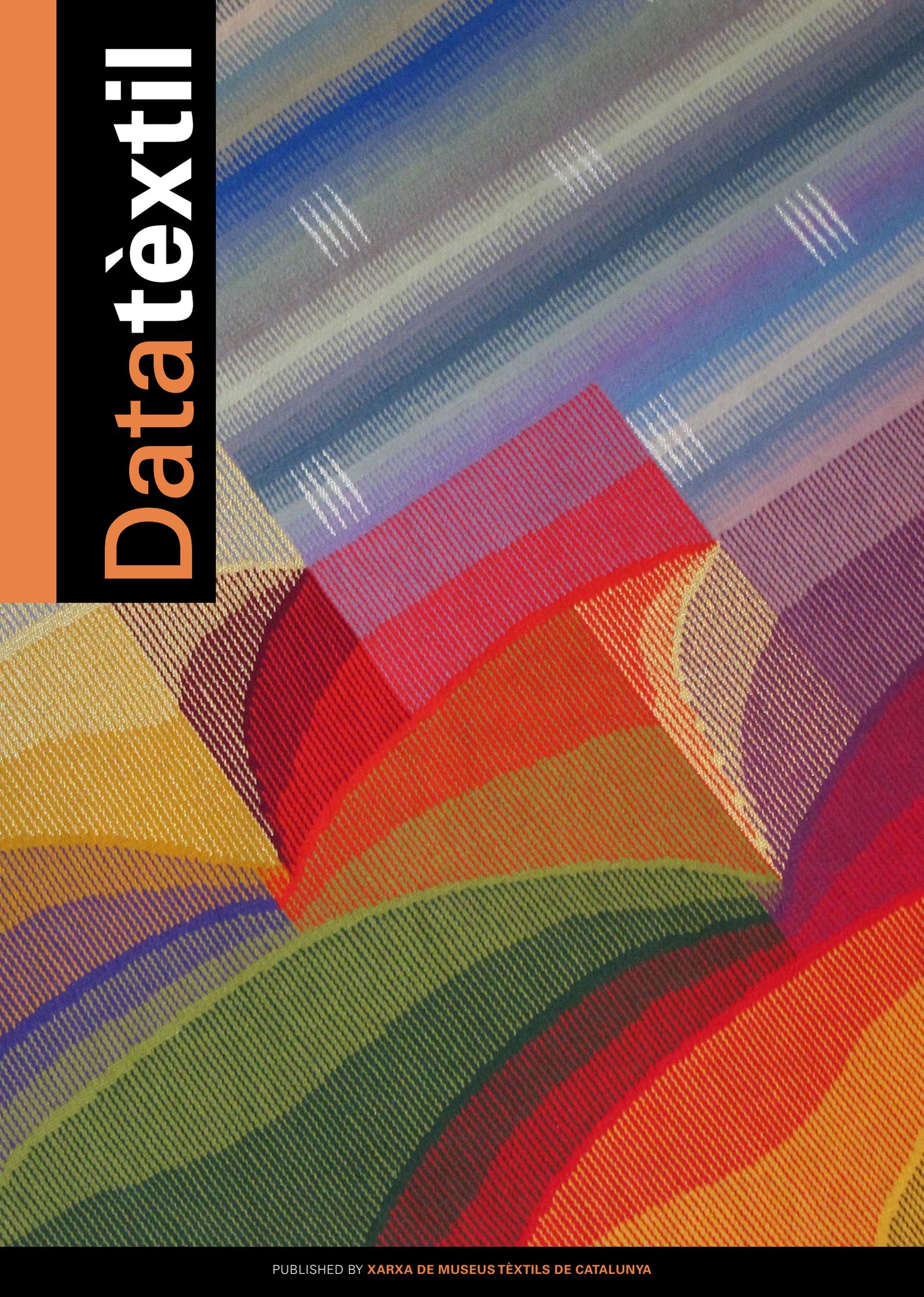


# Data tèxtil



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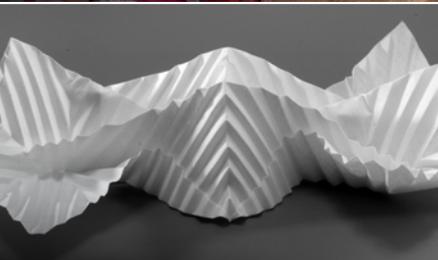
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MARÍA LÓPEZ REY

# Inventory of the archive of ladies' bras and undergarments Pio Vall "Corsés María" and "Confecciones María" (1915-1940)

by ROSA FIGUERAS MARTIN, Degree in Art history. Documentarian

## The woman, the enterprise

1 VENTOSA, Silvia: *Modelar el Cos. Treball i vida de les cotillaires de Barcelona*. Ed. Altafulla. p. 70.

Maria Verdaguer Massana was born in Tona in 1893. She married Pio Vall Amblàs, secretary of the Tona Town Council. They had five children. In April 1914, she got her degree as a teacher of *Fitting and Dressmaking* from the Central Martí academy, in Barcelona. In 1915, they set up *Pio Vall*, a company that manufactured ladies' undergarments, marked under the name *Corsés María* and *Confecciones María*. Following the tradition of this sort of family-run business, Maria Verdaguer designed the items, made the patterns and was in charge of the production workshop. She was aware of everything concerning quotes, orders and marketing, issues that her husband Pio Vall was in charge of.<sup>1</sup>



Maria Verdaguer Massana surrounded by women she was teaching to sew with her Singer machine, which the family still has in the workshop. 1909. Photo: VALLHOM archive.



<sup>2</sup> By 1919, this type of bra was already being made, as can be seen in the *Mariver* dossier. VALL (2017).

<sup>3</sup> The official website of the Spanish Patent and Trademark Office [<https://bit.ly/3aR8qT2>] shows an invention patent held by Maria Verdaguer with number 66403 for improving on corsets dated 11 February 1918.

<sup>4</sup> The family archive includes a letter from 1937 in which Maria Verdaguer asks to have her passport renewed because she would like to travel to Paris, as she had done previously, to find out what was going on there, to benefit her business. The letter is accompanied by one from her husband, Pio Vall, confirming her desire. FIGUERAS (2018).

<sup>5</sup> VALLHOM archive. Pio Vall to representative Juan Buxaderas, 1926. FIGUERAS (2018).

The fabrics were imported from France, silk, tulle, blonde, and combined with lace, appliqué and embroidery. They patented different models of bras, including the “globus”<sup>2</sup>, as well as a new system to make better, more hygienic corsets<sup>3</sup>. She was up to date on the latest fashions, travelling several times to Paris, where she visited fashion boutiques to get inspiration for her pieces.<sup>4</sup>

At a time when undergarments were custom made, by the customer, seamstress or corset-maker, Maria Verdaguer’s company was a pioneer in making pieces in different sizes, which were sold wholesale and distributed to shops. As her family explained, among the Catalan textile impresarios, “*Maria was considered a pioneer in manufacturing bras and corsets.*”

In a document from 1926, Pio Vall told Juan Buxaderas, the company’s representative in Melilla, “*There are bras that, in addition to the measurement, have another size, which is 1, 2, 3, etc. and this is the size of the breast.*”<sup>5</sup> The company had representatives all over Spain, including Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona, and also exported its wares to Cuba, the Philippines and Shanghai.

The Spanish Civil War disrupted business. We can consider the time before the war to be one period and the rest, after, when the company gradually reinvented itself, marketing its products under other brands, including *Mariver*. The collaboration of their children was invaluable to this process. Here we will look at the early days of the company.

## Inventory

Given the Vall Hom family’s interest in raising awareness of Maria Verdaguer and, by extension, the company, which was in business for over 70 years, we took a first look at the pieces that were still in the old workshop on Carrer Major in Tona. The contents make up an interesting archive, which includes the family’s documents. This first approach to the material showed that there were

6 My sincerest thanks to Silvia Carbonell, director of the Centre for Documentation and Textile Museum, and Mercè López, museum curator, for their unconditional help.

7 Corsets refers to pieces that were closed in the front with buttons or hook-and-eye closures and laced up in back, as well as those that were laced up through eyes on the back. Corsets is *cossets* in Catalan and *corpiños* in Spanish. In contrast to what could properly be called a bra.

orders placed by representatives, to suppliers, invoices, drawings by Pio Vall and Maria, among other information.

After screening the material, this inventory focused on the first pieces from the samples Maria Verdaguer herself had saved under the name: “... *peces d’abans de la guerra* ...” (pieces from before the war). These pieces are dated between 1915 and 1940. There are 246 in total. The study was done at the Centre for Documentation and Textile Museum of Terrassa.<sup>6</sup>

The inventory included labelling each piece with a reference number, taking note of the measurements and writing a description, with the type of materials and state of preservation. This information was compiled in a database. Each piece was documented graphically in three images. After this process of entering all of the pieces was complete, they were put into boxes lined with special paper in order to store them in the best possible conditions. In total, there are 246 pieces that have been studied, including 215 bras, 21 corsets<sup>7</sup>, 4 chemises, 3 girdles, 2 suspender belts and 1 pair of stockings.

Seen as a whole, the fabrics include: cotton, blonde, organdie, satin, silk, taffeta, knit, tulle, etc. There are also pieces made with entredeux.

In this period, colour was beginning to appear on undergarments. Previously, the dominant colour by far was the natural tone of the fabric, to which colours like pink and beige were added. Later on, there came blues, salmon and yellow. In this inventory, pink and salmon were dominant. The rest of the pieces were natural, beige, blue, cream, nude, light brown, purple, black and flower print.

The collection includes necklines with scallop stitching with open-stitch embroidery, finished with the same fabric, with a thin line of stitching, welt, tulle edging, zigzag, etc. The sides normally use the same system. The bottom of the pieces is often finished with a sateen band, or several rows of stitches, but there are also pieces with simply finished edges, with backstitching or a thin strip of backing inside. Many have one thing in common, the straps are made of passementerie tape in satin, silk or any other sort of fancy fabric.

Most of the bras have elastic hook-and-eye clasps, and mother-of-pearl or bakelite buttons, as well as fabric hooks. Some of the older pieces have metal or thread eyes, which were laced up, as we also see on some of the chemises.

As these pieces were used for displays, many have the pattern number on a tag, which are: round metal attached with a pin or cardboard with a metal eye, on the older pieces, and adhesive labels, labels pinned on or sewed into the piece. Sometimes, when there isn’t a label, the pattern number is written in blue or red ink or in pencil. They usually have additional information, such as the price per unit or dozen and even in some cases the colours available. This made it easier for the representatives.



Example of “globus”  
bra. COVALLHOM046.  
Photo: R. Figueras.

### “Globus” bra

This type of bra, as the family explains, was made from 1919. We know it was patented. The company regularly patented bras and other dressmaking elements in this period. The pattern for the “globus” bra was very simple. It was normally composed of four symmetrical pieces, one round piece that encircled the breast with darts to make it puff out, which would be the cup, and a long band. They were made in all possible variants.

We can say that nearly 99% of the pieces are in excellent conditions. The few issues found include: loose stitches, openings in the fabric, holes and small stains. Their conditions are surprising, in fact, as they are between 78 and 90 years old.

### Selection and dating

Documenting the pieces in this inventory also gave us more precise dates, from the note Maria Verdaguer herself had left saying they were “...*pieces from before the war...*”.

The company’s first years coincided with the first bras, simple with the purpose of hiding, flattening the breasts, in line with the fashion of that time, and the chemise-pants that would later become slips. The lowest pattern numbers, on the labels, are found on the oldest pieces. The main fabrics are poplin (H), batiste (B)<sup>8</sup> and tulle. At this point they are corselets, with double claps in front with fabric eyes and mother-of-pearl buttons and eyes in back. In some cases, they have boning and the simple pattern of the bra has a sort of open-stitch embroidery to decorate the piece or is finished with scallop stitching. There are models that use the “globus” type pattern to highlight the bust: bras, corselets and chemises from the 1920s. The colours are mainly natural, pink and salmon is beginning to be introduced.

<sup>8</sup> “...La tela popelín se indica abreviada con una H, y la batista con B...” (Poplin fabric was abbreviated with an H and batiste with a B) Pio Vall explained to his representative in Melilla, Juan Buxaderas, in a documented dated in Tona on 23 May 1926. FIGUERAS (2018).

► Corselet. COVALLHOM001.  
Photo: R. Figueras.



▲ Band-style bra. COVALLHOM070.  
Photo: R. Figueras.



► Shirt/trousers. This used the same system improving on corsets to remove the boning, making it easier to wash the item. COVALLHOM213.  
Photo: R. Figueras.

Shirt/bodysuit with open back,  
dated 1934. COVALLHOM215.  
Photo: R. Figueras.



9 GAVARRÓN, Lola: *Piel de ángel*. Tusquets ed. p. 218.

In the late 1920s, around 1928, stockings move upward and garters were replaced by suspender belts<sup>9</sup>. The inventory includes two examples that curiously were worn with bras made of the same type of passementerie: in green print crepe with a grosgrain ribbon.

As the 1930s advanced, the bra patterns became more complex yet also more polished, finished with quicker solutions: the fabric eyes were replaced with elastic ones, the bottom finished in sateen ribbon, which is much easier to put on. The corselet gradually disappeared. In addition to basic fabrics like cotton and tulle, at this point the most noteworthy types were: knit, blonde, satin,



► Model patented in 1931.  
COVALLHOM041.  
Photo: R. Figueras.

► Model registered in 1940.  
COVALLHOM024.  
Photo: R. Figueras.



as well as some pieces in crepe, with every possible combination. There are bras that could have been inspired by those of the Kestos brand, shaped like a triangle with crossed bands. Bras made with entredeux, very common at that time, and a chemise/bodysuit labelled 1934 with an open back. This was when dresses with open backs became popular.

The inventory of these 246 pieces gives us a first look at the undergarments that were worn between 1918 and the 1930s. At that point, both inner and outerwear changed radically. Corsets and shifts began to disappear, giving way to other types of undergarments that were more suited to the outerwear of the time. Lighter, more appropriate for the needs of women in those years. ●

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# Mirror of realities

## Valencian *llaurador* outfits and how they were constructed

by F. XAVIER RAUSELL ADRIÁN,  
Researcher of traditional clothing of Valencia

*“Although clothing for the festivities  
continue to be created from scratch, they will never  
lose sight of their model, which seeks to remain  
firmly anchored in the past.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> TRESCOLÍ, O., RAUSELL, F. Xavier, OLIVARES, Enric, *Vestir-se per a la festa. El ball de les llauradores d'Algemesí*. Exhibition catalogue, 2005. Algemesí. p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> TRESCOLÍ, O., RAUSELL, F. Xavier, OLIVARES, Enric, *Vestir-se per a la festa. El ball de les llauradores d'Algemesí*. Exhibition catalogue, 2005. Algemesí. p. 7.

The various historical perspectives on our traditional clothing have often led us to present isolated reflections in a mirror that shows us only what we want to see. This article takes a different approach to studying our most iconic, unique garments, from a distance, consolidating all of the perspectives that have been given on clothing that comes from the farming world in the agricultural land that surrounded, and still does today residually, the great city of Valencia. One after another, these reflections will build an image, a linear reading of our representative historical clothing, the construction of an outfit with clearly nationalistic or regionalistic connotations depending on who is looking at it.

The evolution of international fashion and its consolidation in the Valencian community, the appearance of new materials and fabrics, the colour changes of clothing that reflects the psychological state of the wearers, its use and their customs, the preservation, conservation and display of some of these pieces from the museum archives as well as other items that will help put them in context, will show clothing that is ever-changing, reinterpreted, adapted or repurposed to become a living expression of a sense of being different.

The clothing worn today by the *fallas* committees, the folklore dance group, draw directly from this evolution that has taken place from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But it was the 20<sup>th</sup> century that made this what it is today, showing the strong influence of *fallas* fashion promoted by the industry behind it and going against the ongoing search for virginal purity of folklore groups that often base their approaches on the aristocratic foundations of clothing that was never worn by the working classes. Both with light and shadows, correct answers and ups and downs, manipulations and flagrant mystifications, aesthetic aberrations or simple proposals of a popular outfit that evolves and adapts to the new challenges of continuing to be recognisable, representative clothing.<sup>2</sup>



Laurent, 1878. Valencian couple who attended the wedding of Alfonso XII and Maria de las Mercedes.



F. Vela, 17 February 1890.  
Valencian woman.

3 TRESCOLÍ, O., RAUSELL, F. Xavier, OLIVARES, Enric, *Vestir-se per a la festa. El ball de les llauradores d'Algemesí*. Exhibition catalogue, 2005. Algemesí. p. 7.

4 Idem pp. 7-8.

*“Regardless, the interpretation we give this Valencian clothing shows that idealisation and reality end up overlapping, often to the point of confusing the romantic search for a past quotidian life with the reinvention of this life through a new lens, completely contemporary and up-to-date, and for very specific purposes.”<sup>3</sup>*

### **The heritage status of the outfits of the Valencian *llaurador* and *llauradora***

*“...the aspects that lead us to imagine rather idyllically a lost past could not be more current. The laws, one after another, on heritage (including ethnology and folklore) were put in place mainly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, to put an even finer point on it, from the 1980s. This is precisely the reality that leads us now to wonder about topics like traditional clothing from Valencia, its evolution, aspects associated with dancing from a more systematic, scientific manner, if you’ll allow the term. But why?, people will ask. It probably has something to do with the role of democratic town councils and the concerns of academics around 1979. At that time, any aspects that defined a people, a specific community, a group, began to be used as assets and instruments of identity, facing the homogenising inertia that still would not disappear. And at the same time, as this mystical recuperated past took shape, a feeling of identity grew, so historical research and the lauded vernacular identity began to take parallel paths.”<sup>4</sup>*



Agrupació Folklorica de Torrent. 1930s.

<sup>5</sup> See works by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1988).

The Valencian nationalism that swept our region calling for, and achieving, an autonomic statue of its own, led to an escalation in the research and re-valorisation of everything Valencian over the final years of the 1970s and practically all of the following decade. Language, culture, territory and especially our backstory full of quotidian events, now we would say ethnological, sought out the lifestyles and customs of our ancestors, like anyone searching for the origin of the myth, in order to build a new present after forty years of dictatorship. And among these customs, clothing, garments that despite being aware they were created only a century ago were justified by a remote antiquity, a far older time, oddly enough in the century when we lost our own laws, as if seeking out a temporal continuity with that time before the dissolution. The invention of tradition.<sup>5</sup>

It is a well-known fact that the *fallas* festival certified the reinvention of the men's dress at the 1964 Congrés Faller in order to unify the image presented at

*Llauradors* in the Horta region, 20<sup>th</sup> century. Popular dance group Les Folies de Carcaixent.



<sup>6</sup> The women's outfit had a long-sleeve haqueton, iridescent green-gold or brown silk skirt, white lace shawl, shoes and ornate black pinafore with lace and jet. Men wore the well-known *torrentí* suit in black sateen with a red cloth belt, shirt with lace on the chest, *rodina*, white trousers and espadrilles.

<sup>7</sup> See the traditional outfit in Alicante. RAUSELL ADRIAN, F. X., *Indumentària tradicional valenciana, v. II. La construcció del vestit tradicional valencià*. Andana Editorial, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> MEDINA RAMOS, A., LINARES ALBERT, S., *Gastón Castelló y las Hogueras de San Juan, 1928-2000. Su manera de interpretar este arte efímero*. Alicante. Patronat Municipal de Cultura, Alicante City Council 2002. p. 68.

the offering of flowers to Our Lady of the Forsaken. The press of the time, which called the event *the maximum popular and religious expression of the Valencian people*, also looked kindly on making the male members of the commissions all look the same. Before then men didn't wear traditional dress, although boys did wear one of three common outfits: the iconic sirwal trousers, the colourful *torrentí* suit or the sombre long trousers and doublet. They called for all men to wear what was called the *panderola* suit. This outfit had come about in years past in the city of Castelló de la Plana, with the advent of popular clothing that coalesced into the well-known outfits of the *llauradora* and *llaurador* of Castelló.<sup>6</sup> In 1942, created for the operetta by Matilde Salvador, *La filla del rei Barbut*, Lluís Sales Boli put together a figure with today's look. And, like the wind it swept our lands from top to bottom, in Alicante the well-known outfit of the *Alicante bride* was created from scratch around 1977 and pushed aside forever, without any controversy or dissenting voices, the traditional dress of the *xixonera* or *llauradora* from the Alicante countryside.<sup>7</sup>

“...an award was also proposed for the commissions with the most beautiful girls dressed up in the typical outfit, which was that of the *xixonera*, which is the most typical and taken for the whole county of Alicante.”<sup>8</sup>

9 RAUSELL ADRIAN,  
F. X., *Indumentària  
tradicional valenciana, v.  
II. La construcció del vestit  
tradicional valencià*. Andana  
Editorial, 2015. Introduction.

This is how these “regional” outfits became artificially uniform through stereotyping and political and institutional manipulation of the representative image. The image and essence of the outfits of the *llaurador* and *llauradora* with all sorts of profound contents and identity values are pressed into the service of the regime and adapted to new uses. Additionally, the towns, with the distance that comes from being far from everything going on in the city, adapted the same outfit or chose a different one, with old and new pieces, to serve the same function. A new way of life led to new needs that had to be addressed. Offerings, gatherings with authorities, *fallas* and festival commissions, inaugurations and dance groups of the women’s branch of the Falange political movement used them, and they were a showcase for the latest in traditional clothing.

Our traditional clothing has been considered just another heritage item since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Alongside other artistic, architectural, festive or cultural works, traditional Valencian clothing must also be considered something that must be cultivated, studied and safeguarded in order to preserve and protect it over time, serving as a representative icon of the Valencian people and their cultural, social and festive nature.

### **Old-fashioned clothing, festive clothing and traditional clothing**

*“Contemporary Valencian culture, created on the foundations of the Renaissance in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and continuing throughout the Republic and Franco’s dictatorship, experienced a certain elitist schizophrenia from the 1960s that led to the abandonment and rejection of all the values of identity that had been commonplace since the end of the previous century. Political confrontation became polarised around the highbrow and the popular, with all the Valencian symbols called into question, seeking vindictive fighting and division around our most sacred symbols. Since then, the language, flag and name of the region marked the conflict that also came to tackle iconic imagery, also heavy with the weight of the dictatorship that had manipulated it for nation-building. With the new democracy, traditional clothing had to be re-purified, dignified and accepted by the community, which quickly, not wanting to accept the origins of the iconic traditional outfits in the Renaissance, searched for a new model focusing once again on what had happened earlier, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>9</sup>*

Male *llaurador*, 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Popular dance group  
Les Folies de Carcaixent.



**10** The puffiness of the skirts and desire to get rid of the traditional hairstyle with a bun on either side of the head, in order to match the hairstyle to that of the dress, have become particularly controversial in recent years. They don't take into account, however, that the later loose hairstyle also has romantic roots, common from the mid-19th century.

**11** *Indumentària tradicional valenciana vol. I. Matèries primeres, color i ornamentació en la roba tradicional, and Indumentària tradicional valenciana vol. II. La construcció del vestit tradicional valencià.* Andana editorial, Valencia 2014 and 2015.

The process that began in that period is still under way. The rejection of the iconic outfit by those with more progressive political leanings is very clear and often attempts to manipulate the use of a certain figure or hairstyle<sup>10</sup> without any historical basis.

In addition to all of this mess, hardly anyone is aware of clothing studies that have dealt with this topic scientifically. Shops and seamstresses using mistaken concept only roil the whole mess up even further, with the general public seeking stereotypes or uniforms that will allow them to be well dressed according to their chosen model. Old-fashioned clothing, quotidian clothing, festive clothing and traditional clothing may seem to be synonyms but they each have a different meaning. Based on the work by Rausell<sup>11</sup>, a clear differentiation between these terms has been established. Old-fashioned clothing would be synonymous with a reproduction of any garment or fashion from history, meaning at least one hundred years ago, differentiating between quotidian clothing, festive clothing and clothing for rituals, each used in a different context. On the other hand, traditional clothing is that created to represent the region, the outfits worn by Valencians with all their particularities, evolutions and differences, which would vary depending on the period and purchasing power of the wearer.

12 VANDAEEL, M., *Manual teórico y práctico del sastrero o tratado completo y simplificado de este arte, originally written in French by M. Vandael and translated into Spanish by José Tamarón, Madrid 1836. Imprenta de los Hijos de Doña Catalina Piñuela, calle del Amor de Dios, issue 7. p. 7. B.N.*

13 VANDAEEL, M., *Manual teórico y práctico del sastrero o tratado completo y simplificado de este arte, originally written in French by M. Vandael and translated into Spanish by José Tamarón, Madrid 1836. Imprenta de los Hijos de Doña Catalina Piñuela, calle del Amor de Dios, issue 7. p. 7. B.N.*

## Looking to the past

The romantic fashion that became popular in Spain after the 1840s had already spread throughout Europe twenty years earlier. It grew out of the rationalism of the Enlightenment and Classicism, prioritising individualistic and nationalistic feelings, factors that would lead to the revolution of 1868 that resulted in the deposition of Queen Isabella II. The convulsive 19<sup>th</sup> century reinterpreted the decorative arts as fashion, mainly based on characteristics from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, although reformulated. This movement sought to tie these new times to previous periods, politically, under the premise of a politico-social justification now with a conservative slant. Creating clothing for each specific use shows daily wear that is separate from other festive and representative clothing, where the feeling of reverence for the past is more pronounced.<sup>12</sup> The clothes worn by this new social order diversified an increasingly homogenising clothing selection that sought to create stereotypes in order to consolidate, visually and through folklore, the historical, cultural and social difference of European people.

*“Old-fashioned luxury and the sort of art that gave a sense of superiority have disappeared, leaving in their place comfort and simplicity.”<sup>13</sup>*

The historicism of romantic fashion, the light, flowy ballet skirts, their accessories, the patternmaking and sewing, marked traditional clothing, adapting it to new times and allowing technical advances and fashion to influence it, always changing and adapting in an ongoing process of reinvention.

## Bourgeoisie fancy dress, modern young women dressed up as farmers

This period of modernisation of Valencian society that effected social, urban and economic changes also led to a reflection on traditional rural life, that which had allowed the city to grow and supported it and which also surrounded and constrained it. The idealisation of this rural world, in contrast to the urban lifestyle, led the dominant bourgeois class to become interested in its fashions and customs, and built a partial, biased perspective of it based on the more folkloric, festive and whimsical aspects of the people. The huts, the popular dances, the exuberance of the landscape and, especially, the idealisation of the festive clothing created the illusion of a fertile land, a flower garden, the smell

Female *llauradora*, mid-20th century. Popular dance group Les Folies de Carcaixent. See more.



14 “El ‘Levante feliz’ a través de la cámara o la imagen costumbrista en los primeros años del cine en Valencia”.

ORTIZ VILLETÀ, À., PIQUERAS GÓMEZ, M<sup>a</sup> J., in *A propósito de Cuesta. Escritos sobre los comienzos del cine español 1896-1920*. Juan Ignacio Lahoz Rodrigo, coordinator. Ediciones de la Filmoteca, documents. Generalitat Valenciana, IVAC. Valencia June 2010, pp. 337-347.

15 TRESCOLÍ, O., RAUSELL, F. Xavier, OLIVARES, Enric, *Vestir-se per a la festa. El ball de les llauradores d’Algemesí*. Exhibition catalogue, 2005. Algemesí. p. 22.

of orange blossoms, where light, music and colour would end up defining what would later become known as the *levante feliz*.<sup>14</sup>

The young bourgeois of Valencia began to wear traditional clothing as a country costume at the carnival balls they hosted. The stereotype of clothing from other areas of Spain were also present: *manolas*, gypsies, Galicians, Basques and Catalans combined with the Valencian *llauradoras*, dressed in dazzling fashion. Their profiles, bodies and some of their accessories that we can see in photographs from that period portray these girls idyllically, with lots or very noteworthy jewellery, silk skirts, shawls and pinafores embroidered with golden metal thread, hoop skirts and combs in their hair.

*“In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the representative Valencian outfit for women and men was based on a well-known historical background, we can therefore say the regional dress that defined the Valencian identity had already been created.”<sup>15</sup>*

16 “De la comparsa de Valencia”. *Diario de Cordoba. De comercio, industria, administración, noticias y avisos. Tuesday 29 January 1878. Issue 8211. Year XXIX.*

### **Valencian people in Madrid, at the wedding of Alfonso XII and Maria de las Mercedes**

The wedding of Alfonso XII and Maria de las Mercedes in Madrid on 30 January 1878 was attended by provincial representatives that embodied the rural element of the State to entertain the people of Madrid. Folklore dance groups from Castelló, Valencia and Alicante showcased their rich clothing, which provided the foundation for the stereotyped models, serving in Valencia and Alicante to create the modern regional dress although Castelló abandoned the outfit presented. The men and women’s rich fabrics comprised an outfit that was a continuation of the clothing worn by the young bourgeoisie in fancy dress for Carnival, with brocade and swivel-weave fabrics, as well as shawls and pinafores in tulle embroidered with metal thread. The men were more sombre, with dark colours, and elegant.

*“Valencia’s dancers surely stand out the most from the rest, for their rich and stylish outfits. They are beautiful women from the countryside, as can be seen in their fresh faces. They wear a short skirt of fabric embroidered in gold and silver, a satin doublet in various colours with very tight sleeves; white embroidered silk stockings and white satin shoes. Their hair is piled high with a large spoon-shaped comb, in gold-plated silver; gold pins with fine pearl details, large earrings in the same style, and several strings of pearls around their necks; on their arms, they carry small wicker baskets and fruit and flowers. The menswear varies, as some wear a coloured velvet waistcoat, a large coloured sash, sirwal trousers, white stockings and espadrilles, with a silk handkerchief on their head; others wear a black jacket, waistcoat, embroidered shirt, dark trousers, silk stockings and espadrilles, and a few wear a round hat and colourful handkerchief.”<sup>16</sup>*

### **The popular clothing of dance groups and the dances of towns in the Horta region**

*“Between the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the second and third decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, folklore dance groups, which were especially active both in Spain and abroad after the Bourbon Restoration (1874-1931) and the Second Republic (1931-1939)*

17 RAUSELL ADRIÁN, F. X., op, cit. V.II. p. 210.

18 RODRÍGUEZ LLORENS, R., *Francisco Miralles. Pasos de baile para una leyenda*. Leixam edicions. Tavernes Blanques, Valencia 2015. pp. 21-22.

*under the name Quadros de bailes y cantos populares valencianos, showcased the rich regional folklore by using opulent clothing that already reflected the stereotypical imagery, adapted to dancing. Following in the footsteps of the bolero dancers who used to perform at the interval at the theatre, from the last quarter of the 19th century this group needed to take on typical dress, recognisable and coordinated, based on the vision of traditional clothing that was identifiable with being from Valencia. Previously, however, they also dressed up as bullfighters, majas and in a wide variety of other costumes.”<sup>17</sup>*

The July fair in Valencia, from 1891, became the centre of performances and showcased the strength and rivalry between the groups. Decked out in traditional style, their outfits were adapted in typical ways used for any dance costumes. The women wore multi-coloured silk and elaborate accessories, with different types of bodices and the characteristic hairstyle with a bun on either side of the head. Men, more sombre, often wore different clothing, depending on the group. Some wore sirwal trousers, breeches and a justacorps, the well-known *traje de torrentí*, or trousers made of coloured fabrics that fit the theme of the performances of the time.

Clothing-hire businesses or the dance troupes themselves made the outfits that would be used as models, as would their repertoires, for other dance groups in Horta, Ribera and Safor, mainly.

*“Paco Miralles’ name started to be heard at festivities in the Horta region and at folklore shows in the city. Soon his mother, who was very handy, decided to sew him a dance outfit and made one in the fashion of a bullfighter, as it was very common for dancers at that time to wear this sort of costume (...) Later, the dancer would have his bullfighter costumes made in Madrid, commissioning them from the same tailor who dressed the famous matador Bombita. For dancing, however, they didn’t have to put in the protective armour that other bullfighters needed, as it made the outfit very stiff and heavy, making it difficult to dance in (...) When Paquito took the stage, the whole audience went silent. He danced alone, dressed as a sailor, which at the time was called the English dance...”<sup>18</sup>*



*Llauradors*, 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Popular dance group Les Folies  
de Carcaixent.

## The Renaissance

19 TRESCOLÍ, O., RAUSELL, F. Xavier, OLIVARES, Enric, *Vestir-se per a la festa. El ball de les llauradores d'Algemesí*. Exhibition catalogue, 2005. Algemesí. p. 23.

Distinguished poet Teodor Llorente, who won the Flor Natural award at the poetry contest called the Jocs Florals, chose his daughter Maria as the queen. Dressed in clothing reminiscent of, or attempting to recreate, that which at that time was understood as traditional Valencia, old-fashioned, wasn't very different from what had been worn at the popular dances for the royal wedding the previous year. Although it sought to recreate the idyllic imagery of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the differences were very clear and noticeable. A representative outfit made of top-quality fabrics and accessories for a social elite had been established as a reference for making outfits, also representative, for the working classes. The queen's dazzling outfit would be adapted to the financial situation of the women who would later wear it.

*“A more or less standardised version of the Valencian llauradora was institutionalised, following the example of 18<sup>th</sup>-century aristocrats. The foundations were laid for the typical and stereotypical Valencian outfit, and a variant that drew inspiration from the past selectively was established. Its creators, from the more comfortable classes of Valencian society at the time, chose elements that were common among upper-class clothing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which they identified with.”<sup>19</sup>*

## Pepita Samper's dress

20 ALMELA i VIVES, F.,  
*Historia del vestido de la  
labradora valenciana*. Semana  
Gráfica, Valencia, 1962. p. 33.

*“It was what José Mateu has shown using such an appropriate model as Ms Samper. It was great in how it won out over the requests of the senses; noble in its use of less common materials; magnificent because it knew no stinginess, only splendour and ostentation.”<sup>20</sup>*

Ms Pepita Samper Bono's dress and beauty captivated the judges of the first Miss Spain contest. Created by a local seamstress following the instruction of ceramicist J. Mateu, it once again brought back the splendour and beauty of the old Valencian *llauradora* outfits after the gradual distortion and blurring of the traditional Valencian clothing in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Traditional clothing spread and became more popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which meant many Valencian women wore these outfits to all sorts of events. Parades, offerings, Floral Games, folklore dances and processions of all sorts often had many young people dressed in the style of the old *llauradores* of the Horta de Valencia. And it is this, the widespread use of the outfits by the working classes, that made it necessary to adapt the clothing, using more affordable fabrics and accessories than those worn by the bourgeois young women in the capital. These dazzling outfits were used as the model to create skirts, bodices, shawls, pinafores and jewellery in less expensive materials. Some silk fabrics, especially damask, but mainly printed cotton, tulle and sequins filled these outfits, seeking to create an imaginary image of a princess or queen from a fairy tale.

Pepita Samper Bono's dress was made of swivel-weave fabric by the Garin fashion house. The well-known Valencian design was interwoven with colours to create a bodice and skirt, in line with the fashion of the time, with a little pad or a bustle. They were also made with a long-sleeve black velvet haqueton, without boning, with a pointed front, like the romantic bodices and a pair of shawls and pinafores, in tulle, batiste and silk, embroidered with golden thread. The hairstyle, also with many elements taken from the fashion of the day, was topped with the combs and jewellery, necklace and earrings.

## Clothing for the *fallas* festival

Pepita Samper was the first woman to dress up for the *fallas* festival. Her popularity spread when she represented Spain at the global beauty contest held in Paris on 7 February 1929. Samper, who also won this contest, stepped down in a sign of mourning after the death of Maria Christina of Austria, mother

Pepita Bixquert, Valencian hairstyle. 20<sup>th</sup> century.



21 TRESCOLÍ, O., RAUSELL, F. Xavier, OLIVARES, Enric, *Vestir-se...*, op. cit., p. 27.

of Alfonso XIII, the previous day. This garnered further admiration for this ambassador, dressed in the Valencian style, and the *fallas* women paid tribute to her that year, making her the predecessor of the *Fallera Major de València*.

Since then, the dress worn by the holder of this honorific title, queen of the *fallas* festivities, although subject to all sorts of interpretations, often serves as the model for the rest of the *fallas* women. In the 1930s, the Valencian dress was worn by the women in the *fallas* commissions at the same time these groups were becoming the main feast day celebration of the city of Valencia. One of the rituals created was adopting, early on, the outfit based on what the *llauradors* in the Horta region wore, although it has passed through the stereotyping sieve of the Renaissance, as an appropriate costume for the festivities. *It was adapted, however, to include more fashionable details that had more to do with the desire to innovate each year than that of returning to the region's roots.*"<sup>21</sup>

The importance of clothing in the world of the *fallas*, and the gratuitous exaltation of women as the stars of festivities, is so great that the celebration today would be nothing without these two elements, both of which come from the tradition of the Floral Games.

22 A paradigmatic case that comes up cyclically in the world of the *fallas* is the use of bands, the well-known panderola outfit (the only one created expressly for the *fallas* festivities) and the use of insignias, the colours of the sashes and tassels, rewards, etc.

## Regionalism, clothing for patriotic purposes

With the dictatorship, political manipulation of traditional clothing would become even clearer, especially in creating symbols and outfits<sup>22</sup>. The new folklore groups that were set up, now known as *Coros y danzas de la Sección Femenina* or *Educación y Descanso*, used standardised clothing presented to the groups in one or two models: the well-known *llauradora* or *festal*, and the mountain style.

The former followed the patterns and design that had already become the stereotypical *llauradora* outfit, now made in cotton, rayon or tulle. This model was used in towns along the coast in the three provinces, while the latter, known as the mountain style, offered a stereotypical version of the traditions from the counties of Alcoia and Vall d'Albaida, with a multi-colour wool skirt in horizontal stripes, black pinafore, Manila or tulle shawl and gold embroidery. In addition to these, there were several local outfits that set apart towns like Requena, Onil, Ibi, Biar and Vinaròs.

Under all sorts of pressure from fashion, the skirts became longer or shorter as those used in daily wear did the same. This also happened with hairstyles, backcombing, quiffs, hair dye, etc., combined with combs of various sizes: the higher the hair, the higher the comb. The white shoes were also a distinguishing feature, many with a platform sole and silk tassel, generally rayon, as decoration.

With the unification of the clothing used under the mandate of the 1964 *Congrés Faller*, which created what is known as the *panderola* outfit for *fallas* men, a new model of clothing was imposed for men, which has been much criticised and discredited in recent years. It drew from the well-known *torrentí* suit with trousers, substituting the old cloth belt for a sash with tassels, creating a colour-based hierarchy for the members of the commission. This model didn't include anything for the head and, while in the beginning they wore espadrilles, these were soon replaced with fashionable shoes of the time. This standardisation of men's clothing created a military-style hierarchy within the commission, reinventing tradition now under the guise of a supposed social equality that was consolidated around the greatest *fallas* act of all, the offering of flowers.

## New lines of research

23 BOUCHER, F., *Historia del traje en occidente*. GGmoda. 2009. Barcelona. p. 393.

*“The influence of art, which had been felt in the evolution of clothing, especially from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was even stronger in the Baroque period. Between the 1720s and the 1770s, indestructible ties between clothing and Baroque tastes were created, the latter considered an appeal to imagination and virtuosity.”*<sup>23</sup>

The traditional Valencian preference for shiny silk fabrics in bold, contrasting colours and elaborate accessories that adapt to a historical construction that has changed and evolved our representative clothing has also led to a search for its origins, an attempt to return to them and find the exact point in which the Valencian traditional clothing was created. Ongoing historical perspectives that have set out to *re-purify* the traditional Valencian clothing has only reinterpreted it through a contemporary lens. It drew inspiration from the old dresses worn *traditionally in Valencia* by the dance groups that attended Alfonso XII's wedding in 1878, but also from the outfit worn by Maria Llorente in 1879, or by Pepita Samper in 1929 or by the *fallas* women in the commissions in the capital from 1940. All of the glimpses into this mirror of history have shown us a deformed, blurry vision that we have to decode and adapt to our needs, which we have had to create and cultivate in order to carry on, in essence dressing in our own particular way, in a Valencian manner. ●

# Mattia Giegher and the first work published on folded centrepieces

by JOAN SALLAS I CAMPMANY

Mattia or Matthia Giegher, as German Matthias Jäger was known, was born around 1589 in Moosburg, the Duchy of Bavaria, and died roughly in 1632, probably in Padua, the Republic of Venice. He wrote the first published work on how to fold napkins and tablecloths.

There is very little information on Giegher's life and most of what there is has been gleaned from his own books, published in Padua in Italian. His surname means 'hunter' in German and, to make it easier for Italians to read, he changed the spelling to Giegher, which is how he is referred to in modern bibliography. This name change led some older authors to mistakenly refer to him as Geiger, which in German means 'violinist'. On the frontispiece of his last book, Giegher published the Jäger family coat of arms, with three hunting horns, a heraldic motif that appears on several gravestones at Johanniskirche, a 15<sup>th</sup> century church in Moosburg.

Frontispiece from  
"Li Tre Trattati" with picture  
of the author, family coat  
of arms and carving tools.



Title of the treatise  
"Trattato delle Piegature",  
printed in "Li Tre Trattati".



1 GIEGHER, Mattia: "Il Trinciante". Padova: Martini, 1621

2 GIEGHER, Mattia: "Lo Scalco". Padova: Crivellari, 1623

3 GIEGHER, Mattia: *Li Tre trattati*. Padova: Guareschi, 1629

4 GIEGHER, Mattia: *Li Tre trattati*. Padova: Frambotto 1639

5 "Ecco dunque, che tu solo te n'hai differito il godimento: ma tanto più l'haura in grado, per la notabil differenza, che vi scorgerai da cert'altra Operetta, che forse ti fara capitata alle mani, più tosto mal abozzata, che in tutto ricavata da questo suo Originale, come pur potea farsi de chi non ha saputo senon dichiararsene altertando mal'auueduto imitatore, quantoch'era obligato di riserbarne la gloria al vero Autore, e contentarsi di non tacere quel, che ben noto ad vna Città intiera Rendine gratia al caso [...]"

Like many other Germans who were drawn by the Italian Renaissance just before the Thirty Years' War, in 1616, at the age of 22, young Giegher moved to Padua, then part of the Republic of Venice, where he learned Italian customs of carving, table setting and napkin folding. From the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, these activities were very important in the Italian courts, and Giegher studied them in Padua, where he compiled them in treatises on his experience as a carver in "Il Trinciante",<sup>1</sup> as a server in "Lo Scalco",<sup>2</sup> and as a napkin folder in "Trattato delle Piegature". Although the first and second treatises were published separately, the third was bound with the first two and published under the title *Li Tre Trattati*, in 1629,<sup>3</sup> and posthumously in 1639,<sup>4</sup> when the publisher warned of plagiarism in the book's prologue. This fact, although not denied, has never been substantiated.<sup>5</sup>

*Li Tre Trattati* is dedicated to Burcardo Ranzovio (Burkhardt Rantzau) of Sasdorf (probably Sassendorf, Bavaria), who at the time was the councillor for law students from the 'German nation' at the University of Padua. At that time of religious reformation, the political, social, cultural and trade relations between Bavarian Catholics and the Italian states were very close, with both courts often hosting banquets showing off their power in opulent table ceremonies. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many important Italian carvers like Cristoforo di Messisbugo, Domenico Romoli, Bartolomeo Scappi, Giovanni Battista Rossetti, Vincenzo Cervio and Cesare Euitascandalo mention the use of artistic napkin folding in their books. However, Giegher was the first to describe this art in words and images for teaching and creative purposes. The vast majority of authors from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries who referred to the art of napkin folding drew directly or indirectly from Giegher's book as their main



Cover of the book "Li Tre Trattati" by Mattia Giegher (1629).

6 FUNKE, Friedrich Kaspar: *Leichtfaßlicher Unterricht in der Kunst: Die Servietten bei Gastmahlen auf eine geschmackvolle und sehr zierliche Weise zu Teller-Aufsätzen zu brechen*. Erfurt: Friedrich Bartholomäus, [1845]

7 KLETT, Andreas: *Neues Trenchier - und Plicatur - Büchlein*. Nürnberg: Loschge, 1677

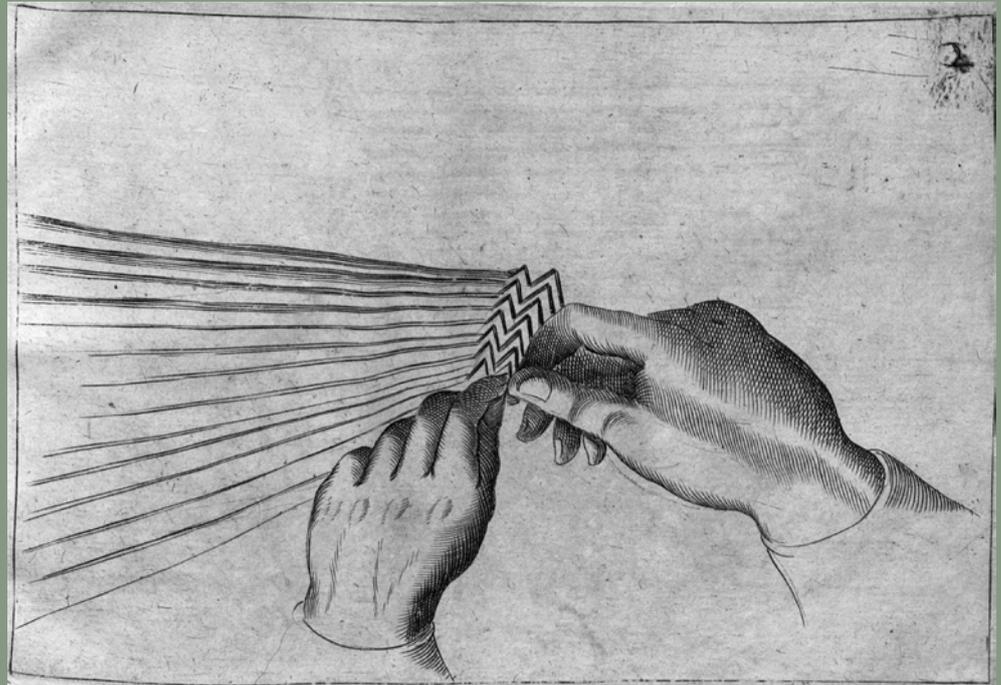
8 PALLIOLO, Paolo: *Le feste pel conferimento del patriziato romano a Giuliano [di Lorenzo] e Lorenzo [di Piero] de' Medici* [in Campidoglio] narrato da Paolo Palliolo, fanese.

source. To understand the art of napkin folding Giegher explains in "Trattato delle piegature", published as part of *Li Tre trattati*, we must take into account four important aspects:

**Firstly**, it is not only about learning how to fold napkins for wiping hands and mouths. It is, above all, about creative sculptures using folded napkins, called folded centrepieces (trionfi da tavola, in Italian) and covering the table with folded tablecloths and food with folded napkins. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, centrepieces were made with edible items, such as butter, sugar, pasta, etc., as well as non-edible materials like wood, wax, tragacanth, napkins, etc. Starting in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the former were known in German as Schauessen and the latter, Schaugerichten. In the first third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there were also centrepieces combining the two, like for example sugar statues dressed in folded napkins. With the advent of European porcelain in 1709, this material was used to make the same subjects as the centrepieces from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, gradually replacing them until, after the French Revolution, they had disappeared completely. Even though the last known book on folded-napkin centrepieces was published in 1845 by F. K. Funke,<sup>6</sup> taking models originally published by A. Klett in 1677,<sup>7</sup> we can't frame it as part of Baroque table culture, as it had already died out.

Centrepieces made of folded napkins began to be used in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century by courts in northern Italy, probably the Florence of the Medici's. The first document that mentions artistic napkin folding dates from 1513.<sup>8</sup> The complexity of the main folding techniques (fan, curved and, especially, sachets and herringbone) show the influence of Florentine tailors of the time, who used very similar methods. From the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, these activities

Illustration from “Trattato delle Piegature”, showing proper hand positioning when using the spinapesce or herringbone folding technique.



9 ANON.: Aanhangzel, van de volmaakte hollandsche Keuken-Meid. Amsterdam: Steven van Esveldt, 1746

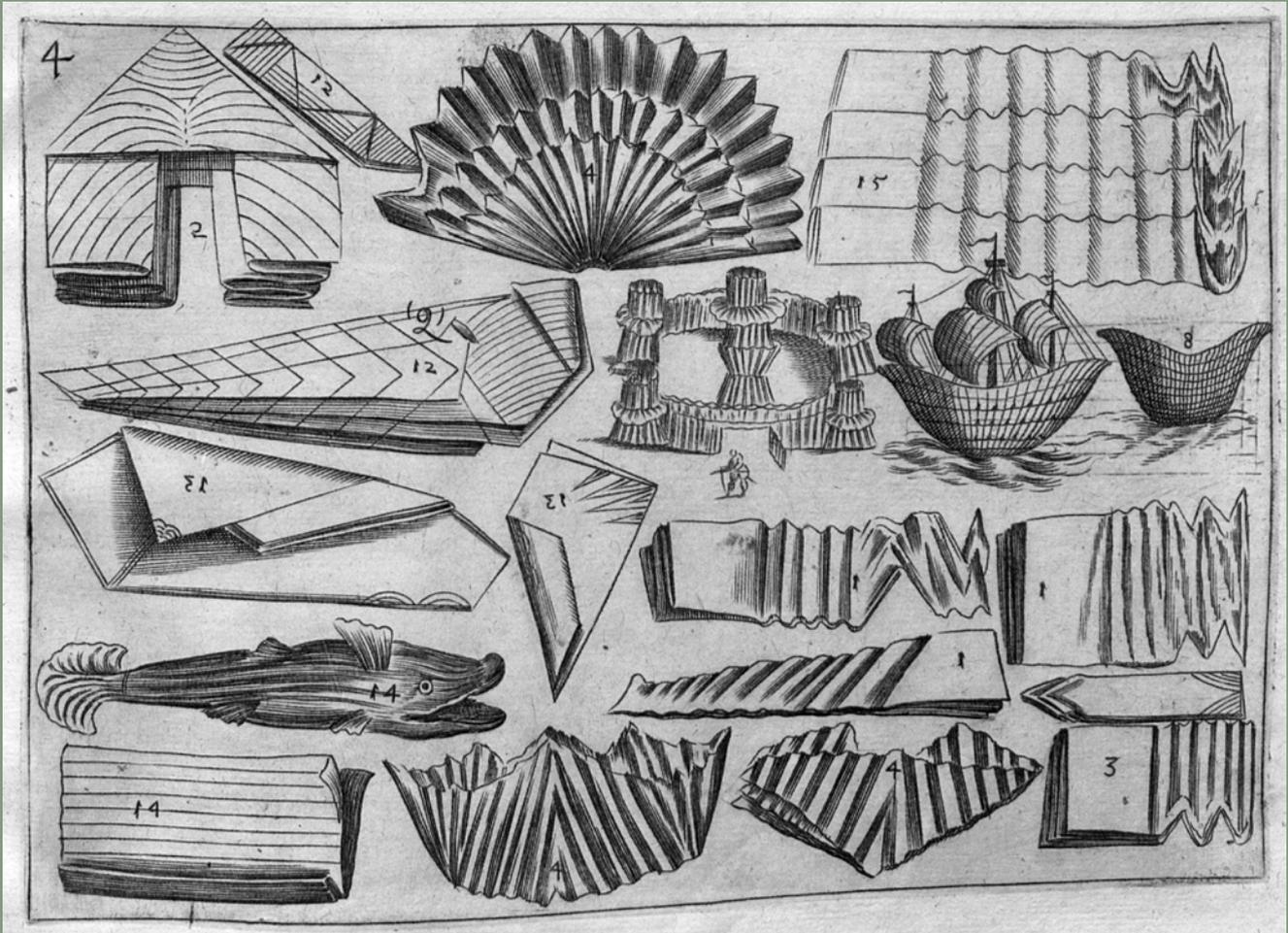
spread to other countries, mainly in the German-speaking world, through illustrated publications by Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, Andreas Klett, Andreas Glorez and Johannes Schalch, among others.

The limited documentation published during the Baroque era on artistic napkin folding in France, Spain and England is indicative of the fact that the practice had not spread as extensively to these countries. Sources from the Baroque era say that, above all in France, this activity wasn't very well received.

**Secondly**, Giegher's book is not for learning how to fold napkins from a series of folding instructions, which it also includes (although mainly based on hand position), but to learn the culture of folding and practice the techniques each folder can use to come up with their own creations. The author of the book doesn't show the models for them to be folded, but to convince us of the great things a folder can do if they learn and properly combine the folding techniques shown. From the early 15<sup>th</sup> century through the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, folding models were designed exclusively for each banquet. The idea of using the same style of folded napkins for different banquets only came about after the first step-by-step folding instructions were published in 1746,<sup>9</sup> alongside the expansion of porcelain.

**Thirdly**, Giegher and the other folding teachers of his time used paper to learn and practice folding techniques, as it allows the folder to correct mistakes without losing its stiffness. Once they had learnt the techniques, they used starched linen fabric. This explains why, in the Western world, folded napkins often have the same foundations, techniques and folding sequences as folded paper items, such as the troublewit. Napkin folding, therefore, must be considered part of the wider folding arts, alongside folded paper and other materials. So, the main element of the folding arts isn't the material being folded but the fold itself, and especially the creative folds.

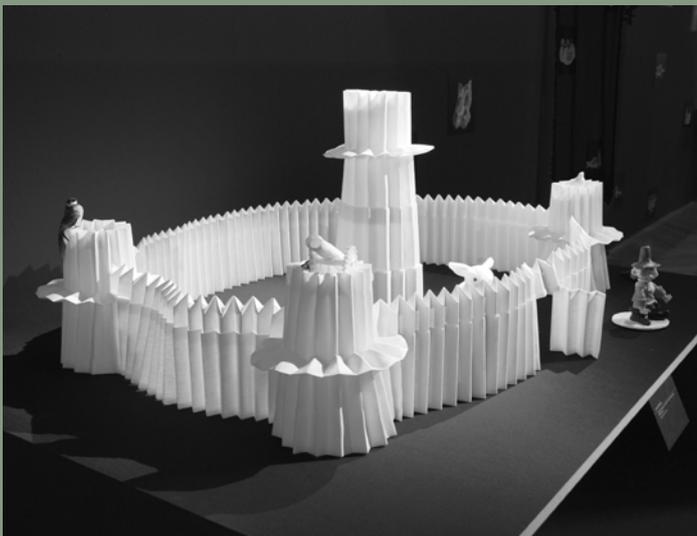
And, **finally**, in addition to their use on the table, folding techniques and materials, objects made of folded napkins aren't merely decorative. Above all,

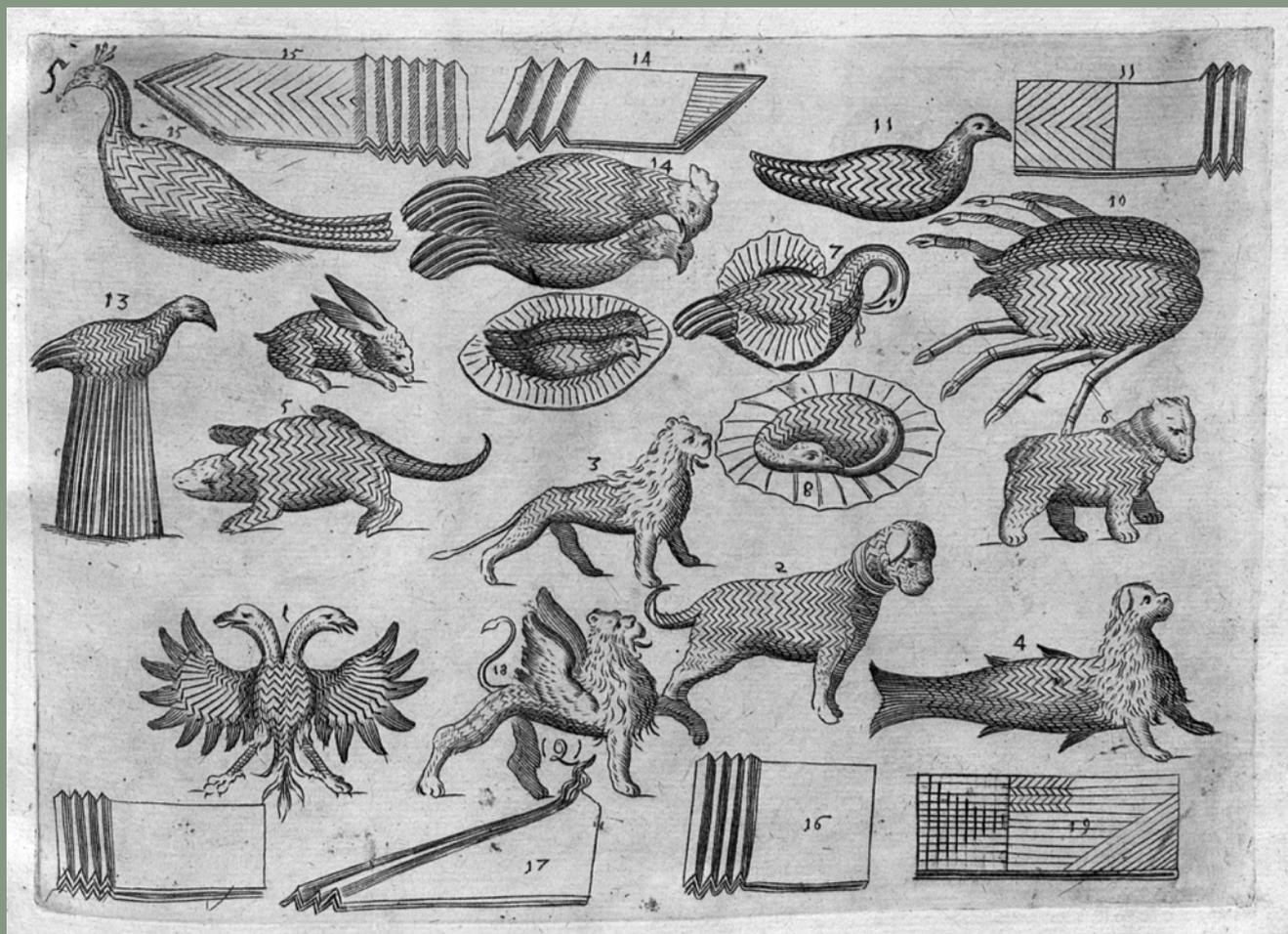


▲ Table 4 from "Trattato delle Piegature".

► "Nave corredata", a galley with sails and wind. Reproduced by the author.

▼ "Castello". Napkin castle with white rabbits in its walls, live birds in its towers and a marzipan man standing in the entrance. Reproduced by the author.





▲ Table 5 from "Trattato delle Piegature".

► "Aquila". Double-headed eagle of the House of Hapsburg. Reproduced by the author.



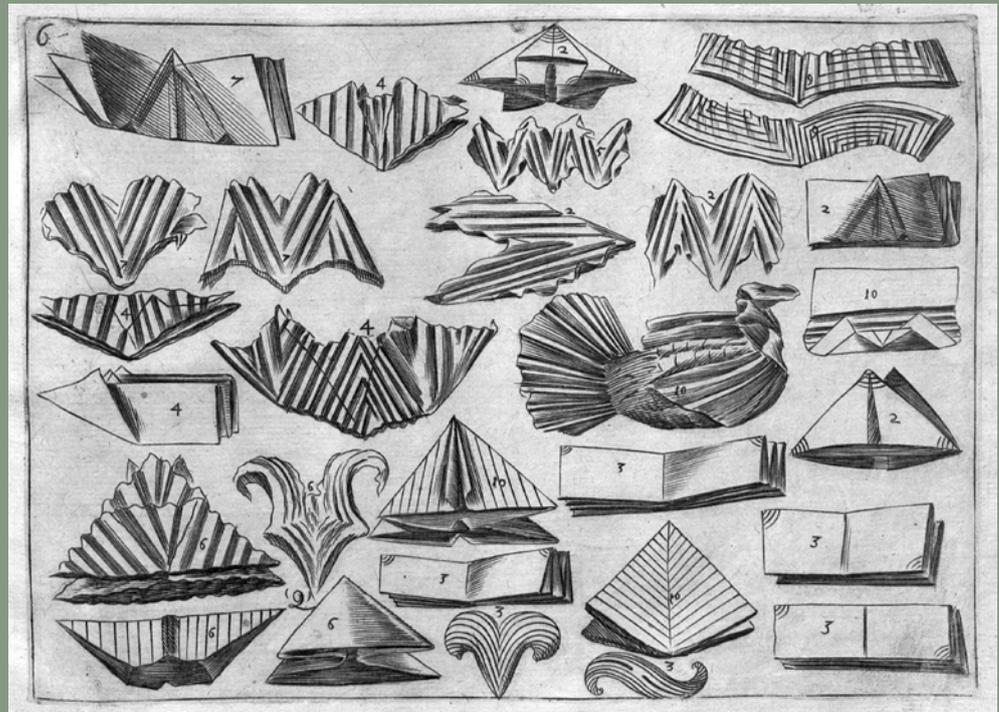


Table 6 from “Trattato delle Piegature”.

10 “le touaglie”, “saluiette sopra’l pane”, “organi”, “gigli”, “monti”, “ventaglio in due maniere”, “gli SS.”, “la corona doppia”, “li cappami”, “li dodici monti”, “li quadrangoli”, “le colline”, “la Naue”, “li copertoj da coprir le panatiere per signori grandi, e le trinciere”, “la mitra”, “il gallo d’India”, “li draghi”, “le rose, e’l rosmarino con la croce di Malta”, “li pesci”, “la corona del papa”, “L’Aquila”, “Il cane”, “Il Leone”, “Il castor”, “La testuggine o tartaruca”, “Vn’orso”, “Il pellicano”, “La salamandra [...] con la corona in testa”, “La fenice”, “Il granciporo, e granchio di mare”, “Li pippioni”, “l’vccello in sù la torre”, “Il gallo in sù la gallina”, “Il paone”, “vna gallina co’ suoi pulcini”, “vn fagiano doppio”, “San Marco”, “Il delfino”. There is an illustration of a rabbit but it is never mentioned, and “La fenice” is mentioned but there is no illustration of it.

11 “piramidi”, “castelli”, “pagoni”, “aquile”, “igni”, “struzzoli”, “leoni”, “cerui”, “dragoni”, “vn Satiro”, “vn Marte”, “Vn’Ercole,

they had symbolic meaning, which German baroque called *Sinnbilder* (images with meaning), in line with the purpose of the banquet, event, location, guests or hosts. With a social and communicative purpose, as well, the symbolism of the folds must be recognised, reflected on and discussed by the participants. So, folding professionals were trained not only in technique and artistry, but also in culture and the humanities, including recurrent themes like heraldry and mythology. On top of knowing how to fold, a folder also had to be able to propose what to fold so it could be approved by their masters.

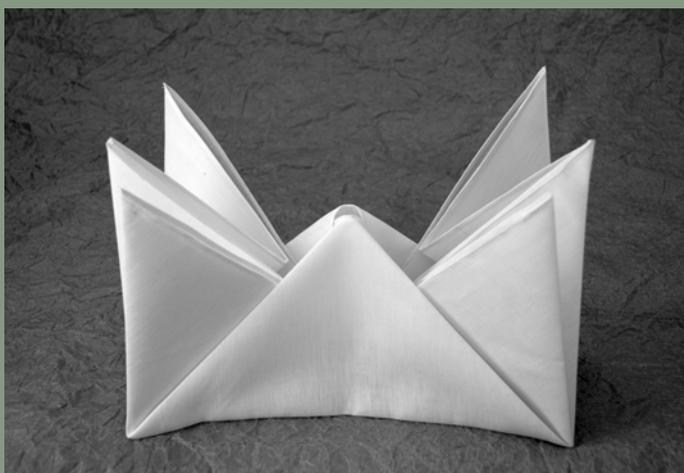
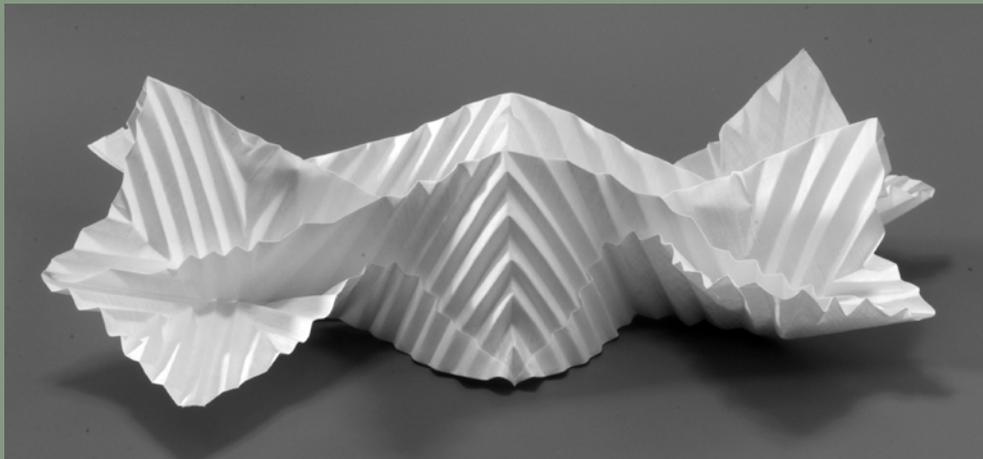
In “Trattato delle Piegature”, Giegher includes a list of many folded centrepieces and illustrations of heraldic, animal, ecclesiastical or mythological subjects.<sup>10</sup> He also mentions other centrepieces made of wax, pasta or folded napkins,<sup>11</sup> without specifying which material was used for each one. This leads us to believe they were made of a combination of materials. Both the names and all the illustrations of each of the folding subjects proposed by Giegher and other Baroque authors must be analysed and interpreted with the help of experts in many fields, such as symbolism, cuisine, textiles and philology, as well as folding experts, of course, which we will at some point cover in another article.

As often happens with books that are used and not just read, very few copies of Giegher’s books remain, especially of the first edition of *Li Tre Trattati* from

che sbrana la bocca al  
lione”, “Vn’Europa sul toro  
con le mani alla corna”,  
“Vn’Elena Troiana adornata  
di veste, e capelli d’oro”,  
“Vna Venere ignuda”,  
“Vna Pallade ignuda”,  
“Vna Giunone ignuda”.

► Napkin to cover food folded with the sachet technique. Reproduced by the author.

► Individual napkin with seven points. Reproduced by the author.



**12 Germany:** Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (M: Oe 311), Universitätsbibliothek Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (18/1 E 777e), Uwe Frenzel private collection. **Switzerland:** Universitätsbibliothek Basel (AP V 31a). **England:** British Library, London (D-7953.a.1.)

**13 Germany:** Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Oq 10332), SLUB Dresden (Putz.17 8 61), Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel A: 133.9 Pol.), Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (Res/Oecon. 710). **England:** British Library [1037.c.13 (. 1)], V&A, National Art Library (86.U.23), The Wellcome Library, London (2829/B/1), National Library of Scotland (Newb.551). **Catalonia:** Arxiu PaDoRe, Badalona (ID4052). **United States:** Morgan Library & Museum, New

York (ID173056), New York Public Library (\*KB1639), Indiana University - Lilly Library (TX885.G45 T78). **France:** Bibliothèque National de France (V-11149), Institut Européen d'Histoire et des Cultures de l'Alimentation, Tours (641.013 GIE), Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris (8° 29336 [Res]). **Italy:** Biblioteca Universitaria di Padova (BOT.4.198).

1629, of which there are only five copies.<sup>12</sup> Of the 1639 edition, there are at least twenty copies.<sup>13</sup> A reproduction was published without citing the original source.<sup>14</sup> Many modern academic publications show some of the images published in “Trattato delle Piegature”, but only one has them all.<sup>15</sup> Georg Philipp Harsdörffer [1607-1658] and Georg Greflinger [ca. 1620-677] published a German translation of the information and illustrations from Giegher’s “Trattato delle Piegature” in 1649<sup>16</sup> and 1650,<sup>17</sup> respectively. While Greflinger plagiarised Harsdörffer, the latter most likely drew from the original sources

**Switzerland:** Bibliothek Bern UB (MUE Römisch V 94). **14 Bologna:** Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1989, ISBN 9788827127674, very poor resolution. **15 SALLAS, Joan:** Gefaltete Schönheit. Freiburg/Wien, 2010 / Folding Beauty. Seul: Jong ie nara, 2018. Images from the original copy at Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich.

**16 HARSDÖRFFER, Georg Philipp:** *Trincir-Buch*. Nürnberg: Fürst [1649].

**17 GREFLINGER, Georg:** *Höfliches und Vermehrtes Complementier-Büchlein*. Rinteln: Petro Lucio, 1650. 1648 edition, also published in Rinteln by Petro Lucio, doesn't include Greflinger's plagiarism of Harsdörffer.

**16 HARSDÖRFFER, Georg Philipp:** *Trincir-Buch*. Nürnberg: Fürst [1649].

**17 GREFLINGER, Georg:** *Höfliches und Vermehrtes Complementier-Büchlein*. Rinteln: Petro Lucio, 1650. 1648 edition, also published in Rinteln by Petro Lucio, doesn't include Greflinger's plagiarism of Harsdörffer.

**18** GERSTL, Doris:  
*Vorschneidekunst und  
Tafelfreuden*, published in  
*Georg Philipp Harsdörffer und  
die Künste*. Nürnberg: Hans  
Carl Verlag, 2005.

**19** HARSDÖRFFER,  
Georg Philipp: *Vollständig  
vermehrtes Trincir-Buch*.  
Nürnberg: Fürsten.

when he was studying law at the University of Padua and probably learned of Giegher's works shortly after his death. Harsdörffer included the German translation in his work *Trincir-Buch*, published without the author's name or a date. Dr Werner Wilhelm Schnabel, a professor at Friedrich–Alexander University Erlangen–Nürnberg (Germany) ventured that this early edition, often dated 1641, was actually published in 1649.<sup>18</sup> The hypothesis seems plausible, as this edition was probably published after the great Nuremberg Peace Banquet at the end of the Thirty Years' War, held in that city in 1649. For the event, Harsdörffer was responsible for the many centrepieces made of folded napkins. This supposition is further bolstered by the fact that Greffliger did not copy Harsdörffer in his 1648 edition. In subsequent editions,<sup>19</sup> published in 1652, 1654, 1657 and 1665, Harsdörffer expanded on Giegher's folding proposals, including 12 individual napkins, 24 centrepieces and two tablecloths. Translating Giegher's work into German was surely no easy feat, as not all of the Italian folding terms had equivalents in German. As a result, Harsdörffer had to coin many new terms, which knowing his personality he was probably quite happy to do. ●

# Portières on the main altar at the Carmelite Convent of Peralada

by INÉS PADROSA GORGOT, archivist and librarian at Peralada Castle.  
Photographs: LAURA GALOBARDES

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to a query addressed to the Arxiu del Regne de Mallorca, we could guess the names of most of the craftspeople who were involved. Listed in PADROSA GORGOT, Inés, “La reforma de la iglesia del Convento del Carmen de Peralada (1875-1895)”, Fundació Privada Castell de Peralada, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The liturgical furnishings made in this period have disappeared, so the description provided is based on documentary information plus observation of the projects and the photographic legacy.

Thanks to Mr Antonio (†1887) and Mr Tomás de Rocabertí (†1898), counts of Zavellá and Peralada respectively, the church of the Carmelite Convent of Peralada<sup>1</sup> was notably restored in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In order to achieve it, they established a relationship with the best artists and craftspeople in Catalonia and some from abroad, including the foreman Gerónimo Granell (1834-1889), the architect Augusto Font (1845-1924), the mosaic artists Gian Domenico Facchina (1826-1904) and Luigi Pellarin, the glazier Antonio Rigalt (1850-1914), and sculptors/woodworkers the Gómez brothers, from Girona.

As it was the main place of worship and consecration, the decoration on the main altar had to stand out from the rest. Since the decoration reflects the tastes of Mr Tomás de Rocabertí, it was directly supervised and modified by him throughout its execution.<sup>2</sup> Before the altar, and in line with the trends of that time, the floor was decorated with a magnificent mosaic created by Luigi Pellarin, an Italian artist who lived in Barcelona, following the designs of the architect Augusto Font.

The altar, a work made by the Gomez brothers from Girona, was framed by the woodwork they also created. On the front, there were five structures imitating neo-Gothic arches, three visible to worshippers and two more hidden as they were perpendicular to the altar, designed by Font. In the upper part of the ogive arches, there was a circle with a stained-glass mosaic by Facchina, inscribed as a visual element. This contained a flower in the centre, from which four more flowers sprung forth, one from each lobe. Between the arch and the ogive arch, four musician angels, created by Miguel Castellanas (1852-1924), embellished the decorations. In the lower part, there was a leather piece in each section, acquired by the Count in Paris and gilded by Juan Sarrado. These embossed leather pieces were decorated with bands of Marian iconography, the M for Mary topped with a crown and the Carmelite emblem.



## Fact Sheet

Contracting party	Tomás de Rocabertí Dameto, count of Peralada, etc.
Date	1894
Design	Fausto Morell Bellet (Palma, 1851-1928)
Embroiderer	Melitona Romero Herrera
Size	1.95 m tall. 1.45 m wide
Passementerie	Two-tone twisted-silk tassels, 16 cm. Parallel embroidery heads
Technique	Threading. Triple embroidery
Fabric	Silk velvet
Materials	Silk threads. Silver and gold. Sequins
Manufactured in Mallorca	19 <sup>th</sup> century
Awards	Honourable mention. Exposición Internacional de Bellas Artes de Barcelona, 1896
Value in 1896	2,500.00 pesetas each one

3 “Tercera Exposició de Belles Arts i Indústries Artístiques”, Barcelona, Palau de Belles Arts, 23 April to 26 July 1896. Vol. LI: Butlletins d’admissió: Indústries Artístiques. FI 15, issue 9-219. Topogràfic D02FI-15-5.5/9. MNAC.

4 It belonged to one of the main noble families from Mallorca, whose father was also the painter Fausto Morell Orlandis, who hosted intellectual gatherings at his home, Can Solleric, in Palma. He specialised in landscapes, portraits and religious and historical painting. The best families and institutions from Palma commissioned him to create various types of works. The Marquis of Vivot did so, who gave the altarpiece featuring Saint Thomas of Villanueva to his cousin Mr. Tomás, count of Peralada. Despite having tried to locate the sketches for the aforementioned works, it has not been achieved. I would like to thank Ángela Garcías Truyols, countess Pálffy, for her help in this search. According to letters between Tomás de Rocabertí and Fausto Morell, we know that the curtains were already hanging on the main altar in July 1894.

5 This date leads us to associate Melitona with the Colegio de las Religiosas Pureza de María in Palma de Mallorca. I would like to thank sister Francisca Arbona for her time.

## The curtains or portières

On either side of the altar, three additional arches completed the group. The upper section did not have any decoration, whereas the bottom one featured embroidered mural wall hangings, with the family crest, in a clearly devotional function. Their mottoes and coats of arms were explained in detail in the 2017 publication. After that publication, I found out that they had been on display at the “Exposición General de Bellas Artes de Barcelona” (1896), which allowed me to delve further and learn information that was rarely available: the name and surnames of the designer, of the person who led the embroidery workshop and the location where they had been made.

The key document is the admission<sup>3</sup> of these pieces for the “Tercera Exposición General de Bellas Artes e Industrias Artísticas” (Barcelona, 1896). It specifies that the project was led by Fausto Morell Bellet<sup>4</sup> (Palma, 1851-1928), a renowned painter from Mallorca, and mentions the expositor, Melitona Romero Herrera, and whose address is Calle de la Concepción 3-3º, Palma de Mallorca, although we don’t have much more information on her. All we can add is that three years earlier, she had won a bronze medal and a diploma at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago<sup>5</sup> in 1893 for a “*velvet portiere embroidered with coat of arms and dress of the child Jesus embroidered in gold.*”<sup>6</sup>

As is common at this type of expositions, various awards were given out. The ones related to the Barcelona Exposition were published in *La Vanguardia* on 17 June 1896, and in Group 4: Tapestry, Fabrics, Prints, Embossed Leather, Lace and Embroidery, we find that “Melitona Romero y Herrera” was given an honourable mention “for six gold embroidered curtains in gold and silk relief numbered 1146 to 1151.”

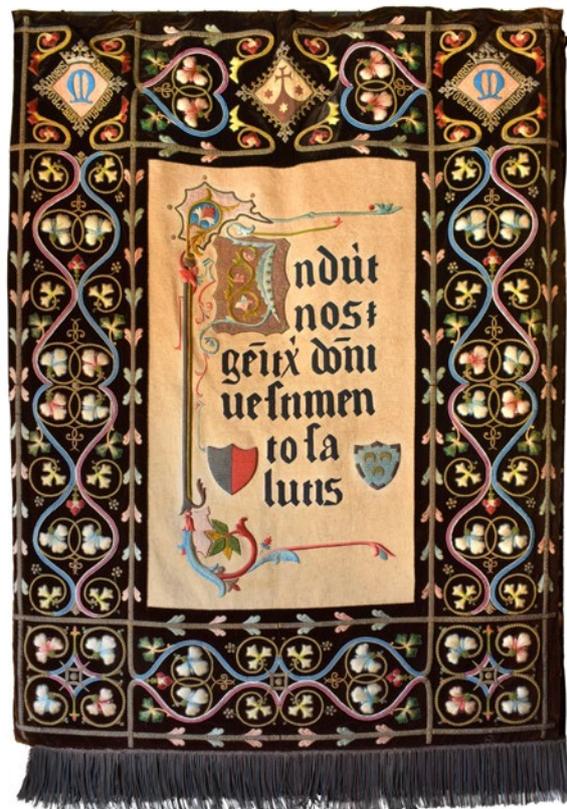
## Description

The aesthetic is the same throughout the group: they are rectangular pieces with a purple embroidered velvet edging whose motif repeats symmetrically on either side. In the centre, in Gothic script, a legend extracted from some sentences from the Bible stands out<sup>7</sup>. Each one is headed by a great flamboyant

The students at Colegio de la Pureza attended three universal expositions: Paris (1878), Barcelona (1-18/08/1888) and Chicago (USA, 01/05 - 03/10/1893), receiving various awards.

6 PALMER, Potter, *World’s Columbian Exposition. Women’s building. Official Catalogue of exhibits.* Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1893, p. 137.

7 Phrases transcribed in PADROSA, Inés, op. cit. (2017).



[See one more.](#)



8 Gold and silver threads are said to combine in a certain way with silk, creating a field or flowers on the fabric, which is called frosted silk because it imitates frost. *Diccionario de la lengua castellana...* Madrid: Joachin Ibarra, 1770, p. 534.

9 According to the *Catálogo ilustrado de la 3ª Exposición de Bellas Artes e Industrias Artísticas*, Barcelona: J. Thomas & Ca., 1896. Issues 1146 through 1151, p. 191, the embroidery is carried out with the threading technique, which is done with curled gold and silver forming small tubes.

capital letter and the decoration is completed with two coats of arms from the branches of the Rocabertí-Dameto family. The back is formed by a white cotton tissue interlining and covered with a fine purple silk tissue.

The Peralada portières correspond to embroidered silk following the triple-brocade technique in which the silk interwoven work with gold thread stands out from the frosted silk background<sup>8</sup>. It is the so-called relief embroidery, whose purpose is to give a sense of three-dimensionality. It was made using gold embroidery techniques. As they are large-format pieces, to make them easier to handle and for several people to work on at the same time, different individuals usually worked on other fabrics, cardboard, parchment or cards<sup>9</sup> that would later be cut out and applied to the final fabric, a technique known as superimposed embroidery or appliqué. This decoration was attached to the main fabric through a variety of stitches, backstitch, piping, silk cords, scallop stitches and silk finishing that, in addition to accomplish this function, also highlighted and gave polychromy to the finished work.



[See detail.](#)

Each of the borders stands out for Modernisme-inspired floral embroidery. On each of the curtains, the upper bands all have the same three elements: each of the corners features a lozenge topped with a crown, bearing the M for Mary, trimmed in gold and silver with the motto “ORA PRO NOBIS DECOR CARMELI”. The other three angles shine out with a floral motif and, in the centre, the insignia of the Carmelite congregation (a stylised mountain — Mt Carmel — and three six-pointed stars: a silver one in the centre of the mountain and the other two placed symmetrically on either side of the mountain).

The plant motifs of the frame are inscribed with sinuous shapes. Some form hearts, others, braces. In other cases, the leaves and branches are interwoven, giving the viewer a sense of movement.

On four of the six curtains, the decoration is framed with borders from which leaves are sprouting. In the other two cases, the figures are framed with various sinuous silk cords of different tones.

In these portières we can see a rich, carefully chosen range of colours and the use of several techniques. We should distinguish between the figures



Knit stuffing with backstitch, for vertical *Roques* piping with *puntita* couching stitch. Shield trimmed in piping.

**10** For this description, we have consulted: GONZÁLEZ MENA, Ma. Ángeles, *Catálogo de bordados*, Madrid: Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, 1974, and ESPINAR RODRÍGUEZ, José Ma., *El bordado en oro contemporáneo: conocimiento de materiales y manufactura de cara a su conservación y difusión*, Final project for degree in Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, University of Seville, Faculty of Fine Arts, 2016-17. <https://bit.ly/396SNpC> [Last viewed: 18/03/2019].

and the embroidery and the joining, edging and finishing elements. Regarding the adornments, the threads set to cover the cardboard moulds are noteworthy, as well as the blended stitching, also known as the *acupictae* technique due to the pictorial technique imitation. The embroiderers attempted to make their work look like paintings. For this reason it's not surprising that, in some inventories, some fine embroidered works were referred to as “painted artwork”.

To give the flowers volume, knotted stitching is applied with little knots or nubs as well as Or Nué, which creates an enamelled bas-relief and chiaroscuro effect. Flat stitching has been used too, and also picot stitch and cross stitch or *pulvinarium*, for flowers and capital letters.<sup>10</sup>

Before placing the pieces, details like stems, branches and other adornments were first put in order to hide the threads behind the figures. The finishing of these can be presented with silk and gold thread outlines, and with silk cords, some of them with the *giraspe* technique, a combined silk thread and braiding. In other cases, the figures are attached to the velvet with backstitch, chain stitch, profile stitch, scallop stitch, edging and piping.

Puffs are also used, some of them finished with trinkets like sequins to enrich the veins of some of the nerves.

We come across a piece of liturgical furnishing, included in the so-called erudite embroideries, both for its fabrics that form it and its wide variety of techniques and stitching used. Plus, the fact that we know its designer, the client and the workshop in Palma where it was made, led by Melitona Romero, who proved to have a highly skilled embroiderers team at her disposal. ●

# Marcelo Scarxell, the illusion of elegance

by BLANCA CASTALDO

Marcelo Scarxell Nicola's life was fashion, and within it, elegance. Fashion understood as a mathematician would, as something surprisingly simple, yet also effective and constructive. Fashion in which simplicity is taken to the extreme. Although he was an illustrator for great fashion designers and worked with large companies as a designer to develop the fashion industry in our country, his work is completely unknown today.

Portrait of Marcelo Scarxell.  
Photo: A. Blanch. Marcelo Scarxell  
Archive.





Girl dancing. Illustrations for the book *Folklore de Mallorca. Danzas Música Ritos y Costumbres*. (1950-1955). Watercolour on paper. Marcelo Scarxell Family Archive.

Marcelo was born on Mallorca in 1935, in the small town of Sóller, in a valley surrounded by mountains that isolate it from the rest of the island with the only natural port on Mallorca that faces the peninsula. The town's close trade relations with Catalonia and France, where oranges grown in the valley were exported, fostered an emerging bourgeoisie and the establishment of textile factories. His father, Jaume Scarxell of "Can Grec", was one of these traders who had made his fortune in France. This is also where he met a distinguished girl, Maria Nicola, who he later married and had two sons and two daughters with. Marcelo Scarxell was the youngest. They lived in Sóller and at Son Beltran, an incredible estate on the hillside of El Teix, very close to Cala Deià. It was a very safe, strategic spot for a trader when the Civil War broke out, which brought a period of shortages and black-market trading.

So, he grew up in a well-off family and was protected to some extent from the squalor of that time. As a child, he said "his favourite hobby was drawing and what he drew most often were ladies." (MARCELO SCARXELL. *Setmanari Sóller*, 1992). At Sacred Heart school, where he studied, father Nicolau Bauzà (drawing teacher) fostered this pastime even though, while the other children read and copied drawings from *El Coyote*, he made drawings of Gilda (*ÚLTIMA HORA*, 2013), which were much appreciated by his schoolmates. Rita Hayworth, who he met years later and dressed while at Pedro Rodríguez's workshop, was always one of his muses, alongside Audrey Hepburn and other stars.

This skill didn't go unnoticed and when Marcelo Scarxell was just 15, Mallorca folklore scholar Bartomeu Ensenyat asked him to do the illustrations for the book *Folklore de Mallorca. Danzas Música Ritos y Costumbres*, which was only published years later (1975).

At that time, the men in Sóller dressed well. Marcelo Scarxell drew his mother and sisters' dresses, and went with them often to visit the seamstress "Sa Ruberta". This was who showed his drawings and introduced him to Felicidad Duce, the director of Instituto Feli, a ground-breaking centre teaching fashion in Spain, who spend the summers in Sóller.



Illustrations for fashion magazines (1955-1960). Marcelo Scarxell Archive.

Around that same time, he met the daughter of French Sólter residents who came to the town periodically. Marcelo Scarxell used to say, quite descriptively, that, as he was used to the angelical beauty of Spanish girls, with hair under their arms though, María José Castañer, a sophisticated, worldly girl, seemed to him like Gilda herself.

**1955-1962 Barcelona**

During his military service, he began doing drawings for various publications for Felicidad Duce’s school, and for fashion magazines like *Sutilezas*, *Janine*, etc. As he explained in an interview with Aina Colom, for *Setmanari Sólter*, at that time magazines didn’t have as many photos and drawings were used to accompany patterns, images or adverts. (A. COLOM, 1992)

When he finished his military service, aged approximately 19, Felicidad Duce hired him as the drawing teacher at Instituto Feli, where he also sketched designs, which the school made a pattern of and published in magazines like *Sutilezas*, *Janine* or the books Felicidad Duce published for the school. Pedro Rodríguez, the most world-renowned Spanish designer of the time, alongside Balenciaga, often worked with his friend Felicidad Duce’s school, giving masterclasses. (VILASECA, 2018) When he saw Marcelo Scarxell’s skill for drawing, he invited him to work at his fashion house, initially drawing and, not long after, as a designer. He stayed with Pedro Rodríguez for five years (1957-1962). (A. COLOM, 1992) Some of the designs he did there can be seen today at the Museo del Traje in Madrid and in the Antoni de Montpalau Collection. After a few years, despite keeping up his friendship with the master, he decided to set off for Paris.



► Figure for French singer Fernanda Montel, called “the most elegant woman in the world” at that time. Ink and watercolour on paper. Marcelo Scarxell Archive. (1957-1962)

► Figures by Marcelo Scarxell for Pedro Rodríguez (1957-1962) and (1965-1970). He was the first to recognise the model Ángeles López, who Marcelo always had a good friendship with. Photo by Blanca Castaldo. Antoni de Montpalau Collection. (1957-1962)





Ink drawings for Guy Laroche.  
Marcelo Scarxell Archive. (1962)

## 1962-1964 Living in Paris

### Working with Guy Laroche

At a time when, as he explained, the French treated Spaniards as if they had the plague, he was lucky to speak French as his mother tongue and have this odd lineage that no one identified with Spain. So, he easily found a job as soon as he showed his drawings to one of the top fashion houses in Paris: Guy Laroche.

Laroche had been in the United States the previous year to learn about the new industrial dressmaking methods that were common there. In 1961, the year Marcelo Scarxell arrived in Paris, he inaugurated his new workshop at 29 Avenue Montaigne (just opposite Christian Dior), with a shop where he presented his first prêt-à-porter collection, to great success. Marcelo Scarxell worked as a designer there for two years and learnt how a real fashion industry works: how they design, make, advertise and sell their clothes.

Some drawings still remain from this time, with his signature and the company's seal. At that time, fashion houses like Guy Laroche, Pedro Rodríguez, etc. had several designers on staff, with exclusive contracts. They proposed their designs, and the best or most suitable were chosen to be made. Fortunately, many of these drawings, in addition to a header or the company seal, had the designer's signature, so it is easy to identify which employee drew them. Some of these designers would go on to create their own fashion houses, after gaining enough experience.

Marcelo Scarxell did each drawing with a specific woman in mind, so his in drawings we can recognise the features of the models he worked with or of his clients, who much appreciated this exclusivity. He often gave his designs extravagant names: Bimba, Tokio, Eleonor, Bakela...

At Guy Laroche, he used to say, he designed dresses for Princess Grace of Monaco, Sofia Loren, María Félix, the Baroness de Rothschild, Viscountess de Ribes, Ava Gardner. (A. COLOM, 1992) Even though the designers could present their drawings and test the dresses with clients, the finished product was presented with the brand of the fashion house and didn't normally mention the name of the collaborator or employee who had designed it. In magazines, and in books of figures from that time, the names of the people who had drawn or illustrated them rarely appeared except if the drawing was signed.

In this regard, he was extremely honourable and never took anything he did at work with him, without permission from the owner. All in all, he kept a folder with a small sample of pieces he did throughout his life, with newspaper clippings etc., his contract with Pedro Rodríguez, a letter of recommendation signed by Guy Laroche, photocopies of the Christmas cards, etc., which he brought out for the exhibition "Marcelo Scarxell: dissenyador de moda & music hall". We, therefore, have very little on his work from this period, other than a few ink drawings and some pages from Spanish magazines on Marcelo's work for Guy Laroche.

### **Music Hall**

He used to say that he met magazine star Line Renaud at Casino de Paris, who in exchange for the drawings he did for her introduced him to the owner of the theatre. (A. COLOM, 1992) After World War II, music halls were in decline. The Clerico brothers revitalised some of these theatres their father had purchased, expanding the auditoriums, creating spectacular scenery, updating the shows with beautiful women performing nude or semi-nude splendidly adorned with transparent fabrics, feathers and jewels. The women performed dances and choreographies that on occasion featured international stars of the like of Frank Sinatra, Ginger Rogers, Charles Aznavour, etc. (*THE TELEGRAPH*, 2019) In the 1960s, they not only brought the music halls back to life, but also exported these shows to the casinos in Las Vegas. French actress Line Renaud was a Vegas showgirl. (*WIKIPEDIA*, 2019)

This is how Marcelo Scarxell came to do a series of designs for shows at Teatre Lido and Casino de Paris (A. COLOM, 1992). Although he didn't remember the names of the shows when he showed us the drawings, and we don't know for sure if his designs were ever used, the theme of the drawings



Figures for Teatre Lido and Casino de Paris. Ink, watercolour and acrylic on paper. Marcelo Scarcell Archive. (1960-1963). [See more.](#)



is very similar to some of the shows that were put on at the Clerico brothers' theatres between 1960-1965, including "Le temple d'amour" and "Porcelaines" at Folies Berger, and "Fastes de Versailles", "Gaité Parisienne", "Suivez Moi", "Cococorico" at Teatre Lido.

While he was in Paris, he married María José Castañer, the young woman he met years earlier and who, with Marcelo's help, would become one of the most in-demand models of the time, along with Marjó.

### **1965-1975 A much-lauded return**

After two years, they decided to return to Barcelona. Felicidad Duce's magazines published his new Parisian designs, in which we can still recognise model Jean Shrimpton who regularly worked with Guy Laroche (*LA MODA OTOÑO-INVIERNO*, 1969-70) and he went back to the workshop of his beloved master Pedro Rodríguez. He had a lot more experience from being in Paris and Rodríguez appreciated and valued that. He worked five more years with Pedro Rodríguez, who he always had a good relationship with despite having moved away. He always supported Marcelo Scarxell in his projects, helping present his collections whenever he could. Marcelo, for his part, continued working with him for years, drawing the Christmas card for Rodríguez's fashion house, for example.

### **1970-1973 Designer for El Corte Inglés**

Marcelo Scarxell came from a refined, cosmopolitan world. In 1970, brothers Isidoro and César Álvarez, founders of El Corte Inglés department store, brought him on board in order to apply his experience with haute couture to prêt-à-porter. El Corte Inglés, Marcelo Scarxell used to say, "only made ladies' dressing gowns" back then. His job was to make the company's products more sophisticated. For his part, in Madrid, he trained in the largest dress-making industry. (M. SOLÉ, 1973) The Álvarez brothers, who Marcelo Scarxell loved greatly, believed in him completely and put him in charge of the whole process of making the brand's ladieswear.

Marcelo Scarxell focused exclusively on clothes for women; other designers made the menswear. With good reason, he proposed that El Corte Inglés create a line of larger sizes because, as he said, not all women have the measurements of a model but they can still look pretty and elegant. And, possibly thinking of his younger daughter Carín, he created a children's line marketed under the brand "Bus Stop". (A. COLOM, 1993) In 1970, 170 designs

were presented in the spring/summer collection at a huge fashion show in Madrid, Seville, Barcelona, to 120,000 people. (*BLANCO Y NEGRO*, 1970)

Before designing, there is the whole research process. It was also important to be well-informed of what was going on in other parts of the world: Milan, Paris, London and New York. Afterwards, they acquired the best fabrics and used them to make the designs. (A. COLOM, 1993) We know from artist Lluís Castaldo, who offered him a job in print design, that Marcelo was also actively involved in building the design and printed textiles industry, which didn't exist previously in Madrid, to supply El Corte Inglés.

He supervised the work of other designers at the company personally until they had enough experience. From the selection of sketches, the patternmakers made the patterns. Then the pieces were cut out, assembled and tested on a model. Marcelo Scarxell said that when he got to El Corte Inglés, they didn't have any models to work on. So, he took a girl from the workshop who was the right height and had the right build and taught her how to walk and move. Over time, he trained a good group of girls, whose only job was to be his models. Once the models had been altered and fitted, the collection was presented. They had several rooms to display the various collections to clients, industrialists, etc. After, depending on the contracts, they decided which colours and sizes each design would be made in. Nothing was left to chance. (A. COLOM, 1993)

The fashion adverts for El Corte Inglés in 1970-1973, when Marcelo was working there, feature black-and-white illustrations of sophisticated women and men in tuxedos, like the ones he told us he drew for the rooms where the El Corte Inglés collections were on display. Although we can't say for sure that he was the one behind them. Either way, when he left El Corte Inglés, there was a clear shift in the illustrations for the adverts and, not long after, they began using photos. (*LA VANGUARDIA ESPAÑOLA*, p. 13 26/02/1970) At that time, the director of advertising and head window dresser for El Corte Inglés was Joaquín López Esteban, who won an award for the best business image for his "Cuadernos de publicidad". (*BLANCO Y NEGRO*, 1971)

As Josep Casamartina explained in the exhibition "Barcelona Prêt-à-porter" (2013), one of the issues that made it difficult to introduce prêt-à-porter in this country was adapting to new production methods; going from customised hand-made designs to industrialised production: in series and for a large audience. This renewal began in the 1970s with a group of ground-breaking brands like Loewe, Jesús del Pozo, Andrés Andreu.



Figures by Marcelo Scarxell for Andrés Andreu (1973). Ink and colour pencil on paper. Marcelo Scarxell Archive.

### 1973-1977 Creative success and business troubles

They all highly valued Marcelo Scarxell's experience in industrial dressmaking. Josep Andreu Faiges who also got his start in the fashion world with Pedro Rodríguez, founded the brand Andrés Andreu in 1967 with a partner. They would separate in 1973, when the company joined the Compramoda Española group created in Barcelona with 36 Catalan designers and dressmakers.

That year, the Andrés Andreu brand was at the Salón de la Confección Barcelona with 80 designs by Marcelo Scarxell, including items for women and girls, and formalwear (ceremony, cocktail and evening). The collection was also successfully presented at the Salon Prêt à Porter Paris at Expo-Porte de Versailles and at the Hilton hotel in Madrid (M. SOLÉ, 1973). Nevertheless, Marcelo Scarxell and Andrés Andreu decided not to continue working together.

At the same time he was working for Andrés Andreu, he had set up a boutique with his wife called Marabú and an artisan workshop where he did haute couture on plaça de Molina in Barcelona. In addition to his own clients, some of the top clients from Pedro Rodríguez were also patrons of his shop when the latter closed his doors. These included Abe Lane, wife of Xavier Cugat; the Marquess of Castellbell; and singer Victoria de los Ángeles, who he had a close friendship with and designed dresses for her to wear at her concerts and on her travels all over the world.

In 1974, Marcelo Scarxell inherited part of the Son Beltran estate, shared with his siblings, and returned to Mallorca to decide a series of issues. Some unfortunate decisions led them to lose most of the estate he loved so much some years later.

Over those years, he and his wife separated. As he told it, he left her everything: the home, boutique and workshop. In 1976, with a capital partner called Pierre Serre and one of his nephews, a successful businessman in the construction sector, they started up the prêt-à-porter brand



▲ Figure by Marcelo Scarxell for Victoria de los Ángeles. (1973-1976) Colour pencil on paper. Marcelo Scarxell Archive. Photo Victoria de los Ángeles Foundation Archive.

► Figures by Marcelo Scarxell with models Isabel Cordero and María Eugenia. (1973-1977) Ink and colour pencil on paper. Marcelo Scarxell Archive.



Figures by Marcelo Scarxell.  
(1977) Ink on paper.  
Marcelo Scarxell Archive.



Marcelo Scarxell S.A. They didn't have a boutique. Marcelo focused exclusively on the creative side, designing and presenting the garments. His drawings, once again, clearly show the physical traits of the models he worked with at that time: Pepa, María Eugenia (Miss Barcelona) and Isabel Cordero, who he often drew with the attitude or movement they would later reproduce for the photos, taken by fashion photographer Antoni Bernard. They presented the collections at Salon Prêt à Porter Paris, where once again they got loads of publicity. They created several catalogues or collections for representatives in Paris, Cannes,



Sketches of dress, jacket and cape. Pencil on paper (1978-1990). Marcelo Scarxell Archive. [See more.](#)

Paris, Cannes, Mexico, Miami, Puerto Rico, etc., who they sold the designs to. In Spain, El Corte Inglés was one of his biggest customers. Apparently, the idea and designs were good, they had many orders, but for some reason or other the business didn't do well.

Marcelo Scarxell, in general, focused on fashion, and within the sector, on elegance. He was a sybarite but, despite being the son of a merchant, he didn't pay much attention to the financial side of things, which in a complex, complicated sector like fashion, he left in the hands of other people. And to top it off, he had problems with the tax agency. At that time, the taxes on haute couture were so high (P. CALZADILLA, 2012) that many creators, even the great Pedro Rodríguez, had problems surviving or had to close.

After the devastation of the divorce, failed business, etc., around 1978, the Álvarez brothers, who loved him a great deal, took him back and offered him a fresh start at El Corte Inglés, where he stayed until he retired at 53. In those years, El Corte Inglés had grown and diversified greatly, although it still had a place in Madrid where the design was done, with many designers and a dozen rooms fully equipped to display the collections all year long. The actual garments, however, were made at various locations in Spain. One each for skirts, underwear, coats, etc. (A. COLOM, 1993) He was just one of the anonymous designers who worked for the brand and, as he told us when he visited Mallorca, his job was very routine: they drew a lot and a small selection was made of items to produce. His drawings from that time, despite being more elaborate, are still just as fresh and elegant as ever.



Christmas card for the Pizà-Colom family with a portrait of Catalina Colom (1990-2010). Marcelo Scarxell Archive.

He retired at 53 and returned to Sóller, where he drew and designed for his own pleasure, for friends or local publications.

The Sóller Cultural Centre - Museum dedicated an exhibition to him: “Marcelo Scarxell Alta costura i Music Hall”. Museo del Traje in Madrid has some of his drawings from the Pedro Rodríguez archive. Some of his dresses and drawings are also in the Antoni de Montpalau Collection and at the Centre de Documentació i Museu de les Arts Escèniques in Barcelona, which has Victoria de los Ángeles’ wardrobe. ●

### Thanks

To Marcelo Scarxell, his family and friends, Victoria de los Ángeles Foundation, Antoni de Montpalau Collection, MAE / Centre de documentació i Museu de les Arts Escèniques, Josep Casamartina.

## Background

Most of the research for this article and the images themselves came from Marcelo Scarxell, his family and friends, and those digitised by Blanca Castaldo.

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# Carles Delclaux

## A continuation of the Catalan Tapestry School

by LAURA DE LA CALLE VIAN  
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<sup>1</sup> *Revista de la Escola de Decoració*, Barcelona, Year I, First quarter, March MCMXIV, pp. 34-35. <https://bit.ly/2w5rMp0>. Tomás Aymat (Tarragona 1891-Barcelona 1944).

2014 was the hundredth anniversary of the first piece Tarragona-born Tomás Aymat ever wove.<sup>1</sup> This was the first step in what, many years later, would come to be known as the Catalan Tapestry School. A century is a good round number that invites us to look back and take stock. But no dip into the history of the School would be complete without looking at Carles Delclaux, the last of its artistic directors. 2014 was also the forty-seventh anniversary of this prolific creator's start as a weaver.

Delclaux was born in Sant Cugat del Vallés (Barcelona) in 1951. When he was still very young, he became interested in painting and began studying under Joan Tortosa. At sixteen, he started working at Alfombras y Tapices Aymat, a company that had been located in the town since the 1920s. From then on, weaving was his life: Delclaux lived his weaving and wove his life. Its close ties with his life mean his work can be read like a biography, because the artist, sometimes boldly and others discouraged, often with humour and at times sarcastically, poured himself into his work. Researching it, therefore, is like writing a chronicle of his life. An artistic life that can also be interpreted musically, as Delclaux never ceased to compose, in his own way, a concert that goes back and forth over a few sonorous themes: the self, women and nature.

### Opening

In 1968, when he joined the staff at Aymat, the company was living a sweet moment: it had gained international renown and moved comfortably in the circles of a new style, similar to the trends of the New Tapestry movement. Delclaux fit in here like a spindle whorl on a spindle. He took on board the new formulas used in the workshop quickly, the volumes, the unorthodox stitches, the new materials, the move away from figurative art, etc. And he quickly started to take part in the weaving of works designed by Josep Grau Garriga, who was the artistic director of the tapestry department from 1957. But these high points aren't often perceived by those living them as what they are: the beginning of the end. Just a few months later, Grau began distancing himself from the factory in pursuit of personal success. Josep Royo, who took

over for him, would leave Aymat as well, in 1970, to seek his artistic fortune in Tarragona, working with Miró and Maeght.

Delclaux took over management of the workshop then, aged just nineteen, full of self-confidence, which would always be one of his most characteristic traits. This security gave him the courage he needed to start working on a personal line that, without going against everything he had learnt in the workshop, pushed him imperceptibly towards the path of tradition. Returning to their craft, for good professionals, is more than a desire; it is a need. Early on, Delclaux felt the expressive limits of the New Tapestry's gestural textiles, proved its effect to be greater than its eloquence, and chose not to be bound by such narrow constraints. This early intuition of reality led him to become interested in the trade. He registered at the Massana School, where he took classes on restoring tapestry and learnt classical techniques. For years, he combined this schoolwork with his full-time job. This shows another of his characteristics: hard-working.

Daring and tenacious; unorthodox and traditional. Opposing elements blended into an emulsion that would always define his work. It is no surprise, then, that these early years gave rise to, almost simultaneously, a piece like his *Tapis-Is* (a three-dimensional textile piece in line with the flashier Polish or Yugoslavian productions) and *La llegada de la esperanza*, in which he returned to flat stitching and figurative representation. And he would never leave this fusion/contrasting line of work, although, naturally, some elements stood out above the others, depending on the piece.

In 1974, he had to do military service, which took him away from his position at Aymat and he never returned. The company fell into an inexorable decline that would end with its closing in 1980. Why is Delclaux, then, considered the heir of the Catalan Tapestry School? Let's have a look.

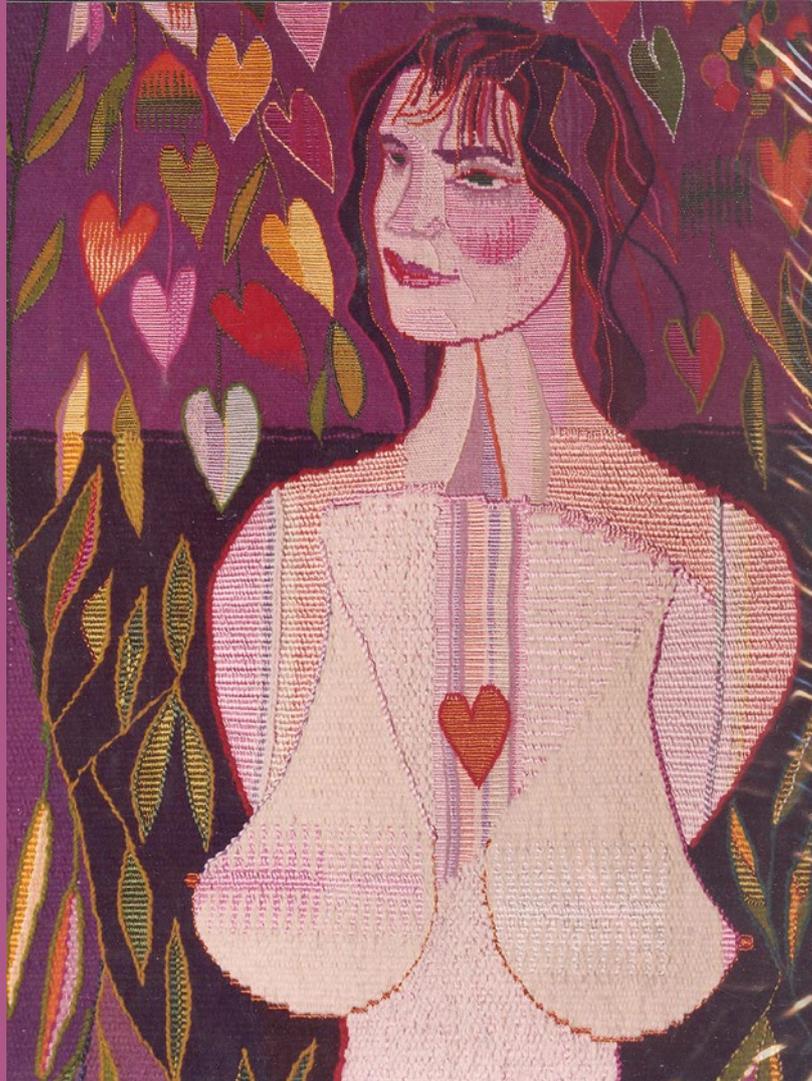
### **Gestation of an artistic figure**

His time in the military on Menorca didn't keep him away from his vocation, as he juggled his obligations as a soldier with his devotion to weaving in his free time. It was a time of personal growth, in which he decided to begin an independent life.

On his return to Catalonia, he moved into Can Monmany in Valdoreix, a town on the outskirts of Barcelona, where he helped organise the small workshop of Mercè Diogène and Cecile Dedieu. But he still did not abandon his own work, which he continued on a loom in his home.

His work continued oscillating between tradition and the heterodoxy that he didn't seem completely satisfied with, because to express himself he needed

*L'Empordanet*. (detail from portrait of Teresa). Size: 340 x 700 cm. 1980. Carles Delclaux Archive. Photos: Carles Cabanas.



material means he didn't have. His good relationship with his former boss, businessman Miguel Samaranch, encouraged him to ask the man for those means. Delclaux returned to Aymat and found it completely changed. In just a short time, it became clear the factory was in crisis: rug production, which was what sustained the factory financially, couldn't compete with products from Asia that were invading the market, and the tapestry department was languishing without its former members. Samaranch offered his former artistic director the chance to move to Girona, with support from the city council, giving him some of the looms and tools from the workshop. Without a moment of doubt, with his characteristic decisiveness, he left Can Monmany and set up a shop in Girona, opening up a workshop on Carrer Força, very close to the cathedral, almost immediately.

His personal and artistic life were beginning to mature. He became a popular figure in the city, students came from various locations and he began to get commissions from decorators, hotels, banks and private homes. His tapestries were filled with flowers, butterflies and birds, not only an ode to nature but also a metaphor for the plenitude he felt. **Women**, as the focal point of life, also had a central role in his tapestries from this period, and to highlight their beauty, Delclaux employed a balanced, intelligent use of a highly varied selection of textile resources. His best piece from that time, perhaps of his whole career, is *L'Empordanet*, a huge tapestry that summed up the highest achievements of his inspiration and his trade.

La Mercè Cultural Centre.  
Girona. Loom room.  
Photos: Laura de la Calle Vian.



In 1984, the small workshop on Carrer Força moved into the new cultural centre the city council had opened at the former convent of La Mercè. Here, the municipal authorities set up the rest of the looms from the factory in Sant Cugat, after reaching an agreement with Samaranch to purchase them. Carles Delclaux led this workshop for twenty-five years, following the same rules that had applied at Aymat, using the same tools and seeking the same goal of creating an artistic industry with its own character for Catalonia. This pursuit of goals, continuity of methods and tools, and use of the brand *Escola catalana de tapís* (Catalan Tapestry School), which Samaranch used to identify his production from the 1960s, allow us to say, without qualms, that Delclaux was the most resolute director of that School.

### **Maturity**

It is clear that, over a long career, any artist's work changes. This is even more true of the work of an artist like Delclaux, who so faithfully conveyed his own experiences. After the hopes and dreams of his youth, which are celebrated enthusiastically in the tapestries of that period, maturity brought a certain disenchantment. His work continued to focus on the same topics, but his perspective and technical means to convey them were transformed. His language became simpler, bordering on abstraction, although his discourse is

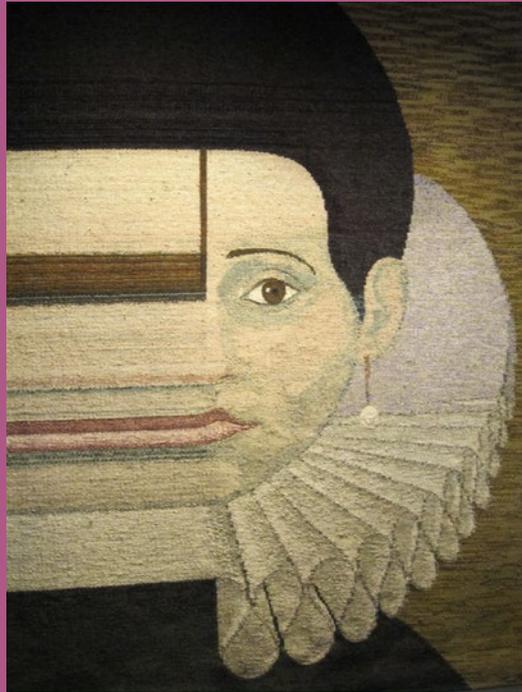


*Corintio*. Size: 204 x 300 cm. 2008.  
Photos: Laura de la Calle Vian.

clear: from praising women he moved to reproach, from tribute to spite, from trust to scepticism. Nature no longer has the same vitality it did before, the exuberant flowers are gone, the butterflies are just an outline, and everything takes on the sharp edges of irony. The final tapestries show a Delclaux who was both hurt and caustic, but would never let himself be taken down. Perhaps to fill the hole left, both in his soul and his workday, by that quasi-pantheistic harmony conveyed in his tapestries, his work turned to a more elemental focus: the resources of the trade. This brought forth a series of textiles that reinterpret old paragons of women's fashion, but with a masculine power that makes them very attractive pieces.

The long and intense professional life of this artist isn't only reflected in his own creations. He spent a significant part of his time translating the works of others. This shows Delclaux's skill, who like any good actor adapted to the artistic peculiarities of a wide range of men: Tharrats, Subirachs, Beulas, Millares, Llosas and many others. This flexibility is indisputable proof of his skill.

This brief portrayal of Carles Delclaux wouldn't be complete without a look at his teaching, which he did without pause from the very beginning: first at the Aymat workshop, then at the gypsy craftsmanship school Campo de la Bota, later at Can Monmany and, finally, in Girona at his workshop on Carrer Força and at the La Mercè cultural centre. Numerous students of his have set up small workshops all over Catalonia, putting down roots for this art form that had no tradition in Catalonia.



► *La princesa de Éboli*. (detail)  
Size: 179 x 338 cm.  
1988. Cardboard by  
Josep Maria Subirachs.  
Photos: Laura de la Calle Vian.

► *San Félix y la catedral*.  
Size: 160 x 262 cm. 2004.  
Cardboard by Pere Llosas.  
Photos: Laura de la Calle Vian.



2 BORRÁS, María Lluïsa,  
*Delclaux, artista y mestre  
del tapís*. Col·legi Oficial  
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Girona. 1991.  
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pp. 212-214 and 357-364).

## To be continued

The abundant work of this creator, with more than four-hundred tapestries woven personally or under his tutelage and still counting, deserves a monograph studying his life and work in depth.<sup>2</sup> I have spent the last few years working on this, doing field work that was not only very absorbing and enriching but also very pleasant. I hope this monograph will soon be available in bookshops, entitled *DELCLAUX. LA VIDA EN UN HILO*, a summary of the meaning of his work, which is also his life. ●

# Tapestry Collection at the Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla, Complutense University of Madrid

by MARÍA LÓPEZ REY  
Conservator of Textile Materials

1 THOMAS, Michel; MAINGUY, Christine and POMMIER, Sophie. *Historia de un arte. El Tapiz*. Skira-Carroggio, SA. Barcelona, 1985, p. 160.  
2 VIGNON, Charlotte. *Coytel's Don Quixote Tapestries. Illustrating Spanish Novel in Eighteenth-Century France*. The Frick Collection. New York, 2015, p. 17.

## Introduction

Between 2011 and 2015, collectors Carmen and Justo Fernández loaned four tapestries with scenes from Don Quixote to the Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla to be studied and displayed.

The director of the library, aware of the responsibility that comes with safeguarding this heritage, has seen the necessity of design a specific preventive conservation programme to ensure their long-term preservation after the conservation treatment of the tapestries.

## The Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla, Complutense University of Madrid

The Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla, Complutense University of Madrid, is a library inaugurated in 2001 with the mission of collecting, managing and preserving collections of old books from education institutions that, historically, have been part of what is the University today.

## Carmen and Justo Fernández tapestry collection

The tapestries are from the Royal Manufacture of Aubusson (France), woven on a low-warp loom in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, and represent various scenes from the book *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* following the iconography designed by Antoine Coytel.<sup>1,2</sup>

The tapestries in the collection represent the scenes:

- *Camacho's wedding* (Fig. 1)
- *Don Quixote receiving the Order of Knighthood* (Fig. 2)
- *Sancho's Dapple* (Fig. 3)
- *Princess Micomicona* (Fig. 4)



Fig. 1. *Camacho's wedding.*





Fig. 2. *Don Quixote receiving the Order of Knighthood*. See detail.



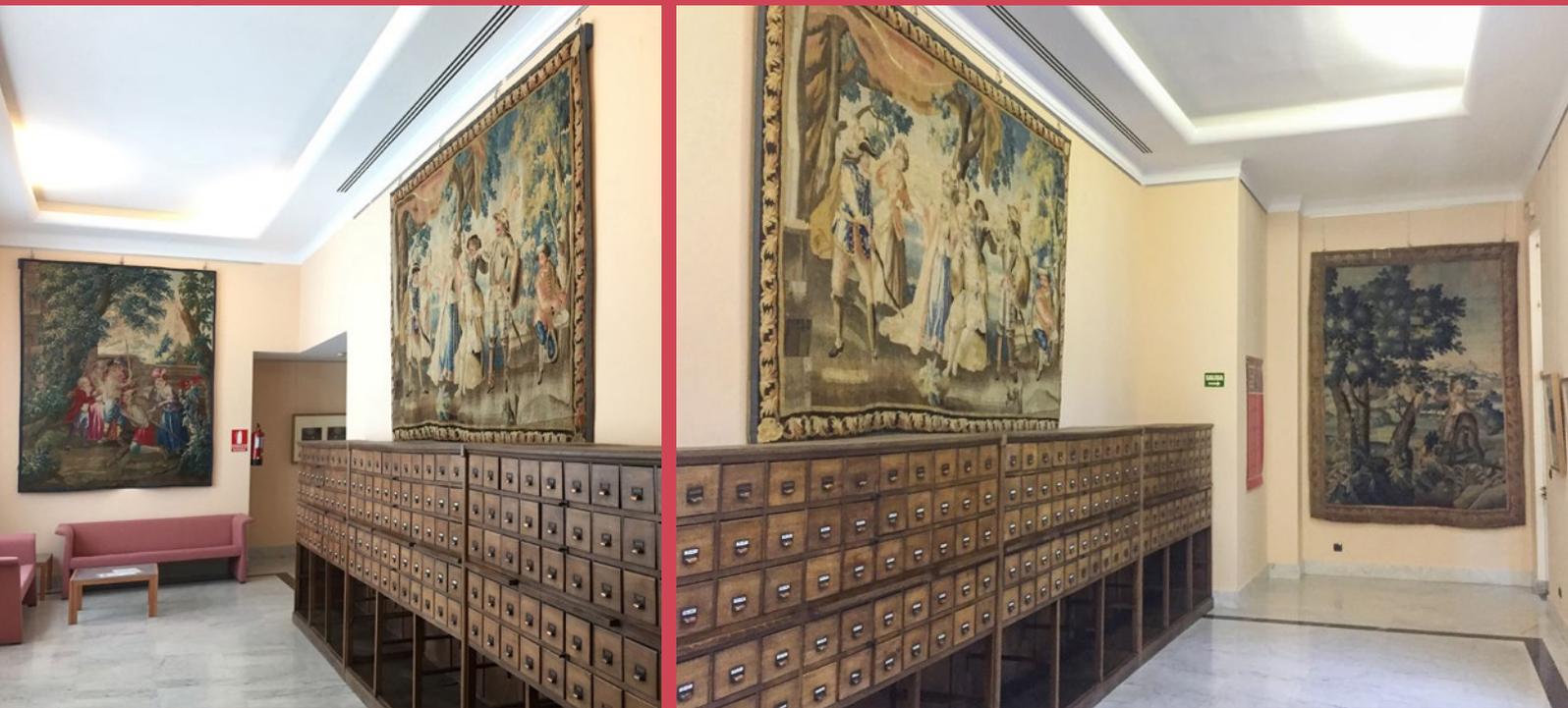
Fig. 3. *Sancho's Dapple*.





Fig. 4. *Princess Micomicona*.





Several views of the Tapestry Gallery.

3 LÓPEZ REY, María. “Tejidos domésticos. La complejidad de su conservación, restauración y exposición”, *Ge-conservación*, issue 8, 2015, p. 166.

The tapestries are on display, with **engravings** of the scenes from *Don Quixote* represented in the tapestries. There are also information panels explaining the history of the collection and the conservation process they have undergone.

The exhibition of textile materials is always risky, so it is very important to strike a balance that allows visitors to enjoy the pieces without damaging them.<sup>3</sup> This balance begins with the decision to alternate periods on display and periods in storage at the library storage area. The tapestries are taken down and packed away in summer.

The room where they are on display isn't just an exhibition gallery, it is used as a lounge for the library users and get from the spaces open to the public to those accesible only by staff. So, in designing the exhibition, it was important to take into account not only the preservation requirements for the tapestries but also the other ways in which the space is used.

The design for the exhibition began with adjusting the tapestries to a room that houses a huge wooden filing cabinet with unused library files and a seating area with two sofas and a coffee table, used by library visitors. It also took into account that one of the walls in the room has four east-facing windows with white roller shades.

The most serious problems we ran into was with the *Don Quixote receiving the Order of Knighthood* tapestry, above one of the sofas, as users could brush their heads on it as they sat down. To prevent this, we took advantage of the full height of the wall and put it as high as possible, so no matter how tall, no one would brush against it.

One of the librarians with a book cart.



4 HERRERO CARRETERO, Concha. “Un modelo de conservación histórica y de intervención conservadora: Las Bodas de Mercurio. Colección de Tapices del Duque de Lerma”, *Ge-conservación*, issue 8, 2015, p. 181.

5 ROMERO SERRANO, Mariana. “Conservación y exhibición de tapices. Nuevos espacios expositivos”, *Revista de Museología*, issue 62, 2015, p. 106.

6 LENNARD, Frances. “Preserving image and structure: tapestry conservation in Europe and the United States”, *Studies in Conservation*, volume 51, supplement 1, 2006, p. 49.

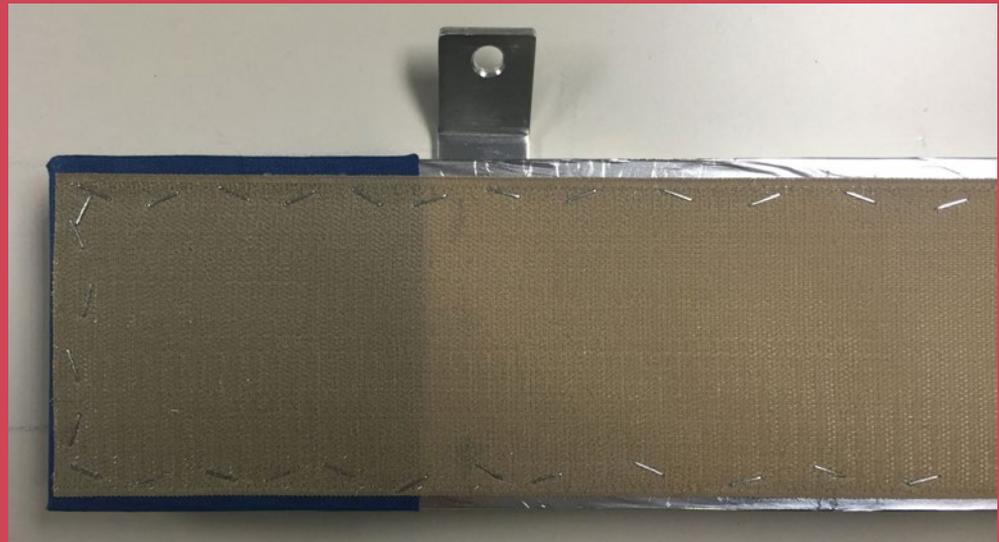
Another problem was with the tapestries *The wedding of Camacho* and *The Princess Micomicona*, which are displayed alternatively on top of the file cabinet, as both pieces overlap the cabinet. To prevent this area from lying horizontal, where it can accumulate much more dust than the rest of the tapestry, we decided to move the cabinet out 10 cm from the wall to give them space to hang comfortably.

*Sancho’s Dapple* tapestry is behind a glass door. Far from being a problem, this door acts as a screen, protecting the tapestry from the book carts heading into the reading room.

The tapestries were designed and manufactured to be hung vertically,<sup>4</sup> which is why they are displayed in this way, respecting their original reading. In recent years, new display systems are being studied using an inclined plane,<sup>5</sup> but this system doesn’t fit the needs of this gallery.

To display the tapestries, we used Velcro®, attaching the tapestry with a Velcro® to a wooden slat. It is an effective method, as it distributes the weight along the top edge, unlike the old methods using rings and thread loops.<sup>6</sup>

The slat is made of wood, and to prevent emissions that would affect the preservation of the tapestry, was sealed with Marvelseal 360® (an aluminised polyethylene and nylon barrier film). To make the slat as inconspicuous as possible, the ends were lined with the same colour as the selvages of the tapestry.



► Close-up of the slat prepared to hang the tapestry.

► Photo exhibition *Portugal Inédito. Fotografías de Hernández-Pacheco, 2017.*



The slat is hung on the top of the wall with a system of guides, so when the tapestries aren't on display, other collections can be shown.

As we've said, the exhibition hall isn't designed for this use and it doesn't meet the lighting conditions recommended for displaying textiles. To minimise the effects of the light, UV filters have been installed on the windows. We also studied how far in the windows the sun shines, making sure it doesn't directly hit any of the wall, and therefore any of the tapestries.

One of the most critical moments came during the installation of the tapestries. To ensure the safety of the tapestries, these activities are planned in advance and carried out according to guidelines laying out the process, staff necessary, equipment required and the steps to follow to prevent any damage.



Close-up of sunbeams.

<sup>7</sup> The recommended cleaning is subject to the availability of the conservation department staff. It can be done every two years if it is not possible to do so every time the tapestries are taken down.

<sup>8</sup> LÓPEZ REY, María. “Aproximación a la conservación-restauración de los tapices”, *Pecia Complutense*, issue 24, 2016, p. 68.

After testing several systems to put up and take down the tapestries, we decided that the simplest and most effective procedure is to use pulleys, so the slat and tapestry are pulled up at the same time, as a single piece. The main advantage of this system is that the Velcro® (holding the tapestry onto the slat) is attached or detached on the ground, on a flat surface, so it can be done without putting the tapestry or the staff at risk.

Once the tapestries have been taken down, the recommendation is to clean the tapestries, front and back<sup>7</sup>, to remove any dust, with an adjustable vacuum cleaner and a soft-haired brush. This cleaning process prepares the tapestry for storage.

When the tapestries are not on display, they are stored in the library storage area, which has the appropriate environment and security conditions to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage.

The best way to store them is rolled up<sup>8</sup>, so a cylindrical storage support have been created for each tapestry, adjusted to the size and specific needs of each one. In addition, the support make it easier to handle the tapestries when they are moved inside the library. Also a two racks made of Ethafoam® (polyethylene foam) have been built for the cylinders to rest on, so the tapestries don't have to support their own weight when rolled up. Furthermore, cotton covers have also been made to protect the tapestries in storage.

Close-up of storage container.



## Conclusion

The preventive conservation plan established was designed taking into account the technical equipment and staff available in the library, so that it would be feasible. ●

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# Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > [ESPAÑOL](#)

## RESEARCH PROJECT

### SILKNOW, weaving our past into the future

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European history is woven in silk. Although the Silk Road is normally associated with its origins in Asia, its European branches were fundamental to the construction of present-day Europe, through the trade relations that sprung up along the way. The legacy of these routes is invaluable: a unique example of heritage in which memory, identity, creativity and knowledge come together in the same place. It is also living heritage, multifaceted, in which tradition and craftsmanship live on.

Nevertheless, despite its huge importance in building contemporary Europe, this heritage has not been properly appreciated. This, in addition to its own physical nature, makes it even more fragile than other cultural elements like paintings and sculptures. Even more so because the intangible heritage associated with textile pieces is seriously endangered by the closing of many industries, the loss of oral memory, the imminent disappearance of those who have first-hand knowledge of traditional techniques, etc. Given the fragility of the materials<sup>1</sup> and knowledge associated with textile design, technology is a must, in order to preserve and disseminate this heritage.

SILKNOW was created in order to tackle these challenges.<sup>2</sup> This research project is funded by the European Union through the CULT-COOP-09-2017 call, “European cultural heritage,



Jacquard loom: an artisan weaving © Garin 1820.

access and analysis for a richer interpretation of the past”, within the Horizon 2020 programme. Coordinated by the University of Valencia, the consortium has nine members from six countries in the European Union (Spain, France, Germany, Slovenia, Poland and Italy). The members include three universities, two SMEs, one international institution and three research bodies. This project aims to improve understanding, preservation and dissemination of European silk heritage from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Based on records from existing catalogues, it aims to produce digital modelling of weaving techniques (a “Virtual Loom”), using automatic visual recognition, advanced spatio-temporal visualisation, multilingual and semantically enriched access to digital data.

This multidisciplinary project is made possible by a group of professionals from such diverse areas as computer technology,

<sup>1</sup> “Bocetos, diseños, dibujos, puestas en carta y textiles” FRANCH, Ricardo, *Del “vellut” al espolín*, Obrapropia, Valencia, 2012.  
<sup>2</sup> PORTALÉS, Cristina; SEBASTIÁN, Jorge; ALBA, Ester; SEVILLA, Javier; GAITÁN, Mar; RUÍZ and

FERNÁNDEZ, Marcos, “Interactive Tools for the Preservation, Dissemination and Study of Silk Heritage—An Introduction to the SILKNOW Project”, *Multimodal Technologies and Interaction 2*, issue 2, 15 May 2018, pp. 1-11.

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text analysis, image processing, semantics, art history, textile preservation and manufacturing. In fact, SILKNOW believes textiles are more than just objects; they are a nexus between different disciplines. However, the project goes beyond merely trying to bring ancient weaving techniques to the modern industry. In this regard, the body of knowledge originates not only from researchers but also from creative industries like GARIN, which still does its weaving with techniques from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Metaphorically, computers will be used to rescue ancient weaving techniques.<sup>3</sup> The results will be of use to many different groups, including researchers, conservation specialists, art historians, creative industries, information technology, artificial intelligence, tourism, etc.

Therefore, the project seeks a series of results that are relevant to a variety of target audiences that are helping build a European history woven in silk.

### Multilingual thesaurus

The information available on cultural heritage in general, and that of silk specifically, is extremely diverse and comes from multiple sources that have evolved over time and space. Additionally, textile heritage does not have a standardised cataloguing system or international vocabulary, and most often, each museum develops its own tools, which means that datasets and searches are not interoperable among different museums. However, it is essential to have controlled vocabularies to work with the museums' collections, not only for researchers and conservation professionals, but also for the general public.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In this regard, as Essinger explains, the ties binding technology and silk heritage are not new at all. In fact, Jacquard looms are seen as the direct ancestors of modern-day computers. ESSINGER, James, *Jacquard's Web: How a Hand-Loom Led to the Birth of the Information Age*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> BACA, Murtha, "Fear of Authority? Authority Control and Thesaurus Building for Art and Material Culture Information", *Cataloguing and classification*, issue 38:3-4, 2004, pp. 143-151.

SILKNOW is putting together an open-access multilingual thesaurus (English, Spanish, French and Italian) on silk, encompassing historical weaving techniques, materials, tools, etc. The result will help standardise this heritage, better preserving it while encouraging contact among collections at museums all over Europe. Furthermore, the participating institutions will improve their inventory and cataloguing systems, as well as the ways in which they process and manage their digital data. Finally, it will be a good example of the benefits of data interoperability.

### Spatio-temporal visualisation

One feature of fabrics is that, despite being geographically far from each other, they often share many of the same characteristics, sharing styles, decorative motifs or even techniques. However, like other fields of art history, textile design has evolved over time and space, adapting to the tastes of each period.

SILKNOW will produce highly interactive graphics to show the data associated with silk fabrics in space and time. This tool will allow researchers to study where the pieces come from, track their connections throughout Europe and their evolution over time, thus showing their historical continuity through to the present day. This will have a clear impact not only as a research tool, but also as a driving force for tourism, raising awareness of collections at small and medium-sized museums, generating new synergies among them and helping create new routes in Europe focusing on silk. Finally, this visualisation will be highly useful for the creative industries as a catalyst and source of inspiration or as a tool to identify copies, as well as helping them better understand their own designs and inspirations, bringing a historical element to their collections.

### Reproducing historical fabrics

The fragile nature of textile heritage sometimes makes it difficult to access these cultural items, which makes research and dissemination more

complicated. Therefore, SILKNOW will build a virtual loom, with representations of historical weaving techniques using graphic models available online that can also be printed in 3D. The purpose is to better understand the structures and techniques, and to make them more accessible and manageable for the public. These 3D replicas can be used as educational materials at museums, for research or for dissemination.

## Conclusions

Cultural heritage is not only about tangible cultural goods, it also includes meanings passed down from one generation to the next, resulting in a sense of belonging to the larger community. Silk heritage goes well beyond fabrics; it is a catalyst for social cohesion, sustainable development, creativity, design and technology. It is the thread that binds together an important part of European cultural heritage and history. SILKNOW, as a joint research project, is committed to safeguarding this cultural



Shuttles © Garin 1820.

heritage using latest-generation technology, weaving our past into the future.

“SILKNOW. Silk heritage in the Knowledge Society: from punched cards to big data, deep learning and visual/tangible simulations” has received funds from the European Union Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant number 769504. ■

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# Library novelties and news

OPEN SOURCE LANGUAGE VERSION > [ESPAÑOL](#)

## EXHIBITION

### Hilando ideas, tejiendo arte

IVAM ALCOI

from June 26<sup>th</sup> to October 27<sup>th</sup> 2019

#### ■ M<sup>a</sup> Jesús Folch.

Curator of the exhibition and curator at the IVAM

*Hilando ideas, tejiendo arte* shows the evolution of textile arts from the 1960s to present day and takes a group of 45 pieces by 22 artists to analyse how textiles are no longer a tool associated with women, decorations, functionality and applied arts, but have become an instrument for generalised expression of critical concepts in art.

The first thing visitors will see is the proposals that advocated for a reinterpretation of the manual processes passed down from ancestral cultures and experimented with materials and techniques like jute, macramé, palm, mica, etc. to use sculpturally. In Spain, Informalists like Antoni Tàpies introduced some of these

principles, but it was Josep Grau-Garriga who, in connection with the *Nouvelle Tapisserie* and the international biennials in Lausanne, spearheaded the renewal of tapestry, influencing groups like the one in Valencia, *Tramant la trama*, whose members included Aurelia Masanet and Pilar Sala. While she was active, Aurèlia Muñoz also researched how to integrate works into architectural spaces. With *Estel Ancorat*, she created a flexible piece made of macramé strings and threads, braided by hand, that changed in appearance depending on where the viewer was standing. In contrast, *Lanas*, an interactive piece made up of 1,600 wool threads in 40 different colours and bells, was created by Juan Hidalgo to generate shape, colour and sound through the movement of its parts.



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The conceptual premises that appeared as criticism of pure aesthetics will be the focus of the next section of the exhibition and pose questions associated with our lifestyle and way of thinking. Robert Morris introduced eroticism as political language and work on Freudian concepts of Eros and Thanatos: the search for order and cohesion versus the drive towards dissolution and fragmentation. Both in his piece *House of Vetti II* and also in *Behind the Lobby Doors...*, we find a narration by Laure Prouvost of the artist's loss of control over the execution, interpretation and vision of his work; and Kimsooja's *Bottari*, in which the ordinary act of tying up and rolling out symbolises the diffusion and concentration of our lifestyle and way of thinking; and the sculptures of Ernesto Neto, which initiate us into knowledge of our body and its relationship to its surroundings.

Nicolas Bourriaud called new forms of appropriating and re-combining artistic materials *post-production*. Cosima von Bonin and Ricardo Cotanda use industrial fabrics, to which they add textile pieces outlined with thread and needle to reflect on social classes and gender, respectively.

Clemencia Labin and Polly Apfelbaum make fabric collages that share an abstract language related to pop and comic art. Joana Vasconcelos speaks about how women's bodies have been displayed to the public like trophies, and Eva Lootz and Annette Messager about the attacks on women's dignity and rights by male-chauvinist culture.

The final section features works with biting, ironic criticism of a socio-political nature that seek to dismantle the rigidity of the governmental system and of our own society. Agustín Parejo School tells us about the cemeteries of our culture; Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa of the armed interventions by the United States in various parts of the world; Cristina Lucas of the consequences of bombing civilians; Carolina Caycedo gives protest slogans a museum-ready format to break the barriers between social protest and institutions; Magdalena Jitrik obliquely quotes the history of Argentinian anarchism through abstract language; and Yinka Shonibare incorporates post-colonial debate on repression and racism by subverting and combining models inherited from Victorian and African cultures. ■

**The exhibition brings together pieces from private and public collections: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Galería Michel Sосkine, Madrid; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona; Colección Herederos de Aurèlia Muñoz; Fundación MACBA, Barcelona; Colección CA2M. Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid; Fundación Helga de Alvear, Madrid / Cáceres; Fundação Joana Vasconcelos, Lisboa; Colección "la Caixa". Arte Contemporáneo, Barcelona; MUSAC. Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, León; and Ayuntamiento de Sant Cugat del Vallés.**



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