The picturesque city of Quito, capital of Ecuador, became in the sixteenth century the center for the production of polychrome sculpture in Latin America. The earliest sculptors were a group of quite insignificant Spanish artists, who, taking advantage of the religious fervor of the time, transplanted their art to the shores of the New World. Their first work was done in a little school opened in 1535 by the Franciscan friars in Quito, near their monastery. At the same time Spanish and Italian religious statuary was being imported by the various religious communities that had begun to establish themselves in Quito and by private citizens as well. A number of Italian statues of Christ done in ivory are preserved to this day in the churches, convents, and private oratories of the city. In the early seventeenth century processional statues began to arrive from Spain. These were carried in religious processions on special feast days—one of the most effective means of spreading and fostering the Catholic religion among the people. Some of them, for instance the two by the Spaniard Martínez Montañés, Christ Carrying the Cross, imported by the Franciscans for their Paso del Cirineo, and the Dominicans’ figure of Saint Dominic, are magnificent.

The Franciscans also introduced Belenes, or crèches, to celebrate Christmas, and the colonists and creoles began to import whole collections of exquisite figurines, which still today, at Christmas, speak of the deep religious tradition of Quito. Among these little figures were some extremely interesting ones of Japanese and Chinese origin, which contributed to the individual character of Ecuadorian religious sculpture.

Sculpture in Quito falls into several categories. Sculptors in the proper sense were those who did ornamental work, architectural parts for altarpieces, moldings, and revetments. A different group specialized in carving, working in low or half relief, while a third made figures in the round. The obligatory guild system which the Spanish government imposed upon its colonies, as well as the brotherhoods organized by the religious orders, were extremely important in the development of Ecuadorian sculpture, for under the auspices of these guilds and brotherhoods workshops were established where the young apprentice could learn an art or a trade.

Sculpture in wood, the characteristic material used in Spain after the end of the sixteenth century, was the natural heritage of Quito sculptors. They also took over the technique of realistic polychromy, and it is still practiced in Quito. Their polychrome sculpture is always brilliant, in the manner of the Spanish artist Berruguete rather than in the flat style of Gregorio Hernández, Pedro de Mena, or Martínez Montañés. The coloring and gilding of clothes and jewels was done in the famous technique called estofado. The wooden image was first covered with gold or
Faithful to the Spanish tradition, the Quitan artists reproduced these sacred images again and again. The only changes were those caused by the varying talents of the artists and the fact that they worked from memory rather than from a living model. Some of these statues recall the works of the most famous Spanish imagineros, or religious sculptors, of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, particularly the Andalusians Montañés, Cano, and Mena, though they always have the brilliant polychromy characteristic of Ecuadorian sculpture. Besides these pieces in the Spanish manner, there were many others in the individual Quitan style, pieces inspired by the fervent mysticism of the artists and interpreted with an oriental, almost Buddhistic feeling.

The sculptured group is rare in Quitan statuary. There are also very few portraits. The best of these are the seventeenth-century figure of Comisario Don Francisco de Villacís, Knight of the Order of Santiago, on his tomb in the church of San Francisco, and the eighteenth-century statue of Bishop Andrés Paredes de Armendáriz, in the presbytery of the church of El Carmen Moderno.

In reliefs the Ecuadorian sculptors represented groups as well as isolated figures. Sometimes these were of wood, sometimes of plaster, but they were almost always painted. Splendid wooden retables were also produced; some cover part or even all of a chapel wall behind the altar, others have changed character by spreading over an entire chapel or church as a carved, gilded, and painted revetment. Such revetments, like the ones in the church of San Francisco and in the Capilla del Rosario in the church of Santo Domingo, leave not a single pillar, arch, or vault uncovered. Throughout Latin America, the elaborate wooden altarpiece, differing strongly from the European type, became a sort of showpiece to boast the riches of the New World.

There is nothing lovelier than the shrines and tabernacles of Quito. Those lined with silver and mirrors in San Francisco and in El Carmen, and the wooden ones in San Diego
**LEFT:** The Baptism of Christ, by Diego de Robles. xvi century. In the church of San Francisco, Quito. **RIGHT:** A monk. xvii century. Now in the Museo Nacional

**LEFT:** Portrait of Bishop Paredes de Armendáriz. xviii century. In the church of El Carmen Moderno, Quito. **RIGHT:** Ecce Homo. xviii century. In El Carmen
and in El Hospital are perfect creations of a perfect art. No less striking are the choir stalls: those in San Francisco, those in La Merced and in the chapter house of the Convent of San Agustín are exceptionally beautiful. The pulpits too are miracles of carving. There is hardly a church in the city that does not exhibit a fine one. Besides the pulpits, there are benches and confessionals, balconies and sacristy cupboards, doors, screens, candlesticks, candelabra, canopies, urns, moldings, processional platforms, and every sort of religious furniture, all of which display the skill of Quito artists.

There are examples of sculpture in stone as well as in wood and stucco, for instance the life-size Virgin of Mercy which Charles V ordered as a gift to the city of Quito and the lovely fountain in the principal court of the convent of La Merced. The fine carvings on the façade of the church of La Compañía and in the cathedral and sacristy are also in stone.

At the end of the eighteenth century decorative pottery began to be manufactured in Quito and interesting figurines of that period, many in native dress, appear in the crèches at the holiday season—tiny characters in the Christmas story. During the same century the sculptor Toribio Avila devoted himself exclusively to sculpture in wax. His was a workshop to which we owe a multitude of religious figurines and several low reliefs lining tabernacles, reliquaries, and shrines.

We do not yet know the names of all the Quito sculptors; their full history is still to be written. The earliest names mentioned in Ecuadorian history are Diego de Robles and Luís de Rivera, both Spanish colonists who came to Quito in the middle of the sixteenth century. The first of these was the sculptor of the Baptism of Christ, part of the main altarpiece in San Francisco. In the middle of the seventeenth century we find Padre Carlos, priest as well as able sculptor, who left admirable works in almost all the churches of Quito; and Olmos, famous for his Crucifixions. In the eighteenth century the names become more numerous. Bernardo de Legarda invented a new way of portraying the Immaculate Conception in which the figure of the Virgin has wings; this is unknown in European iconography. Jacinto López was the author of many fine altarpieces, like the principal one in El Carmen Moderno. Antonio Fernández is known for his magnificent statue of Saint Jerome in the cathedral; Maestro Uriaco for the four Doctors of the Church which decorate the spandrels of the arches supporting the dome in La Merced, besides the group of the Trinity in the presbytery.

There are many more, among them the Indian Manuel Chili, nicknamed Caspicara, an Indian word for pig's hide. His consummate skill is embodied in his Saint Francis,
his group of the Assumption of the Virgin in San Francisco and in his other masterpieces: Saint Francis receiving the Stigmata in the church built by Francisco Cantuña (an Indian and one of the famous half-legendary figures in Ecuador), the Virtues and the Descent from the Cross in the cathedral, besides a number of sacred images scattered throughout the churches in Ecuador. Gaspar Zangurima, a contemporary of Caspicara and also an Indian, founded the great school of sculpture at Cuenca, his native city, which continued in the nineteenth century by Miguel Velez, is still renowned today. So ardently did the great Bolívar admire Zangurima that he allowed him a pension of thirty pesos a month for life, on condition that he spread his skill among his countrymen.

Charming pieces by anonymous artists must also be recorded, for instance the series of busts of the saints in the church of Santa Clara de San Millán in Quito and a small archaistic statue of a monk in the Museo Nacional de Ecuador. The best of these anonymous works is the Saint Sebastian in the church of the same name, of which we know only its date of execution and the price paid for the wood from which it was carved. It is indeed the masterpiece of Quitan sculpture.

Female nudes never appear in the sculpture of Quito. The only naked figures are the Child in the Manger, Christ Crucified, the Ecce Homo, the Saint Sebastian, and the statue of the sick man who accompanies Saint John of God, the founder of the Hospitallers or Brothers of Charity. In the Calvary scenes we see no figures of the thieves: the Ecuadorian type of Calvary includes only Christ, the Virgin, Mary Magdalen, and Saint John.

The Spanish tradition of church sculpture is thus preserved in all its elements in Quito, where there are still workshops organized along the lines of those of the colonial period.

Architecture of the Andes, an exhibition of photographs of South American architecture and sculpture, is now being shown on the balcony of the Great Hall.

We are indebted to Giovanna Phillips for translating Dr. Navarro's article.—Editor.