

St. Francis *Santo* going on view for the first time in centuries

The Bullock Museum to showcase newly restored San Antonio mission artifact

OCTOBER 4, 2018 (AUSTIN, TX) — A figure used more than 200 years ago to teach the tenets of Catholicism through storytelling will be on view once more when the Bullock Texas State History Museum's new exhibition *Becoming Texas: Our Story Begins Here* opens on December 10. The exquisitely sculpted *santo* of St. Francis of Assisi was used by Spanish missionaries working in and around San Antonio beginning in the 18th century.

"Through this figure, you can imagine the catechism lessons that might have been taught by the missionaries to the people who sought alliance, trade, and shelter within the mission walls," said Bullock Museum Director Margaret Koch. "For an exceptional storyteller trying to convey the most important aspects of his faith, the beauty and expressive face of this St. Francis would help bridge language barriers."

The *santo's* finely sculpted clay head is estimated to have come from the early 1800s, while the wooden arms and legs and body made of straw-like plant fiber wrapped around a wire armature are believed to have been made in the late 1700s.

Discovered in the holdings of the National Park Service at the San Antonio Missions, the *santo* was identified as a representation of St. Francis because its hands and feet bear the signs of stigmata, while the cord around the friar's robe, or habit, had three knots, representing the Franciscan oath of poverty, chastity and obedience.

With permission from the Park Service and Catholic Diocese of San Antonio, and with funding provided through the Texas State History Museum Foundation, the Bullock Museum had the *santo* cleaned and restored, and provided with a new habit.

The *santo* will be on view for the first time since it was used by the missionaries as part of the comprehensive *Becoming Texas* exhibition, which covers more than 16,000 years of history of the land we now call Texas. Visitors will learn about the men and women who established vast trade networks across the Americas, crafting and exchanging tools, jewelry, weapons and food. They will hear the languages of these people and understand what it took to survive on the land. They will



A *santo* of St. Francis dating back to the late 1700s and early 1800s will go on display for the first time at the Bullock Museum in *Becoming Texas*, opening December 10.

discover European ambitions for colonization, including the failed La Salle expedition, and what life was like in New Spain.

Becoming Texas: Our Story Begins Here will open December 10, 2018. For more information, visit TheStoryofTexas.com and follow the Bullock Museum on Twitter and Facebook.

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The Bullock Texas State History Museum is a division of the Texas State Preservation Board. Additional support for educational programming provided by the Texas State History Museum Foundation.

ABOUT THE BULLOCK MUSEUM

The Bullock Texas State History Museum includes three floors of exhibitions, IMAX® and special-effects theaters, a café and museum store. The Museum collaborates with more than 700 museums, libraries, archives and individuals to display original historical artifacts and host exhibitions that illuminate and celebrate Texas history and culture. For more, visit TheStoryofTexas.com or call (512) 936-8746.

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