The Jesuits in Hispanic America: A Legacy of Art and Architecture

**Latin American Architecture**

The contribution of the Society of Jesus to the development of Latin American architecture is evident to anyone who has visited there. It was made principally during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at which time the Baroque became a crucial element of Latin American culture.

Images and architecture have been at the core of colonial Latin American since the earliest years of the conquest. From the most rudimentary churches and religious pictures, they were integral to the business of conversion that the Spanish Laws of Burgos of 1512-13 decreed that colonial landowners had to provide the indigenous communities on their property not only with a church and a bell, but also with “pictures of Our Lady.” Missionaries and scholars alike believed that such images could work miracles, whether by converting america or promoting artistry. This enthusiasm for pictures was little to do with “art” in the Renaissance and modern sense, but rooted instead in the medieval European belief that holy images preserved the presence of the sacred. A renowned holy image of the Virgin was not just a portrait of the saint but also an extension of her being. When copies were made of that image, this explanation expanded her presence religiously.

The Jesuits in America arrived in a time when the indigenous peoples were in a state of ferment. While they were still very much a part of the native world, they were also experiencing profound changes. The imposition of a new religion, language, and political order upended their social and economic systems.

The Jesuits, who were known for their rigorous education and commitment to scientific inquiry, found a kindred spirit in the indigenous peoples. They sought to understand the cultures and beliefs of the native peoples and to adapt their teachings to fit within these contexts.

The Jesuits established schools and missions throughout the Americas. They were known for their artistic productions, which included paintings, prints, and constructions. These artistic productions were not only intended to spread the Catholic faith but also to educate the indigenous peoples about the new religion.

The Jesuits in America had a profound impact on the development of Latin American art. They introduced new styles and techniques, and their influence can be seen in the works of many of the region’s most famous artists.

The Jesuits in America also had a significant impact on the development of architecture. They built churches, schools, and other buildings that reflected the new religious and cultural order. Many of these buildings are still standing today and are considered to be some of the finest examples of colonial architecture.

In summary, the Jesuits in America had a profound impact on the development of Latin American art and architecture. Their artistic productions and architectural works continue to be admired and studied, and they remain an important part of the history of Latin America.