

Tools

In Huamanga and its quarries, an artistic tradition of imagery carved *in situ* and at low cost was consolidated, favoured by the teaching of masters from Aragon, a region where the highest quality alabaster in the world is found. Its elaboration was completely handmade: pillory and drill, ropes and pulleys were used to extract the bolus; saw or saw to cut it in the quarry; and ceramic containers to soak the stone. They also used a wooden square to mark measurements, a compass to draw curves, a mallet as a “combo” to eliminate cuttings, a chisel for the main shapes, and burins with different tips for details. Finally, rags and fine dust were used to polish the surfaces, then covered with polychrome, gold or encaustic.



Andean alabaster, piety in Huamanga stone



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The map

Within the Southern Andean viceregal sculpture, a small-format imagery made of Huamanga stone stands out, a type of white, soft and semi-translucent alabaster extracted in Ayacucho, Peru. Although of limited use in pre-Hispanic times, since the seventeenth century this stone was used for devotional purposes, driven by the expansion of the Baroque movement and Catholic evangelization. Its easy availability in high and arid areas facilitated the creation of highly valued figures and reliefs, which spread throughout the Viceroyalty of Peru and reached Chile and the Río de la Plata. Initially of a religious nature, these sculptures evolved towards civil and traditional themes. Local artisans, when working with Andean alabaster, become connected with a European sculptural tradition, especially with the Gothic alabasters produced between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries in England, the Netherlands and Spain, which shows a connection between the local and the global in colonial art.

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Engraving by Huamán Poma

Founded on January 29, 1539, at an altitude of more than 2,700 m, in a region of strong Inca resistance, the city sought to consolidate Spanish rule at an intermediate point between Lima and Cusco, taking advantage of the ancient Inca Road as a political, commercial and logistical link. It soon

became an important commercial, artistic and artisanal hub. It is represented by Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (Waman Puma) (1534-1615), chronicler of indigenous descent, author of *El Primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (1600–1615), a key work of the Ibero-American Baroque, of great testimonial, historical and ethnographic value.

Small Formats

Precedents such as the *modern devotio* of the second half of the fourteenth century, which promoted methodical prayer and interior spirituality, as well as the statements of the Council of Trent on the pastoral function of images, influenced the valuation of small format carving during the Spanish and American Baroque.

The turn towards individual piety, contemplation and mental invocation encouraged, as is common in religious phenomena, a close vision of the devout images, generating an emotional and even tactile bond between the faithful and the sacred object: miraculous, thaumaturgic images, capable of transmitting, at the touch of the fingers, the vivifying force of holiness. His message reached convents and homes, making the daily possession of a carving a source of protection, patronage and invocation that strengthened the believer's faith and daily life.



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Las piezas en piedra de Huamanga de los siglos XVII - XVIII presentan una profusa policromía, similar a la pintura colonial, con pigmentos azules y verdes locales, resplandecientes y bronceados en tonos de oro que realzan y diferencian a los personajes. También se aplican pintas al agua.

Desde fines del siglo XVIII y en época republicana se emplea predominantemente a la escultura del grupo escultórico "pietas" (siglo I), utilizando la piedra pulida con una técnica de pulido que resalta una luminosidad cálida, resultando con efectos de relieve. Este proceso otorga al relieve de personajes corpóreos, realismo emocional y naturalismo.

Crucifixion and Descent

The religious iconography in stone of Huamanga reaches its culmination, in frequency and quality, in the themes of the Crucifixion and the Descent from the Cross, closely linked to Holy Week, whose ceremonies and rituals, still celebrated with dramatic solemnity, have conferred identity to the urban nucleus.

The main visual source of the carvers was the book *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* (1593) by the Jesuit Jerónimo Nadal, as well as the influential "Descendimiento de la Cruz" by Pedro Pablo Rubens in the Antwerp Cathedral (c. 1612), disseminated by the engraving of Lucas Vorstermann, widely known in the Andean south.

From these models, the Huamanguino artisans developed remarkable versions that show great skill: diagonal stairs, moving figures, expressive gestures, projected torsos, defined voids and touches of colour that intensify the emotion, masterfully resolving the technical complexities of the motif and the material worked in a single block.

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Stone Pieces

The Huamanga stone pieces of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries present a profuse polychrome, similar to viceregal painting, with local pigments, oils and varnishes, sgraffito and brocade on gold leaf that enhance and differentiate the characters. Water-based painting was also used. From the end of the eighteenth century and in Republican times, the encaustic procedure (from the Greek *enkaustikós*, “to engrave on fire”) was used, covering the polished stone with molten wax, which gave it a warm tone, highlighted with golden trim. This technique reflects the influx of European porcelains, oriental ivories and neoclassical marble.



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Altarpieces

Saint Mark the Evangelist, one of the saints who protected livestock along with Saint Luke, gave rise to a type of religious and syncretic craftsmanship in rural areas during the nineteenth century: Saint Mark's drawers or santero chapels, small portable altarpieces derived from those used by Spanish missionaries in the area. These wooden boxes have religious figures and scenes at the top; at the bottom, traditional scenes and elements of the Andean imaginary, reflecting a cultural syncretism. Originally carved in Huamanga stone, the figures were simplified over time, crafted in potato paste and plaster, and decorated with vibrant polychromies.

Less represented in this sculptural manifestation, this relief of St. Augustine constitutes a true iconographic synthesis of his contributions to Christian theology and spirituality. Executed during the heyday of Huamanga's stone sculpture, it features rich composition and multiple elements: the episcopal staff, the burning heart in his conversion, a table

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with books that allude to his written work, and a little angel with a clock that represents his vision of time and transience. The image is based on an unidentified engraving, different from those of Vos or Wierix.

The Marian motifs are frequently represented by the carvers of Huamanga, especially the Immaculate Conception, of fervent defence by the Church and the Hispanic monarchy. The figurines of Mary, the new sinless Eve, are delicately executed with iconographic details and rich polychrome. This excellent polychrome and gold relief shows her with laurethane attributes, anthropomorphized sun and moon, God the Father at the top and, below, the moon in the waning quarter and the demon defeated at her feet.

Quarry Gigantography

Alabaster has been used for ritual, artistic and everyday purposes since ancient times in various cultures. Its name comes from the Greek *alabastros*, a pot without handles used to contain perfumes and aromatic ointments. The Huamanga stone, known as the Andean alabaster, is a sedimentary formation of hydrated calcium sulphate ($\text{SO}_4\text{Ca} \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$), originating in ancient seas and salt lakes during the Late Triassic (between 250 and 200 million years ago), and transformed by strong compressions during the Cretaceous.

Chemically similar to gypsum, it is distinguished by its compact structure and very small crystals (less than 0,1 mm). It is found in boluses between 40 and 150 cm, which limits the size of the sizes, and in outcropping or underground veins. The quarries of the Chacolla district have provided the best quality alabaster: white, soft, translucent and fine-grained, ideal for sculpture, as the Jesuit Bernabé Cobo pointed out in 1653. It is also mined in Cangallo and Puno, near Lake Titicaca.

Also called *belenguela* or *berenguela*, it was used in construction, liturgical and ornamental objects. In 2019, the stone carving of Huamanga was declared a National Cultural Heritage Site by the Ministry of Culture of Peru.

