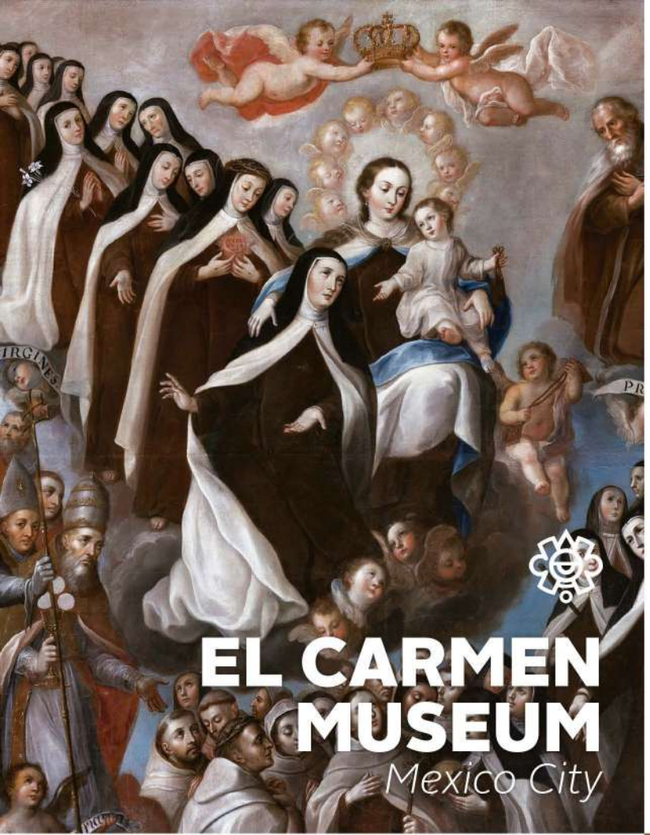


EL CARMEN MUSEUM

Mexico City

/ HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

San Ángel, a time-honored town and rest spot, is today a prominent neighborhood in Mexico City. Its privileged location, its rich traditions, and the dynamic nature of its economy have shaped its particular character. Moreover, its historical and architectural richness earned it the designation National Zone of Historic Monuments in 1984. Of this formidable body of monuments (more than eighty), the most important of all, without a doubt, is the former College of San Ángelo Mártir, today the venue of the El Carmen Museum.

The College was built by the Discalced Carmelites in 1615 to train priests. Its design and works were overseen by a fascinating figure, fray Andrés de San Miguel, a young mariner who is said to have offered his life to Our Lady of Mount Carmel when his ship ran aground near Cuba. Andrés survived and took the Carmelite habit in New Spain at the dawn of the seventeenth century. Instead of studying theology and taking vows as a priest, he studied architecture, hydraulic engineering, botany, carpentry, among other fields. Nestled between the Sierra of Ajusco and Lake Coyoacán, this building is a paradigm of Carmelite architecture and one of the most beautiful establishments in New Spain. The presence of the school even changed the ancient name of the community, San Jacinto Tenanitla to San Ángel (Saint Angel).



HOW TO GET THERE

Take the Metrobus Line 1 to the Bombilla station
Take the subway to Barranca del Muerto or Miguel Ángel de Quevedo.

HOURS

Tuesday to Sunday, from 10 am to 5 pm.

SERVICES

Cultural events, guided tours, workshops, restrooms.

ADMISSION

According to the Federal Fees Act, admission is free for students, teachers, and seniors with a valid ID; children under 13; and people with a disability.
Sundays: Free admission to the Mexican public and foreign residents.

PHOTOGRAPHY

For the use of any device to make videos, visitors must pay the fee stipulated by the Ministry of Public Finance. Non-professional photography, without the use of tripods, is free of charge and must be done without a flash.

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TEXTS
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/ MAIN ATTRACTION

Polyptych of the Passion
Artist: Cristóbal de Villalpando
(1649–1714)

Interspersed with scenes of the foremost Carmelite mystics, Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross, these five canvases exalt the value of penitence. They frame the Mexican Baroque tradition of the seventeenth century. The mystical character of the canvases painted by Cristóbal de Villalpando sets them apart: the Lord of Meditation, represented deep in contemplation and melancholy; while Christ tied to the column alludes to the tragic episode where he was martyred; in prayer in the orchard, we see the angel, in strong contrast to the dispirited figure of Jesus. It is an emotional and ideologically archetypal scene emblematic of the Baroque in New Spain.

Where to see it?

The polyptych of the Passion is in the Sacristy hall.





/ COLLECTION

The museum's collection is essentially religious art. Its finest pieces are the heritage of the Carmelites. Its foundation occurred in the midst of the financial boom, so they hired the leading artists of the time: Cristóbal de Villalpando, Juan Correa, and Miguel Cabrera. The building's architecture stands out for its simplicity and harmony. Originally it was completely austere, a reflection of the strict reform of the order by Saint Teresa of Ávila, and the yearning for prayer and contemplation that the Carmelites inherited from the former hermitages of Mount Carmel of Israel.

/GALLERIES

- **Pilgrims' Portal**

  In this room you will find an anonymous mural painting over the door that dates back to different periods of the history of the building. The oldest is a grisaille from the seventeenth century that represents Christ. Sometime later, this same wall was covered with an oil painting that focused on the origin of the order and its history until the Carmelite reform in the sixteenth century. Here the pilgrims could spend the night and receive fruit and alms from the friars.

- **Introductory Hall**

  It shows the inception of the Carmelite order and its relation to the El Carmen Museum, while it provides a broader panorama of the museum's holdings: material and intangible cultural heritage.

- **Cloister**

  As a sign of austerity, Carmelite monasteries only had lower cloisters, in other words, uncovered corridors on the upper floor.

  This space is characterized by the harmony of the shapes and proportions of the architectural elements. Around the patio there are twenty rounded arches, vaulted corridors, and four niches at the corners, which must have held religious images.

- **Sacristy**

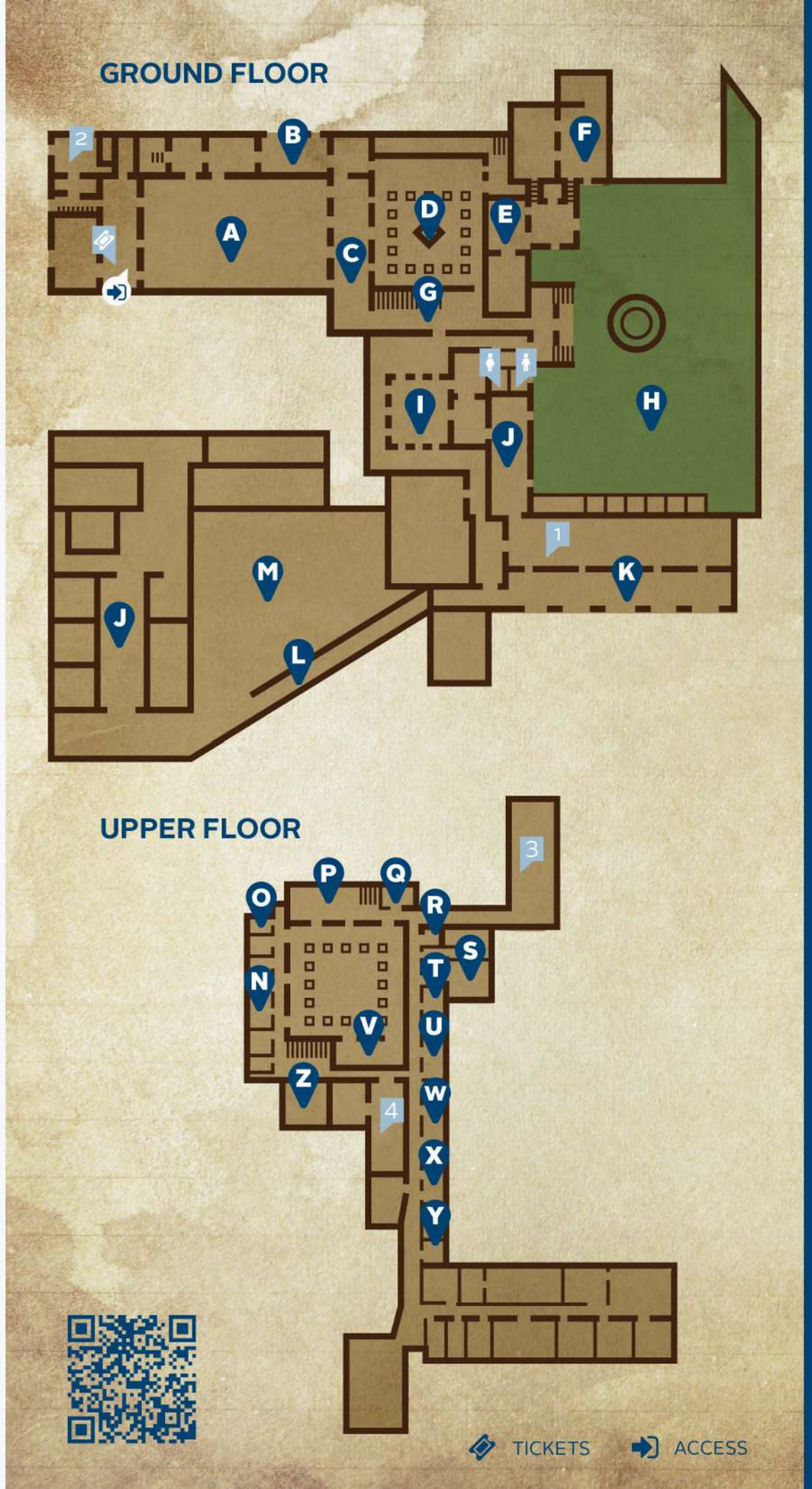
  In this place the Carmelite friars kept their objects for ritual practice. The space has been preserved almost in its entirety as it was conceived from the beginning and it stands out for the exuberance of the typically Baroque ornamentation. The coffered wood ceiling, with decorative elements, was done in various stages. First, there was wood finely carved with reliefs, which were later covered with plaster and finally were decorated with gold and silver leaf.

- **Wash Basins**

  This space has architectural and decorative elements that make it one of the most exquisite spaces in the former monastery. The handmade seventeenth-century Talavera tiles stand out, along with the vault composed of intersected double arches, an uncommon design feature in constructions from the period.

- **Domestic Chapel**

  The main piece in this space is the Baroque altarpiece, whose sumptuousness should be seen in light of the order's efforts in venerating the divine.



GROUND FLOOR

- A *Students' Patio*
- B *Pilgrims' Portal*
- C *Introductory Hall*
- D *Cloister*
- E *Sacristy*
- F *Ossuary, Crypt, and Mortuary Chapel*
- G *Ground Floor Vestibule*
- H *Historical Orchard*
- I *Kitchen Patio*
- J *Temporary Exhibitions Gallery*
- K *Patio of Arches*
- L *Aqueduct*
- M *Aqueduct Patio*

1 Auditorium
2 Shop/Coffee Shop

UPPER FLOOR

- N *Cells 55, 56 and 57*
- O *Cell 61*
- P *Antechoir*
- Q *Gallery*
- R *Cell Type*
- S *Prior's Cell*
- T *Cells 3 and 4*
- U *Cells 5 and 6*
- V *Literature Gallery*
- W *Cells 7 and 8*
- X *Cells 9 and 10*
- Y *Carmen Antúnez Collection*
- Z *Gallery of Angels and Archangels*

3 Library
4 Domestic Chapel

/ A magnificent building that today houses the El Carmen Museum with an extensive collection of artworks, mostly from the viceregal period, as well as materials on the history of the Carmelite friars in San Ángel.



/ HIGHLIGHTS

1541	At the inception of what is today the El Carmen Museum, it was a monastery and college to train Discalced Carmelite friars.
	The architect who built the monastery is fray Andrés de San Miguel, who also designed the monastery in Desierto de los Leones for the same order of Discalced Carmelite friars.
1929	The former monastery and colegio of the Discalced Carmelites was turned into a museum around 1929 and was declared an Artistic and Historic Colonial Monument on April 15, 1932.
1931	Around 1931 the El Carmen Museum was also used as a storeroom for archaeological materials from excavations conducted by Alfonso Caso in Monte Albán, Oaxaca.
13 000	One of the pillars of the self-sufficiency of the monastery of El Carmen was the productivity of the orchard, composed of 13,000 fruit trees.