



St. Barbara

Date

late 17th-early 18th century

Primary Maker

Unknown artist, Peruvian (Cuzco School)

Medium

Oil on canvas

Description

This painting depicts St. Barbara, the patron saint of artillery men and miners. She is often depicted with a palm branch or peacock feather and a tower (usually with three windows, not often depicted with the flames coming out of it). Her legend was published in Jacobus de Voragine's Golden Legend, which was popular in the Middle Ages. The Cuzco School was an artistic tradition that arose in and around the major Peruvian city following its conquest by the Spanish in 1534. The new Cuzqueño tradition was bolstered by the arrival of Italian Mannerist and Jesuit priest Bernardo Bitti (1548-1610) in 1583, who was sent to Cuzco by the Jesuit mission and the Viceroyalty of Peru. Members of the Cuzco School were restricted to painting only religious scenes and portraits using contemporary European techniques. Scholar Guy Brett notes that "all colonial painting began in a process of copying," but that "after a period of sheer copying, some themes

took off." Furthermore, as time passed, Cuzqueño works took on an increasingly independent style influenced primarily by indigenous artists. Paintings by the Cuzco School can typically be characterized by their religious subject matter, a lack of perspective, and the use of distinctly warm tones (red, yellow, brown). The paintings also exhibit a stylistic looseness that cannot be found in their contemporary European counterparts. Sources: Brett, Guy. "Being Drawn to an Image." Oxford Art Journal 14, no. 1 (1991): 3–9. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1360273>. José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Historia de la Pintura Cuzqueña* (1982) (Most thorough discussion of the Cuzco school, in Spanish)

Dimensions

Overall: 40 5/8 × 29 3/16 in. (103.2 × 74.1 cm)