

Sculpture Journal

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State gift or strategy? La Roldana's Nazareno

Felipe Serrano Estrella

As is well known, the exchange of artworks was a widespread practice within the framework of diplomatic relations in the Early Modern period. These transactions facilitated, or at least attempted to facilitate, political ties between their participants. Connections with important figures such as kings, viceroys, ambassadors, nuncios and so on led to the hoarding of various artistic items. Of special interest among these items were paintings and sumptuary artworks. These exchanges generated what we might call the collection of diplomatic art, including pieces that either by their artistic value or simply by their foreign or even exotic nature were held in high esteem, contributing to the rise in splendour of these collections. These 'strategic gifts', as Edward Goldberg calls them,¹ were not part of a simple, generalized practice, for behind them was a code of behaviour that responded to an array of political tactics which aimed at transmitting an image that fitted in with the historical reality at any given time.²

On occasion gifts were made by the artists themselves with two basic strategic purposes. One was to find new purchasers, and thus provide their work with a benchmark commercial value. The other was to increase the fame of the artist.³ When people or institutions accepted a given piece for their collections, the fame of the artist who had given it increased notably. In this sense, it can be said that an artist's success was based on his or her marketing skills and ambition as well as talent. This complex task was carried out by artists themselves, or by whoever managed their production from a commercial standpoint.

These practices have been confirmed by detailed studies of certain royal collections, and are supported by the rich documentation generated by some of the most significant works. These studies have found evidence of gifts from ambassadors and courtiers in search of royal favours, as well as visits to the Spanish court from foreign

powers and institutions to smooth the sometimes complex ways of diplomacy.⁴ Among these were works given by painters such as Orazio Gentileschi. Gentileschi sent his painting *Moses Saved from the Waters* (1632–33) to Philip IV of Spain, in the hope that the influence exerted by Madrid over Florence would lead to the Grand Duke Ferdinand II of Tuscany hiring his services. This would allow him to return to his native country from England, despite or perhaps because of being nearly seventy years old.⁵

These two practices claim to exalt art, but behind each are other hidden interests, as is shown by the life and work of the sculptor Luisa Roldán (1652–1706), known as *La Roldana*. In particular, these issues are germane to one of her most important works, *El Nazareno* (The Nazarene or Jesus of Nazareth), now in the small town of Sisante, Cuenca. This article will try to shed light on the story of this magnificent sculpture which, along with the statue of *St Michael* in El Escorial (fig. 1), brought this Spanish artist fame. The origins of this work are a complicated amalgam of facts and legends which the discovery of documentation in the archives of the nunciature in Madrid may now clarify.⁶

Luisa Roldán's life and work have sparked great interest over a long period, as is demonstrated by the vast bibliographic corpus that exists on her. The information provided by the contemporary author Antonio Palomino de Castro (1724) and the catalogue of the exhibition *Roldana* in Seville in 2007 represent the starting point for this article. This last contribution has familiarized us with some of the most recent documentary sources about her life, and at the same time it has allowed us to review her artistic works with scientific rigour.⁷ There exist a great number of publications of varied styles, including two PhD theses, and since 2007 the work of, in particular, Pleguezuelo Hernández and Llamazares Rodríguez.⁸

Luisa Roldán was born in Seville in 1652, the daughter of Pedro Roldán and Teresa de Villavicencio. She was taught by her father in the family workshop, where she met her husband, the sculptor Luis Antonio de los Arcos, whom she

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1. The *Relazione segreta delle cosse della corte di Spagna* was a code on which the politics of diplomatic or strategic gifts was based, in accordance with the knowledge of the taste of the person to whom the gift was addressed; published in E. L. Goldberg, 'State gifts from Medici to the Court of Philip III. The *Relazione segreta* of Orazio della Rena', in J. L. Colomer (ed.), *Arte y Diplomacia de la Monarquía Hispánica en el siglo XVII*, Madrid, CEEH, 2003, pp. 115–33.

2 Jonathan Brown highlights this in the preface to the literary work *Arte y Diplomacia de la Monarquía Hispánica en el siglo XVII*, in Colomer, as note 1; a key piece for the analysis of the value of an artwork as a mechanism of persuasion within the framework of diplomatic relations. Two essential titles in relation to these aspects are F. Haskell, *Patrons and Painters. A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1963, and J. Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs. Collecting Art in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, New Haven, CT, and London, Yale University Press, 1995. Regarding 'devotional gifts', see M.ª P. Aguiló Alonso, 'Lujo y religiosidad: El regalo diplomático en el siglo XVII', in M. Cabañas Bravo, A. López-Yarto Elizalde and W. Rincón García (eds), *Arte, Poder y Sociedad en la España de los siglos XV a XX*, Madrid, CSIC, 2008, pp. 49–62; A. González-Palacios, *La colección real de mosaicos y*

1. Luisa Roldán (1652–1706), *San Miguel*, 1692, carved, gilded and polychromed wood, 264 × 137 × 170 cm. Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Madrid. (photo: Patrimonio Nacional).

piedras duras, Madrid, Museo del Prado, 2001; and A. González-Palacios, 'Le fase benedette e i loro contenitori', in *Arredi e ornamenti alla corte di Roma 1560–1795*, Milan, Electa, 2004, pp. 41–47.

3 E. Kris and O. Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist. A Historical Experiment*, London, Yale University Press, 1979.

4 The gifts sent by the Viceroy and Vicereine of Naples to the King and Queen of Spain are an example: D. García, 'Presentes de Nápoles. Los virreyes y el envío de obras de arte y objetos suntuarios para la Corona durante el siglo XVII', in Colomer, as note 1, pp. 293–321.

5 G. Finaldi, 'Moisés salvado de las aguas', in *100 Obras Maestras del Museo del Prado*, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, 2008, pp. 106–07; G. Finaldi, *Orazio Gentileschi en la corte de Carlos I* (exh. cat.), Museo de Bellas Artes, Bilbao, 1999, and M. J. Muñoz, 'El IX conde de Santisteban en Nápoles (1688–1696)', in Colomer, as note 1, pp. 461–80, esp. pp. 466–67.

6 The Vatican, Archivio Segreto, Archivio della Nunziatura di Madrid, 48, year 1701, fols. 82r–82v and fol. 83r.

7 A. Torrejón and J. L. Romero (eds), *Roldana* (exh. cat.), Reales Alcázares de Sevilla, Sevilla, 2007.

8 E. Amat, 'Luisa Roldán. Su vida y sus obras', unpub. PhD thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1927; C. Hall Van den Elsen, 'The life and work of the sevillian sculptor Luisa Roldán, with a catalogue raisonné', unpub. PhD thesis, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1992; F. Llamazares, 'Un nuevo Ecce Homo de la Roldana, y el mensaje teológico de esta iconografía en la escultura barroca española', *Boletín de Arte de la Universidad de Málaga*, 30–31, 2009–2010, pp. 89–95.

9 Regarding the relation between father and daughter from this event onwards, see S. Montoto, 'El casamiento de la Roldana', *Boletín de la Real Academia sevillana de buenas letras*, IV, 15, 1920, pp. 113–20, 144–48; and C. Hall Van den Elsen, 'Luisa Roldán, *La Roldana*: portaciones documentales y artísticas', in Torrejón and Romero, as note 7, pp. 19–31.

10 For the role of the woman artist in the Spanish Modern Age, and in particular the training of *La Roldana* in the family workshop, see A. Aranda, 'Ser mujer y artista en la España de la Edad Moderna',



married against her family's wishes in 1671.⁹ Her Andalusian works are linked to her husband's, and especially to those of her father, whose production deeply influenced her stylistic tendencies, which attained magnificent results in her carved and polychromed work in wood. Two of these stand out: the *Ecce Homo* of 'Los Terceros' in Cádiz – housed in the city's cathedral – and the representation of the patron saints of Cádiz, *SS Servandus and Germanus*, commissioned by the town council of Cádiz, also currently housed in the cathedral.¹⁰

Don Cristóbal Ontañón, an important patron of the arts, a Knight of Santiago and assistant to the royal chamber at the court of King Charles II, opened the doors of the court in Madrid for Roldán in 1687. Those doors would never be closed to her and her husband.¹¹ She was appointed as sculptor to the royal chamber of Charles II in 1692, a position confirmed by Philip V. This title represented a great achievement for Roldán, being another mark of public admiration as a sculptor, as well as for

her husband who was an essential pillar in her artistic career. Her recognition also exemplified the success of his commercial strategies in Madrid.¹²

As evidence of this, there is a letter from 1701, sent to Pope Clement XI (1700–21), in which Luis Antonio details the merits of his wife, drawing attention to her work for the king, and the fact that she 'had already completed various statues in the Royal Palace within the last thirteen years'.¹³ Clearly Roldán's appointment to the court in 1692 was a recognition of work that had started years before. We should bear in mind that a good part of her work in Madrid was commissioned by the monarchs themselves, as well as their families, among others the 10th Duque del Infantado.¹⁴

Roldán's stay in Madrid is described as a time of maturity, when a clear method manifests itself in her treatment of certain materials such as terracotta. She made little groups of sculpture representing scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin in this medium that were displayed in showcases. These small sculptures were based on themes such as the *Virgin and Child*, the *Education of the Virgin*, and complete Nativity scenes following the Neapolitan fashion. These works of terracotta and polychrome also represented saints such as Mary Magdalen, or those related to mendicant orders such as St Theresa of Jesus, St Peter of Alcantara and St John of God.¹⁵ Roldán had learned the techniques for works made of fired clay in the family workshop, and interest in them was widespread.

It was precisely at this time that she made two of her most famous works: the *San Miguel* for El Escorial (1692) and *El Nazareno* (fig. 2), which according to the documentation dates from 1700 (Appendix). The first was a direct commission from Charles II. However, the execution of the second answers to other aims that will be analysed here. Recent historiography has attributed another two *Nazarenos* to Luisa Roldán. These share the same iconographic style: the *Niño Jesús de Pasión* (Child Jesus of the Passion) in San Fermín de los Navarros (Madrid), and the *Niño del Dolor* (Child Jesus of Sorrows) at the Monastery of San Antón (Capuchin Tertiary Sisters) in Granada (fig. 3),

in Torrejón and Romero, as note 7, pp. 33–49; and A. Torrejón, 'El entorno familiar y artístico de La Roldana: el taller de Pedro Roldán', *ibid.*, pp. 53–77. For La Roldana's work for the city of Cádiz, see L. Alonso and F. Espinosa de los Monteros, 'Cádiz y La Roldana', *ibid.*, pp. 105–25.

¹¹ I owe this information to A. Palomino, *El museo pictórico y escala óptica. Tomo III, El Parnaso español pintoresco y laureado*, Madrid, Lucas Antonio de Bedmar, 1724 (ed. Madrid, Aguilar, 1947), p. 1092. A valuable source for the period that Luisa Roldán spent in Madrid is B. Gilman Proske, *Luisa Roldán at Madrid*, New York, Hispanic Society of America, 1964.

¹² Catherine Hall highlights how Luis Antonio de los Arcos centred his career in Madrid, applying for positions within the Royal Household, and locates the commercial activities of Luisa's husband in Seville, Madrid and Antwerp in documents between 1701 and 1706. Among the positions applied for, that of 'furiela' at the Royal Palace, Madrid in 1696, stands out. Hall Van den Elsen, as note 9, p. 26.

¹³ Document, as note 6, fol. 82r.

¹⁴ Between 1702 and 1705 she made works commissioned by the 10th Duque del Infantado, such as *Ecce Homo*, *Virgin and Child* and Nativity scenes of 149 pieces for the Convent El Rosal, Priego (Cuenca); Hall Van den Elsen, as note 9, p. 26.

¹⁵ Palomino extolled these small figure groups and the *St Michael* (El Escorial) and *El Nazareno* (Sisante) accompanied by *La Virgen de los Dolores* (Our Lady of Sorrows); Palomino, as note 11, pp. 1092–93; Hall Van den Elsen, as note 9, pp. 27–30.

¹⁶ This attribution is defended by Antonio Torrejón, Alfonso Pleguezuelo, Lorenzo Alonso de la Sierra and Francisco Espinosa; J. L. Romero, 'Niño Jesús Nazareno', in Torrejón and Romero, as note 7, pp. 220–21; and A. Pleguezuelo, 'Luisa Roldán y la iconografía de Jesús Nazareno', in P. Ibáñez and C. J. Martínez (eds), *La imagen devocional barroca*, Cuenca, Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, 2010, pp. 205–14. In the light of recently discovered documents Alfonso Pleguezuelo points out that two important works by Roldán, *San Miguel* in the monastery of El Escorial and *Niño del Dolor* in San Fermín de los Navarros, might have been gifts for King Charles II of Spain and his wife Mariana von Neuburg, respectively; it is also possible that other similar gifts were received by the Duque de Frías, who was the Constable of Castile in that period, or by other ladies of the Spanish Court. Both works were completed in 1692, although they had been planned since 1687, as stated by Pleguezuelo, in order to receive the position of royal sculptor granted

traditionally attributed to Alonso Cano and Pedro de Mena respectively.¹⁶

Antonio Palomino de Castro (c.1653/5–1726) offered detailed information about *El Nazareno* of Sisante, and the impression it made on him when he first saw it, and also the admiration he felt for 'La Roldana' whom he had 'met and visited many times'. He also declared that such quality sculpture could only be made by an artist such as Roldán, whom he extols for 'her great modesty, superior ability and extreme virtue'. He asserted that when she made images of Christ or the Virgin, besides preparing herself with Christian diligence, she was so filled with compassion that she could not but add tears to her statues.¹⁷ Palomino has left us this description of *El Nazareno*, along with information about Roldán's art dealer and the destination of the piece, which will be referred to later:

But above all, she made an image of Jesus of Nazareth, a life-size sculpture of extreme beauty and compassion at the same time; which amazed the whole court ... I went to visit this sacred image before it was taken away from the court, when it belonged to Luis de los Arcos, a widower, and he had it in a room on a desk covered with a curtain; he unveiled it and I was so astonished when I saw it that I felt disrespectful looking at it without kneeling, as it appeared to be Jesus himself. And, after contemplating it for a long time, we sat down and, looking at it again, I told Luis that if he did not cover this majesty again, I could not sit down. The respect and reverence that it caused was such that I have no words to describe it, as it was not only the expression on its face, but also how the hands and the feet were executed, and with some drops of blood running down its face, everything seemed very natural!¹⁸

In studying the origins of *El Nazareno* and its arrival at Sisante, confusion regarding the patrons of the work and the purpose of its execution is apparent. Pleguezuelo has closely analysed a complex mass of information including legends, documentary sources and oral

traditions preserved by the community of Sisante.¹⁹ We need to add subsequent sources to Palomino's contribution, among which two stand out. The first, *Escrito sobre algunas noticias de Sisante. Año 1788*,²⁰ documents the answers given by the parish priest of the village in the *Relaciones Topográficas de Tomás López*.²¹ The second document, entitled *Noticia histórica de la fundación del ejemplarísimo convento de religiosas clarisas, vulgo Nazarenas, de la villa de Sisante, obispado de Cuenca. Del sacerdote que la hizo y de la peregrina imagen de Jesús Nazareno que le da nombre*, was published in Cuenca in 1844 by Francisco Gomez.²²

The authors of these documents made use of the documentation housed in the convent, as well as the nuns' stories. The anonymous author of the *Noticia histórica* added information from some manuscripts that appeared by chance in Madrid at the sale of an estate: 'from a friend of Sr. Andrés Muñiz, inhabitant of Buenache Alarcón, who advised the abbess, Sister Inés de San Francisco de Paula, to take some documents from her convent, which Brother Juan García did, as I heard him say'.²³ It was Antonio Palomino who had declared that *El Nazareno* had been made as the result of a commission by King Charles II, 'as far as I know', for the Royal Convent of San Diego in Alcalá, but that after the death of the king in 1700 it again ended up in the possession of the sculptor. He added 'this divine simulacra had been desired by different people and communities'.²⁴ We do not know the source of Palomino's information, but the 'as far as I know' raises doubts, as the documentation discussed here highlights. The information from the anonymous author, enhanced by that of the nuns in Sisante, provided the royal commission with a new 'aim': now it was asserted that *El Nazareno* had been made as a gift to the pope. The *Escrito sobre algunas noticias de Sisante* provides us with a first, although vague, reference to the place for which the work was destined. The authors assumed 'that the Saintly Image had been boxed several times to be sent to Rome and other parts by the Lords of Madrid. The business was always disconcerting'.²⁵ In this way, from a direct source, the heirs of Luisa Roldán could assert that

in 1692; A. Pleguezuelo, 'El Niño del Dolor, obra de Luisa Roldán: una confirmación documental', *Archivo Hispalense*, 93, 282–84, 2010, pp. 501–06.

17 Palomino, as note 11, p. 109. In relation to this, see M. Nancarrow, 'Luisa Roldán's Jesus of Nazareth. The artist as spiritual medium', *Woman's Art Journal*, XIX, 1, 1998, pp. 9–15.

18 Palomino, as note 11, pp. 1092–93. Perhaps influenced by the Cordovan painter's remarks, the anonymous author of the *Noticia histórica* notes the 'astonishment, the delight of expert artists, all admiring its human qualities; and the artists are surprised after discovering that it has been made by a woman, questioning whether its sculptress made it as a result of a superior impulse, helped by Saint Michael, between pious tears and receiving communion every day'; Anon., *Jesús Nazareno de Sisante. Noticia histórica y novena*, Zaragoza, Imprenta de Octavio y Félez, 1844 (3rd edn, 1950), p. 27.

19 A. Pleguezuelo, 'Jesús Nazareno de Sisante. Una imagen con historia', *Padre Jesús de Sisante*, 4, 2008, pp. 17–28; and A. Pleguezuelo, 'Luisa Roldán y la iconografía de Jesús Nazareno', in Ibáñez and Martínez, as note 16, pp. 187–214.

20 It has been published by J. F. Martínez-Herrera without any reference to the archive, *La fuerza del silencio. Notas y apuntes para la historia de un convento de clarisas en tierras de la Mancha*, Vigo, Lúa Gráfica, 2010, pp. 181–83.

21 The original version is in the Historical Provincial Archive, Cuenca, while a similar document with some variations is located in the Parochial Archive of Sisante; see J. C. Vizúete Mendoza, 'Las clarisas nazarenas', in Ibáñez and Martínez, as note 16, p. 49.

22 'The foundation of the Convent of Clarisas, known as *Nazarenas*, in the small town of Sisante, bishopric of Cuenca'; the first edition was dedicated to Luis Tomás Fernández de Córdoba, Duque de Medinaceli and Marqués de Aytona, and the reasons given for the publication were 'the desire that the passing of time did not conceal the circumstances of the foundation of the convent of Nazarenas of Sisante, the life of its founder, et cetera...'; Anon., as note 18, p. 3. In one of the inventories carried out within the context of the confiscation of Catholic church properties in the early nineteenth century, it is certified that only the documents that referred to its foundation were kept in the archive of the convent: 'Archivo. Uno que solo contiene los papeles y documentos pertenecientes a la fundación de este monasterio'; 'Monjas Franc. cas de Sisante', Cuenca, Archivo Histórico

the sculpture was a papal gift without ruling out other theories regarding its possible recipients. A few years later, the *Noticia Histórica* would add more detail, and even provide the names of the art dealers and the recipient of the artwork; this document assumed that *El Nazareno* was a commission by Charles II for Pope Innocent XI (1676–89), but that the death of the latter, and later the death of the monarch, determined that the artwork would remain in the hands of the sculptor's family until 1711.²⁶ Its early dating suggested that it was a gift for Innocent XI, but the lack of evidence of transactions or communications regarding the work between the death of the pope in 1689 and the death of the king in 1700, along with the fact that La Roldana had settled in Madrid in 1689 having just given birth, raised serious doubts.²⁷ Hence, it was suggested that there was an error in the document, and that it should have referred to Innocent XII, who occupied the See of St Peter between 1691 and 1700.²⁸

The interests of the Spanish monarchy during this pontificate, and vice versa, contextualize and justify the claim that it was Charles II himself who commissioned the work as a gift for Innocent XII. Some of the most important matters dealt with during the reign of this pope were those relating to the beatification of Sister María de Jesús de Ágreda, the need for progress as regards the devotion to the Immaculate Conception, and matters referring to the line of succession to the throne of the Spanish Austrias, and Charles II consulted Innocent XII about these issues in particular.²⁹ Without doubt, the last matter was of great importance during the final days of the king's reign. It was the king himself who sent the Duque de Uceda to Rome in 1698 in order to ask for the pope's opinion, after providing the ambassador with a document that favoured a certain answer. Forty days later Innocent XII gave his support to the candidate of the House of Anjou.³⁰ These factors support the hypothesis proposed by Pleguezuelo of a diplomatic gift between Charles II and Innocent XII. However, similar circumstances would also have operated during the first year of the papacy of his successor, Clement XI. Colomer has considered this

'a fight for papal favour', which reached its greatest significance at the turn of the century.³¹

Documentation from the nunciature of Madrid offers another scenario, quite different from the one accepted until now. This relates to two letters, the first addressed to Pope Clement XI by Luis Antonio de los Arcos and his wife, dated 18 August 1701; and the second, a consequence of the former, sent on 18 September 1701 by the Holy See state secretary to the nuncio of Madrid, in order to gather more information about the venture proposed by the Spanish sculptors. In the first letter, the desire of the sculptor to give the pope one of her works, specifically a *Nazareno*, is evident. In the letter, Luis Antonio, after listing his wife's merits, tells us that the image had been executed during the 'past vacancy'.³² This concise and, at the same time, extraordinary reference leads us to place the execution of the work between September and December 1700, the time when the Holy See became vacant on the death of Innocent XII before the ascent of Clement XI. However, we should note that it might indicate the Spanish royal vacancy after the death of Charles II.³³ Either explanation leads us to revise several issues, while at the same time confirming that the work was intended to be sent to Rome. In the first place, the work can be dated to 1700, and not earlier as has been assumed.³⁴ Moreover, the documentation sheds light on one of the most controversial aspects, that of the recipient: the work was not intended for Innocent XII, but for Clement XI, newly ascended to the papal throne, with whom Spain maintained a tense relationship within the framework of the War of Succession.

In the light of this letter the theory of the royal commission – since Palomino the idea most widely accepted and defended – can be discarded, and so too can that of a high state gift for the pope. However, we should consider the possibility of an in-between hypothesis: the information provided by Palomino would explain why Luis Antonio had no interest in mentioning that the work was initially a commission from Charles II, and that, perhaps due to the king's death, the work had not been paid for. The artistic result and the praise it had received led the couple perhaps to

2. Luisa Roldán, *El Nazareno*, 1700, carved and polychromed wood, h: 175 cm. Monastery of Jesus of Nazareth, Sisante, Cuenca.
(photo: Felipe Serrano)

Provincial, Desamortización, D-70, Inventory no. 4, 15 June 1836.

23 Anon., as note 18, pp. 3–4.

24 Palomino, as note 11, p. 1092.

25 *Escrito sobre algunas noticias de Sisante*. Año 1788, in Martínez-Herrera, as note 20, p. 182.

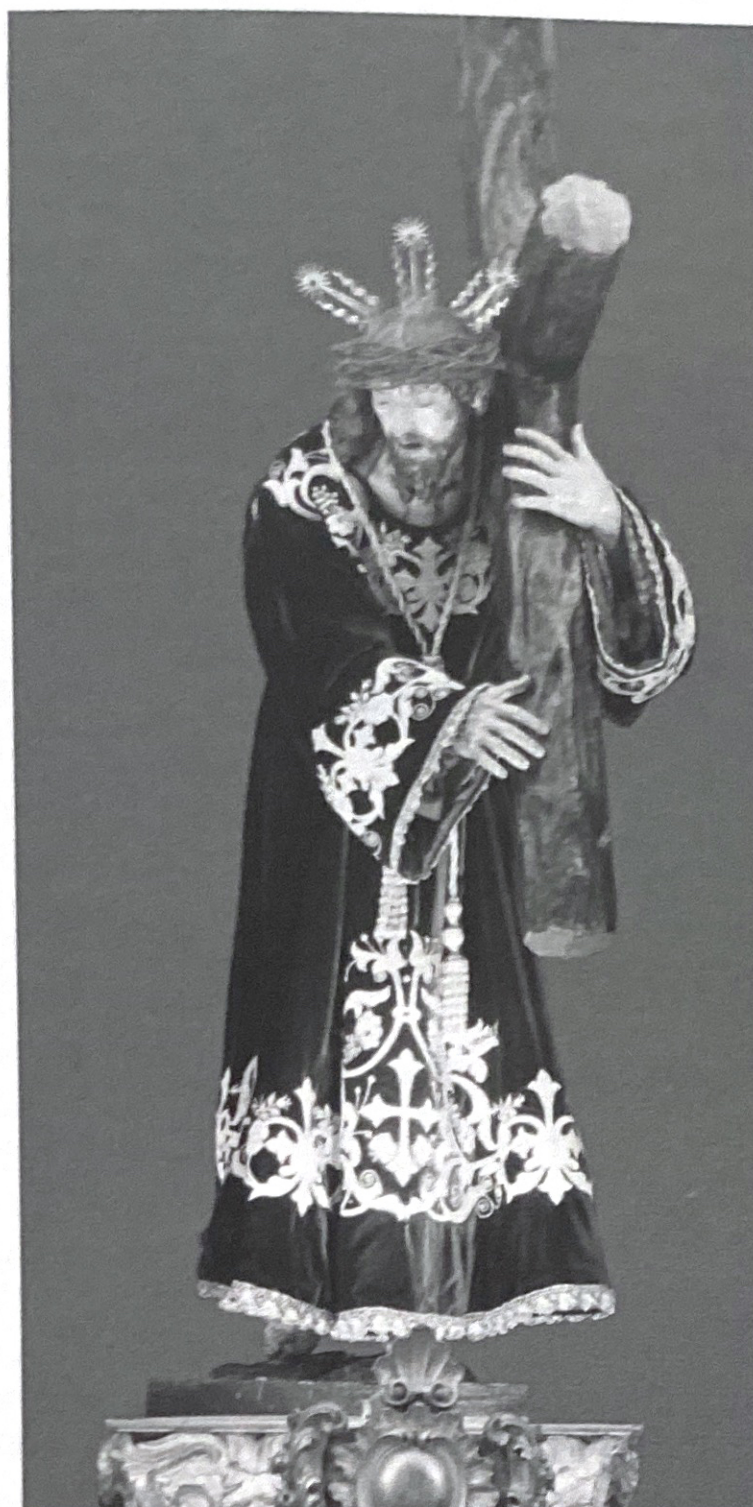
26 Anon., as note 18, pp. 24–25.

27 The first news of Luisa Roldán in Madrid is the document referring to the baptism of her daughter María Bernarda in the parish church of San Bernardo, 28 February 1689; Hall Van den Elsen, as note 9, p. 25.

28 Fr. Emilio Martínez, 'Para tal papa, ... Tal imagen', *Padre Jesús de Sisante*, 1, 2007, pp. 14–17.

29 Pleguezuelo, 'Luisa Roldán' 2010, as note 16, pp. 191–92.

30 Juan Francisco Pacheco Téllez de Girón (1649–1718), 3rd Duque de La Puebla de Montalbán, was then Duque de Uceda. The title belonged to his wife, Isabel María de Sandoval y Girón, 5th Duquesa de Uceda (1653–1711). He was governor of Galicia and viceroy of Sicily. Back in Spain, he was a member of the Council of the Indies, and was sent to Rome by Charles II to consult Innocent XII about the Spanish succession in 1698. He was appointed ambassador to the Holy See in 1699. The death of the pope on 27 September 1700 led Uceda to consult his successor, Clement XI, about the same matter. Contrary to Pignatelli's swift response, the new pope, who had formed part of the council that informed his predecessor on this matter, did not give a response until 1709, as he was afraid of the Archduke Charles' possible actions against the Papal States. Finally, he appointed an imperial sovereign, and Uceda left for Rome as Philip V's ambassador. Uceda would end up supporting Charles III, which caused his exile to Vienna, where he died in 1718. Among his right-hand men and friends – as underlined by Martín Velasco – was Félix de la Cruz Aedo, who appears in the documentation cited here (Appendix). De la Cruz Aedo would become secretary of the Council of the Indies, and Uceda agreed with him to support Philip V; M. Martín, 'La documentación histórica y la publicística del siglo XVIII. El IV duque de Uceda y su correspondencia con don Félix de la Cruz Aedo', *Documentación de las Ciencias de la Información*, 29, 2006, pp. 141–64. On the Spanish War of Succession, see M. A. Ochoa, *Embajadas rivales: la presencia diplomática española en Italia durante la guerra de Sucesión*,



pursue a new personal aim with it. That aim we now discover was quite different, although related to the minor politics referred to at the beginning of this article: a private gift designed to achieve a personal and professional aim. Thus it has little to do with state matters, but with a desire for fame. We do not know to what extent this was orchestrated by La Roldana's husband or to what extent it resulted from the deep religious convictions of the artist herself, convictions that Palomino had already emphasized.³⁵ Luis Antonio introduces his wife as an already established artist, but despite all the merits achieved in her profession, she still desired to place one of her works in the hands of a successor of St Peter.

With the appointment of Luisa Roldán as *Escultora de Cámara*, it might be concluded that the artist had indeed achieved fame in Spain. The fact that a woman had obtained such a title was excellent proof, especially as she retained it during the reign of Philip V, as Luis Antonio noted: 'now she enjoys the same as a sculptress to King Philip

V whom God blessed'.³⁶ It was then that Luis Antonio decided to open new markets for his wife and, thus, to expand the limits of her fame beyond Spain's borders. It was for this that he started to manage the sending of *El Nazareno*. The iconography chosen, Christ holding a cross, could be considered as a hallmark of the artist's native country in its apparent religious fervour, a characteristic of Hispanic territories. To add weight to the proposal, the image was shown to the papal nuncio in Spain, Cardinal Francesco Acquaviva, so that he could speak of its virtues.³⁷ 'Monsignor entered the house of the said Luis Antonio and Luisa, his wife, and saw the said image of Christ, and it seemed worthy enough to send to the Pope.'³⁸ As, however, the nuncio's taste was unknown, after receiving the letter in Rome, Cardinal Fabrizio Paolucci, state secretary between 1700 and 1721, sent a dispatch to Acquaviva, dated 18 September 1701, for more detailed information about the artists, and to know the purpose of the gift and its quality, as he knew that the nuncio had already seen the work.³⁹

This strategic action, minutely calculated by Luis Antonio, derived from the need or excuse of fulfilling his wife's aforementioned desire. Hence, Luis Antonio, along with the blessing of the nuncio, provided three excellent references from people closely related to the proposed recipient of the work: in the first place, the Spanish ambassador to the papal court, Juan Francisco Pacheco Téllez de Girón, Duque de Uceda; secondly, the duke's trustworthy man, Félix de la Cruz Aedo; and, finally, the pontiff's favourite painter, who was held in high regard in Rome, Carlo Maratta.⁴⁰ The Duque de Uceda tried to sort out the problems that arose between Rome and the new king, Philip V. The duke was distinguished by his great education and his promotion of the arts, his magnificent library (confiscated by Philip V), and his outstanding collection of paintings and drawings which included works by Rafael, Giulio Romano, Titian, Correggio, Caravaggio, Carracci, Bernini and da Cortona. Among his collection numerous scientific objects and mathematical instruments stood out, showing his interest in science. His love of the arts explained

3. Luisa Roldán (attributed to), *Niño del Dolor*, 1692–1706, carved, gilded and polychrome wood, 104 × 57 × 59 cm (with a pedestal), Monastery of San Antón, Granada (photo: Felipe Serrano)

Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 2002; S. Tabacchi, 'L'impossible neutralità.

Il papato, Roma e lo Stato della Chiesa durante la Guerra di Successione spagnola', *Cheiron*, 39–40, 2004, p. 225; D. Martín, 'El proyecto de mediación de la Santa Sede como alternativa a la Guerra de Sucesión española', *Revista de Historia Moderna*, 25, 2007, pp. 129–47; D. Martín, 'Roma en la Guerra de Sucesión Española', in C. J. Hernando (ed.), *Roma y España. Un crisol de la cultura europea en la Edad Moderna*, Madrid, SEACEX, 2007, pp. 889–914; D. Martín, 'La Embajada española en Roma y el cambio dinástico de la monarquía hispánica. Aspectos políticos', *Cuadernos de investigación histórica*, 27, 2010, pp. 315–46.

31 J. L. Colomer, 'Introducción. Los senderos cruzados del arte y la diplomacia', in Colomer, as note 1, p. 25.

32 Document, as note 6, fols. 82–82v y fol. 83.

33 There may be other meanings for 'vacancy', as the document is signed 18 August 1701.

34 Pleguezuelo, 'Luisa Roldán' 2010, as note 16, p. 190; Hall Van den Elsen offers the interval between 1701 and 1705 as a possible date, as note 9, p. 27.

35 This practice of presenting work made by the artist herself was not new in Roldán's professional career. We know of the donation of a *Dolorosa* (Our Lady of Solitude) to the Convento de los Mínimos of Puerto Real, Cádiz, in 1688, for which the couple made several works; a 'gesture that indicates a close relationship and an appreciation of their customers'; Alonso and Espinosa de los Monteros, as note 10, p. 120.

36 In the chronology of the life and work of the artist in the catalogue of the monographic exhibition in 2007, it is asserted that the Marqués de Villafranca granted her the position on 9 October 1701, and that she took the oath of office on 21 October 1701; Torrejón and Romero, as note 7, p. 197. However, in the letter addressed to the pope, it is asserted that the title had been granted by Philip V; document, as note 6, fol. 82r.

37 For Francesco Acquaviva, see A. Anselmi, *Il Palazzo dell'Ambasciata di Spagna presso la Santa Sede*, Rome, 2001, pp. 107–10.

38 Document, as note 6, fols. 82r–82v. Francesco Acquaviva



his knowledge, maybe through Félix de la Cruz Aedo, secretary of the Council of the Indies and the right-hand man of the duke during the difficult times of the War of Spanish Succession, of Luisa Roldán's sculptural works.⁴¹

The other reference could not have been better: Carlo Maratta (1625–1713), 'painter to His Holiness had received news of the ability of the aforementioned Luisa Roldán'.⁴² The favourite artist of both Innocent XII and Clement XI, Maratta became *Príncipe Perpetuo de la Academia de San Lucas de Roma*, the institution on which, as will be seen, the Arcos-Roldán couple had already set their sights. There were other Spanish painters who could facilitate the knowledge that the Roman artist Maratta had of Roldán's work: among his Spanish disciples the Majorcan Guillermo de Mesquida (1675–1747) and, more directly, the Valencian Vicente Vitoria (1650–1709) stood out. The latter was a painter and a man of letters, and wrote a biography of his master. Vitoria maintained close relations with Maratta during the periods when he lived in Rome from 1675 to 1686, and again from 1700 to 1709.⁴³

Luis Antonio displayed his sharp business acumen once again between

1701 and 1706.⁴⁴ He suggested that if the results were satisfactory, and the gift pleased Clement XI, Luisa could carry out as many commissions as were convenient either in stone, wood, bronze or silver, and 'whichever other material'. We must bear in mind that the pope had recently been appointed, and a staff of artists was being chosen, and that Maratta played a noted role. It was undoubtedly the best moment to join the group of sculptors at the service of such an august patron. We may assume once again that the gift was part of a calculated strategy, and captured the desire of Luis Antonio to widen his wife's fame and open a new market further away, and with an important potential customer.

However, Luis Antonio was seized with doubts about the transportation of the piece. In fact, Acquaviva, after encouraging the couple on account of the high quality of the work, raised doubts afterwards and left the responsibility for the transportation in the hands of Luis Antonio.⁴⁵ A life-size wooden polychrome sculpture was, it seems, too Spanish; it did not match Italian tastes or, at least, Roman taste. The lack of appreciation shown by the nuncio seemed to stand in the way of the venture. The *History of Sisante* recorded that the heirs of the artist had given an account of the preparation of *El Nazareno* for transportation to Rome.⁴⁶ Maybe these setbacks, the increasing tension in diplomatic relations with the papacy, or even other factors such as the existence of great interest in the work from the nobles of Madrid, finally frustrated the desires of Luisa and Luis Antonio. *El Nazareno* was not sent to Rome, and remained in the couple's home. Palomino saw *El Nazareno* at the already widowed Luis Antonio de los Arcos' house, when he informed Palomino about the people who were interested in the work.⁴⁷ Among these people, along with a Genoese art dealer, were the 10th Duque del Infantado and Philip V himself. However, the amount asked for by the owners, one thousand doubloons, exceeded the amount that the duke was willing to pay. Finally, the work was acquired by Cristóbal Hortelano in 1711, who would send it to the small town of Sisante as the first image for the *beaterio* (convent) he had founded. A few years later, in 1714, the *beaterio* would

became nuncio in Spain from 1700 to 1706. Appointed by Innocent XII, he succeeded Giuseppe Archinto, and his position would be confirmed by Clement XI due to his loyalty to Philip V. For the role played by nuncios in exchanging this type of gift, see D. García Cueto, 'Los nuncios en la corte de Felipe IV como agentes del arte y la cultura', in J. Martínez Millán and M. Rivero Rodríguez (eds), *Centros de poder italianos en la monarquía hispánica (siglos XV-XVIII)*, Madrid, Polifemo, 2010, III, pp. 1823-90, and A. Vatican, 'La nunciatura española bajo el reinado de Carlos II: Savo Millini (1675-1685)', *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, 26, 2001, pp. 131-47.

39 Document, as note 6, fol. 83.

40 Luis Antonio de los Arcos and Luisa Roldán introduce themselves – the latter with the title 'Mrs' – as 'statuary artists', although they emphasize that the work is hers.

41 M. Martín, as note 30, p. 163. For the duke's personal library, see G. de Andrés, 'Catálogo de los manuscritos de la Biblioteca del duque de Uceda', *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos*, 78, 1, 1975, pp. 5-40; E. Ruiz and M.^aI. García-Monge, 'Las bibliotecas del IV duque de Uceda', *Torre de los Lujanes*, 46, 2002, pp. 219-38; M. Martínez, *La colección de libros impresos del IV duque de Uceda en la Biblioteca Nacional de España*, Madrid, CEEH-Calambur-BNE, 2010.

42 Document, as note 6, fol. 82v.

43 It has been asserted that he was the pope's antique dealer, although García Cueto disagrees. He too tried to enter the Academy of St Luke; see D. García Cueto, *Seicento boloñés y Siglo de Oro español: el arte, la época los protagonistas*, Madrid, CEEH, 2006, pp. 120-21, 282-300. For Vicente Vitoria, see A. Bunt, 'Don Vicencio Vittoria', *Burlington*, 766, 1967, pp. 31-32; E. L. Goldberg, 'Vicente Vitoria and the Tuscan Academy', in *Patterns in Late Medici Art Patronage*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 173-83, 344-51; B. Bassegoda, 'Noves dades sobre el canonge Vicente Vitoria (Denia 1650-Roma 1709), tractadista, pintor, gravador i colleccionista', *Bulleti del Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya*, 2, 1994, pp. 37-62, and 'Vicente Vitoria (1650-1709), first historian of Joan de Juanes', *Locus Amoenus*, 1, 1995, pp. 165-72; V. Marco, 'Pintores valencianos en la Roma de finales del siglo XVII', in Hernando, as note 30, pp. 745-63, esp. pp. 753-63.

44 For a detailed account of Luis Antonio's commercial activities in

become the convent of the barefoot nuns of St Clare, dedicated to *El Nazareno* (figs. 4, 5).

This setback did not prevent Luis Antonio from setting in motion further strategies so that his wife might reach international fame, and that 'the artist will be proud'.⁴⁸ He set his sights again on Rome, this time on the Academy of St Luke, to which he sent a polychrome terracotta of the *Virgen con el Niño* (Virgin and Child) as a gift, which encouraged the admission of Roldán as an academician, *sensa alcuna discrepanza*.⁴⁹ Once more his entrepreneurial spirit was manifest, and at the same time he strengthened his wife's international fame with a singular strategic gift. Luis Antonio could certainly make use of his contacts in the papal court for the purpose of having Luisa appointed as an academician. Among these contacts were important figures such as the ambassador to the Holy See, the Duque de Uceda, still in Rome, and, especially, the painter Carlo Maratta, *Príncipe Perpetuo de la Academia*. The results were favourable, and Luisa Roldán achieved her appointment as an academician of St Luke, an exclusive honour as she was the first Spanish woman to do so. However, according to Hall, in a dramatic turn, the appointment took place on the same day as her death, 10 January 1706. It is even more contradictory that, despite these high honours of universal fame and recognition, she had signed a declaration of poverty in her parish church San Andrés in Madrid but two days before, where she would be buried. She was living close by in one of the Duque del Infantado's houses in Calle del Gato.⁵⁰



4. Monastery of Jesus of Nazareth, exterior, Sisante, Cuenca.
(photo: Felipe Serrano)

In the letter of appointment as an academician she is presented as Luisa de los Arcos, taking her husband's name. Luis Antonio had been responsible for applying for the award on her behalf, and was the architect of his wife's fame. Thus, she figures in the list of academicians of St Luke⁵¹ as 'Accademica di Merito: Donna Aloisa de los Arcos da Madrid, Castigliana, la quale havendo dato in dono una Madonna di rilievo di cretacotta fatta di sua mano colorita con Tutti e Nostro Signore'.⁵²

Appendix

The Vatican, Archivio Segreto, Archivio della Nunziatura di Madrid, 48, year 1701, fols. 82r-82v and fol. 83r.

Santísimo Padre

A los pies de Vuestra Santidad, Luis Antonio de los Arcos, artífice estatuario y doña Luisa Roldán, su muger, también artífice estatuaría que por su gran avilidad mereció ser Escultora de Cámara del Rey Don Carlos Segundo, que goce de Dios, y abiendo hecho en su Real Palacio y presencia en tiempo de trese años diferentes estatuas como es el Ángel San Miguel que está en El Escorial, de quatro varas de alto, y otros para diferentes partes, y ahora goza lo mesmo siendo escultora del Rey don Felipe Quinto que Dios guarde.

Dise que todo lo referido no le sosiega hasta tener la dicha de poner en noticia de Vra. Santidad como en la bacante pasada dedicó aser una estatua para el Señor que rixiese la nabe de San Pedro y como lo pensó, ydeó una ymagen de un Sanctísimo Cristo con la cruz a cuestras de madera de taño del natural y para remitirlo a esa ciudad y corte de Roma, para ponerlo en presencia de Vs. Santa Beatitud a ver si la obra era conforme a su deseo por la dificultad que así el dicho Luis Antonio tiene para remitirlo por la distancia, pasó a ver a Mon. Sr. Nuncio y le dio cuenta y Mon Señor pasó en casa del dicho Luis Antonio y de doña Luisa, su muger, y bio la dicha imagen de Santo Cristo y le pareció digna de remitirla según/82 le pareció y también dijo no era dificultoso el (doblado) (re)mitirlo, supliquéle lo dispusiera quanto antes po[sible] (doblado) lo era el motivo

5. Monastery of Jesus of Nazareth, interior, Sisante, Cuenca.
(photo: Felipe Serrano)

Madrid, Seville and Antwerp, see Hall Van den Elsen, as note 9, p. 26.

45 'and visiting him another day he told me that he did not know if sending the said image was a good idea or not, and that I should try my best to find out if His Holiness would like the image to be sent to him'; document, as note 6, fol. 82v. Maybe underlying this is the nuncio's Roman taste.

46 Martínez-Herrera, as note 20, p. 182

47 Palomino, as note 11, p. 1092.

48 Document, as note 6, fol. 82v.

49 Roma, Archivio della Accademia di San Luca, Libro del Camarlengo, fol. 49, 1706, quoted in C. Lollobrigida, 'La donnesca mano. Critica fonti e documenti per una storia dell'arte al femminile nella Roma barocca', *Rivista on line di Storia dell'Arte*, 7, 2007, p. 20.

50 The declaration of poverty and the information about the burial contained in the parochial book are published in Hall Van den Elsen, as note 9, pp. 26–27.

51 The women artists on the payroll in the Academy of St Luke were published in Lollobrigida, as note 48, pp. 15–24. Among the artists studied by Lollobrigida, she is cited as 'Anna Aloisa Delasarcos, *Sculptrice*', *ibid.*, p. 20.

52 Roma, Archivio della Accademia di San Luca, Archivio Storico, v. 46/A, fols. 49–50, quoted in Hall Van den Elsen, as note 9, p. 26.



ofreçer aquella ymagen a su Sanctidad y con ella la voluntad de servirle en todo lo que fuese de su sanctísimo agrado. Con esto se fue a su palacio y iéndole a ver otro día me dixo que no sabía si asertaba o erraba en remitir dicha ymagen y así que yo yciese por la mejor manera que pueda por adquirir noticias si vuestra Sanctidad gusta se remita dicha ymagen. Ella está hecha de buena voluntad, si vuestra Sanctidad gusta hágamelo saber como mejor sea su sanctísimo agrado, que el artífice quedará gloriosa, solo con saber llegó a la presencia de vra. Sanctidad y si fuese de su agrado podrá ocupar a el artífice y de la mesma suerte que en madera exculpa en piedra, bronce y plata y qualquier materia que sea, quien

dará algunas noticias de dicha artífice es el embajador duque de Uceda y el Sr. de la Embaxada don Félix de la Cruz Aedo y también tengo entendido que don Carlos Marati, pintor de vuestra Santidad tiene algunas noticias del habilidad de dicha Doña Luisa Roldán que ella y su marido esperan de la gran consideración de vuestra Sanctidad se tendrá por servido mandar se execute lo que sea de su agrado cuya vida guarde Dios como toda la cristiandad desea.

Dada en Madrid agosto 18 de 1701.

Luis Antonio de los Arcos + + Doña Luisa Roldán

fol. 83

Illmo. Rmo. Sigre.

Mando a V. Mma. La letrera originale scritta a N. Sre. Da un tal Antonio de los Arcos e D. Luisa Roldan sua moglie scultori regii

Ne vedrà ella il tenore, per dar poi qua un esatta informazione e della qualità di tali artifici, della statua di legno che dicono aver dedicata a S. Santità, et effersi già veduta da lei, e qual possa esseri stato il vero motivo di questo loro pensiero. Si aspetteranno dunque da lei queste distinte notizie et a V. Mma. Bacio le mani

Roma 18 settembre 1701

Serv.re Card. Paolucci

Mons. Nun^o in Madrid.

Simulating Degas' vision: implications for dating his sculpture

Michael F. Marmor

Edgar Degas (1834–1917) left a large number of pieces of sculpture in his studio when he died, mostly small wax models, unsigned and undated, and in various stages of disrepair. He had made sculptures since the 1860s when still a young man, but only one was ever exhibited, and all of the bronze castings are posthumous. None of these works were dated by the sculptor, and dating them has become a central issue to Degas scholarship since it is

difficult to discuss style and purpose without knowing when they were done. In almost a century of catalogues and reviews, dating has been largely a matter of historical speculation based on similarities in style to his pastels and paintings. The only objective data has been X-ray analysis of the armature. A technique has recently been developed for simulating the effects of poor vision in an artist, and the purpose of this article is to investigate the application of this technique to the dating of Degas' sculpture.

It is well documented that Degas suffered from visual loss that began before 1870 and progressed until the end of his life.¹ The exact cause of this visual decline is unknown, but his disease