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### **Review of Beatriz Blasco Esquivias, Jonatan Jair López Muñoz, and Sergio Ramiro Ramírez, eds., *Las mujeres y las artes. Mecenas, artistas, emprendedoras, coleccionistas***

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**Blasco Esquivias, Beatriz, Jonatan Jair López Muñoz, and Sergio Ramiro Ramírez, eds. *Las mujeres y las artes. Mecenas, artistas, emprendedoras, coleccionistas. Serie Lecturas, Historia. Madrid: Abada Editores, 2021. 842 pp. + 138 ill.***

This ambitious edited volume stems from two academic seminars held at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (2017 and 2019), organized by the members of the research project “Femenino Singular. Las mujeres y las artes en la corte española de la Edad Moderna (reinas, nobles, artistas y empresarias)”, led by Beatriz Blasco Esquivias.<sup>1</sup> Although the research project focused on the involvement of women (queens, noblewomen, artists, and businesswomen) in the arts in the early modern Spanish court, both seminars expanded to include other contributions. As a result, this collection of articles not only examines the involvement of women in a wide range of aspects of the production and consumption of art mostly in the early modern Hispanic world, but also covers a variety of countries (such as Portugal and Italy) and a wide temporal frame. Structured in four sections, it comprises a selection of 35 essays contributed by senior and junior scholars.

Twelve essays on art as a practice of female power are gathered in the first section. Among the four chapters focused on the female patronage at the monastery-palace of the Descalzas Reales in Madrid—three of them are dedicated to the Habsburg women’s patronage—, the contribution by María Ángeles Toajas Roger stands out. Her essay offers new and thorough research on María de Pisa (1495-c.1574), a bourgeois woman who, among other important commissions, played a key role in the construction and decoration of both her husband Alonso de Gutiérrez’s house known as “del Tesorero” (today the Descalzas Reales), and of her own built right in front, known as “de la Tesorera” (the Monte de Piedad since 1702). In addition to housing a female Franciscan community, both lavish palaces were used by the Habsburg women and their ladies-in-waiting as a secondary residence. As an appendix, Toajas Roger has generously included the references of sixty documents related to María de Pisa and her patronage, providing other scholars the opportunity to continue or expand this research.

The following three chapters are dedicated to early modern noblewomen. Whereas Noelia García Pérez studies the painting collection of Mencía de Mendoza (1508-54), the most well-known Spanish female patron and collector, the following two essays broaden the discussion of noblewomen’s roles as art patrons and intermediaries. Sergio Ramiro Ramírez analyzes María de Mendoza y Sarmientos’s (1508-87) patronage reassigning artistic decisions, commissions and donations that

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ucm.es/femenino\\_singular/](https://www.ucm.es/femenino_singular/)

traditionally have been attributed to her husband Francisco de los Cobos. For example, presenting new archival documents, he demonstrates how María de Mendoza took over the construction and decoration of their burial chapel, the Sacra Capilla de El Salvador in Úbeda (Jaén), to include the representation of her noble lineage and that she indeed donated the celebrated sculpture of Saint John the Baptist as a child by Michelangelo. Ida Mauro places Vittoria Colonna Enríquez-Cabrera (1558-1637), the wife of the VIII Almirante de Castilla, in a prominent position in the artistic exchanges between Spain, Rome, and Sicily by analyzing her *post-mortem* inventory. Mauro's essay also provides strong archival arguments to demonstrate, for example, that the luxurious Florentine tabletop in the Museo del Prado known as the "tabletop of the Admiral of Castile" was, in fact, commissioned by Vittoria Colonna.

The last five chapters are dedicated to three queens covering a variety of subjects. Gloria Martínez Leiva's essay on the portraits of Mariana de Neoburgo (1667-1740), Charles II's second wife, explores how the queen transformed her image and Spanish court portraiture from 1696 by dressing accordingly to the French fashion and commissioning portraits by French artists. Isabel de Farnesio (1692-1766) is the queen that received the most attention in this section with three chapters focusing on her relationship with the ambassador Annibale Scotti and their influence in the artistic taste in Madrid, on her commissions for the decoration of the Royal Palace of La Granja, and on her role as a promoter of the Italian music for violin at the Spanish court. Judith Ortega Rodríguez's essay on Maria Isabel de Braganza (1797-1818)—Ferdinand VII's second wife, known for her decisive role in the creation of the royal museum that today is the Museo del Prado—and her music patronage closes this section of the book.

Women artists are the protagonists of the second section. The Italian architect and painter Plautilla Bricci (1616-1705) and the Spanish sculptor Luisa Roldán (1652-1706) are the only case studies included in this section, along with an overview of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Flemish women painters provided by Ana Diéguez Rodríguez. Two chapters discuss methodological approaches and sources for the study of early modern Spanish women artists. On the one hand, Beatriz Blasco Esquivias proposes considering Antonio Palomino's *El Parnaso español, pintoresco laureado* (Madrid, 1724) as a source as well as Vasari's *Vite* (Florence 1550 and 1568) for the study of Italian women artists; on the other hand, her Ph.D. student Alba Gómez de Zamora Sanz addresses the lack of secondary literature and the scarcity of information in archival sources to reconstruct the different roles played by women in artists' workshops in Madrid. Finally, Marina Garone Gravier's essay dedicated to the lives and careers of two eighteenth-century Mexican (*Novohispanas*) women book printers stands out among the chapters focused on the presence of women in the arts of the book.

The third section includes nine essays that cover a variety of subjects related to art and the construction of female identity. It opens with a well-researched essay on the female spaces in urban Seville houses and palaces contributed by Elena Díez Jorge, María Núñez González, and Ana Aranda Bernal. The authors examine the architecture of the buildings focusing on gender and social status, and they provide useful floorplans and sections of palaces to reconstruct the spaces where not only the *señoras* but also their maids and female slaves lived and worked. Two essays dedicated to noblewomen painters follow: one of them deals with Sofonisba Anguissola's (c.1535-1625) role at the Spanish court and the second contribution, by David García López, focuses on the participation of women in Baroque painting and explores the cases of Teresa Sarmiento Duchess of Béjar (1631-c.1706) and the nun Sor Estefanía de la Encarnación (c.1597-1665). By placing them in this section, the editors underscore that these women were not "professional" artists, although they do not provide an explanation or definition in the introduction of the volume. While it is true that these women did not work in workshops, they did learn with "professional" painters, produced works of art, and were known and celebrated by their contemporaries for their artistic talent and skills. Furthermore, Sofonisba Anguissola and Teresa Sarmiento were included in Palomino's treatise because he considered both to have contributed to the *ars pictorica*. They could have been better placed in the previous section in order to expand the much-needed discussion on "professional" and "amateur" women artists since both Vasari and Palomino included female painters, nuns, and noblewomen in their biographical works. Moreover, this is precisely what Linda Nochlin denounces in her seminal article "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971): women found many institutional obstacles that prevented them from "succeeding" in the "professional" arts, such as the limitations of being born in the nobility or becoming a nun. Three Iberian queens' images and representations are examined in different essays focused on the decoration of Elizabeth of Bourbon's (1602-44) quarters in the *Alcázar*, on the royal entries of empress Isabel of Portugal (1503-39) in Castile in 1526-7 and on the royal entry of a Maria Anna of Austria (1683-1754) in Lisbon in 1708-9. The section closes with three chapters dedicated to urban spaces, culture, and fashion in the Spanish court: a contribution on the presence of women in the Paseo del Prado, an analysis on the stereotype of the *petimetras* and a discussion on methodological problems to address eighteenth-century women's fashion.

The presence of women in the Royal Academies of Fine Arts, museums, and cultural heritage institutions are addressed in the fourth section of the book, expanding the temporal framework to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Apart from an essay focused on European female archaeologists and the one dedicated to the role played by art historian Luisa Mortari (d.2000) as superintendent of cultural heritage in Molise (Italy), four essays deal with these unexplored topics in Spain. Using the minutes and records preserved at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de

San Fernando, Daniel Lavín González provides an overview of the women who were accepted or rejected as “académicas” between 1752 and 1846, and Mariángeles Pérez-Martín explores the nineteenth-century women artists who were members of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos in Valencia. Finally, Jonatan Jair López Muñoz analyzes the education and careers of Ursicina Martínez Gallego (1906-2004) and Concha Blanco Mínguez, two pioneering early twentieth-century women museum curators, and Margarita Moreno Conde reconstructs the history of these professionals in Spain.

In sum, this book is a remarkable contribution to art history, women’s studies, and museum studies. Despite the varying quality of the essays—something that often happens with edited volumes stemming from seminars—they not only foster research but also disseminate knowledge on the involvement of women in the arts covering a wide range of subjects and chronological periods. The strongest essays are rich enough in methods and primary sources for Iberianists, and accessible enough for graduate students able to read in Spanish working on their master’s or Ph.D. dissertations.

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