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A World of Difference: Unity and Differentiation Among Ceramicists in Quinua, Ayacucho, Peru

Jennifer A. Vogt

Abstract

This chapter analyzes local notions of authenticity drawing on ethnographic data collected during thirteen months of fieldwork in the rural village of Quinua, Peru. The author highlights how local ceramic artisans conceived of authenticity, which, it is argued, is encapsulated by local terms and material practices surrounding the concept of *artesano verdadero*. Artisans in Quinua share, borrow, and even "steal" designs from others. Within this context, artisans persistently evaluated each other based on these practices. Ultimately, the narratives artisans tell themselves and others about who they are, and are not, as artisans, thereby put forth claims about who counts and who does not as an artisan. This chapter shows that to be a "true" and thus successful artisan, one must strike a delicate balance of maintaining control over his or her craft and cultural heritage while engaging fickle markets.

In October of 2010, regional government officials from Ayacucho city, Peru, asked two prominent artisans in the rural district of Quinua to instruct a two-month course in ceramic design. The request came as part of a regional development project sponsored by the Peruvian government to promote innovation of artisan products for exportation. Although the two artisans would have received financial

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compensation, they declined the offer. They reasoned, among other things, that the artisans participating in the course (who had been producing for no more than two years) needed to develop their creativity independently; they were not yet *artesanos verdaderos* (i.e., true or real artisans). During more than a year of fieldwork (2010-2011) in the rural district of Quinua in the southern Andes of Peru, I quickly discovered that such evaluations of who is "real" or "true" between producers were not uncommon and often were intensely personal.

Certainly, not everyone expressed it exactly the same. Some artisans, for instance, summed up their sentiments in the following way: "You may copy me, but you will never equal me."[1] Still, every artisan explained to me in some way or another that if a person is to be a "true artisan," he must develop his own style.[2] Keeping such phrases in mind, I will discuss in this chapter local notions of authenticity. I want to highlight how artisans in Quinua conceived of authenticity, which, I argue, is encapsulated by local terms, ideas, and material practices surrounding artesano verdadero. Specifically, artisans self-consciously struggle to balance crafting daringly close replicas of others' designs, mixing and matching their own and others' stylistic elements, and creating new designs. They simultaneously employ shared aesthetic conventions, techniques, and symbols. Within this context, artisans persistently evaluate each other based on these practices.

This chapter then also analyzes artisans' struggles of appropriation—seemingly mimetic encounters between artisans who share, borrow, reuse, and even "steal" stylistic and technical elements from others. I am not necessarily interested in similarities and differences between ceramic objects themselves, or in whether these constitute "authentic" manifestations of a cultural heritage of ceramic making in the Quinua area. Rather, I highlight the relationships between

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artisans as they debate, negotiate, and even overlook material practices of and meanings surrounding appropriation. What makes these relationships particularly tense lies in how artisans differently, and sometimes contradictorily, interpret their and others' practices of appropriation: appropriation may be a way of maintaining a community's craft tradition, a livelihood strategy, a socially offensive act, a sign of unoriginality, or even a creative technique. Within this context, I focus on narratives artisans tell themselves and others about who they are, and are not, as artisans, and thereby make claims about and debate who counts and who does not as an artisan.

Background: Quinua, Ayacucho Department, Peru

The 6,115 Quechua/Spanish-speaking inhabitants of the rural district of Quinua live in twenty-four dispersed hamlets and one more densely populated town center (Perú Posible 2010). Located at an altitude of 3,270 meters in the department of Ayacucho in the southern Andes, the district is buttressed by a mountain range forming the eastern wall of the Ayacucho valley and, 40 kilometers southwest, by the city of Ayacucho (Arnold 1972a, 1972b, 1975, 1985, 1993; Mitchell 1972, 1973, 1991, 1999; Tschopik 1947). Most families produce food (potatoes, corn, fava beans, squash) in their own fields, but they rarely have enough land to achieve self-sufficiency. Although virtually everyone sells or exchanges surplus produce or other foodstuffs on occasion (usually in small quantities with neighbors or during Sunday markets), only a few townspeople produce crops or raise livestock in any commercially significant way. All families ultimately build livelihoods through diverse strategies (e.g., agricultural and unskilled wage labor, food vending, providing transportation services, migration and remittances from migrants, and craft production). Providing some degree of regularity in cash-earning opportunities, artisan production, primarily ceramic making, is the

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largest source of cash flow for about one-fourth of the population (approximately twelve hundred people) in Quinua (Municipalidad Distrital de Quinua 2001).

While organization and relations of production in ceramics are too complex to elaborate fully here, they tend to fall under three main patterns. In one scenario, an owner of a workshop prepares primary materials (clay, designs) but pays men and women to transform them into finished ceramic pieces. Alternatively, an owner of a workshop or tourist shop may informally subcontract another person to make unpainted, but fired, ceramic pieces in the latter's own home workshop; the first owner buys these pieces to later paint and sell. In the final scenario, an artisan who owns his own workshop or tourist shop prepares primary materials and executes the main body of ceramic pieces. Older women in the family balance household work (and its allocation to children) with decorating, painting, and shining ceramic pieces. For families living in the town center, women tend also to manage prices and make sales to tourists and other clients in the family gallery or in rented kiosks in the town marketplace. Most families sell their products to local artisans or tourists, while less than ten sell to vendors or export companies in Lima. If the family business requires travel to Ayacucho city or Lima (to visit potential buyers, travel to artisan fairs, or turn in completed orders to clients), men usually undertake these trips. Children may spend some of their free time helping with light tasks (e.g., painting, selling, stocking the shop, and loading kilns).

Authentic Objects to Authentic People

In recent years, anthropologists working with artisans in different parts of the world have shown how authenticity is a weighty concept with diverse meanings. In his work on "tourist art" in Africa, anthropologist Christopher Steiner (1999) finds that uniqueness of

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artisanal works is not what defines their authenticity. Instead, it is the redundancy of pieces—the quality of looking-alike so that they all reference a well-known model—that is essential to their authenticity. Other scholars, like sociologist Frederick F. Wherry (2006) and anthropologist Les Field (2009), have argued for different understandings of authenticity, which may overlap and conflict in complex ways. Different definitions and their use is shaped by the social situations that artisans, sellers, buyers, museum curators, collectors, and even anthropologists inhabit, thus forming the substance of their judgments (Marcus and Myers 1995; Phillips and Steiner 1999). Thus, if we follow objects as they are created, bought and sold, used, modified, and even destroyed within complex, dynamic networks, we may arrive at more complex and shifting understandings of authenticity (Appadurai 1986). Artistic production then is necessarily embedded in "art worlds"—that is, networks of people whose artistic activities are organized around shared conventions and agreed ways of doing things (Becker 1982, 34). These scholars have obliged us to show how diverse agents—as necessarily interested individuals, groups, or institutions—work to tell stories to authenticate the nature and value of particular objects. In this sense, authenticities are never objective, but are always culturally and politically conditioned by the contexts in which they emerge.

This framework enables a complex understanding of authenticity, wherein seemingly opposed concepts like tradition and modernity, personal and the collective, as well as conventionality and innovation, may be mutually constituted in unexpected ways. It has also been useful in overcoming subject-object dualism by emphasizing that inanimate things, too, may possess agency (Gell 1998; Latour 2005). Building on this framework, I shift analysis from how people create a world of authentic or, in Kopytoff's (1986) terms, *genuine objects*, to focus on how people create a world of authentic selves,

and by implication, less than authentic others. Artisans in Quinua indeed make ceramic objects through discourse and material practices into authentic High art, popular art, and tourist art. Further, museum curators, art collectors, and even anthropologists and other scholars play a part in telling these stories (e.g., Lauer 1982; Mauldin 2011; Ravines and Villiger 1989; Stastny 1968; Torres 2010). I, however, want to build on these analyses, putting analytical pressure on the relationship between artisan as creator and material objects produced (Gell 1998). In plying this point of convergence, I show how artisans' identities as creative laborers directly articulate with the objects they produce. I then explore how this dynamic shapes relations between different artisans, as creative laborers contributing to objects' creation (Becker 1982).

This framework helps to expand notions of authenticity when talking about artisanship. For one, it pushes beyond long-standing tendencies to counterpoise "legitimate" or "authentic" works of art, commercial crafts, and "pure" traditional artifacts. Recent scholarly works have made significant analytical strides in complicating this approach (e.g., Phillips and Steiner 1999). I draw on and extend such works by also analyzing ideas about creativity, which also shapes how people define, construct and pursue values of authenticity.[3] Creativity, like aesthetic criteria and notions about cultural purity of objects, has also provided a basis for denying the aesthetic traditions of many peoples as witnessed in the status of authenticity in many Latin American contexts. This denial is particularly at issue for what is disparagingly called, time and again, "tourist art" or "airport art." I show, by contrast, that producers prioritize creativity in making even these sorts of mass-produced and standardized objects.

Secondly, this framework opens analytical space for showing one very important way in which *who*, rather than *what*, may be considered authentic in certain contexts, particularly in Latin America and

amongst artisan populations. Rather than asking how "that honorific title" art is fought over, what actions it justifies, and what users of it can get away with (Becker 1982, 131-64), I ask in this chapter how the title "artesano verdadero" is fought over and debated, what actions are justified as well as contested, and what contradictions emerge within narratives told by users of it. I ground one such view in ideas about creative people. Artisans I interviewed in Quinua consistently linked creativity with authenticity and, specifically, with "artesano verdadero." In this local language of authenticity, originality, uniqueness, and seemingly nonreplicable qualities conspicuously stand out. Yet, the requirement of shared tradition, in claiming that a ceramic object distinctly originated from Quinua, means that no person can innovate so uniquely as to be considered entirely outside the local cultural calculus.

During my time in Quinua, I often saw artisans reuse older elements, combining them in new ways. They also shared these new designs with family members or sold them to friends and neighbors. Even one well-known ceramic maker, Efraín, locally referred to as a "true artisan," draws inspiration from older ceramic styles and techniques known to Quinua, using naturally derived red and white pigments and modeling each piece by hand.[4] He learned these techniques and styles from his father and grandfather, from which he later developed his personal creative style. Similarly, other people identified as "true artisans" remarked how they too learned technical skills and some stylistic elements as apprentices of Efraín, but later developed their own style. All artisans, even "true artisans," in this way depend on each other to recreate the styles of a recognizable craft, and from this shared repertoire, every artisan not only fashioned his business, but also his sense of self as an artisan-producer (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002). In this context, local notions of authenticity are constituted by both: (1) personal creativity (innovative

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qualities) and (2) collective ideas and practices (imitative qualities), but not unambiguously or comfortably so. In this way, claims to authenticity involve much social commentary and debate. When people in Quinua try to define "artisan verdadero," we find inconsistencies in which people and their material practices of production meet some, but not all, of the criteria expressed by the ideal of "artesano verdadero."

Allure of "Tradition"

Wandering through any tourist marketplace in Peru, one immediately notes the rows of seemingly identical objects, placed side by side on display shelves and tables. One likewise observes similarities between hand-produced artifacts while perusing a popular art gallery in Lima. Such repetition and seriality of a craft, often glossed as "tradition" or "cultural heritage," emerges, in part, from shared material production practices and aesthetic conventions. Specifically in Quinua, the majority of artisans use fine-grained clays of a somewhat-dark red color, although artisans play with tones by combining other mineral elements. The majority of artisans apply decorative elements (e.g., plant shapes, facial features of figures, and other small details) using creamy white, red ochre and dark brown slips. Shapes most commonly identified with the Quinua tradition include *toro* (bull) pitchers, *qarqacha* (two-headed llama) pitchers, musicians, *chismosas* (gossiping women), and *ukumari* (half-woman, half-bear mythical creatures). The miniature churches, for instance, commonly seen on the rooftops of homes in Quinua, are perhaps the most emblematic design/shape for Quinua ceramics (Mauldin 2011; Stastny 1968).[5] We also find to a lesser extent in contemporary Quinua plates of different sizes, *toqtoq* (vessels for toasting corn), as well as spherical and curved-contoured vessels for carrying liquids (e.g., *aysaku*, *yukupuynu*, *tachu*, and *tumin*). In making these vessels,

artisans have traditionally employed coiling and hand-modeling techniques; paints and slips are applied with fine-tipped brushes made from chicken feathers or cat hair. Many artisans continue these practices today but have also incorporated new technologies to aid production.[6]

Such imitation and seriality of designs, as Steiner (1999) argues, give coherence and visibility to a shared craft in markets.[7] Even tourists, after one or two trips to a Peruvian craft market, may be able to identify the miniature churches or typical white-on-red color scheme identified with Quinua ceramics. Aesthetic repetition, as a marketing strategy, is thus crucial to making products by artisans in Quinua identifiable to a broad population. In this context, it is artisans' strategies of appropriation—sharing, borrowing, reusing, and even "stealing" stylistic and technical details—that gives a sense of contiguity to artisan products.

Scholars of expressive cultural production in Peru—whether called *artesanía*, *arte popular*, *arte vernacular*, or *expresión plástica* —have repeatedly called attention to the unique cultural, stylistic, and technical characters of Quinua pottery (e.g., Fuente, et al. 1992; Ravines and Villiger 1989; Sabogal Wiesse 1979; Spahni 1966; Tschopik 1949). In one of the most well-read books on arte popular in Peru, Francisco Stastny tells us that "[a]mong present-day potters villages, one of the most active and successful is Quinua, in Ayacucho" (Stastny 1968, 111). Dean E. Arnold, in an ethnoarchaeological and ecological analysis of pottery making, states:

> Quinua ceramics are unique in the Ayacucho Valley. No other pottery made in the valley approaches that of Quinua in the diversity of vessel shapes, flexibility of expression, and the complexity of its decoration. These characteristics also make Quinua Pottery one of the most complex and diverse contemporary ceramic products of

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> the entire Peruvian highlands. Quinua pottery is also unique to Latin America. Its pottery (churches, bulls, and other shapes) is exported to worldwide markets and is available in import shops in New York, Chicago, San Diego, Milwaukee and Europe. (1993, 15)

Fuente et al. relate how the craft has been passed down between generations:

> In the past, Quinua was a center inhabited by '*olleros*' . . . It is difficult to discern exactly when ceramic objects in Quinua began to have a ceremonial function. The ceramicist Otccochocco initiated the production of these objects, who was followed by Dionisio Lope and Faustino Nolasco, of the Inkacasa community, located below Quinua. Another follower of the idea [to make ceramics for ceremonial use] was Francisco Sanchez, known by the nickname '*Al aire*' [literally meaning "to the air"] . . . According to artisans in the area, this name was given to him because his ceramics were so fine that they appeared as if blown by air. His son Santos Sanchez, known as '*Niño al aire*' ["Child to the air"], was a fine ceramicist . . . The son of [Santos] is Mamerto Sánchez, creator of so many new forms we see today. (1992, 80-81)

Various government administrations too have pursued the economic and symbolic potential of ceramic production in Quinua (see Hernando and Van Hulsen 2001; Indacochea 2001; Villantoy Valverde 2011). A recent government-backed development project *Di mi tierra*, *Un producto*, for instance, selected Quinua to receive development assistance, describing Quinua as "one of the most enchanting villages of Ayacucho . . . inhabited by talented artisans that mold clay with mastery, creating works of art whose motifs represent and express daily life and emotion, just as their Huarpa and Wari

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ancestors did" (PromPerú 2012). While these brief accounts importantly demonstrate cultural significance of ceramic production in Quinua, they convey a sense of unproblematic "sameness" and continuity of artistic styles and technical forms, downplaying differences between producers and styles.

To reconcile these differences, Quinua ceramics have been categorized into objects for ritual use, for domestic use, and for decorative use (e.g., Arnold 1993; Fuente et al. 1992; Ravines and Villiger 1989; Stastny 1968). Similarly, many scholars and development specialists have attempted to identify different sorts of producers. For instance, Sabogal Wiesse distinguishes between "indigenous artisan," "artisan-worker," "pseudo-artisan," and "vernacular artist" (1979, 6). A 2001 International Labor Organization study of development potentials of artisan work in the Ayacucho region distinguishes between "master artisan," "innovator artisan," and "local artisan" (Hernando and van Hulsen 2001, i). Although classifying phenomena into categories is useful in many situations, it hinders our understanding of locally constructed concepts as well as how people in artisan communities seek to make sense of anomalous cases—that is, cases that meet some, but not all, of the criteria expressed by such concepts (Becker 1982). In this way, externally derived categories obscure ambiguities, contradictions, and slippage between them. By attending to how people in Quinua socially construct or create social types, we are better positioned to see "the ambiguities of [folk] terms and the contradictions between what they predict and what the world exhibits" (Becker 1978, 863). Thus, while much has been written about artisan production in Quinua, far less understood is how people working to make ceramic products experience, talk about, and try to come to grips with the ambiguities of sameness and differentness of objects and, further, how these understandings articulate with their sense of who they are as creative laborers.

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Multiple Significations

Over a year of working with artisans in workshops, market stalls, and even during strictly nonmarket activities, I heard all artisans recount, often with frustration, experiences with design copying and theft. Many artisans in different parts of the world are similarly preoccupied with copying and daringly close replicas of their products but, importantly, for different reasons. As Steiner argues for African art markets, for instance, acts of imitation may enable strategic market positioning. Indeed, a part of Quinua ceramic object's value "depends not on its originality or uniqueness but on its conformity to 'traditional' style, [where] displays of nearly identical objects side by side [in a market] underscore to prospective tourist buyers that these artworks indeed 'fit the mold,'" or conform to a "traditional" style (Steiner 1999, 95). This critique, however, offers only a partial view, and a particular understanding of a creator's relationship to objects he or she produces as market-oriented. It therefore does not help explain why producers in Quinua make distinctions between not only their products but also each other as creators.

Many artisans in Quinua, in some respects, also view imitation as a way of legitimating the skill of a predecessor, paying homage to generations before them, or keeping their cultural heritage alive. An artisan named Juan described this to me: "*Los antiguos* have to be followed, too. . . . Waiting for new works so that these too give value to their [los antiguos'] works. If we continue using the same designs, we are not valuing los antiguos." This cultural phenomenon has been found to operate similarly amongst Asante woodcarvers (Silver 1981, 1983). Yet in their conversations with each other and me, artisans drew implicit distinctions between copying and sharing designs. An artisan, on one hand, may explain how he preserves technical aspects, spiritual myths, and everyday practices—elements that are said to belong to the community—by reusing older design elements

in his pieces. He may also, however, criticize others' pieces as mere copies, explaining they offer little economic and cultural value. The point I want to make for the case of Quinua, therefore, is that anxieties about design copying are not the same as positive feelings associated with sharing a craft tradition.

Writers on the sociology of art and culture provide a framework that opens analytical space for both negotiations of values and a relational understanding of aesthetic criteria (e.g., Becker 1974, 1976, 1982; Bourdieu 1983). Becker (1982) for instance, points out that even the most apparently individual of works can be the result of collaboration (even if the work is attributed to one author), while Bourdieu (1983) focuses on struggles occurring between individuals. Colloredo-Mansfeld, Andtrosio, and Jones (2011), through an analysis of Otavalan weavers, highlight both cooperation and conflict:

> Amid the robbery of designs, the lost earnings, and the mutual suspicions, artisans were also materializing a foundation of a market. This base drew from the changeability of fashion, commitments to an economy with an indigenous identity, and interdependence of working side-by-side in a provincial market town. The circulation of ideas . . . contribute to a kind of economic commons. . . a base of designs and goods with value linked with some notion of indigenousness—although (and this is crucial) such contributions are rarely intentional. (41)

The authors further show that while many complain of rivals who "sent someone to their showroom to buy a sample under false pretenses, or 'spied on their shop windows from the street corner,'" just as many producers perceived copying as a "reassuring sign of connection" (Colloredo-Mansfeld, Andtrosio, and Jones 2011, 45). The shared value of ideas contributes both to an artisan's enterprise and to an individual's sense of personal and collective self.

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Simultaneously, copying and conflicts over appropriating ideas reflect concerns about market value and competition: the more daringly close ceramic objects appear, the more they are likely to compete for the attention of prospective buyers. Artisan producers thus seek to capture the economic value by differentiating their products from one another through creativity and innovation. What differs between the Ecuadorian case and the Peruvian case is that producers in Quinua are particularly adamant about personal identity, particularly linked to the notion of creativity. So while creativity is oriented toward innovating to create new and better products, it is also socially imbued with a particularly nonmonetary value (although these different valuations are inextricably intertwined).

Ethnographic Beginnings

Once, in describing why he enjoyed making ceramics and why he had done so for more than twenty years, Manuel said that in working with clay, "*Uno se deja sus huellas con sus dedos*." That is, quite literally, the artisan leaves behind the marks of his fingers after having used them to massage, pinch, and pull wet clay in shaping an object (photograph 6.1). Here, we begin to see how people's impressions of themselves, of who they are as artisans, begin to emerge from direct bodily engagement with the material of clay. Objects made from clay, I suggest, become a kind of extended person, an argument derived from Alfred Gell's (1998) conception of art as a transfer of properties and agency of persons to things. Rather than simply a transfer, however, where the objects themselves may possess capacity to affect certain processes while circulating in different networks, engagement between person-as-creator and clay-material is a mutually constituted extension.

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Photograph 6.1. "*Uno se deja sus huellas con sus dedos*." That is, quite literally, the artisan leaves behind the marks of his fingers after having used them to massage, pinch, and pull wet clay in shaping an object. (Photograph by author)

On one hand, the raw material of clay, particularly as it is shaped from an abstract mass of raw material to a specified form, extends the body-person of the artisan, leaving imprints on the surface of the clay (Gowlland 2009).[8] For Manuel, his fingers, and, by extension, his hands and the rest of his embodied person, leave one very observable and physical manifestation of himself as creator. He later fires the clay, after maybe shaping it into an animal figure or miniature church, and puts it up for display in his shop or market stall. In this way, then, these personal markings of the creator and thus a sense of who he is as a maker become more permanent and visible for future artisans, buyers, and other observers.

On the other hand, the clay material, its physical properties bearing a kind of agency, affects the artisan as creator. Artisans' narratives reflected in various ways the importance of this mutual engagement with clay. Producers, for instance, often complained that

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many producers "*hacer por hacer*" ("make for the sake of making"). One artisan elaborated on this idea, explaining that such producers are not engaging the head (*la cabeza*) while engaging the hands (*los manos*).[9] Another artisan described it thus: "Without emotion one can have ability, but there is no art, there is no creativity." People make objects, which necessarily require their hands, but they are not using their creativity, which necessarily requires their head and hands working in conjunction (photographs 6.2*A* and 6.2*B*). One may master technical skills in manipulating materials of the craft, but to become a true artisan one must also master nontechnical faculties locally referenced as *emoción* (emotion) or *espíritu de creatividad* (spirit of creativity) or simply as *mi creatividad* (my creativity). Artisans in Quinua consistently stressed the importance of creatividad in setting a true artisan apart from all others working in ceramic production.

One artisan named Carlos helped me understand this process. He explained learning creativity as the following: "With your hands you make different little models, and you learn more too. You learn what difficulties you have in making ceramics. You learn what small differences you can make. And so I have to model using my hands, to get more practice." The clay and person are mutually constituted, each being transformed by the other in their conjunction. Artisans continually emphasized this predilection for creativity for making objects and curiosity for the clay as a fundamental aspect of artisan identities in Quinua.

Creatividad, moreover, was cited as an essential element in the longer process of learning to make ceramics. In making an object, there is a clearly definable task at hand, which is to be achieved by one person in conjunction with a mass of clay. This single act of creating, suspended in time and place, in which materials, tools, and maker interact, however, may be, and often is, for many producers,

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Photographs 6.2*A* and 6.2*B*. People make objects, which necessarily require their hands, but they are not using their creativity, which necessarily requires their head and hands working in conjunction. (Photographs by author)

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part of a longer process of ceramic making. In describing how they learned to make ceramics, every artisan emphasized how their physical engagement with clay often spanned over many years, perhaps four, ten, or twenty years, and sometimes more. Thus, finger impressions literally and metaphorically reference this process, just as they reference the more momentary mutually constituted relationship between clay-material and body-person-maker. In this long process, if a person is to be a "true artisan," he must become familiar with the physical malleability of clay, to learn directly with the hands and other bodily senses the clay's limits and potential for creating things. With embodied mastery of technical skills, an artisan must, at the same time, self-consciously familiarize himself with the malleability of his own imaginative faculties. He must learn directly, through exploration and experimentation as the artisan's hands engage the immediacy of clay and the limits and potential of his creativity.

Social Commitment and Values of Personal Authenticity

At this point in my analysis, one might conclude that local conceptions of authenticity, grounded in ideas about personal creativity, support modern views of authenticity in the context of artistic practices. In these views, authentically creative persons are defined as special individuals, whose work distinguishes them as persons set apart, or better, above the masses.[10] But this view is problematic because it sets the authentic creative person against tradition, where the creative person must struggle for originality over imposed cultural rules. "What gets lost," as Charles Taylor argues, "in this critique is the moral force of the ideal of authenticity" (1992, 17). My analysis thus far hints of this moral force in local understandings of authenticity, since artisans define and evaluate personal identity of themselves and each other within a set of shared values (for creativity). Following Becker and Bourdieu, I now shift to an explicit

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focus on the *socially* constructed and agreed upon moral nature of authenticity. In other words, creative laborers in Quinua are necessarily enmeshed in a broader social space or arena.

While imprints left by fingers reference a person's physical engagement and personal identity, for artisans, they are also symbolic of their social identity. As these marks materialize on ceramic objects, referencing personal artisan identities, they are also up for display, as I mentioned before, for other artisans and observers. Along with these marks of the body are made other marks of the creator, such as the particular color combinations he chooses, in the particular way he forms the shape of an eye or paints on a plant design, and in other small details. This fluid convergence of personal marks are thus also up for display in public spaces. Artisans insisted, for instance, that each artisan has his *sello* (stamp) or *estilo* (style). Each artist's style of executing the complex combination of colors visibly distinguishes his work and accentuates the individual character of Quinua ceramics.[11] Developing a personal style depends on both individual, creative flair and technical mastery of manipulating clay. It also depends on manipulation of established, albeit flexible, conventions governing the use of materials, the choice of colors, the use of local cultural themes, and other elements of design and content (Becker 1982).

For example, consider these bull pitchers, each made by a different artisan (photographs 6.3*A*, 6.3*B*, 6.3*C*, and 6.3*D*). Each artisan worked within a similar set of stylistic and symbolic elements, most prominently, the typical white-on-red color scheme and the bull form of the pitcher used to serve *chicha* at community fiestas. Yet we also see that these four artisans used similar elements to create four distinct pieces. Artisans thus "use available materials to produce works which, in size, form, design, color, and content, fit into the available spaces and into people's ability to respond appropriately" (Becker

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1984, 229). Notably, when I showed a photograph of these pieces (which were all on public display) to several artisans, most were fairly accurate in naming the creator of each piece.[12] Each clay object often bears socially recognizable marks of the artist who made it.

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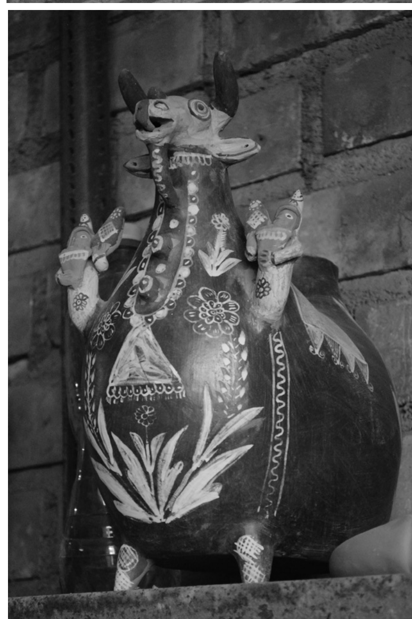

Photographs 6.3*A*, 6.3*B*, 6.3*C*, and 6.3*D*. Bull pitchers, each made by a different artisan. (Photographs by author)

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Artisans insisted that a person, if he is to be a true artisan, must develop this personal style, and further, continue to do so to set himself apart in a world of social others who all draw on a shared repertoire of symbols and styles of a recognizable Quinua tradition of ceramic making. The individual who puts the piece up for sale or buys it advertises his proficiency. Displaying and selling ceramic objects therefore put artisans' personal identities on the line, exposing their creative choices to public scrutiny and judgment. Ceramic objects in the rural Quinua district, much as Blenda Femenías (2005) found for producers of bordados in rural Coylloma Province of Peru, become a ground for social evaluation where people must prove their creativity in seeking to gain respect as a "true artisan."

"You May Copy Me, But You Will Never Equal Me."

Artisans in Quinua persistently stressed the connection between shared technical skills and symbols used in making ceramics and the creative skills, talent, and vision of the individual creator. Many even acknowledged that, practically speaking, it is entirely impossible to execute an exact replication of another person's work or style, given individual tastes and abilities. So if each artisan is said to have his or her own style, why do artisans make social distinctions and argumentative claims about one's own and others' authenticity? Part of the explanation, I argue next, is grounded in ideas about copying, specifically in relation to values for creativity. For this argument, I turn to Bourdieu, who, like Becker, conceives of creative practices as occurring within certain social relations, but these are characterized by antagonism and power struggles rather than cooperation.

The primary source of inspiration, artisans reported, is other pieces of ceramics.[13] Skilled artisans design them in clay, using tools, without looking at a model. Well-trained artisans, therefore, need not directly copy other's work to be directly influenced by it, or they

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may design from memory a design seen only once, especially since most pieces draw on shared aesthetic conventions. An artisan named Eduardo, for instance, who produced small piggy banks, told me how he came across this design while working, and simultaneously learning how to make ceramics, in a larger workshop for another artisan. Eduardo made a small change to produce his personal design. As he reconstructed the pig form in clay from memory, he bent its ears to make them appear "floppy" and "realistic," a detail, Eduardo said, based on countless observations of living pigs. This process of conservative modification, or "editing" (Becker 1982), characterizes creative practices in Quinua; artisans orient themselves according to a shared repertoire of a Quinua style, gained from countless observations of other people's ceramic works, which enables innovation and improvisation. Importantly, however, such impressions of personal style are not always reliable proof of its creator, particularly given apparently small changes and variation in design details marking personal styles. It is these apparently minor variations within a common currency of designs that give rise to conflicts; artisans accuse each other of copying their original, unique design. In this context of quasi-identical objects, seemingly small variations and changes become socially significant details.

When artisans spoke of others as copying or described others' accusations of copying, these discourses almost always articulated with ideas about authenticity grounded in moral and social values. The family owning the workshop in which Eduardo had seen the piggy bank design, for instance, approached Eduardo, asking him why he copied their design. Eduardo rejoined that the design did not belong exclusively to them, explaining that "the design belongs to Quinua . . . everyone makes it now." Eduardo legitimated his use of the design by citing a social fact—that is, aesthetic conventions shared within the district. Accusations about design imitation,

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artisans said, also indicated that a person lacked self-esteem. "If an artisan is worried about others copying his work," one artisan explained, "then he is not confident in himself and his creativity," implying that only a true artisan is unconcerned when others copy his work because he knows and demonstrates that, as a craftsman, he and his creative skills are equal to no other. And conversely, no one can equal him even if he dares try.

One aspect of ceramic production in Quinua that provided a particularly salient source of conversation and debate about copying as well as in artisans' desires to show how they were true artisans is plaster molds (photograph 6.4). I recall one afternoon when I asked an artisan named Efraín, who was working at the time on hand coiling a water pitcher, if he used molds.[14] At the time, it seemed a common enough question, since I had seen every artisan use plaster molds in some way or another. Further, molds allowed artisans to produce in a standardized way and at a much faster pace than did modeling each piece by hand alone. Yet Efraín stated, after laying down the rock he used to evenly smooth the coiled-clay walls of the pitcher, "No. I only make pieces by hand. Handmade pieces have their value. Each piece is unique. With molds, there's no difference in the pieces." One might stop here to argue that artisans defined authenticity as based in objects that are unique, purely made by hand, and carry a higher market value. Objects made with molds are, by contrast, serial copies, inauthentic, and cheap. But, consider this statement made by Efraín as our conversation about molds and artisan work in general in Quinua unfolded: "Nobody equals me. Nobody!" he exclaimed. "I can't say I'm the only one making ceramics, but these people, they don't equal me." Within Efraín's exclamation, market values ambiguously infuse with values for a sense of self, of Efraín's perception that he is a uniquely creative person. For most artisans, too, this material practice of using molds versus hand modeling

techniques was a constant source of social evaluation, bringing the value of one-of-a-kind creative person into the social realm.

Photograph 6.4. Plaster mold, plaster artisan. (Photograph by author)

Additional contextual clues relating to Efraín's assertion that he definitively does not use molds reveals the ambiguous and often contradictory nature of imitation and innovation. Later I found out that Efraín had asked his daughter-in-law to make small people figures using her plaster molds. Efraín integrated these molded figures into a piece that he wanted to use to enter a national artisan contest. A few other artisans in Quinua, when they saw this piece, remarked that Efraín had used molds to make this piece. "So why should he win?" they asked. In doing so, they attempted to diminish Efraín's authenticity as an artisan. In general, it is not uncommon to find such contradictions among artisans in Quinua. Many artisans criticize others' use of molds or downplay their own use of molds, even though every artisan either used molds to produce or bought plaster-molded pieces from others to quickly fill their shops. My question

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is thus: If molds practically help artisans produce and earn a better living for themselves and their families, why do they attempt to downplay their own and/or devalue others' use of molds?

Artisans who used molds, a type of technology for duplication, and could thus produce faster, certainly increased competition between each other for sales. Indeed, artisans complained about lost sales due to introduction of mold technology in general.

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Photographs 6.5*A*, 6.5*B*, 6.5*C*, 6.5*D*, 6.5*E*, 6.5*F*, 6.5*G*, and 6.5*H*. Felipe using mold technology for faster duplication of a stallion sculpture. (Photographs by author)

Felipe made a mold from a stallion sculpture that he himself designed and modeled in clay (photographs 6.5*A*-6.5*H*). As he and his wife, Felicita, worked to create the mold, he conveyed that he enjoyed designing such unique pieces because it allowed him to be creative. Making the mold, Felipe said, would help him produce faster without working so hard to make each piece entirely by hand. Many other artisans made plaster molds from one "original" design, which, an artisan may tell you, originated in his workshop. From these molds were made serial copies to increase his and his family's production output, which increased his ability to compete with his neighbors for attention from prospective buyers.

The anxieties around molds, however, most prominently emerged when the so-called original piece presumably belonged to an artisan other than the one who created the plaster mold. Specifically, producers often talked about molds in the context of copying and robbery of designs (*robar mi diseño*) as a moral and social offense. My

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conversation with the artisan Carlos (mentioned previously) helped me to understand why imitating others was such a social, moral, and personal offense. His comments, to remind the reader, relate back to my argument that finger impressions and details marked on clay objects reflect an artisan's creative identity, but what I did not mention was that Carlos was explicitly speaking about the relationship between creativity, copying, and mold use. "One is not an artisan, if he uses only molds," Carlos further explained. "He is not thinking, not using his creativity. Molds are to advance in one's work. With your hands, you make different little models, and you learn more too. You learn what difficulties you have in making ceramics. You learn what small differences you can make. And so, I have to model using my hands, to get more practice. If not . . . if I am just making with plaster molds . . . then I am settling on the same." Comments like Carlos' express a kind of awareness that molds, as a form of technology, affected confluent processes of separation.

In one sense, molds physically separated the artisan from his clay medium because the artisan used his hands less to form the clay, the mold acting as a partial proxy. But this contracted experience of direct contact with clay also meant that the artisan spent less time and energy thinking and creating in clay since the mold, in bearing a predetermined design, did a good part of the image-making and creative work for the artisan. Carlos further pointed out to me the material signs of this process of separation. "Handmade pieces cost you a little more time. You need higher temperature [for the kiln]. And when it's fired well, it sounds like metal," he explained, knocking on a fired, hand-modeled piece of ceramic. "If it's not fired well, it doesn't sound like this," he continued, knocking for comparative purposes on a plaster-molded ceramic piece. Indeed, I could hear the difference, the latter being a more muted sound. Inhering in the material properties of a finished ceramic object was an irrefutable

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test of technical mastery, accessible to human sensory experience and thus a materially grounded source for social evaluation and proving oneself to be a true artisan. Carlos continued further: "Molds leave these small seams here, within," he points out on a plaster-molded piece, "Just by looking at it, this was made with a mold. If you look inside this [hand-modeled] piece, it doesn't have seams. With a mold, it looks like this. Wiping with a sponge, you can see it." Herein also lay a material test of creativity, wherein one substitutes impressions of fingers with nonhuman marks (e.g., seams of a plaster mold); wherein one simultaneously risks replacing creativity with mere copying and ultimately risks being evaluated as anything but a true artisan. Deeper anxieties lie at the heart of much of artisans' struggles to minimize others work as unoriginal and mold-made. Molds separated artisans from their creative potential and mastery of technical skills and by extension their identities as authentic and true artisans.

Final Comments

Right now in Peru, and in other Latin American countries, state development policies celebrate local artisan enterprises. They ostensibly do so to stimulate creative market strategies, revitalize traditional technologies, and encourage disintermediation. By grafting onto products, like ceramics, narratives of origin, shared "tradition," "authenticity," as well as quality, artisans in Latin America may be able to create symbolic value (Bourdieu 1984, 1986; Brown 2003; Coombe 2011; Harvey 2009). As Coombe, Schnoor, and Ahmed argue, "Places of historical and contemporary disadvantage may thereby be transformed into places of competitive advantage" (2006, 896). Yet assertions of collective patrimony may also figure in political projects that idealize concepts of artisan communities and authentic culture.

When examined from a local perspective, as I have tried to do in this chapter, authenticity may look very different from how it is conceived by policymakers and development. Perhaps above all, artisans' narratives about authenticity function as projections of future trajectories and about becoming. In this sense, constructions of authenticity reflect emotional investments and desires for attachments. After all, artisans are caught up within wanting to belong to national and global economies, to be recognized as authentic artisans or entrepreneurs, and to capture a share of the market value that inheres in claims to creating "authentic" cultural products. But they are also emotionally invested in local communities composed of present as well as future creative laborers. It would seem that it is this emotional component to people's constructions of themselves and identities that escapes apparently simple definitions of authenticity in a context in which external agents are redrawing where and how artisans' identities are expressed. I will save an extended discussion of these wider political economic implications of shifting authenticities for future essays. Instead, I would like to end this chapter with the following, an extended excerpt from my conversation with the artisan Juan (mentioned previously), which, I believe, reflects these difficulties artisans face in struggles to define who they are, where they come from, and where they are going, both personally and collectively, in terms of both material livelihood and social relationships:

> It's difficult [to protect our designs]. We artisans, we live from this, no? We can't say 'don't do that [copy this design].' The artisans who come before us, well, we live from them. Los antiguos [the ancient ones] have to be followed, too . . . Waiting for new works so that these too give value to their [los antiguos'] works. If we continue using the same designs, we're not valuing los antiguos . . .

> and what other option is there for us? There is no other option. So I say, if I sell more of these [pieces that everyone sells], I'm just settling. But if I don't sell these, I have to look for another [design]. This is how I'm inspired. This work I no longer sell, but it's better that I make another. So this little thing inspires me. The traditional or whatever can inspire me. And it's even better if I can sell to the public, no? And so, one makes a decision this way. If not, I'm settling for what I'm already making. I'm not thinking how to create new and better works. An artisan has to look for new values, to look for new prestige.

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Notes

1. Translations from Spanish sources are my own.

2. This chapter is a tentative exploration of the implications of everyday practices of and debates over local meanings of authenticity. As such, the analysis here constitutes a focus on adult men working in ceramic production. This focus offers a particularly fruitful place to begin, I believe, since people generally referred to as "artisan" during my fieldwork in Quinua were predominantly male adults. A discussion of how already-existing inequalities—in this case, class, gender, and generational differences—translate into competing ideas about

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cultural authority and authenticity would overextend my analysis in this chapter.

3. The ideas and practices surrounding creativity and authenticity that I discuss in this chapter are a recent phenomenon in Quinua and in Peru in general. Their most prominent forms have emerged in the last decade or two but are historically linked to a conjunction of wider processes—for example, early twentieth-century *indigenista* movement, subsequent state industrial and development policies, and programs carried out by different Peruvian administrations, and shrinking land base and other livelihood opportunities for rural people.

4. I have used pseudonyms, except for artisans' names that appear in published scholarly works (i.e., Mamerto Sánchez, Francisco Sánchez).

5. During my conversations with artisans, they too singled out the significance of these objects, describing how the *padrino* (godfather) of a *zafacasa* (house-raising ceremony) contracts an artisan to make a church. The family building the home holds a fiesta, where they provide food and music for dancing for those invited (e.g., extended family members, friends, and neighbors). The church is later adhered to the roof of the new home, saying something to this effect: "May this house be blessed with this church."

6. I will discuss one such technology—that is, plaster molds—later in the chapter.

7. Steiner (1999) argues, drawing on principles of mass-production, that "authenticity [of tourist art] is measured generally through redundancy [of a particular ethnic style] rather than originality" (101). This is a different, yet mutually influential, form of authenticity than notions of authenticity I discuss in this chapter.

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8. See Gowlland (2009) for a comparative case of *Zisha* pottery making in China.

9. This conceptualization is different from the mind/body dualism so often critiqued by anthropologists and other scholars. Rather than viewing creativity as located in an immaterial mind and distinguishable from a material body, artisans conceptualized creativity in terms of materiality of the head-hands and distinguishable from materiality of hands making alone. This is a process recognized by several writers and commentators on creativity in artistic practices (e.g., Sennett 2008).

10. See Taylor (1992) for an extended discussion.

11. Also see Femenías (2005) and Gowlland (2009) for comparison. Gowlland, for instance, argues that "the actions of the body-person imprints on the surface of the clay; the sum of skilled movements performed in proper sequence comes to mark the pot with the signs of the maker" (2009, 138).

12. Other scholars have similarly noted the ability of artisans to differentiate their styles by visual cues (e.g., Femenías 2005, Gowlland 2009).

13. Artisans also mentioned newspapers, television, and books as well as everyday events and special occasions in the community as other sources for inspiration. Artisans in Quinua, however, most often appropriate design and stylistic elements from other artisans' goods.

14. A plaster mold is used to create duplicate copies of utilitarian, decorative, or even more complex works of art through a process called casting. The mold itself is a negative or mirror image of the final work.

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