



2007.004

Unidentified Artist

*The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities with Saints*

Peru, Cuzco

Eighteenth century

Oil on canvas, 48 x 39.5 inches

The composition of the painting mimics an altarpiece. In the predella along the bottom are Saint Barbara and Saint Lucy, both early “Virgin Martyrs” who lived in the third century C.E. Barbara is pictured with her emblematic tower, in which her father had imprisoned her, and Lucy is shown with her eyes that were gouged out prior to her martyrdom. Between them is a niche containing a sun-shaped monstrance holding the Eucharistic host. Above, the altar expands over several steps (*gradillas*) typical of altars in Peru that offered levels on which flowers (as in this painting), candelabras, and silver *mayas* used to reflect the candlelight were arrayed along with the physical accoutrements of the liturgy such as chalices and missal stands. In the painting, these objects are replaced by the living presence of the Holy Trinity and Christ’s earthly family. Christ is shown as a small boy standing on a globe of the earth topped by a skull (to remind us of our mortality) and a coiled serpent (to remind us of the ever-present danger of falling into sin). He is accompanied by his parents, the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, and her

parents, Saints Anne and Joachim. Above the head of the Christ Child are the dove of the Holy Spirit, God the Father with his arms spread wide, accompanied by two musical angels.

The predominantly red and blue palette, the rather generic figure and facial types, and the heavily embroidered garments of Mary, Joseph and the Christ Child are typical of the artistic workshops of eighteenth-century Cuzco.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt