

# WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

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## WORLD MONUMENTS FUND CELEBRATES THE COMPLETION OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH OF SAN JUAN BAUTISTA IN HUARO, PERU

For Immediate Release—Huaró, Peru, January 28, 2007... **Bertrand du Vignaud, President of World Monuments Fund Europe; Marcela Temple de Pérez de Cuéllar; members of Peru's National Institute of Culture (INC); and other distinguished guests today celebrated the completion of the first phase of the restoration of the Church of San Juan Bautista, in Huaró, Peru.** The restoration's first phase, which cost \$110,000, was funded by grants from WMF, including one from the Robert Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage, WMF France, and the INC. The work included documenting and conserving the interior mural paintings by renowned Peruvian artist Tadeo Escalante (c. 1770 – c. 1840), along with the church's altars, pulpit, and paintings on canvas.

The project was launched by WMF France in 2001, when a group of WMF France members traveled to Peru to explore its heritage. They happened to stop at the Church of San Juan Bautista in Huaró and were impressed by the quality and beauty of the murals and paintings in the church, but also concerned by their sorry state. "We decided on the spot to try to save them, proposing to the Peruvian authorities that we raise funds for their restoration," said **Bertrand du Vignaud, President of World Monuments Fund Europe.** "WMF France members immediately offered to help and Mrs. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, with great enthusiasm, convinced Peruvian friends to follow suit. This project not only provides for the conservation of an important and very distinguished example of architectural painting in Peru, but will also serve as an outstanding model of conservation action in Peru. Now, thanks to this timely intervention, Escalante's work is as lively as ever, and we hope that WMF's and INC's efforts will be safeguarded for generations to come."

The town of Huaró was once an important link within the Incan road system, lying 35 miles south of Cuzco, the capital of the empire. The 1500s were a time of radical change for the town, bringing about the Spanish conquest in the first half of the century and the Jesuits in the

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latter. Within a few years of the Jesuits' arrival in 1571, the Church of San Juan Bautista was built and quickly became a focal point in the community. Local artists were commissioned between 1675 and 1699 to create the murals and decorations, which served to spread the evangelical gospel and symbolized the fusion of indigenous and colonial beliefs. For years, new compositions were painted one on top of the other, with the highly emotive work of Escalante (who was of both Incan and European descent) being the last layer completed in 1802. Painted scenes from the Old and New Testaments alternate over a wall surface area of approximately 575 square meters; the ceiling art adds about 360 square meters. Over these vast spaces, Escalante juxtaposed depictions of the glory of the Ascension with the damnation of the Rapture, among other Biblical stories.

In the two centuries that passed since Escalante's final brushstroke, humidity, faulty restorations, and vandalism left portions of the murals in grave condition. Mrs. Pérez de Cuéllar, wife of former UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, spearheaded the much needed intervention. A team of nine technicians from the INC took on the arduous task of restoring the Church of San Juan Bautista, often referring back to the methods and supplies of Escalante and applying them to modern conservation approaches. The walls, ceiling, 49 paintings, four tin devotional paintings, and 27 sculptures were all fully restored, including cleaning, paint restoration, and color reintegration.

The second phase of the restoration, which will be carried out in 2007 with the support of WMF and the INC, will include the conservation of the church's ornately painted coffered ceiling, training for local artisans, a plan for site interpretation for visitors, and a detailed publication documenting both phases of the project.

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