



**JAIME EGUIGUREN**

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**Anonymous Artist**

Last third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Viceroyalty of Peru, Cuzco

**PAIR OF FRAME**

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## ***Pair of Frames***

Carved wood, gilt and polychrome, covered with gold leaf  
198 x 108 x 22 cm and 192 x 106 x 19 cm

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Two fantastic carved frames making up a pair. The composition is entirely executed with dense carving barely leaving any gaps and in painstaking detail.

The carving is arranged around a central subject towards the top, consisting of a feminine figure with a distended belly and pronounced torso holding a horn of plenty in each hand. A great fanned ornamental comb or scallop shell rises above her head, made up of vine or acanthus leaf scrollwork. The carved shell is flanked, in turn, by two elegant exotic birds. To their sides, two little child figures draped in sashes help to hold up the horns with one hand, while in the other they support the rounded heads of fantastical long-beaked birds. The sides present undulating and straight carving with little heads of children or cherubs immersed in floral scrollwork. Towards the bottom, a child with a distended belly, arranged among scrollwork, balances and completes the composition. One might say that Cuzco was pushing the boundaries of fantasy in the anthropo-zoomorphic depiction and Andean vegetation of a carving whose sense of volume tends towards "horror vacui".

It is worth highlighting that these little children's heads or full-length bodies could be typical Quechuan physiognomic faces from Cuzco's Mestizo art. They emerge from an intricate landscape of flowering foliage, Dionysian subjects of wild mythology, horns of plenty overflowing with succulent fruits and classical flowers from the high plains, including bunches of grapes, corn cobs, pineapples, vegetable elements and scrollwork in the form of shells. The treatment of the carving is fluid, elegant and of great expressive quality and opulence, alternating work at the picture plane with the relief contouring of the figures. This exquisite Pair of Frames would have adorned the walls of a living or main reception room (*sala*), the most important area of a Vice-Regal house in Cuzco, which the owners would have imbued with sophistication and ostentation in their choice of decoration and furniture.



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## Furniture in Vice-Regal Society: Mestizo art

The Spanish living under the Viceroyalty imposed an element of classism on colonial Peruvian society, which at first split into two main groups: aristocrats and commoners. The first was made up of nobles, bourgeoisie (rich merchants) and noble Indians (descendants of the Incas and Kurakas). Making up the plebeian sector were the artisans (poor Spaniards and Mestizos living from manual labor) and blacks (mostly slaves). This led to the development of court furniture, bourgeois furniture and that of the common people, just like in Spain. Furthermore, the “redskin” races (Americans), the whites (Europeans) and the blacks (Africans) gradually mixed, producing new racial groups that gave rise to different uses and customs. This hybridization was of core importance when it came to the emergence of Mestizo art, whose characteristics were conditioned by forms from beyond Europe.

Chronologically, from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, Renaissance Hispanic furniture continued to follow previously known styles. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century and for the next hundred years, it took on Baroque curvatures featuring less sparse ornamentation, with a clearly local and peninsular appearance. Subsequently, the English Baroque of Chippendale and French Rococo arrived, the latter being Baroque’s final phase, followed by a slow shift towards the neo-classic.

At the same time, so-called Mestizo art was developing, emerging towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and really exploding in the 18<sup>th</sup>, only then to be ignored with the forming of the Republic. It reached its greatest heights in the Andean area whose center is Cuzco. Few pieces of Peruvian furniture from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries have survived: the humidity and the coast, the excessive dryness of the Andes, and the three devastating earthquakes that wrought havoc on the colony, were the factors behind this situation. In any case, in spite of the few surviving works, we have records through historical chronicles and inventories of the sumptuous interiors of the mansions and the furnishings installed there. Cuzco, meanwhile, was also half-destroyed in 1650.

Another historical factor that had an impact on the few pieces of Peruvian cultural heritage that were preserved was the expulsion of the Jesuits, whose possessions were either dispersed or lost.

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The most important artisan hubs were Lima, Cuzco, Cajamarca, Trujillo, Ayacucho and Arequipa, and there are discernible differences between the output from the coast and that of the mountain areas, depending on the sociological, geographic and traditional patterns that were dominant. Lima looked out to sea, from where new styles came, and had an ostentatious, opulent and cosmopolitan society. Trujillo, as the port to the north of the Viceroyalty, followed in Lima's footsteps. Cuzco, stripped of its role as imperial capital, did however preserve the prestige of indigenous tradition. The city was host to important groups of *encomenderos* that were descended from natives of noble blood and with lordly airs, though their sense of the existing reality was sharper. However, when the Baroque made its arrival, it found fertile land for an exultant approach to form, with expressions that were sometimes dazzling, and yet different from what was found in Lima. The artistic product would symbolize the image of the new lord and the satisfaction of family pride. More modest, Cajamarca and Arequipa identified with the mountain regions.

## Artisans

The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw the forming of the first guilds of artisans, craftsmen, master builders, painters and sculptors, *estofado* masters and gilders, wood and ebony carvers and workers in any other necessary areas connected to major and minor arts, the latter including furniture.

These guilds were subject to Vice-Regal law, which controlled all professional activities; they had their own statutes, patron saints, brotherhoods, parishes, inspectors and mayors. As was the case in Spain, the regulations applied both for the Capital as well as for Cuzco and a number of cities from the interior. We know that in the case of painting and architecture, workshops were managed by masters registered by the guild, which was not the case for cabinetmakers, where the names of workshop heads have fallen into oblivion.



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## Types of Wood and Ornamentation

The types of wood most often used were oak from the Sierra, extremely similar to the mahogany that came from Guayaquil, white-wooded willow, ceiba, birch, local cedar, lúcumá, naranjilla, guama, jacaranda and rosewood.



Trunk belonging to the Dominican Order, Peru, 17<sup>th</sup> century, Detail of Taracea Marquetry, Jaime Eguiguren Art & Antiques



Evangelization trunk, Quito, Ecuador, 17<sup>th</sup> century, Jaime Eguiguren Art & Antiques

## Techniques

Ornamentation is the most prominent element of colonial Peruvian furniture, with turned details, pinnacles and sculptural plasterwork being most noteworthy.

Opulent inlay *taraceas* were carried out in a range materials, fruit tree woods, tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, glass, crystal, silver, and the motifs tended to be floral or geometric, in the Mudejar style. The Renaissance carvings adopted geometric forms, diamonds and the Moorish star. With the arrival of the Baroque, work began in polychromy and gilding, along with ornate Churrigueresque and Rococo motifs in the stylization of foliage, garlands, flowers and rose windows. Works from Cuzco presented a greater sense of volume than those from other regions, whereas Arequipa excelled in producing the finest carving with vegetable motifs, foliage, pomegranates, hummingbirds, phytomorphic stylings, idealized animals, festoons, fish scales, turned capriccios, scallop shells and ornamental combs.



Painted armoire, Peru 18<sup>th</sup> century,  
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## The Development of Peruvian Mestizo art:

### Originality and Subjects

Spain arrived in America with two symbols: the cross and the sword. The natives welcomed the Spanish with apparent submission, but did not entirely give themselves over to their spirit; their tastes would gradually filter into Hispanic culture, either to affirm or transfigure it. One of the phases in this particular situation was that of Mestizo art, which took firm hold in Peru. One of the conditions of its development was the channel of communication and dissemination at its disposal: the religious missions, particularly the Jesuits, who settled in various parts of America, with similar artisan arrangements and spiritual language. The execution of the picture plane, the painstaking carving work, the desire to depict local flora and fauna all bore certain similarities, as an affirmation of the American existence. And yet within what was already the limited territory of the Viceroyalty of Peru, the three existing centers of Mestizo art, Cuzco, Arequipa and Cajamarca, presented local characteristics, given the apparent Incan unification was in fact a formal cover under which different traditions from earlier rules survived.

In terms of the techniques used, these did not differ greatly; it is in the carved ornamental motifs that we find the similarities and contrasts. There are features common to both Cuzco and Arequipa: mascarons, full-length figures or just faces with Quechuan physiognomies emerging from sumptuous blooming foliage, Dionysian subjects from wild mythology, horns of plenty overflowing with succulent fruits and classical flowers from the high plains, along with the presence of exotic birds. In Arequipa we observe the puma of Tiahuanaco and the mermaid of Titicaca, associated with the Virgin, which leads us to conclude it was a symbol of purity. In Cuzco one popular motif was that of female figures holding horns of plenty with water gushing out, fantastical animals, feathers, and slices of fruit, leaves, spirals and the “amancay” lily of the Sierra. As we mentioned earlier, one might say that Cuzco was pushing the boundaries of fantasy in its anthropo-zoomorphic depictions, while Arequipa excelled in the field of vegetation; certainly the carving work in Cuzco was more voluminous than in other areas of the Sierra.

There is another historical factor to explain the success of vernacular art from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and during much of the 18<sup>th</sup>. The earthquake that seriously affected Cuzco in 1650 called for a rapid

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process of rebuilding. Bishop Mollinedo y Angulo took the arduous task in hand: he took architects and sculptors under his protection, commissioning them to restore where possible and build new works where necessary. The demand for workers was enormous, and there were not enough European-trained artists and artisans to meet the task, which meant that Mestizo art and its artists started to be considered, having been previously disregarded by the cultured sections of society. Values changed: indigenous planimetry supplanted the academic sense of volume, and compositions were no longer developed in a spirit of stylistic perfection. Hispanic Indian primitivism turned towards the decorative effects offered by a crossing of the lines, natural models and Baroque pomp. The popular would come to the fore; in modern terms one might speak of a democratization of art, the fusion of Catholic and pagan, real and imagined, in an atypical and robust combination of strange beauty.



Silver Frame, Peru, 18<sup>th</sup> century  
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## Peruvian Vice-Regal Houses

There are three main influences in urban homes: Mudejar, Plateresque and Mestizo art. Vice-Regal Peruvian architecture followed the norms of a society in evolution, subjected to the peninsular model and yet also adapting to local needs and available materials. The architecture of the coast predominated in Lima, using local clay, and until the 18<sup>th</sup> century the facades were narrow on the outside and deep inside, with latticed windows and the ornamental space concentrated around the columned entrances. In Cuzco and Arequipa, buildings identified with the Sierra, and walls were built in masonry and mortar coated in lime, above a grey/green border of local stone. The houses had a singular appearance, with great latticed gaps, running open galleries like Renaissance *loggias* and rounded arches. The front entranceways were executed in stone, carved with Incan motifs, heraldic coats of arms, fleurons, the *Amaru* serpent, noble busts, rosettes and columns. Arequipa, which was founded in 1540 with the name Beautiful Villa in the valley of Arequipay, stands out in a green meadow surrounded by the Puna high plateau. The ornamentation of its civil architecture has a marked Mestizo flavour.



Palacio de Torre Tagle, Lima, Peru, early 18<sup>th</sup> century

## Layout of rooms in a Vice-Regal house

The internal layout of rooms followed Spanish Andalusian tradition, both on the coast and in mountainous Sierra regions. Generous rooms with high ceilings with broad floorboards of polished wood, or baked brick in more modest residences. The ceilings were vaulted.

On entering the house, after passing the front gate, we arrive in the reception area (*zaguán*) where visitors would dismount their horses or get out of their carriages. A lattice separated this area from the first courtyard, which was simple as its function was to welcome visitors into the house. To the right of the first courtyard there would be a stairway leading to the next floor of the house, if there was one. It is important to mention that, during the Vice-Regal period, many families sought to copy the European model of living on the upper floor of their houses. However, the constant seismic movements often made this difficult. One important example is the earthquake that took place in 1746, and where the Viceroy José Manso de Velasco, on undertaking the reconstruction works, ordered houses to be built with just one floor, resulting in the criticism (and even court cases) of the Lima elite.

After the first courtyard came the closed gallery which led to a living room (*sala*), the most masculine room, which served to host friends and relatives. This then led onto the *cuadra*, which was the main room and where the most sophisticated furniture was on display, and which would feature a traditional *estrado*, or raised platform. After the *cuadra*, there was another closed gallery leading to a second courtyard.

On the left of the *sala* there would often be a chapel. The bedroom (*cámara*) and its adjoining side room (*recámara*) were on the left-hand side of the first courtyard. The *cámara* was the bedroom of



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the owners of the house, although servants and slaves often slept their too in case their masters needed anything.

The cesspit was normally to be found at the back of the courtyard house, past the garden. In most cases there were chamber pots in the bedrooms, and wealthier households would have bathtubs.

As we have observed, Peruvian Vice-Regal houses included a number of spaces which, over time, became differentiated in the family's public and private life. We can detect which are the masculine and which are the feminine spaces, where new residents could not resist the temptation of surrounding themselves with luxurious furniture, a degree of ostentation and sophistication that was still in the process of establishing itself in the area.

Generally, in each different space we find chairs, trunks, chests, waste paper bins, cases, wardrobes, tables and, particularly characteristic of many homes, as mentioned earlier, the "sala de estrado", the feminine room where the lady of the house would host gatherings. In this space, the chairs and tables were adapted, making them into short "ratón" or mouse-style furniture.



Painted table, Peru, 18th century

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Painted armoire, Peru 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jaime Eguiguren Art & Antiques

From the inventories we can appreciate the luxury of the decoration of these *salas*. The wall adornments tended to include one or two mirrors, the occasional painting of the saint to which the family was devoted, and perhaps a portrait of some illustrious forebear. In the winter they would keep warm with silver braziers, and the lighting came courtesy of large tallow candles. Over time, the houses of the elite filled up with more sophisticated furniture. It is in this sort of *sala* in a Vice-Regal household that we would have found this marvellous Pair of Frames adorning



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the walls, alongside a mother-of-pearl inlaid *barqueño* trunk with drawers, silver braziers and jacaranda furniture.



Room with "estrado" platform, Cervantes' Birthplace House-Museum, Alcalá de Henares



Console, carved and polychrome wood, Peru, 18<sup>th</sup> century,  
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Luis Lagarto, 1556 - 1624, Tempera on vellum, carved and giltwood frame, Jaime Eguiguren Art & Antiques

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