

## **“Cuenca, a city of handicrafts”**

### **1. Cuenca city: Features**

Originally called Santa Ana de los Ríos de Cuenca, this city is located in an inter-Andean valley of the Ecuadorian southern highlands, capital of Azuay province. Cuenca is located at 2,538 m. a. s. l., and has an approximate population of 580,000 inhabitants. Its surface is 15,730 hectares and its weather presents temperatures ranging between 14°C and 18°C, throughout the year. The valley in which it is situated is surrounded by mountainous systems of exceptional characteristics which also have a hydrographic system consisting of four main rivers: Tomebamba, Yanuncay, Machángara and Tarqui, which cross the city from west to east.

The Centro Histórico (historical downtown) displays a wide architectural wealth in about 200 hectares. Here we find a lot of colonial and republican style buildings, an significant archaeological area, the handicrafts neighborhoods -of colonial origin-, some central markets, the Barranco del Tomebamba area with Paseo 3 de Noviembre, and several sites of interesting landscapes and cultural relevance, which show the reasons why Cuenca was declared a World Cultural Heritage city.

The Cuenca canton is divided into 15 urban and 21 rural parishes, represented by their corresponding Boards of directors before the City Hall of Cuenca.

### **2. Historial background.**

Since the beginning of Cuenca's history its inhabitants have found in crafts a form of subsistence which allowed them relative independence. The towns known as Cañaris, located in the current parishes of Cañar and Azuay in pre-Inca times had achieved a great ability to work raw materials provided by the surrounding environment, samples of their pieces of work circa 2,000 years BC, in ceramics, lithic and, later, metals such as silver and gold, not to mention the craftsmen who should have worked in perishable materials such as those woven in vegetable and animal fibers.

The Inca presence contributed with new artisan techniques, which were perfected until the arrival of Spaniard conquerors, when other trades appeared: tanners, roof-tile-makers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, tailors, silversmiths, and farriers, among others. According to the colonial regime this knowledge had to be transferred from the teacher to the apprentice through a contract developed with the presence of a scribe.

Many pre-Hispanic craft trades continued and were coupled with new technologies brought by Europeans, such as jewelry, ceramics, sculpture, and textiles; but others were necessary for the construction of the new city; among them the most relevant, that last until today, are blacksmiths and smiths, carpenters, roof-tile-makers, plaster-assemblers and, it is not even necessary to mention master pieces such as paintings and sculptures developed with such major techniques that were endowed to emblematic artists of this city.

In the early years of the Republic, art and craft schools were created, from which important works had emerged, and later considered artistic heritage for the city. Although, almost always, artisans are anonymous, some names can be found in the history of Cuenca such as: Gaspar Sangurima, Miguel Vélez, Enrique Alvarado, and Antonio Ramírez.

The Spanish city was plotted in checkerboard city layout, being located in certain places, the craft trade neighborhoods that until now are preserved as the Barrio Las Herrerías (wrought iron), the neighborhood of the Ollerías (ceramics), the Tinsmith's shop and saddlery in the Barrio El Vado, wood-oven bakeries in Todos Santos, and rural parishes such as Sinincay that stands out in marble work or San Joaquin in basketry; and the city center characterized as the original commerce area of the city, where there are several workshops and craft shops.

Cuenca continues to be an emblematic city in Ecuador's artisan work, for its excellence, wide dissemination and diversity. These attributes are recognized at the American continental level by being designated by the Organization of American States - OAS - in 1975, as the headquarters of the Inter-American Center for Handicrafts and Popular Arts -CIDAP-, an international public institution created in order to safeguard and promote the Artisan crafts and folk art of America.

The wide cultural, artisan and architectural wealth were sufficient reasons to reward Cuenca as Cultural Patrimony of Humanity by UNESCO, on December 1, 1999.

### 3. Traditional handicrafts and craft-jobs in Cuenca

#### 3.1 . Goldsmith and Jewelry

Master work, wide knowledge of materials, ancestral techniques and identity designs, characterize the goldsmith's shop and jewelry of Cuenca as the most outstanding craft activities of the city, whose tradition dates back to pre-Hispanic times when Cañari culture had proven to shelter skilled goldsmiths making pieces used both for ceremonial purposes and personal ornamentation. Later, with the arrival of the Incas, and then with that of the Spaniards, new techniques were taught and learned, eased by the existence of several nearby gold mining sources which led to strengthening jewelry in Cuenca.



1. Argó Joyería: Hummingbird Pansies..



2. Oruga Design Colectivo: Beyond the Sea.

The main raw materials used are silver and gold, in addition is the use of precious and semiprecious stones. Another important feature of Cuenca jewelry is the execution of traditional craft techniques which are carefully and jealously kept and transmitted from one generation to the next one. Many are the basic techniques used: lost wax casting, rolling, manual assembly, jewel finishing (filing, sanding, polishing, shinning). Special techniques such as enameling, gold covering, gold or silver plating, stamp punching, carving and openwork, setting and jeweled of precious stones are also highlighted, and filigree that is a very special technique which consists of weaving quite fine, twisted, intertwined and attacked threads of fine metals to then be filled in small spaces called cardboard or guides, forming shapes and textures of singular delicacy and thoroughness.



3. Salvador Castro: Filigree technique ressignificance



4. Paulas, typical earrings

Traditional Cuenca goldsmithing is characterized by having in its designs the influence of Renaissance and Baroque features, which mixed with the Indian mentality, result in a mestizo art that is evidenced in the local designs, result of years of practice and experience, with the investigation of new techniques and forms. In these jewels we can notice an extraordinary perception of nature with shapes and colors that emulate the flora, fauna and daily life of the place.

Cuenca jewels are ornamental and made for commercial purposes; because of their prestige and quality they are recognized and requested nationally and internationally. Currently, new market trends and contemporary jewelry design have been developed incorporating the application of alternative materials such as wool, thread, leather or ceramics, new equipment and processes, making of jewelry an artistic element loaded of symbols which refer to the people's identity, whose principal characteristic is to be unique pieces entirely "handmade".

### **3.2 Pottery and ceramics**

Cuenca is considered the capital of ceramics in Ecuador. Its ceramic tradition has an important indigenous content that was later mixed with the techniques and designs brought by the Spaniards.

The main raw material used is clay that, along with other elements, forms the basis of the potter's work, who prepares his material according to his needs. The provinces of Azuay and Cañar are characterized by their abundance in clay deposits, since they are

geologically located in the so-called ancient volcanism area, which explains the richness of these materials in this region.

Part of what is now the urban center of Cuenca, the neighborhood called "Convention of 45", and certain surrounding areas, the parishes of Sayausí and Sinincay, are characterized by having a large and rich ceramic deposit with high iron content, which explains its reddish color after burning. Other deposits with kaolin mines are found in Cochapata, Tinajillas and Yungilla, somewhat remote but that supply the pottery production.

The modeling of ceramics is either developed by standing or motorized lathes. Molds are also used to make decorative pieces. Traditional firewood ovens were used for firing ceramic pieces, but due to predatory effects, gas and electric ovens are used with better effects to control temperature levels. After baking, the techniques of glazing, varnishing and coloring are applied to finish the pieces.

The traditional Cuenca pottery is currently projected to the elaboration of decorative objects, although the handmade dishes are marketed for being unique pieces, since the artisanal productive capacity, the amount of produced pieces is only accessible to few people, therefore, artisans are still working in smaller quantities. An interesting case is that carried out in the traditional ceramic neighborhood "Convention of 45", where black pieces are made, whose color comes from the way of cooking, resistant to higher temperatures and, several of them, suitable to use them in microwaves. Semi-industrial production also offers utilitarian ceramic options with traditional and contemporary aesthetic features.



1. José Encalada, ceramist at Convención del 45



3. Fausto Bravo, Bulls sculpture.



4. Eduardo Vega, Decorative vase

At present, works on murals and sculptural pieces stand out demonstrating the sense of Cuenca identity.

On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that in the past, artisanal brick and tile manufacturing for the constructions in the city abounded. This work was characterized by the use of molds, outdoor drying and burning pieces in wood-fed ovens. This activity has lost importance due to the expansion of the industry producing these materials. The few remaining brick factories are located in the parishes of Sinincay and Sayausí, belonging to family tradition.

### 3.3 “Toquilla straw” and basketry.

The case of toquilla straw weaving in Cuenca is particular, it arises from the initiative to bring master hat weavers from Manabí, a province recognized for their expertise in weaving this fiber, to teach the craft to local craftsmen. The results exceeded expectations, becoming an important area in hat production and establishing the most important export houses in the city. At the end of the nineteenth century and until the first half of the twentieth century, a large part of the peasant and urban population knitted their hats, competing with the traditional Montecristi.

Between 1880 and 1890, the Ecuadorian hat was distributed from Panama to other countries, mainly European, becoming known as the "Panama Hat". Historically, the Ecuadorian toquilla straw hat has been related to this name, campaigns are currently being undertaken, from the public and private sectors, to correctly refer to as "Ecuadorian Hat", highlighting the producing villages such as Montecristi, Jipijapa and Cuenca, High quality referents in their fiber fabrics.

The fiber comes from the *Carludovica Palmata* palm, which is grown on the Ecuadorian coast. Various individuals and conditions participate in the production chain: weavers, intermediaries, exporters and a series of workers derived from the mentioned process. The prepared and classified straw is sold by the coastal producers to wholesalers in charge of bringing the raw material to Cuenca, where the fiber is delivered to weavers. Once the hat is woven, it is sold to the "commission agents", who are mostly intermediary agents of the City's export houses such as Serrano Hat, Homero Ortega, Moreno Hat, Kurt Dorfzaum, among others. The product arrives semi-finished to be delivered to other workers, who perform the hat finishing and composting processes for final sale or export.

The weavers intersperse the fabric with their daily and domestic tasks being a secondary activity; 90% being female. The fabric begins with in a circular shape template to descend forming the crown and then the brim.

As alternatives to the fabric of the hat, several utilitarian products have been developed such as bread boxes, placemats for dining tables, baskets, boxes, figures, and many others.



*1. Toquilla Straw hat*



*2. Straw hat weaving*



*3. Craftswomen weaving baskets*



*4. San Joaquín parish baskets made by craftswomen.*

It is also woven in other fibers such as bamboo cane called “duda” and a reed variety called “suru” in Kichwa in Azuay, Ecuador. These vegetable fibers are present in the rural parish of San Joaquín, where around 50 artisans make baskets, bins, bassinets, diaper-bag and more, with various hatches. This fabric is much thicker and rustic, however the objects produced have an aesthetic and quality that is marketed to different parts of the country and abroad.

### **3.4 Wrought iron.**

The smelting and forging of iron was developed in Cuenca from the Colony time and was basically intended for the development of utilitarian objects, such as door plates, hinges, knockers, Gothic-style locks, tillage tools and hardware.

The story has it that in this sector of the city was located at a strategic position, as it was an obligatory entrance and exit from the city, there the outsiders: muleteers and merchants who left their horses while they went to the city to sell their products; it is so



that in this place the work of the forge was developed to meet the demand of ironworks and other objects for the animals; This area is called "Las Herrerías" neighborhood.

As time passed by, the changes of society and the new cultural references, the trade of the blacksmith has had to adapt with great ingenuity to the diverse and changing needs of society, making - with great artistic level - fences, windows, railings, balconies and street lanterns that have marked the peculiar appearance of the historical center of the city.

The art of forging iron consists in shaping the metal with the help of fire and hammer blow. Through the forge, different shapes can be obtained without melting the metal, for this it is necessary to expose the iron piece to high temperatures in the forge. When the piece is completely red it is taken to the anvil, where, through strokes, the desired shape is achieved.

In a wrought iron workshop, the forge is indispensable, which is the stove where the metal will be heated for its forging. The anvil, which is a tool formed by a block of steel and used by the craftsman to chisel or hammer the piece of iron. We also found a pile with water to cool the forged pieces and other tools for measuring and tracing, such as tongs, gouges, punches, hammers, etc.

Among the most traditional and unique products are iron crosses, which - as a symbol of Christianity - are placed on the roofs of the houses during the celebration of the roof finishing or "huasipichana", culmination of the roof of a house; action that demonstrates the symbolic and social content that contains the elaboration of iron crosses, not neglecting blacksmiths' high aesthetic content, ingenuity and ability to build master pieces.



*1. Forging process*



*2. Luis Maldonado craftsman*



3. Traditional roof top cross



4. Gothic padlock

### 3.5 Embroidery.

As a historical reference, it is known that the Cañari people, former settlers of what is now Cuenca, knew the spinning of cotton, and needles have been found in copper and bone, which gives the clues of a knowledge and use of the thread not only for knit but to sew, embroider and ornament.

Embroidery crafts are practiced in Cuenca and its surroundings, mainly in the parishes of Baños and Sayausí, being a form of cultural expression loaded with symbolisms and expressions, typical of a culture immersed in a rich tradition. It has been kept, among other reasons, because of the presence and validity of the popular costume, religious celebrations and the tourism market.

As an exponent of the traditional embroidery in the popular clothing, the costume of the “chola Cuenca” appears, with its characteristic skirt that exhibits exuberance of color in a rich profusion of shapes and varied designs, adorned with sequins, earrings and other ornaments. This mestizo costume has great Spanish influence, but presenting certain adaptation to the local culture.

As for technology, in the early stages, skirts had to be embroidered entirely by hand and little is known of the motifs used. Machine embroidery is widely used today and the

patterns are mostly floral and bird type. Frame embroidery is also done for delicate items such as blouses, shirts and tablecloths.

Machine embroidery is a process that requires skilled hands and creative minds that combine with great skill, ability and ingenuity to produce shapes, texture and colors of undeniable expressive value. The motifs are drawn first on paper or on the fabric directly depending on the skill and experience of the person embroidering. The technique called "drill" is used, which consists of making tiny perforations with the same needle of the machine, but without loading the thread. This way the area to be embroidered follows the delimited outline for the motifs.

Through this technique, the production time is optimized, since more stitches can be made in shorter times, for example an embroidered skirt can take from three to fifteen days of work.

Formerly, the fabric used for the skirt was a fine wool cloth, but today it is a fabric known as Texlan, which is produced with synthetic fibers. Velvet or suede are usually used for more elegant skirts. For the blouses the canvases and cottons are used.

A special form of embroidery is the carving, a rescued technique that requires great mastery and perfection; since it consists of embroidering fabric on fabric shaping varied designs.

In addition to the production of traditional clothing, textile objects embroidered in a drum and frame, are appealing elements for tourism, such as cards, pictures, napkins, t-shirts and others which are sold as a tourist promotion, as they have city motifs, scenes of rural life, landscapes, etc.



1. Chola Cuencana skirt typical design



2. Ana Vásquez, fabric over fabric textile design.



3. Embroidered card



4. María Curay, embroidery craftswoman.

### 3.6 Saddlery.

The saddlery was, from the first colonial years, one of the most linked jobs to the economic activities of the city and the parish, due to the need that the Spaniards had to manufacture saddles and implements for their cargo and riding animals, to more than certain objects and containers of great utility among the nascent population of Cuenca. Until the middle of the last century the existence of a significant number of saddlery in Cuenca gave account of the indisputable importance of this trade.

The materials used for this job are leather and sole, saddles and tools for horses, suitcases and saddlebags were made until a few years ago. At the moment the use of the horse is not essential, except for ranchs and sports or eco-tourist activities. Due to the changes in the population's needs, the production has been diversified towards the elaboration of other articles such as wallets, bags, belts, cases for knives or for firearms.

The process of producing an object made of leather goes through four fundamental moments: preparation and curing of the leather; material handling: measurement, plotting and cutting; elaboration of the parts of the object: burnished, modeled, embossed, armed, sewn; and finishes.

The job of saddlery is an activity that is experiencing a frank and undeniable survival crisis, since apparently its product is no longer necessary in the current economic system. Saddle-makers are very few in the urban area, in the El Vado neighborhood, in Cuenca, just seven craftsmen are located.



1. Sole carving



2. Cattle herds



3. Saddlery craftsman

### 3.7 Tinsmith

Tinsmith has strong colonial roots, dates from approximately 1682. This job was very useful for developing household goods and farming utensils.

The techniques in the elaboration of tin objects can be summed up in the trace, the cut and the different folds, to then proceed to the assembling and then welding to make the finishes. However, the details in each moment of the process require singular attention, patience and care, because that is where art, ingenuity, skill and knowledge of its artisans are appreciated.

The use of plastic and the progress of industrial technology has reduced the use of products such as pans, pails, buckets, bathtubs, pots, which are not made except as decorative elements of yesteryear. The production of candlesticks, lamps and lighters, scales, kitchen utensils, etc., are produced limitedly. The use of aluminum is currently an alternative to make decorative items such as mirrors, chests and ornaments.

The trade of the tinsmith is in decline, there are few artisans who keep their work, determined in different neighborhoods and sectors of the city, most in the Historic Center, in El Vado area.





1. Tinsmith

### 3.7 Other handicrafts.

**Wood work.** As a result of the presence of the Colonial School Quiteña, in Cuenca important artists emerged who were dedicated to the elaboration of sculptures and wood carvings with exquisite quality and details, such is the case of Gaspar Sangurima (18-19 centuries). In addition, sculptures, altars and carved doors can be seen in the various wooden architectural elements in colonial and republican houses, as well as in churches and convents.

There are currently many artisans who produce furniture, decorative objects, doors, kitchen utensils, with techniques such as carving, wood veneer and marquetry.



1. Wooden carved Baby Jesus



2. Wooden Hummingbird



3. San Alfonso carved wooden door

**Marble and Stonework.** This job has been practiced since colonial times. The first works were the fountains in courtyards of the convents, public squares and home interiors, later sculptural works of great importance were created. For the construction of these works the artists used simple tools (chisels, combos) and local marbles, so there are many marble craftsmen who appear in the history of Cuenca.

The trade is transmitted from generation to generation. The craftsman receives the help of his wife and children in tasks such as sanding, modeling and polishing; The workshop can also be composed of operators and apprentices under the direction of a teacher. With the right tools and machinery, the craftsman performs various activities such as cutting, modeling, sanding and polishing.

The marble workshops are located in the rural parishes of the city: Sinincay, Checa, Sidcay, Ricaurte, El Valle, San Joaquín, Sayausí; Cuenca became the parish with the largest number of inhabitants dedicated to this trade. In general, stores or commercial stores are located in the center of the city.

The marble and travertines used are of a wide variety of colors: white, black green, gray, pink, red; and in addition Carrara marble from Italy and marble from Venezuela are used.

Among the most prominent products are tombstones, crosses, busts and zoomorphic figures. Generally, the intermediaries buy the works from the master craftsmen and then sell them in their stores installed in Cuenca and Chordeleg or are sent to other cities in the country, and in smaller amounts abroad.



1. Turtle in marble



2. Inmaculada Concepción Cathedral carved marble detail



3. Iglesia del Carmen Alto wáter fountain



**Pyrotechnics.** Pyrotechnics is a job that has been kept since colonial times, being used for religious celebrations, especially Corpus Christi, and nowadays they are used for all kinds of parties.

It is known as "cohetero" (rocket-pilot), the craftsman who makes gunpowder and other chemical based devices, becoming a very dangerous work that requires great knowledge and skill. The work generally involves the whole family and operators are rarely hired.

The main material used is gunpowder, in addition to other elements such as reed, coal, vegetable fibers, black wax, pitch, various types of paper and chemical elements, which are imported by some stores.

Among the produced items, the traditional castles stand out. They are reed structures that are several stories high. They are symbols of the secular rite that are used in the



festivities. It takes 3 weeks of work to build a castle. Products such as light rockets, sparklers, hand wheel, “crazy cow”, balloons, flying and other popular elements are also made.

Currently the craft workshops are located in the rural areas of the city and they are about 46, distributed in parishes such as: Nulti, Miraflores, San Joaquín, Baños, Turi, and in other cantons of Azuay.



1. Fireworks castle



2. Balloon



3. Pyrotechniques craftswoman



4. Indio Lorenzo and Vaca Loca

#### 4. Crafts.

The craft workshops of jewelry, embroidery, saddlery and ceramics are mostly located in the historic center of Cuenca. These workshops almost always have small dimensions and are divided into two areas, one for display and sale of products and another for the workshop in the back of the store. For other activities, the workshops are located in the periphery, emblematic neighborhoods and rural parishes, such as basketry,

pyrotechnics, marble, woodwork, Las Herrerías neighborhood, among the most prominent.

There is no artisan census of the city, however according to a study conducted by CIDAP and the University of Cuenca, based on the population and housing census that took place in 2010, it is estimated that there are 10,064 artisan artisans in Cuenca, which represents 77.2 % of the artisan population in the province of Azuay. Of which the majority are craftsmen in the sewing and embroidery trades, pottery, jewelry and silverware, wood carvers, basketry, leather, blacksmithing and forging.

Many artisans belong to several associations, which provide them with certain benefits such as trainings, sales spaces and the benefits of law, backed by the National Board of Artisan Defense.

## **5. Craft training.**

Most of the artisan crafts in Cuenca have been transmitted from generation to generation by artisans and families of exceptional mastery and creativity. The learning takes place in the workshops, where the operators and the apprentices work under the direction of a teacher. Formerly it began at a very young age, where the apprentice carried out activities related to tasks that would give them skills and experience in the management of materials and tools. At present, this modality is no longer very frequent, especially in handicrafts that do not represent greater economic income. Even so, the artisan does not limit access to anyone who wishes to learn and has turned his intention to instill in the youth the love for traditional crafts, which always make of Cuenca a rewarded city for these talented crafts people.

The Municipality of Cuenca has the Escuela Taller (Workshop School) which provides training in such areas as masonry, plumbing and gastronomy, but there is no public training school aimed at teaching crafts; while, private schools provide spaces to train those interested in traditional techniques. On the other hand, jewelry, ceramics and blacksmithing learning take place individually.

Institutions such as the Centro Interamericano de Artesanías y Artes Populares (Inter-American Center for Handicrafts and Popular Arts) –CIDAP- in partnership with artisan associations, the University of Cuenca and the University of Azuay, carry out training and improvement courses for artisans, mostly practical, with the objective of updating knowledge in terms of techniques, improvement of finishes, new designs, production costs, marketing and corporate image.

In the years 1994, 1996, 1998 and 1999, CIDAP, with the support of the Instituto Ítalo Latinoamericano -IILA- conducted training courses in the field of jewelry, in order to provide artisans with the possibility of knowing how to handle and manage equipment, new techniques and procedures suitable for the production in limited series of handmade jewels. These courses had a great acceptance and results of them, today there are master jewelers from several countries taking part in these training and production workshops.

At the moment, projects related to international cooperation are related to similar institutions such as CITE Catacaos (Peru), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency –JICA-, as well as professionals from Cuba and Colombia.

On the other hand, the two Cuencan universities that have in their academic offer design and arts studies: University of Cuenca, Faculty of Arts; Universidad del Azuay, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Art, have workshops for students learning, and they are closely linked with the crafts of the city and from them new professionals emerge with significant contributions in the field of crafts, art and design.

## **6. Dissemination and Marketing spaces**

### **6.1 Market.**

The commercialization of handicraft items is carried out through several channels such as direct sales in their own businesses, or through distribution in galleries throughout the country, and national and international sales. There are recognized artisans in their branches of expertise who receive requests, from abroad, for the elaboration of exclusive pieces to be sent outside the country, individually and, not for export, such is the case of

jewelry, gothic locks in blacksmithing, embroidery and straw (toquilla straw). The crafts of Cuenca contribute significantly to the economy of Ecuador. (Statistical supporting data-annexes are attached)

Local and national fairs, organized by various governmental institutions such as GADs and Prefectures are also a mechanism to drive the production and consumption of handicrafts. In recent years, at least 25 fairs were registered in the city of Cuenca, in the month of November, within the framework of the city's festivities.

## **6.2 Institutions**

### ***Centro Interamericano de Artesanías y Artes Populares –CIDAP-***

The greatest impulse to the training and promotion of craft trades has been carried out by CIDAP, an institution that throughout its 44 years has permanently organized events for local, national and international crafts: conventions, technical meetings, international seminars, inter-American meetings, exhibitions, museum shows, researches, competitions, fairs, workshops and training courses.

For 16 years, CIDAP has been developing the Handicrafts Festival of America, with the aim of creating spaces for dissemination, training and trade in quality crafts. This trade fair is considered - perhaps - the most relevant for the dissemination and support of the artisans of Cuenca, Ecuador and the rest of the continent, since it brings together more than 140 national and international artisans every year, and receives the visit of more than 300 thousand people (figure estimated by hotel and tourist references). In the Festival of the year 2017, it is estimated that during the five days that the Festival lasted, about 110 national artisans traded US \$ 316,908.00. (CIDAP source)

As of 2018, the institution organizes “ARDIS, Design Week for Handicrafts”, an event that seeks the momentum and construction of the dialogue on contemporary crafts.

In recognition of excellence and artisanal creativity, CIDAP awards two prizes, the CIDAP Medal for Ecuadorian and international artisans, and the ARDIS Award for artisans and national designers for contemporary crafts.



1, 2 y 3. Images from Festival de Artesanías de América, CIDAP 2018.

4. Winners from CIDAP awards 2018.

**Centro Municipal Artesanal –CEMUART-**. The Municipal Artisan Center was created in 1999, it is one of the most complete craft spaces in Cuenca and is visited by national and foreign tourists. It was acquired by the Illustrious Municipality of Cuenca from private individuals, in order to turn it into a commercial center for handicrafts.

The Municipal Artisan Center has its own administrative autonomy and financing, which is generated through the rental of spaces for the exhibition and commercialization of handicraft products and pieces, and has a regulation granted by the Illustrious Cantonal Council.

At present, CEMUART is determined to strengthen its field of action to become a recognized cultural center of Cuenca with local and national relevance. Through art and culture events, it seeks to highlight and preserve the intangible heritage of our city for the generation of opportunities for growth and development of enterprising artisans,

people with different abilities, who have the status of producers that transform the raw material into pieces and products that highlight our culture and identity as well as handmade elements of the region and country.

***Portal Regional de Artesanías de Cuenca (Cuencan Regional Portal of Handicrafts) – PRAC-*** The Regional Portal of Handicrafts of Cuenca is a complex that comprises 1600m<sup>2</sup> and its space is divided into a gallery of permanent exhibitions and an area for events on the second floor.

The Artisan Portal is literally “the entrance to the historic center of Cuenca”, it is located in the sector of the old neighborhood of San Blas, between Simón Bolívar street and Huayna Cápac avenue. In December 2016, it opened its doors with a renovated and wide square that preserves the old building in one of its parts. This new artisan complex is a tourist and economic attraction, a project that demanded an investment of 5.2 million dollars.

The gallery, which is located in the same place where the Fairs and Exhibitions Center of the extinct Economic Reconversion Center of Azuay, Cañar and Morona Santiago - CREA- used to operate, exhibits and markets more than 3 thousand handicrafts from different parts of the southern area , a space that seeks to enhance the work of artisans from Azuay and our culture and traditions embodied in art by the valuable hands of potters, painters, weavers, jewelers, carpenters and more.

## **7. Conclusion**

The Cuencan crafts have a deep connection with culture and identity. They are the reflection of its inhabitants and constitute an economic, tourist and communicative potential of the city. They are the expression of the people, of their past, their faith, symbolism and ideals. It will pass from generation to generation and will move forward interacting and adapting to modernity, and they will not disappear because they carry a strong cultural load of belonging and identity.

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Cuenca, July 23rd, 2019

**Bárbara Velasco**  
**President**  
**World Crafts Council –WCC Latin America**

Dear Mrs. Velasco:

Receive the warmest greetings from the City of Cuenca, Ecuador. Knowing the importance of the recovery and recognition of artisanal knowledge, and the contribution of this sector to cultural, economic, and social development, I respectfully request the addition of the City of Cuenca, Ecuador, to the World Crafts Council (WCC) Network as a "Diverse Craft City."

Sure to have the strong support of different sectors of our City in submitting this application and fulfilling the purpose of the WCC, which seeks to strengthen handcraft associations and promote brotherhood among the artisans of the world.

Best regards,

Pedro Palacios Ullauri  
**MAYOR OF CUENCA**

\* Documents and requested files are attached.



Cuenca, july 20th, 2019

Mrs. Bárbara Velasco  
President  
WORLD CRAFTS COUNCIL LATINOAMÉRICA

Dear Mrs. Velasco,

Receive a warm greeting from the representatives of Craft Trades of the City of Cuenca.

We send this letter in relation to the designation of Cuenca as "Diverse Artisan City", presented by the Mayor Ing. Pedro Palacios Ullauri.

We want to express our full support for this designation, we believe that Cuenca is beautiful not only because of the urban layout and its hospitable people, but also because of the artisan identity that makes Cuenca so dynamic. This city is made of mud, wrought iron, carvedwood, embroidery, straw shawls, goldsmithing and weaving, trades that are found in five neighborhoods where we artisans concentrate by crafts.

From our different activities, we supply with fine works to the local, national and international markets, this is a bet that attracts tourism, which fills our city with different culture, making it unique.

We, signatories of this letter, greatly appreciate your attention, waiting for a positive response to the procedures that are undertaking to achieve such a precious designation.

*Artista Gabriela de C*  
0100 24456-5

 ASOCIACION  
INTERPROFESIONAL  
DE ARTESANOS  
"EL OTORONGO"

Cuenca, july 20th, 2019

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President  
WORLD CRAFTS COUNCIL LATINOAMÉRICA

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Mariana de Jesús Velesaca Ayala.  
Presidenta

Gremio de Pirotécnicos del Azuay – Cantón Cuenca

Cuenca, July 20th, 2019

Mrs. Bárbara Velasco  
President  
WORLD CRAFTS COUNCIL LATINOAMÉRICA

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[illegible]



RECTORADO

Cuenca, July 19, 2019

Oficio No. R-410-19 UDA

**Mrs.**  
**Barbara Velasco**  
**President**  
**World Crafts Council – WCC Latin América**

Dear Mrs. Velasco:

Receive a warm greeting from Universidad del Azuay in Cuenca, Ecuador. We are writing in regard of Cuenca's application to be designated as a *Diverse Craft City*, presented by the city's mayor Mr. Pedro Palacios Ullauri.

We want to express our full support for this application as we believe crafts and artisanship in Cuenca should be recognized and enhanced for they embody our traditions. Culture, economic and social development within our city is enriched greatly from the contribution of craftspeople. Notwithstanding, the upcoming generation may have difficulty in recognizing its significance. The nomination of Cuenca as a *Diverse Craft City* from the World Crafts Council would aid to grow awareness of the high-value crafts hold not only in our community but globally.

Sincerely yours,

  
Prof. Francisco Salgado--Arteaga, Ph.D.  
Rector

/CUS.





**UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA**  
**Rectorado**

Av. 12 de Abril s/n y Agustín Cueva  
Edificio de Administración Central  
Cuenca- Ecuador

Oficio R. 2019-Nro.0668  
Cuenca, 15 de julio de 2019

Mrs. Barbara Velasco  
**President**  
**World Crafts Council – WCC Latin América**

Dear Mrs. Velasco, receive a warm greeting from The University of Cuenca, Ecuador. We are writing in regard of Cuenca's application to be designated as a "**Diverse Craft City**", presented by the city's mayor Mr. Pedro Palacios Ullauri.

We want to express our full support for this application as we believe that Cuenca is full of culture, diversity, art and artisanry. Being recognized by the UNESCO as a Cultural World Heritage Sites, our city highlights the art made by hand by the local community, especially, using paja toquilla, paint, silver, wood, among others.

Sincerely yours,

  
Eng. Pablo Vanegas Peralta, PhD.  
**RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CUENCA**

