

WOMEN ARTISTS OF  
EARLY MODERN SEVILLE

by

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## ABSTRACT

While there have been great strides made in the last fifty years to devote the same scholarly attention and care to the study of Early Modern female artists that their male counterparts historically enjoyed, there is still much work to be done. This thesis considers one such area of need, women's artistic production in seventeenth-century Seville. While a recent notice that at least 90 women were active as artists in seventeenth-century Iberia suggests a robust climate for women's artistic production, when we turn to seventeenth-century Seville, arguably the center of Spanish art in the period, I argue that opportunities for women artists were in fact more limited than those numbers may suggest. This situation is somewhat belied by the extensive literature dedicated to a single artist from Seville, the sculptor Luisa Roldán (1652-1706). In this study, which is the first to focus specifically on women artists of seventeenth-century Seville outside of Roldán, I address the lives and careers of the city's lesser known women artists, focusing on Luisa de Valdés, María de la Concepción, María de la Encarnación, and María de la Santísima Trinidad. In doing so, I challenge the notion that the city offered a great deal of artistic opportunity for women, more fully addressing the limited environment in which they lived and worked. The foremost limitation, I argue, was the expectation that they subvert individual artistic identity for the betterment of an institutional entity, whether that was the proliferation of a male-run workshop or the spiritual progression of a convent.

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## INTRODUCTION

While there have been great strides made in the last fifty years to devote the same scholarly attention and care to the study of Early Modern female artists that their male counterparts historically enjoyed, there is still much work to be done. This thesis considers one such area of need, women's artistic production in seventeenth-century Seville. While a recent notice that at least 90 women were active as artists in seventeenth-century Iberia suggests a robust climate for women's artistic production, when we turn to seventeenth-century Seville, arguably the center of Spanish art in the period, I argue that opportunities for women artists were in fact more limited than those numbers may suggest. This situation is somewhat belied by the extensive literature dedicated to a single artist from Seville, the sculptor Luisa Roldán (1652-1706). In this study, which is the first to focus specifically on women artists of seventeenth-century Seville outside of Roldán, I address the lives and careers of the city's lesser known women artists, focusing on Luisa de Valdés, María de la Concepción, María de la Encarnación, and María de la Santísima Trinidad. In doing so, I challenge the notion that the city offered a great deal of artistic opportunity for women, more fully addressing the limited environment in which they lived and worked. The foremost limitation, I argue, was the expectation that they subvert individual artistic identity for the betterment of an institutional entity, whether that was the proliferation of a male-run workshop or the spiritual progression of a convent.

In order to lay a robust foundation for this discussion, the first chapter includes an assessment of gender, female literacy and popular artistic tropes of the time period; a discussion of the artistic guilds and workshops in Seville; and the general status of artists in seventeenth-century Spain. The second chapter focuses on the wives and daughters of Sevillian male artists, specifically Luisa de Valdés, María de la Concepción, and María de la Encarnación. The third chapter focuses on convent artists, specifically María de la Santísima Trinidad, arguing that, in addition to being born or married into a workshop situation, creating art for a convent was the other avenue by which a woman could hope to publicly pursue artistic endeavors during this time period. Through the study and comparisons with female artists working outside Seville, it becomes apparent that the strictures women in the city faced (via workshop and guild systems specifically) were at least as, and in many cases, more robust than women encountered elsewhere in seventeenth-century Europe.

As was noted above, the past fifty years have seen great efforts made to include women artists in the art historical canon. Linda Nochlin began the revolution in 1971 with her essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”<sup>1</sup> That short essay laid the foundation for the first international exhibition of art by women artists, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (1976) curated by Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris.<sup>2</sup> Since then, numerous notable scholars have also contributed to this field, offering comprehensive studies of issues confronting women artists throughout history. Similar to the holistic treatment employed by Nochlin and Harris, Delia Gaze compiled the *Dictionary of Women Artists* (1997), an encyclopedia of 600 women artists spanning from the middle ages to the early twentieth-century.<sup>3</sup>

While Nochlin and Harris laid the foundation for the application of feminist theory to art and art history with “Why Have There Been No Great Woman Artists?” other scholars

challenged the notions put forth in the essay. While Germaine Greer aligned herself with the masculine principle of greatness that can be found in the work of Nochlin and Harris, Norma Broude focused less on the male-dominated nature of the canon, as this “unquestionably accepts the patriarchy’s definition of artistic “greatness”.”<sup>4</sup> Ten years after the essay was published, art historians Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock offered a more introspective perception, asking why many great artists were so long ignored simply on the basis of their sex, and what this says more broadly about our civilization.<sup>5</sup> While the study of women in art and art history has developed over the decades, these voices were integral in bringing this important conversation to the forefront of the art historical canon.

Women artists in Italy have thus far been afforded the most extensive scholarly attention among Early Modernists. Studies devoted to Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653), Elisabetta Sirani (1638-1665), and Lavinia Fontana (1564-1614) detail many different aspects of those artist’s careers including the themes of their work, important biographical events, and their influence throughout art history.<sup>6</sup> Scholars including Mary Garrard (1989), Ward Bissell (1999), and Sheila ffolliott (2015) have treated the life and work of Artemisia Gentileschi, while Adelina Modesti (2014) and Babette Bohn (2004) have worked on Elisabetta Sirani and Lavinia Fontana, respectively.<sup>7</sup> Each of these Early Modern Italian women has also enjoyed a rich exhibition history in recent years. Most recently “A Tale of Two Women Painters: Sofonisba Anguissola and Lavinia Fontana” was held at the Museo del Prado (2020) in celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the museum and “Artemisia” (2020-21), the artist’s first solo exhibition in the UK, was held at the National Gallery in London, where it was also the first exhibition dedicated specifically to a woman.<sup>8</sup>

But when one focuses more specifically on the study of women artists of seventeenth-century Spain, the results are far more limited. Extended discussions focus largely on the Seville-born sculptor, Luisa Roldán (1652-1706) the painter Josefa de Óbidos (1630-1684) and, ironically, the Italian-born Sofonisba Anguissola (1532-1625), who spent fourteen years (1559-1573) at the court of King Philip II.<sup>9</sup> For example, Carmen Fracchia (2011) discusses the work of Sofonisba Anguissola and Luisa Roldán and three male artists (José Ribera, Diego Velázquez, and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo) in an exploration of the depiction of women's imagined identity in Early Modern Spanish culture.<sup>10</sup> In an article that focuses in large part on Early Modern Seville, Casey Gardonio-Foat (2010) offers a unique and intriguing glimpse into the family workshops of Early Modern Spain, utilizing Roldán and Valdès Leal as primary examples.<sup>11</sup> In her later dissertation (2012), Gardonio-Foat employed a wide range of methodologies as she assessed the social, economic, legal, and religious traditions that colored the lives and careers of Roldán, Óbidos, and a few of their lesser-known Iberian contemporaries.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Ana Aranda Bernal's chapter in the *Roldana* (2007) exhibition catalogue offered another wide-ranging overview of the women artists of Early Modern Spain, in which she briefly discussed several of the women I focus on in this study.<sup>13</sup>

The rather limited scope of these recent studies of women artists in Early Modern Spain is problematic for a number of reasons. Of the three women most often discussed in the literature (Roldán, Óbidos, and Anguissola) only the Seville-born Roldán lived and worked in Spain for her entire life. Anguissola returned to her native country and, although born in Seville, Josefa de Óbidos spent most of her life and all of her career in Portugal.<sup>14</sup> Gardonio-Foat noted in her own review of regional scholarship, including early works by Antonio Palomino (1724), Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez (1800), and José da Cunha Taborda (1815), that existing studies present an

inclusive view of women's artistic activity across Early Modern Iberia.<sup>15</sup> It is Gardonio-Foat, who, as was noted earlier, suggests that over ninety women actively participated in the arts in Early Modern Spain and Portugal, a figure derived from her survey of the biographical records included in the aforementioned eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature. Unfortunately, she does not specifically identify or enumerate these individuals by name beyond the few established women artists I have previously mentioned.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, detailed documentation and even autograph works are limited to very few identifiable women. Recognizing this, Gardonio-Foat worked to craft a comprehensive portrait of the women artists of Early Modern Iberia with, as I noted earlier, a particular emphasis on Roldán and Óbidos, and a consideration of the social and historical factors impacting artistic production by women, including gender rules, legal and social codes, and artistic professionalism.<sup>17</sup> While this expansive methodology is necessary for her comprehensive assessment and provides a robust foundation for my own research, here I adopt a more specific framework through which to consider the women artists of Early Modern Seville.

Focusing on one specific city and the circumstances of women's artistic production there, I am particularly indebted to the methodology of Babette Bohn. Bohn, a specialist in seventeenth-century Italian art, has focused much of her recent work on women's cultural production in Bologna. In her recent monograph, entitled *Women Artists, Their Patrons, and their Publics in Early Modern Bologna* (2021), Bohn argues that, among other factors, the university culture of the city created an ideal environment for women artists to hone their craft and thrive as professionals within what was otherwise a male-dominated field.<sup>18</sup> Bohn's work offers a model for considering how the social, cultural, and religious context of Seville may have fueled or impeded the fertile artistic production by women.

One of my primary aims in this study is to offer the women artists of Spain, specifically Seville, the undivided scholarly attention that they have so rarely been afforded. To do so, I ground this exploration in consideration of the lives and work of Luisa de Valdés (1654-1730), María de la Concepción (1664-1730), María de la Encarnación (act. 1650), and María de la Santísima Trinidad (d. 1631). An integral piece of this study is an appendix (Appendix A), which offers the first comprehensive consideration of these women as a group, complete with available works, life dates, and primary source documentation. The Appendix also includes the two sisters of Luisa Roldán – although even their names are not known with certainty. In sum, from these six artists, extant, attributable works survive from only one: Luisa de Valdés. Although information on these six women is limited, they represent the very small percentage of women artists of Early Modern Seville who are documented and discussed in existing primary and secondary literature. One day I hope to travel to Spain to continue this exploration and uncover more women artists within the documents there, but for this project I had to rely heavily on the secondary sources that have consulted those documents.

In an attempt to identify additional women artists beyond the six who appear in the Appendix, however, I consulted electronically available versions of early sources such as Antonio Palomino, sometimes referred to as the Spanish Vasari, and J.A. Ceán Bermúdez, in an attempt to identify other women artists in Early Modern Seville who may have been mentioned in passing. In *Lives of the Eminent Spanish Painters and Sculptors* (1739), Palomino mentions four women (Sofonisba Anguissola and her sister, Artemisia Gentileschi, and Luisa Roldán); as we have seen, of course, though Roldán was born in Seville, none of these artists carried out their careers in Seville.<sup>19</sup> Bermúdez does include more women in his *Historical Dictionary of the Most Illustrious Teachers of the Fine Arts in Spain* (1800), among them Doña María de Abarca

and La Duquesa de Aveiro, both of whom were active in mid-seventeenth-century Madrid, but his discussion also excludes women artists who lived and worked in Seville.<sup>20</sup> This original contribution (Appendix A), along with the accompanying discussion provided in the chapters that follow, is intended to provide a frame of reference for better understanding the few documented women artists working in Early Modern Seville, and perhaps encourage further research and discussion of their lesser known or even now-anonymous contemporaries.

The lack of existing literature dedicated to Sevillian women considered here stands in sharp contrast to the plethora of studies dedicated to their contemporary, Luisa Roldán. Born into her father's prolific Sevillian sculpture workshop in 1652, Luisa married sculptor Luis de los Arcos in 1671. After marriage – and her subsequent departure from her father's workshop – Luisa received many commissions throughout Cadiz and Madrid. These were primarily for large-scale wooden sculpture that she trained to create in her father's workshop. Eventually, having relocated to Madrid, she was the first woman ever appointed Sculptor to the Chamber (under Charles II in 1692) and Sculptor to the King (under Philip V in 1701).<sup>21</sup> While in Madrid, she also began to create small-scale terracotta sculpture, which became a specialty for Roldán (Fig. 1).<sup>22</sup> She was, as well, honored of the Roman Accademia – although notice of this arrived after her death.<sup>23</sup>

Roldán's well-documented career is chronicled in a number of major studies, including a catalogue raisonné (1992) and two monographs (2018, 2020) by Catherine Hall-Van Den Elsen, the leading voice in Luisa Roldán scholarship.<sup>24</sup> Roldán, like Artemisia Gentileschi and others, has also enjoyed a rich, recent exhibition history including a major exhibition at the Museo de las Bellas Artes in Seville (2007), accompanied by an excellent catalogue.<sup>25</sup>

Because Luisa Roldán works are already well-established via these sources, they are omitted from Appendix A. Indeed, because Roldán's career is so well-established in the scholarship dedicated to women artists of seventeenth-century Spain, I believe that it has, in some ways, shaped our perspective on the opportunities available to women in Early Modern Seville. I discuss Roldán's rather extraordinary career in the following pages primarily as an outlier, rather than a representative example of the time period. I will not focus specifically on her career – as this is well-established in the literature – but, rather, use it as a unit by which to measure the restricted reality of Roldán's lesser-known contemporaries in Seville.

Similarly, Anguissola and Óbidos, the other women artists most commonly discussed in relation to Early Modern Spain, enjoyed rich artistic liberties in comparison to the Seville-based women discussed in the chapters that follow, in some cases even greater than were afforded Roldán. For example, the oeuvres of Anguissola and Óbidos included a variety of narratives and genres, from self-portraiture (Fig. 2) to still-life (Fig. 3), while Roldán's body of work, as well as those of the other Sevillian women discussed here, was defined by the rigid religious narratives that characterized Spanish, and particularly Sevillian, identity. To further the point of their exceptionality, Óbidos and Roldán were able to achieve an artistic identity outside their family workshops – something that, as we shall see, was nearly impossible for the other four Sevillian women considered here, with the exception of entering a convent. And while Anguissola and Roldán received court appointments, those were in Madrid, outside the confines and strictures of the workshop and guild system of Seville. Recognizing their exceptionality suggests that adopting Roldán, Anguissola, and Óbidos as the leading players in the discussion of women artists in Early Modern Spain has skewed the narrative for our contemporary understanding of women's artistic opportunities during this time period. With this study, I hope to offer a more

representative assessment of the restrictive environment in which the women artists of seventeenth-century Seville were confronted.

In Chapter One I assess the social, historical, and educational context for women in Seville, specifically addressing the climate for women as producers and learners. Here, discussion relies upon works addressing the history of women in the city, foremost among them historian Mary Elizabeth Perry (1990). Perry's research incorporates rich primary source material, such as art and literature, women's writings, Inquisition records, and contemporary laws and regulations to better understand female experience in the city.<sup>26</sup> The work of art historians Mindy Nancarrow Taggard (1999) and Emilie Bergmann (2016) also informs my discussion of female education in the city via their treatment of a popular visual trope of the time in Seville, that of St. Anne teaching her daughter Mary to read (Fig. 4 & 5).<sup>27</sup> Both argue that female education in Seville was viewed only as a benefit to the city's religious identity, or as a benefit to their future husbands of Seville; never for the well-being of the women themselves.<sup>28</sup>

The final section of this chapter focuses on a series of societal and institutional factors that contributed to the marginalization of the women artists of seventeenth-century Seville: notions of female intellectual capacity, the workshops system, and guild regulations. Frederika Jacobs (1994, 1997) has written extensively on the contemporary perception of women's intellectual and creative abilities.<sup>29</sup> Although her work focuses on Italy, it informs our understanding of women's educational limitations and their place within the artistic environments of Early Modern Europe. Antonio Palomino's writings and commentary offer a great deal of insight into the development of the city's first *Academia de Bellas Artes* (founded 1660).<sup>30</sup> Finally, Peter Cherry's work dedicated to artistic training and the painter's guild in Seville (2005), which summarizes the artistic environment assessing the developments that were

rapidly formalizing the artistic landscape, and in many ways making it even less accessible to women, provides support for my analysis.<sup>31</sup> Although I was not able to access explicit information on women's involvement in the artist guild system of seventeenth-century Seville, turning to information on women in the guild systems of other cities offered insight into what the strictures likely were in Seville.

Chapter Two focuses on the daughters and wives of celebrated Sevillian artists. Being born into or marrying into an artist's household was one of the only ways a woman could expect to work in the arts in Early Modern Seville, and was, not incidentally, the origins of Roldán and all women addressed here. While this trope was more or less common throughout Early Modern Europe, the strict environment of Seville offered virtually no room for upward mobility for women artists past the workshop context, as Roldán is the only significant example. Gardonio-Foat (2010) briefly introduces the daughters of the Seville still-life painter Juan de Valdés Leal (1622-1690), who worked in their father's workshop, and I consider these works here as well.<sup>32</sup> Leal's eldest daughter, Luisa de Valdés (b. 1654) was a painter and engraver (Fig. 6, 7 & 8), who also made a name for herself through her polychromy in the Holy Week processionals. A recent chapter by Antonio García Baeza (2019) is, to my knowledge, the only extended consideration devoted to her work. Baeza examines the intersections of the Valdés and Roldán workshops, and how one miraculous event brought Luisa de Valdés's identity to light as the polychromer of a beloved sculpture of Fernando III (Fig. 9).<sup>33</sup>

Luisa de Valdés's engravings and single, extant polychromed sculpture are among the very few identified, surviving works by any of the women artists that I discuss (Appendix A). I argue here that the absence of documented works is due in large part to the anonymity that was expected in the workshop context, and, more specifically, from a woman working in a Sevillian

workshop. While there are many commonalities between the lives of Luisa Roldán and Luisa de Valdés, including their upbringing in their fathers' workshops and their speculated divergence from these workshops through marriage, there are also many moments of divergence in each of their careers that led me to interpret Luisa de Valdés as a much more representative example of the women artists of seventeenth-century Seville, and the restrictive environment of the family workshop. To support this argument, I also discuss two other women whose identities emerge from Sevillian workshops. The first is Luisa de Valdés's younger sister, María de la Concepción, who represents both categories of women artists that I will discuss, as she later joined a convent. The second is María de la Encarnación, wife of Sevillian sculptor Juan de Torres (d. before 1650) who, upon his death, was able to fulfill her late husband's commission for the altarpiece of Seville's College of San Basilio Magno Torres.<sup>34</sup> Without this fulfillment of her husband's commission, María de la Encarnación's name would likely have never been recorded, and unknown to us today.

The third and final chapter discusses two nun artists of Seville, the aforementioned María de la Concepción and María de la Santísima Trinidad, although I will focus primarily on the latter. In addition to working in the workshops of their fathers or husbands, another method by which women in Seville might advance their artistic craft was through the role of nun artist. The foremost scholar on this subject is Mindy Nancarrow Taggard, and I have consulted a number of her studies in order to familiarize myself with the subject matter. In her studies devoted to María de la Santísima Trinidad, a celebrated sculptor from a Mercedarian monastery in Seville (2000, 2003), Nancarrow relies upon the nun's final confession, recorded by Matheo de Villarroel in 1631.<sup>35</sup> While Nancarrow offers a focused study of this nun artist and her contemporaries across Spain, I apply her careful scholarship of María de la Santísima Trinidad to my more expansive

study of the women artists of Seville by addressing the expectation of the nun artist to abandon her individual artistic identity and allow her work to dissolve into the collective of her convent, much like her contemporaries in the workshops of Seville.

Although Luisa de Valdés, María de la Concepción, María de la Encarnación, and María de la Santísima Trinidad technically worked in different artistic spheres (workshop vs. convent), there are many similarities between them which point to the systemic issues in the artistic landscape of seventeenth-century Seville, specifically with respect to the limited opportunities for women artists. Primarily, their work and, by extension, their identities are difficult to trace because autograph works from either a workshop artist or nun artist were rare. This is a direct result of the fact that in both contexts, women artists were expected to sacrifice individuality for the betterment of the collective whole, whether that be the proliferation of their father's workshop or the spiritual progression of their convent.

The second and final connection between these two spheres that I discuss is the role that fervent Catholicism played in their works and careers. Spirituality played a formative role in the careers of each artist that I assessed in this study. The quality of Luisa de Valdés's most famous work, *San Fernando* (Fig. 9), was directly attributed to divine intervention by famous chroniclers of the time period, Antonio Palomino and Diego Ortiz de Zúñiga.<sup>36</sup> It is not as shocking that Christianity should also play a large role in the creation of convent art, but in the case of María de la Santísima Trinidad, her role as an “obliged” artist actually resulted in her alienation from her fellow nuns. Additionally, events that I will discuss in more detail led to Nancarrow poignantly placing María de la Santísima Trinidad in “recorded history as [a] visionary, not [an] artist.”<sup>37</sup> While religion is a primary pillar of Seville’s cultural identity, I am intrigued by the overwhelming role that it played in the contemporary notion of women’s intellectual and artistic

inferiority, and the overwhelming effect that this had on their careers and our modern understanding of them.

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” *Art News* (January 1971): 22-48.

<sup>2</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris, Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> Delia Gaze, *Dictionary of Women Artists*, vol. 1 (London; Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Norma Broude, review of *Obstacle Race* by Germaine Greer, *Art Journal* 41, 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> Mary Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2020); Babette Bohn, “Female Self-portraiture in Early Modern Bologna,” *Renaissance Studies* 18, No. 2 (2004): 239-286; Adelina Modesti, *Elisabetta Sirani ‘Virtuosa’: Women’s Cultural Production in Early Modern Bologna* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Raymond Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art: Critical Reading and Catalogue Raisonné* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Mary Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Raymond Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art: Critical Reading and Catalogue Raisonné* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Shiela ffolliott, “Artemisia Conquers Rhodes: Problems in the Representation of Female Military Heroics in the Age of Catherine de’ Medici,” in *Patronage, Gender & the Arts in Early Modern Italy: Essays in Honor of Carolyn Valone* ed. Katherine A. McIver and Cynthia Stollhans (New York: Italica Press, 2015); Adelina Modesti, *Elisabetta Sirani*; Babette Bohn, “Female Self-portraiture”.

<sup>8</sup> “A Tale of Two Women Painters: Sofonisba Anguissola and Lavinia Fontana”, exhib. cat., (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 2019); “Artemisia”, exhib. cat., (London: The National Gallery, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Elena Taddia, “Une histoire d’intimité cachée : Sofonisba Anguissola portraitiste et dama de compagnía (1559-1573) à la cour de Philippe II d’Espagne” *E-Spania* 37 (2020), accessed April 1, 2021. <https://journals.openedition.org/e-spania/36657>.

<sup>10</sup> Carmen Fracchia, “Women’s Artistic Production and Their Visual Representation in Early Modern Spain,” in *A Companion to Spanish Women’s Studies*, ed. Geraldine Hazbun and Xon de Ros (Rochester: Tamesis, 2011), 129-143.

<sup>11</sup> Casey Gradonio-Foat, “Daughters of Seville: Workshops and Women Artists in Early Modern Andalucia,” *Women’s Art Journal* 31 no. 1 (Spring 2010): 21-27.

<sup>12</sup> Casey Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists of Golden Age Iberia: Careers in Context” (PhD diss., New York University, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Ana Aranda Bernal, “Ser Mujer y Artista en la España de la Edad Moderna,” in *Roldana*, ed. Antonio Torrejón Diaz and José Luis Romero Torres (Seville: Justa de Andalucía Consejería de Cultura, 2007): 33-51.

<sup>14</sup> Liana de Girolami Cheney, “The Emblematic Self-Portraits of Josefa de Ayala d’Obidos,” *Mediterranean Studies* 9 (2000): 203-229.

<sup>15</sup> Casey Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” 4.

<sup>16</sup> Casey Gardonio-Foat, “Daughters of Seville,” 22.

<sup>17</sup> Casey Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” viii.

<sup>18</sup> Babette Bohn, *Women Artists, Their Patrons, and their Publics in Early Modern Bologna* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Antonio Palomino, *Lives of the Eminent Spanish Painters and Sculptors*, trans. Nina Ayala Mallory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 27-342.

<sup>20</sup> J.A. Ceán Bermúdez, *Diccionario histórico de los más ilustres profesores de las bellas artes en España* (Madrid: Reales Academias de Bellas Artes de San Fernando y de la Historia, 1965), 107.

<sup>21</sup> Mindy Nancarrow Taggard, “Luisa Roldán’s ‘Jesus of Nazareth’: The Artist as Spiritual Medium,” *Women’s Art Journal* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 9-15.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine Hall-Van Den Elsen, *Fuerza e Intimismo: Luisa Roldán, Escultora (1652-1706)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2018), 119.

<sup>23</sup> Felipe Serrano Estrella, “State Gift or Strategy? La Roldana’s *Nazareno*,” *Sculpture Journal* 22 No. 2 (2013): 95.

<sup>24</sup> Catherine Hall-Van Den Elsen, “The Life and Work of the Sevillian Sculptor Luisa Roldán (1652-1706) with a catalogue raisonné” (PhD diss., La Trobe University, 1992); Hall-Van Den Elsen, *Fuerza e Intimismo*; Liana De Girolami Cheney, “Luisa Ignacia Roldán ‘La Roldana’: New Attributions to the First Sculptress of Spain, 1652-1706,” *Mediterranean Studies* 14 (2005): 148-168.

<sup>25</sup> *Roldana*, exhib. cat., ed. Antonio Torrejón Diaz and José Luis Romero Torres (Seville: Justa de Andalucía Consejería de Cultura, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> Mindy Nancarrow Taggard, “Murillo’s *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read* and the Question of Female Literacy and Learning in Golden Age Spain,” *Konsthistorik Tidskrift* 67 (1999): 31-46; Emilie L. Bergmann, “Learning at her Mother’s Knee? Saint Anne, the Virgin Mary, and the Iconography of Women’s Literacy,” in *Women’s Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World*, ed. Rosalie Hernández (London: Routledge, 2016), 243-261.

<sup>28</sup> Nancarrow, “Murillo’s *St. Anne*,” 31-46.

<sup>29</sup> Federika Jacobs, “(Pro)creativity” in *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa: Women Artists and the Language of Art History and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 27-63; Federika Jacobs, “Woman’s Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguissola,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1994): 74-101.

<sup>30</sup> Antonio Palomino de Castro y Velasco, *El Museo Pictórico y Escala Óptica* (Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> Peter Cherry, “Artistic Training and the Painter’s Guild in Seville” in *Velázquez in Seville*, exhib. Cat., ed. David Davies, Enriqueta Harris, Michael Clarke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996): 67-75.

<sup>32</sup> Casey Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” 135-164.

<sup>33</sup> Antonio García Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés y la Devoción Fernandina,” in *Fastos y Ceremonias del Barroco Iberoamericano*, vol. 9, ed. María de los Ángeles Fernández Valle, Carme López Calderón, and Inmaculada Rodríguez Moya (Seville: Universo Barroco Iberoamericano, 2019), 241-256.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen Dooley, “The *Academia de Bellas Artes* and the Age of Crisis: Affluence, Art and Plague in Seventeenth-Century Seville” (PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 2015), 140; Gardonio-Foat, “Daughters of Seville: Workshops and Women Artists in Early Modern Andalucia.”

<sup>35</sup> Mindy Nancarrow Taggard, “Art and Alienation in Early Modern Spanish Convents,” *South Atlantic Review* 65, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 25-26; Mindy Nancarrow Taggard, “The Artistic Activity of Spanish Nuns During the Golden Age” in *Essays on Women Artists: the Most Excellent*, ed. Linda Girolami Cheney (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003): 41-51; Matheo de Villarroel, *Vida de Soror Maria de la Santissima Trinidad*, MS. 2741, fols. 56-71 (Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid).

<sup>36</sup> Mindy Nancarrow Taggard, “Luisa Roldán’s ‘Jesus of Nazareth’: the Artist as Spiritual Medium,” *Women’s Art Journal* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 9-15; García Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés y la Devoción Fernandina.”

<sup>37</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 49.

## CHAPTER ONE: SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT FOR WOMEN ARTISTS IN SEVILLE

In order to better understand the lives and careers of the women artists of Early Modern Seville, such as Luisa de Valdés, María de la Concepción, María de la Encarnación, and María de la Santísima Trinidad, one must look to the socio-historical context in which they lived. During the first half of the seventeenth century, Seville thrived as one of the most prosperous cities in Western Europe. However, the 1640's marked a tumultuous and transformative chapter for the city in many different capacities. Because of the city's economic success, their taxes to the crown in Madrid increased dramatically; additionally, the neighboring port city of Cadiz became a fierce competitor, and significantly decreased Seville's trade to the Indies. Aside from their economy, a number of natural disasters descended upon the city during this decade; a dramatic devastation of crops, the flood of 1649 that was so destructive that it halted the Holy Week celebrations that year (which was nearly unheard of), and finally the bubonic plague that took 60,000 lives, nearly half of the city's population.<sup>1</sup> Not only was this a transformative time for the city, but it also produced the environment that yielded the women artists in question.

In this chapter I argue that while the women artists of Early Modern Seville had apparent freedoms, they were constrained by a variety of factors, some unique to the city and others not, that might hinder their artistic production. These factors include the passive ideal enforced by Seville's patriarchal society; educational limitations and contemporary notions of women's intellectual inferiority; and institutional barriers including the workshop and guild system in

Seville, the status of the visual arts in Spain, as well as the emergence of the new *Academia de Bellas Artes* in 1660.

### Historical Context and Attitudes Towards Women

While they were living under strict patriarchal limitations, the women of Early Modern Seville did have opportunities to actively participate in the life of the city. After Christopher Columbus's 1492 expedition, many Spanish were called to the New World at the beginning of the sixteenth century; Mary Elizabeth Perry quotes Andres Navarego (1525), the Venetian ambassador to Spain, on the subject, who commented that this exodus meant that Seville was now "in the hands of women".<sup>2</sup> This new adjustment ostensibly brought a great deal of opportunity to women in the city: many of them claimed the property of their deceased husbands and sons who had traveled to the New World, while also actively participating in legal transactions whether their husbands were alive or not. Women were also heavily involved in the commercial sector of Seville, investing in and forming their own companies; many female-owned and often female-staffed shops in the silver quarter of the city sold goods such as silks, buttons, and linens.<sup>3</sup> While these seemingly opportunistic elements may, at first glance, identify Early Modern Seville as a progressive, inclusive place for women, each of these scenarios was heavily orchestrated by the male population of the city. As Perry notes, in most cases it was the absence or death of a husband or sons that allowed women any legal or monetary agency. Businesswomen oftentimes required aid from a male merchant to carry out international affairs, and even wealthy widows who inherited their husbands' businesses never invested on their own, but rather encouraged their sons or male servants to represent them in a commercial capacity.<sup>4</sup> The lives of women were still determined by men, even if those men were absent or deceased.

Perry contrasts the reality of the hyper-romanticization and manipulated view of female experience in the city by discussing images of women created by male artists living in Seville during this time. For example, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo portrayed women workers such as flower and fruit sellers (Fig. 10) with seemingly happy and carefree dispositions, when the reality of their jobs was far more bleak and daunting.<sup>5</sup> Another example of the romanticized version of female existence was the abundant imagery of the Virgin Mary. Throughout history, the Virgin Mary has been depicted in many ways, as she has been interpreted by each culture and time period. The extreme variation of this visual type draws attention to her specific characterization in Early Modern Seville, which aligns well with the city's general sentiment towards the female populace. Where the Virgin was, at times, portrayed as the powerful *Theotokos* (Fig. 11) or the regal and divine *Maria Regina* (Fig. 12) elsewhere in Europe, the passive and docile Virgin of Early Modern Seville served as a much less empowering example for her women followers. This was enforced both by the city's religious institutions and by the male artists who constantly reproduced this image of the submissive, powerless mother.

As Perry explains the Virgin Mary held a deep and lasting influence on the women of Early Modern Seville: she stood as an important intercessor between the people and God in the city, where she was especially revered as Our Lady of Antiquity. Also important were the sister martyrs Justa and Rufina, who represented fervent Catholic strength to the people of Seville.<sup>6</sup> Each of these figures was an exemplar upon which the women of Early Modern Seville were expected to model themselves. The martyr sisters were meant to remind women of the fleetingness of their earthly suffering and the best ways in which to express their passions and yearnings (specifically through religion), while the Virgin's message was much less assertive.<sup>7</sup> The Virgin of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Seville, and many other Catholic cities

throughout Europe, was portrayed in a passive, asexual manner, often in the form of an obedient girl or passively sorrowful mother (Fig. 13).<sup>8</sup> This docile, delicate motif in sacred art transcended to secular depictions of women, as can be seen in Murillo's rendering of Seville's flower girls (Fig. 14). Although the reality for women in this line of work was grueling and laborious, Murillo captures them in an idyllic light so as to align them more closely with the contemporary images of the Virgin, and the larger narrative of passivity in which Seville's women were expected to situate themselves.<sup>9</sup>

This passivity of the Sevillian Virgin also translated to the societal expectations of women, including professionals, among them women artists. Luis de León's publication *La Perfecta Casada (The Perfect Wife)* published in Madrid in 1583, served as a guide for the newly engaged women of Early Modern Spain, particularly focusing on responsibility to husbands, children, and especially to God.<sup>10</sup> This concept of explicitly outlining women's place in contemporary European society was pervasive throughout the continent, as can be seen over a century earlier with the Florentine Leon Battista Alberti's *I libri della famiglia (On the Family,* 1430's).<sup>11</sup> Although, for most, the sentiment that a woman's place was the home remained widespread, tracts supporting female education like those prevalent in Early Modern Italy, where women publicly pursued a range of artistic disciplines and often garnered public commissions, began to appear in the sixteenth century on a wider scale than before.<sup>12</sup> Not coincidentally, the sixteenth century also witnessed notable examples of female artists on the European continent who left their families or family workshops to pursue appointments elsewhere. These included Sofonisba Anguissola, who traveled from Italy to Spain; and Levina Teerlinc and Susanna Horenboult, both of whom left their family workshops in Belgium for court appointments in London. This mobility only increased in the seventeenth century which artists like Artemisia

Gentileschi, who was born in Rome but worked in Venice, Naples, and London.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, however, seventeenth-century Spain, especially Seville, remained reliant on the patriarchal structure advocated by Luis de León – a point I return to below. Although Luisa Roldán is an exceptional example in many respects, even she left the family workshop via one of the few avenues available: marriage. This patriarchal model for female behavior helps to explain why the male artists of Seville – such as Murillo – depicted women as sweet, unbothered, and one-dimensional.

This model of Sevillian feminine virtue is particularly applicable to my investigation of the women artists who were employed in their father's workshops. This would include Luisa de Valdés, who is considered further in Chapter Two. Her father's 1682 portrayal of *The Immaculate Conception* (Fig. 15) illustrates the passivity that was characteristic of depictions of the Virgin popular in seventeenth-century Seville. The Virgin's cocked head and hands folded to her chest indicate submission and fragility, and these qualities are further explicated by the contrasting regal scenery. The date of this painting suggests it may well have been completed while Luisa de Valdés was in her father's studio, seeing as she returned there in 1675 after a failed marriage, a point which I discuss in further detail in Chapter Two.<sup>14</sup> Like Luisa de Valdés, the women artists who worked in the workshops of their fathers, husbands, or brothers; they were not only confronted with this submissive trope in the visuals they met daily, but were certainly expected to render women in the same way. The expectation of the “passive” woman helps explain what Appendix A makes manifest, that while women were surely producing art in Early Modern Seville, the lack of autograph works suggests that they were expected to contribute to the collective whole rather than to cultivate their own individual artistic identity. The strict ideals of comportment that circumscribed female behavior in Early Modern Spain as a whole

likely reinforced this concept – and played a role in Sofonisba Anguissola’s cessation of signatures after she arrived in Spain.<sup>15</sup>

This consideration begs the question of whether or not the brothers and sons of Seville’s workshops were also expected forgo their own individual signature for the proliferation of the workshop rather than their individual artistic development. In the case of the Valdés Leal workshop, we might turn to the work of Lucas de Valdés, brother to Luisa and son to Juan de Valdés Leal, on this point. While Juan de Valdés Leal and his wife Isabel Morales Carrasquilla (an amateur painter from Córdoba) encouraged artistic development in their household, as evidenced by the artistic activity of their daughters Luisa and María de la Concepción, they focused primarily on the development of their only son’s artistic talent. He was groomed to succeed his father as a landmark artist in Seville from a young age, completing autograph engravings for the San Fernando celebration at the age of eleven alongside his elder sister Luisa (Fig. 16).<sup>16</sup> He began studying Latin, mathematics, literature and theology at the age of four or five alongside members of the Spanish nobility at the Colegio San Hermenegildo, founded in Seville in 1590 by the Jesuits.<sup>17</sup> While the sons of Seville’s workshops, such as Lucas de Valdés, were groomed for careers in the city’s artistic and intellectual communities, daughters such as Luisa do not appear to have been similarly educated. Rather, a high percentage of the daughters that worked in these workshops left at a young age to marry and have children.<sup>18</sup> I will discuss this in the context of Luisa de Valdés and Luisa Roldán in further detail in Chapter Two, but this was also the case for Isabel Sánchez Coello, daughter of Spanish portraitist Alonso Sánchez Coello. She lived and painted at the Spanish court with Sofonisba Anguissola from 1559-1580 while her father served as court painter to King Philip II. After his death in 1588, Isabel left her artistry behind at the Spanish court to marry at the age of twenty four.<sup>19</sup> While the children, both

male and female, of Spain's workshops were expected to contribute to the workshop production, this was seen as the foundation for the son's artistic careers, while the daughters, if they did leave the workshop, they appear to have often left their art behind to marry and have children. This further explicates the degree to which Luisa Roldán represents the exception rather than the rule, as she raised a family as well as garnering numerous commissions and court appointments.

#### Educational Limitations and Notions of Intellectual Inferiority

The issue of women's education in Early Modern Seville is a complex one. While the Renaissance brought with it an encouragement of female education and literacy, Spanish society suffered a major regression in this area in the wake of Martin Luther and the Reformation. The Protestant Reformation throughout Europe reinvigorated the patriarchal nature of Spain's Catholicism, in which they, according to Mindy Nancarrow Taggard, returned to the notion that intellect and knowledge were reserved for men, while women existed only to serve them.<sup>20</sup> It is also important to consider that even when literacy was encouraged among the female population of Early Modern Spain, it was often only in the context of furthering religious education, or in order to serve as the best mate for their husbands, not for the educational enrichment of the woman herself. Underlying this was a contemporary belief that women were intellectually stunted based upon their gender.<sup>21</sup>

A popular visual type in Early Modern Seville, the Education of the Virgin, offers insights into contemporary ideas regarding women's intellectual capacity. According to Nancarrow, even though it had fallen out of fashion elsewhere in Europe during the sixteenth century, the apocryphal scene enjoyed overwhelming popularity in Early Modern Seville. The painter Juan de Roelas (1558/60-1614) "rescued" the iconography in the early seventeenth century when he depicted *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read* (1610-15) at a Sevillian

monastery (Fig. 17). Images of the Virgin's infancy, such as this one, were widely celebrated in the Marian cult of Seville.<sup>22</sup> While this image of developing literacy seems as though it would project a positive and encouraging educational message to the women of the city, Nancarrow argues that it actually achieved the opposite.<sup>23</sup>

The primary reason for this lies in the fact that many religious minds of the time period took issue with the concept of the Virgin "learning" or "being taught" to read, arguing that the extrabiblical scene was purely ornamental because the Virgin inherited her Divine Wisdom directly from God through her own Immaculate Conception.<sup>24</sup> In other words, Mary, like other women, would not have been capable of engaging in intellectual activities without an act of divine intervention. While the visual narrative was popular among many Sevillian monasteries and convents, where it may well have served as an erudite inspiration to residents pursuing that same divine knowledge, for the average Early Modern woman of Seville, to do so must have seemed an exercise in futility. This perspective is reinforced by the contemporary notions of women's intellectual inferiority.

The concepts underlying Early Modern perceptions of women's intellectual inferiority can be traced back to antiquity. Frederika Jacobs (1997) employs the metaphor of "procreativity" to express the contrasting experiences of women and men artists of the Renaissance, rooted, since antiquity, in presumptions of innate intellectual difference, and how those notions developed overtime. She acknowledges the fact that female participation in the physical process of human reproduction, as well as in creative arts professions, had become undeniable in Italy by the second half of the fifteenth century. However, she notes that Early Modern thinkers distinguished – as their predecessors had – between male and female participation in the creative act as the difference between creating and making.<sup>25</sup> In other words, women could participate in

purely physical production, such as childbirth, but the formation of the intellect of the child – from conception – lay with the father; just so, women could create copies by wrote in terms of art, but were incapable of any true intellectual, artistic production, which required a mental capacity that they, by the virtue of their gender, simply did not possess. While Jacobs's analysis focuses on Early Modern Italy, her work underlines a dominant narrative regarding women's intellectual inferiority that long dominated throughout Europe, including in Seville.

Not surprisingly, women's role in Early Modern visual arts was, as elsewhere, often interpreted as a passive one, a point that recalls the assignment of "Divine Intervention" both to the Virgin's learning and the work of virtually every woman artist that I discuss in the following chapters. As Jacobs argues, this stemmed primarily from the fact that women were believed to lack the "philosophical precedent" to form original thought, and therefore to invoke the *invenzione* that qualifies an artist as such.<sup>26</sup> It also helps to explicate a further point made by Nancarrow in her analysis of the Education of the Virgin, notably that the images of the "reading Virgin" were adapted in Seville to adhere to the primacy of manual labor over mental labor, as women were qualified for only the former, not the latter. This is illustrated by the inclusion of a sewing basket, a manifestation of manual and domestic labor, in many depictions of the Education of the Virgin. This includes Murillo's 1655 painting (Fig. 4), where the Virgin's sewing basket is foregrounded, and, arguably, a greater focus than her missal.<sup>27</sup>

Understanding the attitude towards women's education and intellectual ability in Early Modern Seville, and the environment for women as a whole, is absolutely critical to our understanding of the women artists who lived and worked there. These societal limitations also deeply informed the new development of a more specialized artistic climate in the city, and by extension, a new set of institutional barriers that, in the end, further marginalized women artists.

### Institutional Barriers: The Guild System in Seville and the New “Academia de Bellas Artes”

While guild systems varied by city, membership was essential for any individual who hoped to support themselves through participation in the public marketplace. In most cases, this membership was required for to publicly sell a product, including works of art. Beyond basic access to the marketplace, guild membership also provided a robust networking system by which artists could make connections with prospective clients and collaborators. Although there is a great deal of information detailing the intricacies of Seville’s guild system, and studies by Peter Cherry (1996) and Ellen Dooley (2015), which address the painter’s guild of St. Luke and the *Academia de Bellas Artes*, respectively, I have not been able to access information regarding women’s role in the city’s guilds specifically.<sup>28</sup> Although both, especially Cherry, discuss the regulations of Seville’s painter’s guild, they fail to detail the place that women held within the guild system, which leads me to believe that women were not addressed within these documents. Cherry’s treatment of the painter’s guild of Seville relies primarily on the third volume of Francisco Pacheco’s *Arte de la Pintura*, and although he mentions the four main painter professions as they are detailed in the civic ordinances (*ordenanzas de Sevilla*), which were republished in 1632, I was not able to access these documents.<sup>29</sup> In the absence of clear information regarding guild regulations in Early Modern Seville, reference to guild regulations and women’s experiences in other European city centers may suggest what the situation was like in the Spanish city. In Barcelona for example, women were strictly prohibited from being certified as masters and consequently from joining artist’s guilds.<sup>30</sup> Due to the restrictions surrounding acquisition of “master” status in Seville, a point which I will return to shortly, we might surmise that women were also barred from guild participation in that city. An exception may have been the acceptance of a widow based upon a deceased husband’s membership.

This was the case in other cities throughout Europe, such as Antwerp. Upon visiting the city in 1526, Albrecht Dürer witnessed a guild procession that included a large troop of widows.<sup>31</sup> Somewhat unusually, in Bruges, women actually accounted for 12-25% of guild membership during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>32</sup> This may have been the case with María de la Encarnación in Seville (see Appendix A), who adopted the altarpiece commission of her late husband, Juan de Torres, a point that I discuss further in Chapter Two.<sup>33</sup>

While there are similarities between women's artistic involvement in Seville and other cities such as Antwerp and Bruges, there are also quite a few differences that would indicate that the latter cities offered a much more progressive environment for women. For example, in the Antwerp, women's most active role in the art industry was that of "art dealer"; male artists often had their wives or daughters manage the sale of their artworks, which in many cases included a separate payment made to the seller.<sup>34</sup> This likely contrasted with the situation in Seville. Here we should recall the earlier discussion in this chapter where it was noted that businesswomen often relied upon men to manage their international affairs, and wealthy widows relied upon their sons or male servants to manage their investments.<sup>35</sup> This consideration, in addition to the fact that widows and women artists in Antwerp and Bruges were much more publicly acknowledged in their artistic communities, supports the idea that artist guilds in Seville offered a less progressive environment for women artists.

Further, contemporary notions of women's intellectual inferiority in seventeenth-century Seville played an interesting role in women's acceptance in the city's workshop system. Because they were considered capable of manual labor, women might be expected to mechanically copy and contribute to the works being produced in their family workshops.<sup>36</sup> Their employment in family workshops may have also protected competitive guild positions for men – Gardonio-Foat

suggests that this may have been why some women artists who did not belong to a family workshop pursued a husband who was a guild member, so as to garner an opportunity to work under their husband's membership.<sup>37</sup> It is clear that Seville's guild system was also largely governed by gender, seeing as women could oftentimes only hope to gain guild access through their natal family or marriage to a member. While women might be encouraged and expected to participate in their family workshops, the lack of both autograph works and the near-impossibility of achieving master status suggests that this inclusion was made only in an effort to increase the productivity of these organizations, and thereby the proliferation of their fathers' or husbands' reputations, as opposed to women's own artistic development.

As we shall see, fathers such as Pedro Roldán might disapprove of a child's marriage, as he apparently did with Luisa's, in order to keep them within the family shop.<sup>38</sup> This was, of course, not a circumstance confined to Seville or even Spain. Similar manipulation can be seen in the relationship between Tintoretto, or Jacopo Robusti, (1518-1594) and his daughter Marietta Robusti (1560-1590). Carlo Ridolfi (1594-1658), Italian art biographer and painter, described this in his biography of Tintoretto (1642), noting: "However, Tintoretto was satisfied to see her married to Mario Augusta, a jeweler, so that she might always be nearby, rather than be deprived of her, even though she might be favored by princes, as he loved her dearly."<sup>39</sup> While Ridolfi frames this arrangement in an affectionate light, it is clear that Pedro Roldán followed in Jacopo Robusti footsteps in his efforts towards the active suppression of his daughter's separation from the family shop. While Roldán was able to transcend this barrier, many others, including Luisa de Valdès, as we shall see, did not. Women's restricted roles in the guild and workshop systems of Seville support my claim that they were expected to exist as a part of the collective whole rather than an individual in the artistic environment of the city.

It should be noted, as well, that a change was occurring in the artistic circles of mid-seventeenth-century Seville: the move to an academic rather than workshop/ guild-based model of training and professional activity. The *Academia de Bellas Artes*, the city's first drawing academy, was founded in 1660 by Francisco Herrera the Younger (1622-85) and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682).<sup>40</sup> The Accademia was intended to provide a break from the workshop system that largely defined Seville's artistic environment, and in turn elevate the status of Seville's artists from practitioners of the Mechanical Arts to educated practitioners of the Liberal Arts. In initiating an Academy, Seville was following the model of other major European cities, including Florence, where the *Accademia del Disegno* was established in 1563, and Rome, where the *Accademia delle Belle Arti (Accademia di San Luca)* was established in 1577.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, the infusion of this academic element in Early Modern Seville further challenged women artists in an already restricted professional environment. Exemplifying this, Luisa Roldán was admitted to the Roman *Accademia di San Luca* in 1706, but was never admitted into the *Academia de Bellas Artes* in her hometown of Seville.<sup>42</sup>

Italy's influence on the artistic climate in seventeenth-century Seville also manifested in debates surrounding the *paragone*, in this case the relative status of painting or sculpture as the superior art form. Karin Hellwig (2016) states that despite the overwhelming popularity of polychromed wood sculpture in seventeenth-century Seville, artist and theorist Vicente Carducho (1585-1638) stated that it "does not fit with Italian academic artistic taste."<sup>43</sup> This global context is important to our consideration of the city's women artists, especially Luisa de Valdés, a polychromer, and Luisa Roldán, a sculptor who had to rely on her brother-in-law, polychromer Tomas de los Arcos, to "complete" her sculptures.<sup>44</sup> Although polychromed sculpture may not have been appreciated on an academic or global scale, in Seville this medium superceded the

restrictive nature of the *paragone*, as this was an artistic trademark and long held tradition within the city that defined the careers of two of the only documented women artists of seventeenth-century Seville.

Especially important to understanding how the newly formed *Accademia de Bellas Artes* reified existing barriers to women's artistic advanced in Seville is the *carta de examen*. The *carta de examen* was a formal exam that potential masters were required to sit for in order to gain Master status in the Academia.<sup>45</sup> A primary tenet of these exams was exhibiting a mastery of the male nude. Drawing the human body from nature was, however, absolutely forbidden to women.<sup>46</sup> This restriction from observing the male nude would have barred women from consideration for "master" status and furthered their exclusion from the newly formed Academy as they could not pass the *carta de examen*. It is worth noting the inherent patriarchy in this academic system, wherein a candidate for this status was only expected to master the male nude rather than the female as well. This element only served to further alienate the women artists who were attempting to participate in this increasingly gendered space. This case not limited to Seville – in fact, Linda Nochlin cites these academic restrictions as one of the foremost barriers to women's artistic education.<sup>47</sup> However, women were beginning – albeit exceptionally – to gain admittance to Academies elsewhere. Artemisia Gentileschi was the first women admitted into the *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno* in Florence in 1616, following marriage and departing her father's workshop in Rome and, as we have seen, the exceptional Roldán gain admittance to the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome, even if on her deathbed.<sup>48</sup> Reference to women's experiences – in this case access to Academy membership – again highlights the degree to which Seville's artistic environment was more restricted than those throughout the rest of the continent.

Before moving onto the next chapter, I feel that it is worth noting that Luisa de Valdés, María de la Concepción, María de la Encarnación, and Luisa Roldán were born into a tumultuous and rapidly developing Seville. Considering this new environment, Ellen Dooley outlines the various circumstances that impacted the city and its people, including multiple wars abroad, a decline in trade with the Americas, mismanagement of finances by the Crown, and multiple epidemics including a bubonic plague between 1647 and 1652.<sup>49</sup> Focusing on the city's major workshops, Dooley argues that in this moment of turmoil, Seville's artists played a crucial role in restoring morale through their creative contributions, especially those included in the city's celebrations and processions.<sup>50</sup> In a city as devoutly religious as Seville, it comes as no surprise that the countless paintings and sculptures from the *Academia* and the workshops of Roldán and Valdés Leal would help to lighten the spirits of the city, especially during such dismal times. Not only were Luisa de Valdés, María de la Concepción and Luisa Roldán born into this chaotic time, but their fathers were arguably at the forefront of this rapidly developing landscape. The Roldán and Valdés Leal workshops were primary producers of this so-called "morale-boosting" art, thereby placing the artist-daughters of each shop, especially Luisa de Valdés and Luisa Roldán, within a critical period of artistic collaboration and production. But each was working under the restrictive circumstances which I have already outlined, and I explore this juxtaposition of opportunity and opposition in the next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Hall-Van Den Elsen, *Fuerza e Intimismo*, 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 14.

<sup>3</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 15-16.

<sup>5</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 37-39.

<sup>9</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 18.

<sup>10</sup> Fray Luis de León, “La Perfecta Casada,” *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* 37 (Madrid: M. Rivadeneyra, 1855), 211-46.

<sup>11</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della familia* (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1969).

<sup>12</sup> Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Translated by Earl Jeffery Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1982), 3–4; Moderata Fonte, *The Worth of Women: Wherein Is Clearly Revealed Their Nobility and Their Superiority to Men*, Translated by Virginia Cox, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1997), xvi–xxv.

<sup>13</sup> Patrizia Costa, “Sofonisba Anguissola’s Self-portrait in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts,” *Arte Lombarda* 125 (1999): 54-55.

<sup>14</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 254.

<sup>15</sup> Lily Chin, “Sofonisba Anguissola and her Early Teachers” (Master’s Thesis, CUNY Hunter College, 2018), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen Dooley, “The *Academia de Bellas Artes* and the Age of Crisis: Affluence, Art and Plague in Seventeenth-Century Seville,” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2015): 140-141.

<sup>17</sup> Dooley, “The *Academia*,” 142.

<sup>18</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 39.

<sup>19</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 39.

<sup>20</sup> Nancarrow, “Murillo’s *St. Anne*,” 36.

<sup>21</sup> Jacobs, “(Pro)creativity,” 27-63.

<sup>22</sup> Nancarrow, “Murillo’s *St. Anne*,” 33.

<sup>23</sup> Nancarrow, “Murillo’s *St. Anne*,” 33.

<sup>24</sup> Nancarrow, “Murillo’s *St. Anne*,” 33.

<sup>25</sup> Jacobs, “(Pro)creativity,” 36.

<sup>26</sup> Jacobs, “(Pro)creativity,” 39.

<sup>27</sup> Nancarrow, “Murillo’s *St. Anne*,” 39.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Cherry, “Artistic Training,” 67; Ellen Dooley, “The *Academia de Bellas Artes*,” 27.

<sup>29</sup> Cherry, “Artistic Training,” 67.

<sup>30</sup> Casey Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” 45.

<sup>31</sup> Els Kloek, “Guilds and the Open Market: The Example of the Netherlands,” in *Dictionary of Women Artists*, ed. Delia Gaze, Vol. 1 (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997): 29.

<sup>32</sup> Kloek, “Guilds and the Open Market,” 28.

<sup>33</sup> Gardonio-Foat, “Daughters of Seville,” 23.

<sup>34</sup> Kloek, “Guilds and the Open Market,” 29: such was the case for Laureys Keldermans’ wife in 1511 in Averbode, and Rogier van der Weyden’s wife in 1459 in Cambrai.

<sup>35</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 15-16.

<sup>36</sup> Jacobs, “(Pro)creativity,” 36.

<sup>37</sup> Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” 143-44.

<sup>38</sup> Hall-Van Den Elsen, *Fuerza e Intimismo*, 53.

<sup>39</sup> Carlo Ridolfi, *The Life of Tintoretto and of his children Domenico and Marietta*, trans. Catherine and Robert Enggass (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1984), 98.

<sup>40</sup> Cherry, “Artistic Training”; Dooley, “The *Academia*,” 24.

<sup>41</sup> “The Making of an Artist,” Italian Renaissance Learning Resources, In Collaboration with the National Gallery of Art, accessed June 3, 2021,  
<http://www.italianrenaissanceresources.com/units/unit-3/essays/academies/#:~:text=The%20Accademia%20became%20the%20most,Giambologna%20%2C%20and%20other%20leading%20practitioners>; “Storia Dell’Accademia,” Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, accessed June 5, 2021,  
<http://www.accademiasanluca.eu/it/accademia/storia>.

<sup>42</sup> Felipe Serrano Estrella, “State Gift or Strategy? La Roldana’s *Nazareno*,” *Sculpture Journal* 22 no. 2 (2013): 95.

<sup>43</sup> Karin Hellwig, “The *Paragone* between Painting and Sculpture,” in *On Art and Painting: Vicente Carducho and Baroque Spain* ed Jean Andrews, Jeremy Roe and Oliver Noble Wood (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), 275.

<sup>44</sup> Jane Bassett, Mari-Tere Alvarez, “Process and Collaboration in a Seventeenth-Century Polychrome Sculpture: Luisa Roldán and Tomás de los Arcos,” *Getty Research Journal* 3 (2011): 15-32.

<sup>45</sup> Cherry, “Artistic Training,” 68.

<sup>46</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 41-43: Bernal offers a relevant discussion of the discrepancies between male and female education, both artistic and in general, during sixteenth and seventeenth century Seville. This discussion details the fact that girls were taught basic arithmetic derived from the Renaissance, along with their Christian virtues, which deprived them of exposure to essential tenets of drawing, painting, and sculpture. Because of this, the boys were able to maintain the canon, and “painting” was organized more and more according to male expectations and conventions.

<sup>47</sup> Nochlin, “Why Have There Been,” 22-39, 67-71.

<sup>48</sup> “Artemisia Gentileschi,” The National Gallery, accessed July 3, 2021,  
<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists/artemisia-gentileschi>.

<sup>49</sup> Dooley, “The *Accademia*,” 14-15.

<sup>50</sup> Dooley, “The *Accademia*,” 15.

## CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN ARTISTS IN WORKSHOPS

This chapter focuses on the daughters and wives of Seville’s male artists, specifically Luisa de Valdés (b. 1654) and María de la Concepción (b. 1664), two daughters of Juan de Valdes Leal, one of the foremost painters of the Spanish Baroque; and María de la Encarnación, widow to Juan de Torres, a celebrated Sevillian sculptor (Appendix A).<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I offer a new consideration of the very few known works of these artists as well as the circumstances surrounding the production of now-lost works. Two points emerge as essential. First is the lack of documentation for women artists in Early Modern Seville, which, I argued in the previous chapter is the result of a range of social and institutional factors that fed into the expectation to forgo artistic individuality for the sake of a larger collective (in this case their family workshop). Second are the ramifications of the spiritual nature of their work, especially in terms of contemporary reception and perceptions of skill/ ability. The discussion that follows focuses primarily on Luisa de Valdés because of the more extensive existing research and extant works attributed to the artist, while also introducing María de la Concepción and María de la Encarnación. Ultimately, by offering a sustained consideration of these three “lesser known” artists of Early modern Seville and what we know of their careers, I hope to challenge the view established by scholars such as Casey Gardonio-Foat and Ana Aranda Bernal that seventeenth-century Seville held many opportunities for women artists by outlining the restrictive and limiting elements that defined the workshop context.<sup>2</sup>

Luisa Roldán enters the discussion to provide comparative analysis – as the exception to the rule as exemplified by the other women considered here. As we saw in the introductory chapter, Luisa Roldán is certainly the most famous woman artist to emerge from Early Modern Spain and specifically Seville. The ample documentation of her career and scholarly attention paid to her work are due in large part to her appointment as Sculptor to the Chamber under King Charles II (1692-1701) and then Sculptor to the King under King Philip V (1701-1706), appointments she held after a move to Madrid in 1688.<sup>3</sup> While I do not focus primarily on Roldán here, I am informed by the work of Antonio García Baeza, who suggests a common trajectory between the artistic careers of Roldán and Luisa de Valdés.<sup>4</sup> I believe that expanding upon Baeza's hypothesis, and using Roldán's "success" as a unit by which to measure that of Luisa de Valdés illuminates the degree to which Roldán, who successfully transitioned out of her father's workshop, represents the exception rather than the rule when it comes to our contemporary understanding of seventeenth-century women artists in Seville, and why Luisa de Valdés serves as a much more representative and realistic example that we might turn to in the future.

#### Introduction to the Women Artists

In seventeenth-century Seville, it appears to have been quite common for prolific artists, such as the sculptor Pedro Roldán and painter Juan de Valdés Leal, to enlist the help of their daughters as well as their sons in the family workshop.<sup>5</sup> Ana Aranda Bernal cites this custom as one of the primary modes by which a Sevillian woman artist could hope to find employment and hone their skill, a view that contributes to the general sentiment that the city offered a wealth of opportunities for women artists.<sup>6</sup> This appears to have been true to an extent, as this practice produced three of the five women artists that I discuss in this thesis (Luisa de Valdés, María de la

Concepción, and of course Luisa Roldán), along with, very likely, many other unidentified/undocumented women artists.<sup>7</sup> Two further examples include Luisa Roldán's two sisters María and Francisca (see Appendix A). So little is known about these two women that there has been, historically, discrepancy amongst scholars as to their names.<sup>8</sup> But, Catherine Hall Van-Den Elsen has constructed a detailed chart of Pedro Roldán's children, including their baptismal records, in her book *Fuerza e Intimismo* (2018) that allows for a secure identification of the women as María and Francisca Roldán.<sup>9</sup>

Luisa de Valdés, or Luisa de Morales (b. 1654), is arguably the most established “lesser-known” woman artist discussed in this thesis; she is the only artist for which we have extant work (see Appendix A). This is due in large part to the fact that her father was Juan de Valdés Leal, one of the most celebrated painters of Golden Age Seville and President of the city’s newly formed *Academia de Bellas Artes* from 1663-1666.<sup>10</sup> Because of Luisa de Valdés’s role in her father’s prolific workshop, and – perhaps most importantly – extant, signed works, she has been included in many comprehensive studies of the time period which focus on women artists of seventeenth-century Spain, including those by Aranda Bernal (2007) and Casey Gardonio-Foat (2012).<sup>11</sup> Although her inclusion in these volumes is significant, each of these scholars largely reference Luisa de Valdés as an aside – a means of exemplifying the common seventeenth-century Sevillian practice of employing children, both male and female, in artistic workshops. But Luisa’s participation in the 1671 celebration of the beatification of San Fernando, recently discussed at length by García Baeza, was a landmark moment in the young artist’s career, and allowed her the unusual opportunity to both collaborate with the famed sculptor Pedro Roldán, working outside the immediate family sphere, and to sign her work, two practices that were rare for women artists in seventeenth-century Spain. Although Luisa de Valdés married and left her

father's workshop in 1671, presumably in the hopes of establishing professional independence, an annulment of that marriage three years later forced her back into her family home, and, Baeza has argued, artistic obscurity.<sup>12</sup>

María de la Concepción, or María de Valdés (b. 1664), was another daughter of Juan de Valdés Leal, and is referenced in many of the same comprehensive volumes as her sister. Although María later joined the Convent of San Clemente el Real, which her father completed a commission for in 1680, she was raised in the painting tradition of her father's workshop.<sup>13</sup> While she is less established in the literature than her sister Luisa de Valdés, Juan Agustín Ceán Bermudez (1800) states that her miniatures and portraits were composed with ease and accuracy, although he does not discuss any specific works.<sup>14</sup> Although no identifiable works by María survive, her identity as both a daughter of the Sevillian workshops and a nun artist is significant to my discussion of the lesser known woman artists of Seville, and the strict criteria within which women had to fit in the hopes of developing their artistic identity. Given her convent life, I discuss her in greater detail in the next chapter.

The third and final woman that I discuss in this chapter is María de la Encarnación (life dates unknown, remarried 1650), wife to Sevillian sculptor Juan de Torres. María de la Encarnación is known to us only because she is documented as having fulfilled the commission for the retablo of Seville's College of San Basilio Magno Torres in the year 1650; this after the death of her husband. Although nothing is known about her artistic upbringing or her specific participation in the workshop environment, María de la Encarnación is important here because she represents a scenario, as we saw in the previous chapter, appears to have been fairly common throughout Europe (but rather less common in Seville as she is the only example of which I am aware), in which widowed women artists were entrusted with the completion of their dead

husbands' commissions.<sup>15</sup> This identity distinguishes Encarnación her from the other women artists considered here because it is unclear whether she actually worked as an artist or served as the manager of the financial elements of the studio.<sup>16</sup>

María de la Encarnación fulfilled the commission for the retablo of Seville's College of San Basilio Magno Torres in the year 1650.<sup>17</sup> While I agree to some extent with Gardonio-Foat's assertion that this marks her as a "noteworthy example of a woman operating independently in Seville's art market," I also think it is important to complicate this sentiment. Because it is unknown whether María de la Encarnación was a sculptor by trade or primarily managed the administrative element of her husband's studio, it is possible that she was contractually obligated to fulfill this commission, rather than "granted the opportunity," as her husband's death left it incomplete.<sup>18</sup> Recalling the discussion of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Antwerp in Chapter One, we are reminded that widows who inherited their husband's guild memberships and incomplete commissions usually only fulfilled these as a means by which to dispose of their husband's work and profit from the sales, not necessarily to exercise their own artistic independence.<sup>19</sup> In either case, it seems that María de la Encarnación represents yet another example of womens' lack of agency in seventeenth-century Seville: even if she was "granted the opportunity" to complete the sculpture, it appears this (and her emergence into the documentary record) only came to her through the death of her husband.

As Appendix A makes clear, daughters and wives of Spanish workshops account for a significant percentage of the "active" women artists I am aware of in Seville beyond Luisa Roldán; these are Luisa de Valdés, María de la Concepción, and Roldán's two sisters.<sup>20</sup> Although all of these five women actively contributed to the artistic production of their father's workshops, Luisa Roldán and Luisa de Valdés are the only women artists from whom we have extant,

attributable works. Until more information is uncovered regarding the other women artists of Seville, the limited information and fortunate documentation of Luisa de Valdés and her works will hopefully bring us closer to crafting a realistic understanding of their experiences, and may even lead to new discoveries.

### Seeking Independence

In late seventeenth-century Seville (c.1660s-1680s), three major artists and their workshops fulfilled most commissions: Pedro Roldán (sculptor), Juan de Valdés Leal (painter), and Bernardo Simón de Piñeda (altarpiece architect). Each man joined the drawing academy of Casa de Lonja, which Valdés Leal oversaw as president from 1663-1666. The 1671 beatification ceremony of San Fernando, honoring the city's patron saint more than four hundred years after his death, saw this collaborative team at the height of their popularity, and they were collectively tasked with completing the decorations for the ceremony in a mere forty days.<sup>21</sup> As was noted above, Luisa de Valdés's participation in this celebration allowed her to collaborate with another studio and sign her work. Beyond that, those events and the resulting works of art produced, encapsulate two of what I argue are the major issues that defined the experience of women artists in seventeenth-century Seville: the expectation for them to subvert their individual artistic identity for the sake of the collective whole and the direct attribution of their artistic talent to divine intervention.

The truncated work timeline for the San Fernando ceremony demanded "all hands on deck", and therefore offered Luisa de Valdés the opportunity to collaborate as a polychromer with Pedro Roldán on *San Fernando* (Fig. 9), a tactic that would most likely have not been employed had the workshops been given ample time to complete the decorations. The sculpture was well-received, and the idealized and youthful vision of the monarch served as an inspiration

for other images that followed.<sup>22</sup> Another important artistic element of this religious event was the completion of a series of illustrations that detailed moments from the celebration; over 1,000 copies of the resulting pamphlet were distributed throughout the city. Juan de Valdés Leal allowed both of his eldest children, Lucas and Luisa, to illustrate and sign a portion of his share of the pamphlet. This allowed Luisa de Valdés to establish herself as an engraver as well as a polychromer, especially as she created and signed four prints (Fig. 6, 7 (which includes two prints), and 8).<sup>23</sup>

Such pamphlets were quite popular throughout Early Modern Europe, especially as a means to commemorate an important festival, which was the case for the beatification of San Fernando.<sup>24</sup> The production and distribution of these pamphlets turned ephemeral, intangible moments, such as the festival procession, into a work of art in and of themselves to be remembered and cherished for centuries to come. Luisa de Valdés carefully crafted images inspired by those created by her collaborators, including her father, Matís de Arteaga, Murillo, and Simón de Pineda y Herrera el Mozo. Although Luisa's contributions are based on the already famous narratives and images that were used to justify and popularize San Fernando's beatification, and thus were likely not original conceptions, her etchings feature both the glories and virtues of Fernando as a monarch, and his heroism and holiness as this festival saw his transition to sainthood (Fig. 6, 7, 8).<sup>25</sup>

Antonio García Baeza offers a formal analysis of the content addressed in Figures 6 and 7. Figure 6 includes Luisa's artistic interpretation of 6 of the 24 hieroglyphs that were incorporated in the design of the accompanying altarpiece, a nod to the interdisciplinary, collaborative nature of the commission. These hieroglyphs were meant to address the heroic character of Fernando (top left to bottom right);

Inside of a laurel wreath and under the crown of a bucranium there are: a lion, crowned who treads on a dragon, whom he has just defeated, and embraces a lamb; the arm of God with a Roman scale where the sword and the crown are weighed, and an angel who offers the monarch the sword Lobera while pointing to the profile of Seville; the Giralda beaten by the winds but secured by a chain with links of laurel wreaths; King David receiving the sword from the priest Achimelech; and a galley with the sword and the crown at the stern, and with the sail inflated thanks to the winds that the anagram of María expires.<sup>26</sup>

The images treated in both plates of Figure 7 were echoed in the design of the flying buttresses in the Seville Cathedral. These illustrations focused more heavily on Fernando's holiness, acknowledging his ascension from secular to divine figure (top left to bottom right);

The royal crown within the crown of thorns; a Muslim ship capsizing in front of the Torre del Oro (a landmark characteristic of Seville); a flaming sword that guides a Muslim soldier towards the Catholic faith; the river Guadalquivir crowned with sedges raising the crown to the sky; a crowned ship helped by the wind so as not to envest with the bridge of boats; the sun of the horizon removing the darkness over the mountains while the crown shines in the center; a victory with an anchor (sign of Clement X) and the palm of martyrdom; a lion, a bull, a wolf and a sheep coexisting patiently.<sup>27</sup>

Because the original document, Fernando de la Torre Farfán's *Fiestas de la Santa Iglesia...* is written in an Early Modern Andalucian dialect that I could not translate, I relied heavily on Baeza's Spanish translation and interpretation of these engravings. However, Baeza excludes plates 9-12 (Fig. 8) from his analysis. Because of their placement between the two sets of plates featured in Figure 7, we can infer that plates 9-12 also focus on Fernando's divinity. This is supported by the incorporation of the famed *giralda*, or bell tower, of Seville's cathedral in plate 11, the union of two swords and crowns in plates 12 and 13, which could signify Fernando's identity among both secular and divine royalty.

As we have seen, it was extremely rare for women artists of Seville's workshops to sign their works – one of the reasons that so very few are known to us. Authorship was often attributed to whomever signed the contracts for the works, a task usually performed by the male head of the workshop.<sup>28</sup> With this in mind, Luisa de Valdés's autograph engravings deserve

particular consideration (Fig. 6, 7, 8). Luisa's signature on the prints, as Baeza points out, may suggest an attempt to separate herself from the anonymity of her father's workshop, especially as she chose to autograph her works as "Luisa de Morales", utilizing her mother's more discreet maiden name, rather than as "Luisa de Valdés".<sup>29</sup> This effort was somewhat successful, as the Spanish historian Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez, did not recognize her as a member of Juan de Valdés Leal's workshop in his popular *Diccionario histórico de los más ilustres profesores de las Bellas Artes en España* (1800).<sup>30</sup> Baeza also points out that exposure from the mass distribution of these prints would have situated any artist for a prolific career.<sup>31</sup> This consideration, as well as her attempt to professionally identify as "Luisa de Morales," positioned Luisa well for her next step: marrying and leaving the family workshop.<sup>32</sup>

A similar attempt to distinguish herself from her father's artistic identity also marked the career of Luisa Roldán, although more successfully, despite initial attempts by her father to prohibit the match.<sup>33</sup> Marriage enabled artists to leave the family home and workshop, and in Roldán's case, thus began a prolific career with her husband Luis de los Arcos and his brother, the polychromer Tomás de los Arcos.<sup>34</sup> Luisa de Valdés, too, presumably collaborated as a polychromer with her husband, the relatively well-known sculptor Felipe Martínez.<sup>35</sup> Baeza's suggestion that Luisa de Valdés followed in the footsteps of Luisa Roldán in seeking independence from her father's workshop is quite sound.<sup>36</sup> Considering the close relationship between their fathers (Juan de Valdés Leal was godfather to Isabel Roldán, Luisa Roldán's sister) and the frequent collaboration of their workshops, it is safe to infer that Luisa de Valdés would have been acutely aware of Luisa Roldán's separation from her father's workshop through marriage the year prior, and was quick to attempt a similar move after laying the professional groundwork via her work- and signature- on the prints for the beatification of San Fernando.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike Luisa Roldán, however, Luisa de Valdés's marriage ended after only three years. At that point de Valdés received an annulment and returned to the family home, once again disappearing into the obscurity of her father's workshop. According to Baeza, she discreetly created work from her home after her father's death.<sup>38</sup> Her echoed, and ultimately failed, grasp for independence reflects one of the primary limitations faced by many women artists of Seville's workshops, and further explicates the degree to which Luisa Roldán, who successfully separated herself from her father's studio and went on to establish her own lucrative career, should be considered the exception rather than the rule.

### Artist as Spiritual Medium

Another moment of intersection between the careers of Luisa de Valdés and Luisa Roldán addresses an important issue to understanding the contemporary reception of women artists in Spain, especially in Seville: the attribution of artistic talent to divine intervention. While the trope of the "divinely inspired artist" can be found in the tradition of men artists, first established by St. Luke's anachronistic depiction of the Virgin and Child from life (Fig. 19) and perpetuated by many artists of Early Modern Europe such as the Michelangelo, this title was a supplemental decoration for a man artist's reputation rather than a qualifier, as it was for a woman artist.<sup>39</sup> Both Gardonio-Foat and Nancarrow have argued that the trope of divine intervention as an explanation of female artistic ability was a popular one in Early Modern Spain, but it holds particular resonance in considering the career of Luisa de Valdés.<sup>40</sup> As was noted in Chapter One, the idea that female artistic achievement was necessarily divinely inspired was supported by the contemporary notions of women's intellectual inferiority, especially in comparison to men's creative and intellectual superiority. I believe that Frederika Jacobs best expresses this complex dynamic as it relates to divine intervention when she notes:

Although speaking of the author rather than the artist, Shakespeare perhaps captures best the essence of the relationship when, in *The Winter's Tale* (II.iii) he wittily compares the actions of a love-making couple to the movement of a printing press. Rhythmic up and down motion aside, the process whereby the blank page receives the impression of a male-authored text is not unlike that which enables male form to be impressed on female matter.<sup>41</sup>

This analogy of women as a “blank page” or “canvas” illustrates the popular notion of the time period that women’s intellectual and creative emptiness positioned them as optimal vehicles by which to receive messages from God.

This ideation manifests in Antonio Palomino’s famed review of Luisa Roldán’s final sculpture, and arguably her “obra maestra”: *El Nazareno* or *Jesus of Nazareth* (Fig. 18). In *El museo pictoro y escala óptica*, (1724) Palomino acknowledges Roldán as a professional sculptor and also addresses Sofonisba Anguissola, the Italian painter working at the Spanish court, as a “lady-in-waiting to the queen,” which was indeed her title at the Spanish court.<sup>42</sup> This recognition on the part of Palomino of Roldán’s titular status as artist (rather than lady-in-waiting-cum-artist) was a significant coup for Spain’s first female professional sculptor. However, he did not praise the artist on the basis of merit, rather on her ability to most accurately replicate God’s message. Palomino’s discussion of the work is colored by much more admiration and praise than his other reviews featured in the publication, but his praise is focused more toward the shockingly realistic elements of Roldán’s *Jesus* rather than celebrating the artist for her craft or artistic choices. Nancarrow affirms that this was Palomino’s intent, stating that “[women’s] empty minds were blank slates upon which God could record his truths, whereas the developed minds of men threatened to short-circuit his transmissions.”<sup>43</sup> In short, Palomino attributes the breathtaking final product to Roldán’s careful devotion to perfectly “recording God’s message” rather than the artist’s own hand. Although Luisa Roldán’s career was defined by many commissions and two court appointments, the attribution of one of her masterpieces to

divine intervention rather than her own inherent talent is revelatory of the limited scope with which the women artists of seventeenth-century Spain were regarded.

Although Luisa de Valdés extant body of work is far more limited than that of Luisa Roldán, similar language surrounds early discussions of her major commission: *San Fernando* (Fig. 9). As I previously mentioned, Luisa de Valdés and Pedro Roldán were able to fulfill this commission in a mere forty days, which was rather unheard of for a project of such size and detail, as well as for a polychromer of limited professional experience such as Luisa de Valdés.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the chronicler Diego Ortiz de Zúñiga (1636-1680) praised Luisa de Valdés for working so quickly, and ultimately explained her fulfillment of the truncated deadline via the trope of divine intervention. Her participation as polychromer of the sculpture is actually only revealed so as to document her completion of the sculpture as a “miracle”, and was recorded as testimony in support of the canonization of the saint, as he was only approved for beatification at the time.<sup>45</sup> Essentially, this event was considered a miracle because she, as a woman, was not believed capable of completing such a physically and artistically demanding task. Ironically, her fulfillment of this commission as a woman artist is the only reason that we know of her collaboration on the sculpture today, only because it was used to solidify the work as a miracle from God.

In addition to the contemporary reception of these sculptures by Roldán and Valdés, there are also supernatural moments associated with each commission that no doubt reinforced the contemporary notion of “divine intervention” when it came to women artists and their work. Luisa de Valdés’s completion of the statue, which Baeza identifies as a “spiritual outburst”, consisted of the artist falling ill, praying to the image of Fernando, and being miraculously healed.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, discussions of Luisa Roldán’s artistic process for *Jesus of Nazareth* are

colored reference to multiple emotional or spiritual moments, such as pious demonstrations and shedding tears during the artistic process. Nancarrow identifies these tears as the defining attribute of the Virgin, suggesting that Roldán chose to place herself in this tradition as a strategy for survival.<sup>47</sup> Although Roldán's sculpture was executed in Madrid rather than Seville, the consideration of the city as substantial to Roldán's artistic foundation reinforces the evaluation of Luisa de Valdés's experience, and establishes a pattern in Andalucía. While both women participated in this performative trope, this discussion marks another moment of divergence between their careers. Although Luisa Roldán's *Jesus of Nazareth* was attributed to God's hand rather than her own, and also marked the artist's death in 1706, the completion of this statue garnered her appointment as an academician of St. Luke in Rome; she was the first Spanish woman to achieve this.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, Luisa de Valdés's participation in this "clairvoyant" narrative did secure the documentation of her collaboration with Pedro Roldán, but she was never able to progress past her father's workshop, and faded into obscurity in Seville.

These examples suggest that spiritual performance was an integral element of women artists being seriously considered in seventeenth-century Spain, and Luisa de Valdés's experience with *San Fernando* confirms that this was certainly the case in Seville as well. Again, while this consideration of "divinely inspired artist" can be found in the long tradition of men artists, the designation of divine inspiration more often served as a supplemental appellation to the male artist's reputation rather than a complete explanation, as it did for the women artists considered here.<sup>49</sup> Whether these spiritual encounters that defined the major works of Luisa Roldán and Luisa de Valdés were authentic, or artificial as many scholars suggest, it nevertheless proved to be an extra obstacle that women artists had to fulfill in order to participate in the artistic environment of Spain in any capacity, because during this time "divine intervention" was

the only explanation for their artistic achievements.<sup>50</sup> The acknowledgement of this layer, in addition to the consideration of their lack of artistic identity within their father's workshops, further emphasizes the lack of agency that was granted to the women artists of seventeenth-century Spain, and specifically Seville.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 33-51; Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” As I explained in the introduction, while these women artists have been discussed in studies by Ana Aranda Bernal and Casey Gardonio-Foat, they were addressed only as supplementary to a larger discussion of women artists throughout Early Modern Spain, or all of Iberia, or in isolation.

<sup>2</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 34: “they were born into their situation- Pedro made it possible for Luisa and Maria to gain access to their impeccable training.”

<sup>3</sup> Nancarrow, “Luisa Roldán’s ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’” 9; “Luisa Roldán (called “La Roldan”),” The J. Paul Getty Museum, accessed June 30, 2021, <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/3441/luisa-roldan-called-la-roldana-spanish-1652-1706/>.

<sup>4</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 241-256.

<sup>5</sup> Gardonio-Foat, “Daughters of Seville,” 137.

<sup>6</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 34. Bernal she provides a comprehensive list of the Spanish artists that employed their daughters in their workshops, but mentioned no others from Seville.

<sup>7</sup> “The number of existing works from women artists in Spain is much less than the number of documented women artists”; from Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 33.

<sup>8</sup> Nancarrow, “‘Jesus of Nazareth,’” 9: Nancarrow lists Roldán’s daughters as María and Isabel; Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 34: Bernal lists them as María and Francisca.

<sup>9</sup> Hall Van-Den Elsen, *Fuerza e Intimismo*, 38.

<sup>10</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés y la Devoción Fernandina,” 243.

<sup>11</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 33-51; Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” 135-163.

<sup>12</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 254.

<sup>13</sup> Dooley, “The *Academia*,” 142.

<sup>14</sup> Dooley, “The *Academia*,” 140-141; Bermúdez, *Diccionario*, 107.

<sup>15</sup> Kloek, “Guilds and the Open Market,” 29-30: In Antwerp, the most common way in which women became members of the guilds was as widows of guild members.

<sup>16</sup> Gardonio-Foat, “Daughters of Seville,” 23.

<sup>17</sup> Gardonio-Foat, “Daughters of Seville,” 23.

<sup>18</sup> Gardonio-Foat, “Daughters of Seville,” 23.

<sup>19</sup> Kloek, “Guilds and the Open Market,” 30.

<sup>20</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 33.

<sup>21</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 243.

<sup>22</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 246-249.

<sup>23</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 250-253: Valdés Leal permitted them to sign their work, even though they were not professionals, on account of Luisa’s “feminine condition” and because Lucas was only 11.

<sup>24</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 250.

<sup>25</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 250-253.

<sup>26</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 253.

<sup>27</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 251-252.

<sup>28</sup> Bernal, “Ser Mujer y Artista,” 34.

<sup>29</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 253.

<sup>30</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 253.

<sup>31</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 253.

<sup>32</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 253.

<sup>33</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 254.

<sup>34</sup> Hall-Van Den Elsen, *Fuerza e Intimismo*, 53.

<sup>35</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 254 (note 44).

<sup>36</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 254.

<sup>37</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 254; Bernal, “Ser Mujer,” 35.

<sup>38</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 254; Baeza suggests that Luisa de Valdés was paid for her discreet completion of a sculpture of Saint Joseph in 1698, which was attributed to her father’s workshop even after his death in 1690.

<sup>39</sup> Marsha Libina, “Divine Visions: Image-Making and Imagination in Pictures of Saint Luke Painting the Virgin,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 61 (2019): 240, 242.

<sup>40</sup> Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” 135- 163, 195-220; Nancarrow, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’

<sup>41</sup> Jacobs, “(Pro)creativity,” 37.

<sup>42</sup> Antonio Palomino de Castro y Velasco, *El museo pictórico y escala óptica*, III (Madrid: Aguilar, 1988), 498; quoted in Nancarrow “Luisa Roldán’s ‘Jesus of Nazareth’,” 14.

<sup>43</sup> Nancarrow, “‘Jesus of Nazareth’,” 12.

<sup>44</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 243.

<sup>45</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 248.

<sup>46</sup> Baeza, “Luisa de Valdés,” 248.

<sup>47</sup> Nancarrow, “‘Jesus of Nazareth’,” 13.

<sup>48</sup> Felipe Serrano Estrella, “State Gift or Strategy? La Roldana’s ‘Nazareno’,” *The Sculpture Journal* 22 no. 2 (2013): 95.

<sup>49</sup> Libina, “Divine Visions,” 240, 242.

<sup>50</sup> Nancarrow, “‘Jesus of Nazareth’,” 13; Gardonio-Foat, “Professional Women Artists,” 195.

## CHAPTER THREE: NUN ARTISTS

In this chapter, I consider another important group of women artists in the city of Seville, and the country as a whole: those working in convents. Focusing on María de la Concepción (1664-1730), daughter of Juan de Valdés Leal and sister to Luisa de Valdés, and María de la Santísima Trinidad (d. 1631) (see Appendix A), I argue that while the circumstances of workshop and convent artists differed in many respects, they were unified by the same expectation of women artists to forgo their individual artistic identity for the betterment of the institution of which they formed a part. Much like the workshop artist, the work of the convent artist of seventeenth-century Seville is largely unexplored – perhaps because it was rarely recorded – and was often simply attributed to their convent rather than the individual artist.<sup>1</sup> I argue, as well, that there is a strong connection between the two circumstances – that of the female artist in a family workshop and that of the convent artist- in the form of the “spiritual epiphany” as explanation for artistic accomplishment. While these two elements manifested differently for women in each context, the continuity is revelatory of the systemic issues that defined the general experience for women artists in Seville.

Because research on nun artists in Seville is limited compared to the extensive research in other parts of Europe, and there are no extant works from either of the Sevillian nun artists that I discuss in this chapter, this assessment is much more conceptual as opposed to being based in formal or historical analysis of specific, extant objects. Nevertheless, I do believe that this assessment offers a valuable study of this second group of women artists in seventeenth-century

Seville, and helps to solidify the systemic issues that colored the lives of women artists in the city.

### The Conventual Context

The study of nuns as artists is relatively new to the art historical canon. As Ann Roberts (1998) notes the first professionally written history of nuns did not appear until 1996, and the depth and breadth of this study did not allow for the assessment of nuns as artists. As was previously stated, this limited research is due in large part to the lack of documentation of specific convent artists – however, great strides have been made in recent decades to construct a comprehensive understanding of the lives of convent artists throughout history. In recent years, women have been considered in the late medieval context as patrons, makers, and subjects of religious art. Roberts even suggests that the study of religious women in the medieval period has offered a great deal of insight into secular women of the medieval period – although convent artists were not well-documented, nuns in general were expected to keep detailed chronicles of their lives, which have provided a great deal of contextual information for contemporary scholars.<sup>2</sup>

Much like the country's secular women artists, the convent artists of Italy have been extensively studied. Suor Plautilla Nelli (1524-1588), for example, is the first Florentine woman artist from whom a significant body of work survives, and one of the first European women artists we can identify with extant religious paintings on a large scale. In fact, in Vasari's *Vite* (1568) he discussed her works more than those of any other female artist.<sup>3</sup> Although Suor Plautilla Nelli is not Spanish-born, the research dedicated to her provides a strong contextual foundation to support the investigation of the convent artists of Seville.

In the Middle Ages, convents served as popular centers of learning throughout Europe, and offered educated women the opportunity to hone their artistic skill during a time when their only other option to do this would have been in their home alongside their artist father or husband. Over the next centuries, the development of the printing press saw a decline in manuscript illumination and an increase in large-scale painting within convents. As we saw with the contemporary notions of women's intellectual inferiority in Early Modern Spain, the Counter-Reformation greatly explicated the country's Catholic identity.<sup>4</sup>

As Mary Elizabeth Perry explains, the two most acceptable avenues for women in Early Modern Seville to pursue were marriage or religion.<sup>5</sup> This Counter-Reformation also saw a multiplication of convents in Catholic Spain, especially Seville; twenty-eight convents were founded in the city and survived well into the seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup> Many convents of Seville obeyed the Tridentine directive to enforce cloistering of all female religious orders. Although they were under the direction of male confessors, nuns within these strictly enclosed convent walls were able to cultivate their own distinct subculture defined by community and commitment to their religious duties.<sup>7</sup> While Perry claims that this was empowering for many of the convent members, evidence suggests that this was not the case for María de la Santísima Trinidad, one of the two conventional artists considered here.<sup>8</sup>

The only documented convent artists that I discuss in this chapter are María de la Concepción (b. 1664), daughter of Juan de Valdés Leal and sister to Luisa de Valdés, and María de la Santísima Trinidad (d. 1631) although I focus primarily on the latter. Despite the prolific reputation of her father and the limited but fruitful documentation of her sister, very little is known about the life and work of María de la Concepción. María was raised in her father's workshop, alongside her sister Luisa, who was discussed in the previous chapter, and her brother

Lucas, who went on to lead the *Academia de Bellas Artes* in his father's footsteps.<sup>9</sup> Instead of continuing a commercial artistic career like her sister and brother, María entered the Cisterian order of the Convent of San Clemente el Real.<sup>10</sup> The artist biographer Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez (1800) stated that she was a talented painter, and that she “executed works in miniature well and portraits with ease and accuracy.”<sup>11</sup>

María de la Santísima Trinidad’s upbringing presumably differed greatly from that of María de la Concepción. Mindy Nancarrow employed the nun artist’s 1631 confessional to Matheo de Villarroel in her own research, which details the nun’s experience living and working as an artist in a Mercedarian monastery in Seville in the early seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup> This documentation offers a firsthand account of the artist’s experience, which is invaluable to my own assessment of María de la Santísima Trinidad. While her life dates and circumstances of her artistic training are unknown at present, Nancarrow places the nun’s entry into the Mercedarian order in 1630, and her death to sometime in 1631.<sup>13</sup> In Spain during this time, convents required a substantial dowry payment in exchange for entry: this payment from each admittee was the main source of income for the convent. However, convents sometimes waived the dowry entry to women who exhibited musical or artistic talent, which would ultimately benefit their institution.<sup>14</sup> Nancarrow explains that this practice offered advantages to both the convent and the artist, in that the individual was able to exercise their talents and abilities in the name of their religion and the community was able to abstain from spending money on a professional artist and inviting an outsider into their environment.<sup>15</sup> Working within this context, María de la Santísima Trinidad initially entered her convent in 1630 as servant to an elderly nun, but she was quickly promoted once the nuns took note of her sculpting skills, which she may have learned from a relative who belonged to one of the workshops in Seville.<sup>16</sup>

### The Obligated Artist and Lack of Artistic Identity

Although we have no extant works from either María de la Concepción or María de la Santísima Trinidad (See Appendix A), enough has been established regarding each of their careers to offer an interesting comparative analysis, as they operated from two different spectrums of the “nun artist” title: the artist who created for “pleasure”, or was motivated by pure devotion, and the artist who created out of obligation, respectively. In reality, Nancarrow argues, her distinction of the “obligated artist” incited a further degree of marginalization for María de la Santísima Trinidad.<sup>17</sup> The distinction between these two types is very important to a developed consideration of the convent artist experience. The “unobligated” artists, those who entered the convent by way of a dowry payment, including Leal’s daughter María de la Concepción, maintained control over their artistic production, and they were free to practice their art when they were not fulfilling their conventional obligations. Contrastingly, the “obligated” artists, such as María de la Santísima Trinidad, relinquished their artistic production and intellectual property in exchange for their entry into the convent. Any work that was produced during their time at the convent no longer belonged to them, but to their religious community.<sup>18</sup>

This distinction within a subsect of the population of women artists in seventeenth-century Seville is symbolic of the two elements that I have employed to analyze their experience. The first group of artists, which can be represented by María de la Concepción in Seville, had full artistic liberties and were able to freely develop their own artistic identities as well.<sup>19</sup> We can deduce that María de la Concepción belonged to this group as her father, one of the most celebrated artists of seventeenth-century Seville, accepted a new contract with her convent in 1680 after she had already entered.<sup>20</sup> Because none of the artist’s works are extant, we cannot determine the nature of them; whether they were religious or not, the amount of time that she

freely devoted to her artistry, etc. Contrastingly, María de la Santísima Trinidad had little to no artistic agency as an obligated artist.<sup>21</sup> In 1630, she was accepted into the Mercedarian order of Seville on the condition that she “make devotional sculptures from plaster.”<sup>22</sup> In this respect, her experience closely parallels that of the workshop artists, especially in terms of the expectation to relinquish their individual artistic identity for the proliferation of their institution, and this idea of “communal labor”. Although these artists were working in different environments, this preliminary foundation indicates that they shared an important experience. In the end though, we can identify no known works by either convent artist.

Although the concept of communal identity over the individual identity unifies our consideration of both the workshop and convent artists, I do feel the need to distinguish the motivations behind each. As was discussed in the prior chapters, the daughters of Leal and Roldán were expected to join their family workshops, thereby contributing to the proliferation of their father’s career and reputation, and by extension, their familial livelihood. In terms of the convent artists, the psychological foundation for this reasoning was more complex. Nancarrow discusses this in an article detailing the isolated lives of convent artists in Early Modern Spain (2000), detailing the idea that the once an individual entered this religious community, they became an integral part of a collective, joined in a shared life with Christ, rather than an individual.<sup>23</sup> Essentially, when a convent artist created art, this was not an expression of her individual faith, but the faith of the entire convent. She was no longer an individual, and not only a part of a cohesive whole, but responsible for expressing the religious sentiment of this cohesive whole. This is reflective of the general nature of convents, and religious institutions in general, throughout Europe; renouncing earthly belongings and relationships, even identifying as sisters within the same divine family. Where the women artists in their familial workshops were

contributing to works that reflected the artistry of their father or husband, convent artists were producing works that reflected their entire institution's sentiment towards their heavenly father. The communal, collective mentality was a huge draw for many participants, especially those who were leaving very little behind in the secular world, as was likely the case María de la Santísima Trinidad.<sup>24</sup> However, this inclusive, familial environment was not María de Santísima Trinidad's experience; in fact, it was quite the opposite. Her negative experience there greatly affected her artistic process, and Nancarrow suggests, may have hastened her death.

Although the convents seemingly advertised an equal and balanced existence within their community, a rigid status structure defined much of María de la Santísima Trinidad's experience. This included, in descending order, choir nuns, lay sisters, servants, and slaves. Although María de la Santísima Trinidad served as a choir nun, her role as an obligatory artist demoted her to the "lay sister" level.<sup>25</sup> One of the primary distinctions of María de la Santísima Trinidad's career as an "obligated artist" was the discrimination that she faced because of it. Recalling the institutional changes that were underway throughout sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe, the discussion of the "manual" and "liberal" arts were at the forefront of many artistic circles, and those of Seville were no exception.<sup>26</sup> In the case of María de la Santísima Trinidad and her sculptures, this discussion was further explicated by the infusion of the "obligated" element, and the consideration that her actions were encouraged by something other than her love of God. In the eyes of their religious community, the nuns who produced art of their own volition were motivated by their love of God, which elevated their status within the community. Contrastingly, the nuns who produced art in response to an external force, such as their obligation to the community, were looked down upon or even scorned for their base manual activity.<sup>27</sup> This prejudice towards the obligated convent artists is representative of one of the largest issues of the

convent system. Why would these institutions essentially commission these women to complete works that they need only for them to be ridiculed and ostracized for their contributions to the convent? This trope represents an extension of one of my primary considerations, the subversion of an individual artistic identity for the proliferation of the institution.

However, where this expectation was positively accepted and reinforced in the workshop environment, María de la Santísima Trinidad's identity as an “obligated artist”, Nancarrow maintains, exposed her to much ridicule and alienation. This was due in large part to the fact that many nuns who required an obligatory position came from destitution or a “lower class”, and their acceptance of this job thereby confirmed their inferiority to their fellow nuns.<sup>28</sup> While the women of Seville's workshops were clearly working within their own marginalized system, it seems as though the “obligated artist” of Seville's convents was even more limited in her artistic abilities and choice of subject matter, and this can mainly be attributed to her responsibility to represent the whole community with her art, or her subversion of her individual artistic identity for the proliferation of the convent as a whole. The role of the “obligated artist” appears in theory to be an honor for a woman of seventeenth-century Seville; to devote your life to your religion, to create art to satisfy your debt, and ultimately, to represent your community. However, in the case of María de la Santísima Trinidad, one might posit that the “communal” aspect did not serve her artistic production or her quality of life.

### The Obligated Artist and Divine Intervention

Much like the women workshop artist, our limited understanding of the experiences of the convent artist is colored by the infusion of references to “divine intervention”, especially in terms of their artistic process. As one might imagine, this attribution of artistic production to divine force was much more intense in the conventional context than in the workshop, as the work

had a much more specific religious motivation. However, where the “spiritual outbursts” of Luisa de Valdés and Luisa Roldán solidified them as vehicles for God’s divine artistry, María de la Santísima Trinidad’s experience was much more sinister. Nancarrow poignantly states that the nun, along with her “obligatory artist” contemporaries, entered history as “visionaries rather than artists” because of the harsh subjugation and ridicule they faced from their fellow nuns, and the psychotic episodes that resulted from this.<sup>29</sup> In fact, María de la Santísima Trinidad’s oeuvre, completed for a monetary rather than spiritual reward, was viewed by her fellow nuns as the “work of the devil”.<sup>30</sup> While Luisa de Valdés and Luisa Roldán reportedly both experienced spiritual outbursts during their artistic processes, these ultimately contributed to the completion of their respective masterpieces. Those of María de la Santísima Trinidad, recorded in history by her confessor, Matheo de Villarroel in the year of her death, tell a much darker and inhibiting tale. The harsh ridicule she faced from her fellow nuns, which manifested in forms such as detachment, harsh words, and ultimately alienation, quickly led María to these spiritual outbursts, and frequent visits from “demons”, who wreaked havoc upon her workshop and her artistic process.<sup>31</sup> These “outbursts” for de la Santísima Trinidad were often characterized by the juxtaposition of Jesus Christ and demons. The confessor noted:

Christ showed himself to her in visions when she was fulfilling her novitiate, telling her that he wanted her for himself. But later, devils humiliated her in her workshop, declaring that she was mistaken if she thought her art would earn her a place in that convent.<sup>32</sup>

In such an intensely religious environment, it comes as no surprise that María de la Santísima Trinidad’s psychosis might manifest in such a way; this experience is also laying the foundation for placing her in the tradition of other “divinely touched” women artists and even saints, such as Teresa de Avila (1515-1582).<sup>33</sup> While her time at the Mercedarian convent was marked by isolation and ridicule, María de la Santísima Trinidad gained the favor of her fellow

nuns by attracting attention (and external support) to the convent in 1630, a year that marked economic hardship and famine in Spain that ultimately led to the closure of many religious institutions. While the details of her death are illusive, it appears as though she fell ill after receiving the stigmata; in April 1630, her confessor reports, María de la Santísima Trinidad sustained bleeding wounds in her feet and chest, and lay on a cot “face up, with eyes shut, her teeth firmly closed, and her lips apart, one foot above the other, the left foot above the right, with her arms extended on the bed and quite stiff.”<sup>34</sup> According to her fellow nuns, she had not wounded herself with any sharp instruments nor employed anyone else to do it for her.<sup>35</sup> She received the privilege of the stigmata, and her fellow nuns testified that she “merited the divine favor of the stigmata by her many virtues.”<sup>36</sup> Much like the artists of the seventeenth-century Sevillian workshops, this event brought hope to a struggling community, and helped to boost morale in a particularly trying time.

Although we do have extant works from the artist Luisa de Valdés, such as her polychromed work on the *San Fernando* sculpture, as I discussed in the previous chapter, we would not know of her participation in this sculpture today if it had not been for her “spiritual outburst” in the completion process, as well as her supposed incapability to fulfill such a daunting task as a “woman artist”. I cannot help considering this in relation to María de la Santísima Trinidad, who, as Nancarrow so aptly noted, “entered into recorded history as a visionary, not an artist.”<sup>37</sup> The implication of “divine intervention” by way of a “spiritual outburst”, in both the workshop and conventional context, is revelatory of the negative sentiment towards women’s artistic education and creative development in seventeenth-century Seville. Although we do not have any extant works from convent artists such as María de la Concepción and María de la Santísima Trinidad, I believe that this merely serves to support this claim rather

than hinder our exploration of it. Their artistic production, especially that of María de la Santísima Trinidad as an obligated artist, was immediately subsumed by their convent upon completion.<sup>38</sup> It is clear that like the workshop system, the women artists of the convent system were given no artistic voice or agency. Given the documentation habits of each system, it is quite fortunate that the few documented women artists of seventeenth-century Seville are even known today. As each of these fields grow, I hope that we are able to shed light on many more women artists.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ann Roberts, Review of *Encyclopedia of Women in Religious Art* by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona; *Boccaccio’s ‘Des cleres et nobles femmes’: Systems of Signification in an Illuminated Manuscript* by Brigitte Buettner; *Nuns as Artists: the Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* by Jeffrey F. Hamburger; *Women, art and Spirituality: The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* by Jeryldene M. Wood, *The Art Bulletin* 80, No. 1, Mar. 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Nelson, “Suor Plautilla Nelli,” Oxford Grove Art Online, accessed June 30, 2021, <https://www-oxfordartonline-com.libdata.lib.ua.edu/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000061625?rskey=HAR4pm&result=1>.

<sup>4</sup> Mindy Nancarrow Taggard, “Cecilia and María Sobrino: Spain’s Golden-Age Painter-Nuns,” *Women’s Art Journal* 6, no. 2 (Autumn 1985- Winter 1986), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Nancarrow, “Cecilia and María,” 15; Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 75.

<sup>7</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 75 & 78.

<sup>8</sup> Perry, *Gender and Disorder*, 75.

<sup>9</sup> Dooley, “The Academia,” 140.

<sup>10</sup> Bermúdez, *Diccionario*, 107.

<sup>11</sup> Bermúdez, *Diccionario* Vol. 5, 107.

<sup>12</sup> Villarroel, *Vida*, Fols. 56-71.

<sup>13</sup> Nancarrow, “Artistic Activity,” 45. The author notes “I consulted the 1701 copy of her life made from the original dictated to her confessor in 1631, when she was too ill to write,” Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 38.

<sup>14</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 25.

<sup>15</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 25; this very scenario is exhibited by Juan de Valdés Leal’s involvement with his daughter’s institution, the Convent of San Clemente el Real.

<sup>16</sup> Nancarrow “Art and Alienation,” 26; she cites page 60 of Villarroel’s recorded confession from María de la Santísima Trinidad.

<sup>17</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 45.

<sup>18</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 45.

<sup>19</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 45.

<sup>20</sup> Dooley, “The *Academia*,” 143.

<sup>21</sup> “Among these obligated artists- whose number is difficult to determine because their communities assumed their labor and, thus, did not record it,” Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 45.

<sup>22</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 45.

<sup>23</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation.”

<sup>24</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 45; there Nancarrow describes Maria as “destitute.”

<sup>25</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 27.

<sup>26</sup> Hellwig, “The *Paragone*,” 271-281.

<sup>27</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 46.

<sup>28</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 28.

<sup>29</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 49.

<sup>30</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 46.

<sup>31</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 29.

<sup>32</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 47: She cites pages 61 and 69 of Villaroel’s recorded confession from María de la Santísima Trinidad.

<sup>33</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 49.

<sup>34</sup> *Vida, virtudes, y Milagros de varias religiosas de la Orden de la Merced*, MS. 2714, (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional), Fol. 29.

<sup>35</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 37.

<sup>36</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 48-49.

<sup>37</sup> Nancarrow, “The Artistic Activity,” 49.

<sup>38</sup> Nancarrow, “Art and Alienation,” 24.

## CONCLUSION

Although the workshop and convent artists of seventeenth-century Seville differ greatly in many respects, assessing them through these two common lenses reveals much about the limiting environment that this city cultivated for its women artists. Although María de la Santísima Trinidad was labeled as an “obligated artist”, it is plain to see that each of these women artists were working under some form of obligation. The workshop artists were often contributing to their father’s artistic reputation, and in turn their family’s livelihood. The convent artists, even the “leisure artists” such as María de la Concepción, were obligated to complete religious works as a form of their own spiritual development. And of course, each of these women artists’ experiences is defined by a divine intervention of some kind, as the contemporary notions of women’s intellectual and creative inferiority barred any other explanation for their artistic accomplishments.

Through my treatment of the women artists of Early Modern Seville, I believe that my assessment of their lives, works, and the environment in which they lived, as well as my construction of the Appendix, offers a great deal to our contemporary understanding of their experience. Going forward, this area of study could benefit greatly from an extensive study of the archives in Seville. Based on my research, I believe that there are likely many more women artists preserved within these documents. Much like the case in which contextual information regarding the secular women of the Medieval period was gleaned from the study of nuns during this time period, and Mary Elizabeth Perry’s methodology of reading against the grain in

archival sources, I believe that a thorough treatment of the general archives regarding women in Early Modern Seville would reveal a great deal more about the women artists living during this time period.<sup>1</sup> A few additional areas of need include the role of women in Seville's guild system, and a further treatment of the confessions or chronicles of other Sevillian nun artists. As the stories and works of more women artists are unearthed with time, I hope that we can establish more commonalities between the women artists of seventeenth-century Seville and beyond, and cultivate a deeper understanding of their experience during this time period.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Elizabeth Perry, "Finding Fatima, a Slave woman of Early Modern Spain," in *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010): 3-19; Perry uses judicial documentation of the slave Fatima to infer important information about the experiences of women in Early Modern Seville.

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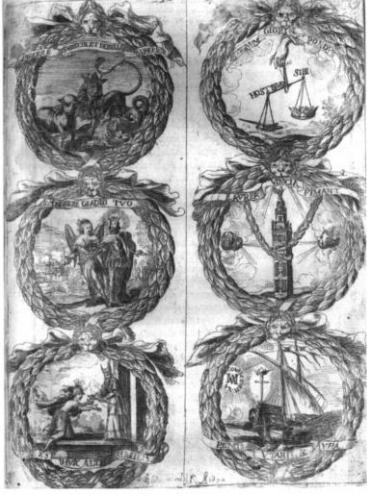
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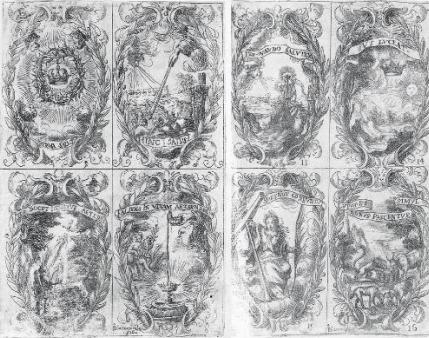
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## APPENDIX A

Artist Name	Life Dates	Works	Images (if available)	Location	Date	Primary Source
Luisa de Valdés (polychromer)	b. 1654	<i>San Fernando</i>		Catedral de Seville	1671	-Juan Agustín Cean Bermudez: <i>Diccionario</i> Vol. 2, pg 107. Identified as "Luisa Morales", Bermudez was not aware that she was the daughter of Juan de Valdés Leal.
Luisa de Valdés (engraver)		Emblems in Fernando de la Torre Farfán's <i>Fiestas de la Santa Iglesia metropolitana y patriarchal de Sevilla al Nuevo culto del Rey San Fernando</i>		Hispanic Society of America, New York	1671	- <i>El doctor Cristóbal de Urbaneja de cuento del milagro de la curación de Luisa de Valdés</i> . This document confirmed the miracle of Luisa's spiritual outburst, and thereby her divine completion of <i>San Fernando</i> .

Luisa de Valdés (engraver)		<i>Glorias y virtudes de Fernando III,</i> Plates 8 & 16		Hispanic Society of America, New York	1671	
Luisa de Valdés (engraver)		Emblems in Fernando de la Torre Farfán's <i>Fiestas de la Santa Iglesia metropolitan y patriarchal de Sevilla al Nuevo culto del Rey San Fernando.</i>		Hispanic Society of America, New York	1671	
María de la Concepción	1664-1730	Paintings, most likely miniature portraits (not extant)	No surviving works known			Juan Agustín Cean Bermudez: <i>Diccionario</i> Vol. 5 p. 115: Described as “daughter and disciple of Juan de Valdes Leal”, Commended for “painting well with oil and miniatures, and executing portraits with ease

						and accuracy.
María de la Encarnación	Remarried in 1650	Retablo of Seville's College of San Basilio Magno Torres	No surviving works known	Colegio de San Basilio Magno Torres, Seville	1650	Archivo Histórico Provincial de Seville, Sección Protocolos Notoriales, legajo 548, f. 433.
María de la Santísima Trinidad	d. 1631	Religious sculpture (not extant)	No surviving works known		c. 1630	Matheo de Villarroel, <i>Vida de Soror María de la Santíssima Trinidad</i>
Francisca Roldán	b. 1650	Responsible for painting the flesh and faces of sculptural figures in her father's workshop	No surviving works known	N/A	N/A	N/A
María Roldán	b. 1654	Various sculpture	No surviving works known	N/A	N/A	N/A

## FIGURES



Figure 1: *Education of the Virgin*, Luisa Roldán, The Suida-Manning Collection, Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, 1689-1706.



Figure 2: *Self-Portrait*, Sofonisba Anguissola, Lancut Museum, Poland, 1556.



Figure 3: *Still Life with Sweets*, Josefa de Óbidos, Municipal Library, Santarém, 1679.



Figure 4: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Museo del Prado, Madrid, 1655.



Figure 5: *The Education of the Virgin*, Luisa Roldán, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, early 1680s.

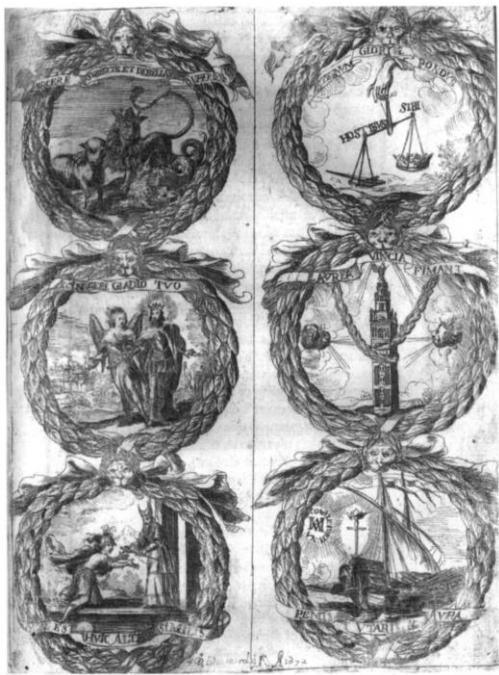


Figure 6: Emblems in Fernando de la Torre Farfán's *Fiestas de la Santa Iglesia metropolitan y patriarchal de Sevilla al Nuevo culto del Rey San Fernando*, Luisa de Valdés, Hispanic Society of America, New York, 1671.



Figure 7: *Glorias y virtudes de Fernando III*, Plates 8 & 16, Luisa de Valdés, Hispanic Society of America, New York, 1671.



Figure 8: Emblems in Fernando de la Torre Farfán's *Fiestas de la Santa Iglesia metropolitan y patriarchal de Sevilla al Nuevo culto del Rey San Fernando*, Luisa de Valdés, Hispanic Society of America, New York, 1671.



Figure 9: *San Fernando*, Pedro Roldán (sculptor), Luisa de Valdés (polychromer), Catedral de Sevilla, 1671.



Figure 10: *Girl with Fruit and Flowers*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, oil on canvas, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, 1665-1660.

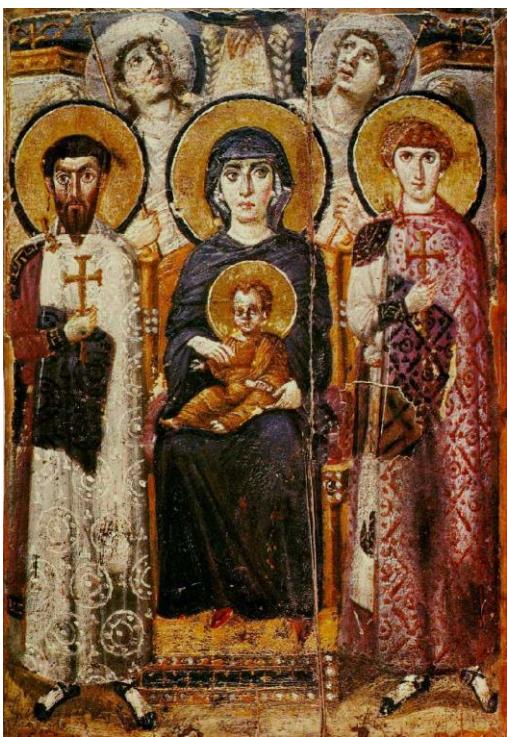


Figure 11: *Virgin (Theotokos) and Child between Saints Theodore and George*, encaustic on wood, Mt. Sinai, Egypt, Sixth or early seventh century C.E.



Figure 12: *Sanctae Mariae Coronavi*, Giacomo di Mino, 1340-1350



Figure 13: *Mater Dolorosa*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid, 1660-1670.



Figure 14: *The Flower Girl*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, oil on canvas, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, 1665-70.



Figure 15: *The Immaculate Conception*, Juan de Valdés Leal, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid, 1682.



Figure 16: *His Palis*, from *Fiestas de la S. Iglesia Metropolitana, y Patriarcal de Sevilla, al nuevo culto del Señor Rey S. Fernando el Tercero de Castilla y de León*, Lucas de Valdés, etching, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, 1672.



Figure 17: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read*, Juan de Roelas, oil on canvas, Museo de Bellas Artes, Sevilla, 1610-15.



Figure 18: *Jesus of Nazareth*, Luisa Roldán, polychrome wood with cloth, Convent of Poor Clares, Sisante, Spain, 1697-1701.



Figure 19: *Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin*, Rogier van der Wyden, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1435-1440.