## Gifts of grateful wonder The Oregonian B1 TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2009

A Quintana exhibit presents painted thank-you notes to saints, statues and carvings 0719-1

By NANCY HAUGHT THE OREGONIAN

HEY ARE THE SHORTEST OF STORIES, ONLY A few lines long. They begin with worry and end in wonder: A soldier, gone for 25 years, comes home alive. A boy who fell into a deep well survives. A woman in poor health delivers a robust child. Each is a glimpse into a life of faith.

These tiny stories are ex-votos, painted thank-you notes to saints who intervened to answer prayers. From a Latin phrase often translated as "from the vow made," ex-votos spread from Italy to the Americas in the 16th century and remained popu-

lar expressions of faith through the

20th century.

of the Americas Where: Quintana Galleries, 120 N.W. Ninth Ave.

**Devotional Art** 

When: 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, through May 30

Cost: Free

Information: 503-223-1729, quintanagalleries.com

Dozens of ex-votos are part of an exhibit this month at Quintana Galleries in Northwest Portland. "Devotional Art of the Americas" includes carvings, statues and paintings some dating to the 1700s - from New Mexico, Mexico and Central and South America. It represents a portion of the devotional pieces collected over 25 years by Rose and Cecil Quintana, whose love of indigenous art has fueled their gallery since 1972.

A crucifix from Guatemala may be the highlight of the exhibit. Carved from wood, the cross has knots and whirls like a tree. The figure of Jesus bears several

wounds, the face a study in resignation.

But the heart of the exhibit is the 40 ex-votos, which were painted and left at churches and shrines as votive offerings. Painted on tin, each includes an illustration of the problem and a likeness of the saint whose help is sought. Many of them are dedicated to the Virgin Mary. A Spanish caption, written across the bottom of each ex-voto, explains the circumstances of its creation.

"There's something sweet and naive about them," says Cecily Quintana, whose parents collected these ex-votos. Most of the art she and her parents love "is spiritual - whether you're looking at kachinas or ceremonial masks."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF QUINTANA GALLERIES

## Angry Mother-in-law

"Dulce's mother-in-law seemed to be bewitched," reads the Spanish caption on this undated ex-voto. A priest advised the beleaguered daughter-in-law to give the angry woman tea made from holy water. "Her prayers were answered and her promise kept."

Nancy Haught: 503-294-7625; nancyhaught@news.oregonian.com



SU-FAMILIA-A-LA-VIRGEN-DE-SAN. JUAN-DE-LOS-LAGO SU-PAPA- BR. FAUSTINO-MARTINEZ. Y- SR. VENTU B. STA. CRUCITA-MARTINEZ, Y- STA. VICTORIA-MARTINEZ. Y- A-MORENO. DAN. GRACIAS-A-LA-BENDITA-EL-JOVEM-BALVADOR-MARTINEZ, QUE-PRESTO-SUS-CERV RICANO.DE-LOS-ESTADOS-UNIDO S. LIBRANDOSE DE TODO-PELIGRO, VIENE-AVISITAR-A-LA ADOS-UNIDOS. PROMETIENDO-ESTE-RETABLO. PUBLICADO-Y-PAGAN-SU-PROMEZA. LEON. GTO.

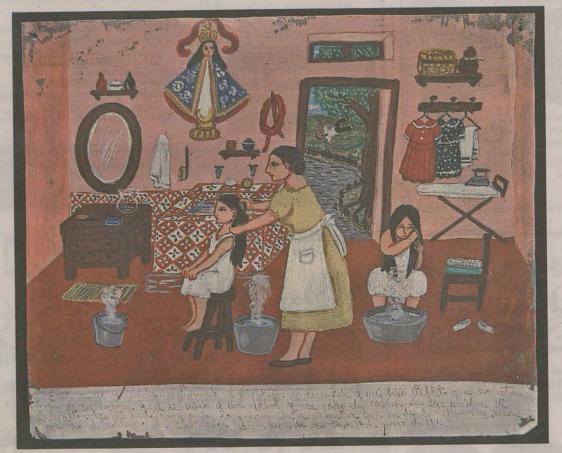
MARTINEZ, EL-JOVEN- UOSE-DE-LA-LUZ-MARTINEZ, Y-IMMAGEN - DISPUES - DE - 25 - AMAS, FU

ABOVE

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## Safe Return of Soldier, 1940

The Spanish caption reads that "Mrs. Moreno invoked all of her family to pray" to the Virgin Mary for a family member who had served in the U.S. military. "He was away for 25 years," according to the ex-voto. When he returned, "He went to pay his respect to the Virgin wearing his full military uniform."



LEFT

## Boy Fell From Tree, 1945

A mother picks lice from her daughter's head as her sister sits nearby. Outside the door, a boy – perhaps their brother – falls from a tree. The ex-voto thanks the Virgin Mary because, despite his mother being distracted, the boy escaped serious injury.