

Painting Pairs 2025-26: Katie Hieb and Juliana Montoya

The Miraculous Christ of Esquipulas

19th century

Private Collection

Oil on Tinplate

333mm x 17mm x 257mm (h x w x d in frame)



Abstract:

This report examines the multiple acts of making preserved within a nineteenth-century Mexican retablo depicting the Miraculous Christ of Esquipulas, a distinctly Guatemalan religious subject. Part of the Courtauld's Painting Pairs initiative, the study combines technical examination and art historical research to reconstruct the painting's production, adaptation, and devotional life. Technical analysis revealed the successive stages of manufacture, including the preparation of the imported tinplate, the application of pigment, and later intervention, while art historical investigation situated the painting within the wider circulation of miracle-working images throughout New Spain. Comparison with surviving representation suggested that the composition derives from a printed intermediary, demonstrating how devotional images were repeatedly remade as they moved across media, workshops, and geographical boundaries. The report finds that the object embodies a continuous process of manufacture, reproduction, and devotional transformation, highlighting how technical analysis can recover evidence of artistic practice and contribute to a fuller understanding of nineteenth-century Mexican retablo production.