniards and the Nahuas became a bridge of communication between these two distinct and highly evolved cultures. This pioneering study of the Casa del Deán mural cycle adds an important new chapter to the study of colonial Latin American art, as it increases our understanding of the process by which imagery in the New World took on Christian meaning.

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