

# **Itinerary**

Women and power at the Prado Museum

## Introduction

The strengthening of royal power and the increase of international relationships in Modern Europe cannot be separated from a major boost to art. Beyond its aesthetics function, art was a political tool for monarchies to become present, give a controlled image of themselves in public spaces and to leave a personal and familiar memory. Therefore, the portrait acquired great impulse. Communication difficulties brought about by distance among European Courts favored its expansion as they were the only means to be able to follow the image of absent family members as well as their descendants. Today we are able to put a face to figures remembered by historiography; as well as rescue, through research, women who were present in political events but have been forgotten.

In this itinerary about Women and power at the Prado Museum, we shall use portraits as stepping stones to recover the political leading role of Royal Houses' women in the government of the kingdoms of Spain and the international politics, as well as the one held by some women of noble elites pursuing the conquest of their rights. Through them, we shall make clear some limits drawn by the laws and the vital problems they shared, as women, with the women of their generation, who we shouldn't forget as active subjects in the relationship power-society.

Some of these women had an important role as collectors, patrons of the arts and promoters of royal collections, thus associating them in a very significant way to this Prado Museum. This itinerary is a humble but heartfelt tribute.

The Prado Museum and the Institute for Feminist Research of the Complutense University of Madrid have collaborated in the preparation of this itinerary and hope you enjoy your visit to the Museum.

## The Virgin of the Catholic Kings. Master of the Virgin of the Catholic Kings. Room 51A.

We start the itinerary with Isabel I de Castilla, who was born in 1451 and died in 1504; it is no doubt one of the most recognized and valued figures in the History of Spain. The painting The Virgin of the Catholic Kings connects us with some characteristics of her reign: the close collaboration with her husband Fernando de Aragón in tasks related to governing and the role not only of the Church but religion as well in Castilian Monarchy international and domestic politics; also with her role as a collector of art.

Isabel, daughter of Juan II of Castilla and Isabel of Portugal, proclaimed herself queen of Castilla in Segovia upon her brother's death, Enrique IV, in 1474. Six years before, in 1468, Enrique had acknowledged her as princess of Asturias and heir, but afterwards he went back on his word and appointed his daughter Juana, when he found out about Isabel's wedding to Fernando de Aragón, celebrated without his consent in 1469. Isabel broke with the policy of assigning rights to the throne to spouses or sons that other Castilla and Leon princesses had followed during the Middle Ages.

The reign was characterized by the mutual collaboration and support with her husband in international politics: Fernando supported Isabel in the War of Spanish Succession against Lady Juana and the conquest of the kingdom of Granada; Isabel supported Fernando in his Mediterranean Politics. The marriages of their son and daughters were planned bearing in mind both kingdoms international projects.

Notwithstanding common policies that could be fostered, Isabel always had a clear concept about both kingdoms independence. The monopoly granted to Castilla on the lands and commerce with America, the boundaries between the kingdoms or the appointment of officials among the ones who were born in the kingdom attest this fact.

Queen during thirty years, from 1474 to 1504, she encouraged enterprises of great complexity as well as strengthening the real power in Castilla facing up to nobility,



## The Virgin of the Catholic Kings. Master of the Virgin of the Catholic Kings. Room 51A.

Church and cities, to which she asserted her authority by several institutional ways. She extended the land boundaries of the kingdom by incorporating the Canary Islands, the conquest of the kingdom of Granada and the support to Colón's Atlantic project, which broadened the European perspective and placed Castilla at a dominant position in Europe. The shadows of her reign are mainly associated to religious intolerance. As from 1492 the Jewish and Muslim population was forced to choose between emigrating or converting to Catholicism and conversion was no guarantee of egalitarian treatment.

Her political wisdom had other projections: she fostered organizations governing domestic and overseas commerce, she protected the Castilian industry and promoted community services that made clear the royal action in fields that had been foreign up to then; she understood the importance of Latin as a language of knowledge and power, and therefore hired Beatriz Galindo to teach it to her daughters, but she also supported the Castilian Grammar of Antonio Nebrija, enhancing this language and favoring its expansion.

She never resigned the government action and to be seen as such, in peace as well as in war, which was significantly reflected not only in her iconography but in her legacy as well.

To end, we invite you to focus on the position of the members of the royal house in the painting: Fernando and the prince Juan on the right side can be seen as a reflex of masculine supremacy, but the size of the queen seems to try to compensate this reading. Anyway, the frequency of this gender division in the depiction of family groups – which you shall encounter in other paintings in the Museum – connects us to the association of men and women to really different social rights and duties.



## Catalina of Austria, wife of Juan III of Portugal. Antonio Moro. Room 56.

Antonio Moro is one of the great portraitists of the Flemish renaissance, for his ability to grasp the deep temperament of his characters among other reasons. His portrait of Catalina of Austria, Queen of Portugal, could be no exception. At forty-five years of age, her pose reveals authority and strength.

Catalina, born in 1507, was the posthumous daughter of Felipe el Hermoso and the queen Juana I of Castilla and her childhood was deeply marked by the terrible confinement she suffered together with her mother in the palace of Tordesillas. Her brother Carlos I planned her marriage to her cousin the king Juan III of Portugal, following the wedding policy bound to unite the kingdom of Portugal into the crown of Castilla.

This marriage placed her in one of the most affluent and important Courts in renaissance Europe – thanks to the Portuguese maritime expansion-, which attracted both intellectuals and artists who were protected specially by Catalina's sister in law, María of Portugal, who took in several educated women of those times such as the sisters Luisa and Ángela Sigea, Paula Vicente or Juana Vaz. This cultural atmosphere was not strange for Catalina; bearing in mind the point of reference she had from her mother and grandmother Isabel la Católica. She had a large humanist library – served by the bookseller Juan de Borgoña – which not only included classical authors but contemporary authors as well, and she enjoyed a relationship with some of them.

Both, Catalina and her husband were very religious – not exempt from intolerance – and she kept a close relationship with prestigious characters such as Ignacio de Loyola, Francisco de Borja, Francisco Javier or Fray Luís de Granada. She also developed an important social work with the Lisboan fishermen.

Her life represented what was expected of women of the nobility in those times, whose social destiny was to bear many children and her vital destiny was to see how few survived.



Catalina of Austria, wife of Juan III of Portugal. Antonio Moro. Room 56.

She gave birth to nine children of which only two reached adulthood: Juan Manuel, the heir to the crown, who died when he was seventeen, and María Manuela, first wife of Felipe II and mother of prince Carlos, who died during childbirth, as many women of those times. She was 18 years old.

In a period of time in which childbirth was an important cause of death, Catalina lived 71 years.

A strong willed woman, joining forces with her husband and committed to Portugal, she was responsible for the education of her grandson Sebastián who had lost his mother. When he inherited the throne, at 3 years old, she defended his rights confronting the wishes of Carlos I who wanted to carry out the peninsular unity. As a regent she was respected and she defended the identity and independence of the kingdom of Portugal. It was not an easy task, even if she had a lot of support. Her numerous attempts to marry King Sebastián to guarantee the dynastic succession were fruitless. Disappointed, she retired when her grandson was 14 years old.



## Doña Juana of Austria. Antonio Moro. Room 56

Juana of Austria, born in 1535, was a daughter of Carlos I and Isabel of Portugal, who died during childbirth when Juana was only 4 years old.

The women in charge of her education had a bearing on her training to fulfill dynastic functions. In 1552, being 17 years old, she gets married to Portugal's heir prince, Juan Manuel. At the Portuguese court, together with her aunt the queen Catalina and her cousin María Manuela of Portugal, she has her first encounter with court life – as there was no stable court in Castilla -, she gets in contact with a group of women with great cultural knowledge and gets in touch with the knowledge and strong Christian beliefs that characterize the court of Juan III. She did not acquire, though, the love for luxury and pomp.

When she became a widow in 1554, and having given Portugal a heir, she was called by her father to be responsible for the regency of the kingdoms of Spain, which was a common practice of Carlos I with the women of the Royal House. This is shown by the regency his wife Isabel had executed during his absences or when he commanded his aunt Margarita of Austria to be in charge of the government of the Netherlands, later under the rule of his sister María of Hungary.

Juana settled in Valladolid. She collaborated with the royal secretaries, surrounded herself of some Portuguese advisers who had been part of her mother's entourage, she kept a regular correspondence with her father and lately with her brother Felipe II, who confirmed her in her position during the stay in England and the Netherlands. Her regency, from 1554 to 1559 was not alien to tense moments, neither with the kings nor to taking personal decisions in critical situations. She was not, therefore, just the executer of orders, but the one who took decisions in matters that demanded prompt and strong answers. She was a current advisor of Felipe II in matters involving Portugal and Italy in the court of Madrid. Felipe II respected her decision not to marry again and asked for her collaboration as



## Doña Juana of Austria. Antonio Moro. Room 56

regards his daughters' education when his third wife passed away.

Religion was an essential part in her life and motif of a certain transgression with the complicity of Ignacio de Loyola. Juana requested access to the Compañía de Jesús, creating a conflict that was resolved in her favor, even if she always used a male pseudonym which kept her access hidden. As a Regent, she supported the European expansion of the Order and interceded for them with the papacy. She chose black as the common color for her wardrobe, as is shown by Antonio Moro in the painting which is possibly from 1559. Jesuitical black, black representing the constant mourning at the court of Felipe II.

Juana passed away at the Escorial in 1573 and was buried at the monastery she had created for the retreat of noble women: the "Descalzas Reales", in Madrid.



## Isabel of Valois holding a portrait of Felipe II. Sofonisba Anguissola. Room 56.

Isabel de Valois, daughter of the king of France Enrique II and Catalina of Médicis, was born in 1546 and her destiny was to be queen. At the age of three she was betrothed to the king of England Edward VI, who died before the wedding. In 1558, after the defeat of the French troops by the Spanish in San Quintín, it is thought about an everlasting peace between both countries, which was ratified by the betrothal of Isabel to the heir of Felipe II, Prince Carlos. Felipe II decided to substitute his son in the wedding plans at the death of his wife María Tudor. The wedding was celebrated in June 1559 with great pomp, at Nuestra Señora de París, and the Duque of Alba represented Felipe II.

A splinter lodged into the French king's eye during the tournament with which the royal wedding ended. The king passed away four days later. One of the first functions Isabel held as a queen was to be present at her father's burial and the crowning of the successor.

Her trip to Spain started at the Castle of Blois. The encounter with Felipe II was at the Palacio del Infantado, in Guadalajara, where the union was blessed on January 31<sup>st</sup> 1560. She was 14 years old and he was 32. She was very well received as this was associated to peace.

Isabel, who was intelligent and very well prepared since childhood for her role as queen, seems to have influenced in moving the Court to Madrid and in the introduction of a certain luxury and refinement. She loved the fines arts, protected Sánchez Coello and Sofonisba Anguissola, with whom she followed painting and drawing classes.

She kept a very active correspondence with her mother and a good relationship with the French Court ambassadors, which was the cause of certain mistrust by Felipe II. The king limited the number of French ladies of the Casa de la Reina – an institution representing the tradition and which gathered together all the people associated to cover her public and private life needs and which implied a certain commitment from the queen towards them



## Isabel of Valois holding a portrait of Felipe II. Sofonisba Anguissola. Room 56.

– and he introduced in it women and men he trusted.

In 1565 Isabel acted as a royal ambassador in an interview with Catalina of Médicis, her mother. The encounter between mother and daughter, celebrated in Bayona, had the intention of favoring the proposals the duke of Alba, as spokesman for Felipe II, was presenting. There are doubts that this really expensive trip favored the king's project, but the presence of Isabel in the royal plans cannot be underestimated in view of the watchfulness and mistrust both countries had for each other.

Her political and vital time was short. The queen's main role was to provide a male heir to the throne, at any price, and Isabel had four pregnancies between 1564 and 1568. She passed away in the latter one, at 22 years old. Since her death the king shall always wear black. The portrait we are seeing inevitably associates her to him through the portrait she holds.

After her death, her sister in law Juana of Austria shall be responsible for the education of her daughters, the little Isabel Clara Eugenia and Catalina Micaela.



## The princess Isabel Clara Eugenia and Magdalena Ruiz. Alonso Sánchez Coello. Room 56.

The princess Isabel Clara Eugenia is present in this portrait with Magdalena Ruiz, one of the most significant characters among the ones entertaining life in Court. Since the death of Queen Ana of Austria, the princess has become the leading female role in the court as well as an efficient collaborator to her father, king Felipe II, in the Government tasks: she runs the Royal House, deals with ambassadors and secretaries, writes letters, organizes documents ...

She therefore acquired a political experience that might have encouraged Felipe II to defend her rights to the throne of France, when Enrique III died with no heirs, as daughter of Isabel of Valois and granddaughter of the king Enrique II. But Enrique IV of Borbón's conversion to Catholicism moved away this possibility.

Felipe II shall have her in mind for another essential project: the government of the Netherlands, divided and at constant war against the royal sovereignty. In his will dated in 1594, he appointed Isabel Clara Eugenia as governor and heir to the Netherlands. The donation was carried out, as dowry, on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1598, two days before her wedding to her cousin the archduke Alberto. The donation was only going to be effective if there were descendants, meanwhile it continued to be a protected state and controlled from the Court in Madrid, and the king was the ultimate responsible for its dynastic conservation. This situation limited the government's possibility of action, but not the political activity of the princess; who kept a very active and demanding correspondence with the king and his court favorites.

Isabel Clara Eugenia was aware, since her arrival to Flanders, about the difficulties to not only carry out but win the war of independence held by the Provinces in the North – today's Holland. She very soon bet on peace as the only way to stop the economic damage and instability of the territories still loyal to the crown. That's what she advised her brother king Felipe III, with positive results.



## The princess Isabel Clara Eugenia and Magdalena Ruiz. Alonso Sánchez Coello. Room 56.

Between 1607 and 1621 the country lived a period of stability that favored a substantial development. Isabel Clara Eugenia and Alberto promoted the arts and literature and international politics as well. Rubens was a painter of the court and ambassador, as well as Bruegel de Velours, Van Dyck and some of the most important painters of the time. The Prado Museum and the monastery of the Descalzas Reales, where she lived and received education when she was a child, still hold important works of art of that period; some were donated directly by her.

In 1621, after the death of her husband, Felipe IV confirmed her as governor even if she had no descendants. During the years of war in Europe between 1620 and 1630, her work in favor of peace has been recognized, even if it was unsuccessful. The capture of Breda, immortalized by Velázquez, corresponds to this period of time. The conciliatory spirit reflected by General Spínola must have been close to the beliefs of the governor, who stayed in office until her death in Brussels in 1633.



## Queen Ana of Austria. Sofonisba Anguissola. Room 56.

We are in front of a portrait of Ana of Austria (1549-1580) painted by Sofonisba Anguissola. The choice of Ana of Austria, daughter of his sister María and Maximiliano II, as his fourth wife, has been related to Felipe II's wish to look for an efficient ally in the defense of his interests in the Netherlands and Italy. The chronicles, as in other similar cases, tell the hardship of Ana and her parents' separation, as they were aware that it would not be easy to see each other again. After travelling for five months, the king's retinue, together with the king who had met Ana in Segovia, arrives in Madrid on November 26<sup>th</sup> 1570.

Marriage of Spanish princesses to emperors of the House of Austria had been habitual, but it hadn't been the same in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, as from this marriage, the heirs of the house of Austria in Spain shall always be sons of a princess of that dynasty; in an unusual dynasty endogamy that had the papacy's connivance.

Ana, who had been born in 1549, had a daughter and four sons, of which only the last one survived, who shall reign as Felipe III. When Felipe II, sick with flu, wrote his will, he decreed for a Regency Council but changing what was customary he did not appoint the queen as governor. When Ana became aware of this decision she stated her discontent and claims, for her position in Court was clearly damaged.

With a king permanently settled in Madrid and obsessed with personally intervening in all matters of the kingdom, the queen was not involved in any state matter, even if it seems that she frequently spent time with the king in his office.

Ana of Austria changed the lifestyle of the court, going back to much simpler ways of life. The continuity of family mourning during her decade as queen shall not be foreign to these changes.

El Escorial must have been an attractive place for her due to her love of nature and hunting which she practiced with crossbow and harquebus. Unlike Felipe II, she could not beat the flu, and passed away in 1580, not yet thirty one years old.

Felipe II thought about a new marriage. The chosen one was Margarita of Austria, who was 13 years old when her sister queen Ana passed away. It was a failed attempt due to



Queen Ana of Austria. Sofonisba Anguissola. Room 56.

the princess opposition, who decided to go into the convent of the Descalzas Reales. From there she shall actively intervene, among other matters, in the planning of the marriage of her nephew Felipe III. For some women the convent was a refuge to be safe from danger and broaden the personal scope of autonomy, as well as a possible space of power.



## Felipe IV's family or Las Meninas. Velázquez. Room 12.

Confronting the tradition of personal portraits in the Austrian Court, Velázquez places us in front of a portrait of the family of Felipe IV in an everyday life scene. Painted near 1656, the princess Margarita is, at five years old, the only choice for the succession.

The painting enables us to visualize the relationship of women with power through its main figures.

Princess Margarita reminds us that women had the right to reign, in the absence of a male, in the Spain of the Austrias, as it had historically happened in the reigns of Castilla and Navarra. The arrival of the Borbón dynasty took this right from them in 1713, when the Salic Law was enacted.

The birth of boys placed the princess in the international game, and she was betrothed to her uncle, the emperor Leopoldo I, when it was necessary to show the approach of the two Habsburg branches. Felipe IV, and when he passed away queen Mariana of Austria who was regent at that moment, seem to have delayed the marriage due to the lack of security of the survival of their son Carlos. Margarita, therefore, might have felt close to the Spanish throne. In 1666, due to imperial insistence, the marriage by which she became consort empress at the age of 15, took place. Her position in the sphere of power is legitimized when she gave birth to heirs that would guarantee the dynastic continuity. She died at the age of 22, after having her fourth child.

Her mother, queen Mariana of Austria, is next to her husband, as it is reflected in the mirror, which inverts the position of the kings. It was the decision of Felipe IV that Mariana is regent during Carlos II childhood, holding in her hands a power that gave rise to strong resistance and criticism. Many of them were due to being a woman, associated to lack of governing skills and moral weakness.



## Felipe IV's family or Las Meninas. Velázquez. Room 12.

Mariana knew how to use image and protocol as political weapons. Her portraits wearing mourning attire, signing documents, linked to dynastic emblems or with her child, supported her authentication by way of respect, lineage and service. The historical revision of her figure cannot avoid the discursive contexts in which she has been analyzed up to our days.

The ladies next to the princess connect us to the court as space of power and influence, in this case due to closeness to the women in the Royal House. Closeness that implies influence as well as prestige for their families, and that can guarantee them a social position related to their family status, through marriage, thanks to the queen's support. This support shall be present as well in the aids to maids and to the ones who had the mission of being companions and making court life enjoyable. The Court, therefore, devised complex and diverse relationships of women coexistence.



## Felipe V's family. Louis-Michel van Loo. Room 39.

The painting we are seeing, a painting by Louis-Michel van Loo, who was a painter in the Spanish court between 1737 and 1752, has the value of putting together three women who held the throne as consorts and at least two of them held a powerful influence: Isabel de Farnesio, Bárbara of Braganza and M<sup>a</sup> Amalia of Sajonia.

In this family portrait, which breaks with all the previous models at many levels, Felipe V, the king that inaugurates the Borbón dynasty in Spain in 1700 due to the lack of a direct heir of Carlos II, shows a family that guarantees in face of the number of sons, the male succession. His second wife, Isabel de Farnesio, is at the centre of the image. Her position, gesture and gaze, facing forward and sure of herself, seems to show that she really feels that way; the centre around which everything turns. She had motives; she was intelligent and well prepared, her arrival to court changed the power relationships when she managed to expel the powerful Princess of the Ursinos, who had great influence over the monarch, and she directly involved herself in the government's activity.

The attitude and favor of the king made easier her intervention in matters of national and international politics, especially during the second reign of Felipe V after the death of his son Luis I, period in which Isabel, due to the king's weakness, held all royal functions. Recovering Spanish influence in Italy and placing her sons in charge of Italian states were the goals she was able to fulfill. When Fernando VI passed away with no heir, she came back to power as queen governor, until the arrival from Naples of the new king: her son Carlos III. Politics and art were her two passions and she had exceptional opportunities to devote herself to them. Her vast painting and sculpture collection can be enjoyed here, at the Prado Museum.

Isabel de Farnesio received a lot of criticism in her time due to her political interference, her power over the king, her domineering character and her power. With her attitude and behavior she broke the desired model of a discreet, pious and obedient woman that was



## Felipe V's family. Louis-Michel van Loo. Room 39.

expected according to tradition.

Bárbara of Braganza was the wife of Fernando VI. A woman of broad culture – she spoke six languages – and lover of music, she was the model used by the enlightened Jerónimo Feijoo to support the falseness of the thesis on women inferiority in his Speech on the defense of women. Protector of the composer Scarlatti and the singer Farinelli, she set up the Convento de la Visitación de Nuestra Señora, in Madrid, also called Convento de las Salesas Reales, as school and residence for young women of the nobility. It was Fernando VI's decision that the remains of the couple lie in its chapel, as the king did not want to be parted from her and she could not be buried at the Royal Pantheon in El Escorial as she had not given birth to a heir, the main role of a queen.

The wife of Carlos III, M<sup>a</sup> Amalia of Sajonia, introduced in Spain the custom from Naples of nativity scenes. She passed away only two years after arriving in our country, and Carlos III did not marry again. He resorted to his mother Isabel de Farnesio and when she passed away, to the Princess of Asturias, to fulfill the role the court and protocol demanded. Women were essential pieces belonging to and for the monarchy, beyond their role as mothers or as interchange political tools in international relationships.



## The Dukes of Osuna and their children. Francisco de Goya. Room 34.

The portrait of the family of the Dukes of Osuna places us facing a strong discourse as regards the genders and is the opportunity to bring to life the struggle of some ladies of the nobility to conquer spaces and develop a noteworthy social activity in the public sphere. M<sup>a</sup> Josefa Alonso Pimentel, countess-duchess of Benavente by family, and duchess of Osuna by marriage, was one of those women.

The discourse on family and maternal love is strengthened in the XVIII century, but the one that shall significantly triumph shall be the one stating the educational difference of boys and girls according to what was socially expected from them. The protective role of the father is seen in the relationship his hands establish with the bodies of his wife and eldest daughter; the girls, dressed as their mother, look for and receive protection, and carry fans in their hands, fans with which they can learn the language of love communication. Marriage, except for exceptional cases, is their option in the future; the boys, even if smaller, are autonomous with toys representing future professional options. The difference of future options will affect both the social standing and power relationships between the genders not only in the private environment but in the public sphere as well. The professional boundaries will continue to be really close for women as limits to their learning possibilities are set in place and, therefore, their incorporation into liberal professions is difficult.

The Osuna couple was one of the most important ones at Court due to their wealth, cultural curiosity and patronage of writers and artists; among them we can find Goya. Hand in hand with the Age of Enlightenment, they committed themselves with institutions prone to reform such as the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de Madrid, presided by the Duke of Osuna. Even if access to women was resisted, their constant claims finally resulted in the creation of the Junta de Damas de Honor y Mérito in 1787. Fourteen women were the first members and M<sup>a</sup> Josefa Alonso Pimentel was the president.

The writer and translator María Josefa Amar and Borbón, from Aragón, took part in the



## The Dukes of Osuna and their children. Francisco de Goya. Room 34.

controversy on the convenience of admitting women in the Sociedad Matritense. As a defense of this position she sent her memoir Discourse in defense of women talent and their skill for governing and other roles in which men are hired. She was one of the first members to be admitted. The bourgeoisie and nobility started to find common views.

The Junta developed an important work to encourage women education, improve life conditions at children shelter centers – La Inclusa – and women prisons. It critically positioned itself as regards certain legislative projects and promoted the first vaccination campaigns not only in Spain but in the American Colonies as well. Its activism, near the sphere of power, enabled the start of changes of what we shall later call social policies, especially for women and childhood.

Little Pedro of Alcántara, who appears sitting on a cushion, became director of the Prado Museum between 1821 and 1823.



## Carlos IV's family. Francisco de Goya. Room 32.

The portrait of Carlos IV's family that Goya shows us has lost the majesty and pomp Van Loo presented in the portrait of Felipe V's family, even if the importance of the queen is common to both. In this case M<sup>a</sup> Luisa of Parma, as center and most noteworthy figure in the scene. Her image is damaged, as it must have been the wish to relate it not only to age but to the 24 pregnancies – 14 children alive and 10 miscarriages – she had during thirty years and that seem to have left serious after-effects. She had fully fulfilled her maternal role. We can see in the portrait the seven surviving children. The queen, dressed in the French style common at court in those times, carries the sash of the Orden de Damas Nobles she had started in 1794.

Her central position must also have had a symbolic nature, since, given the king's temperament and his lack of interest in government affairs, M<sup>a</sup> Luisa played an important role in running State affairs. From the early beginning she took part together with her husband in meetings with ministers and had influence in the choice of Manuel Godoy as prime minister, to whom both the king and the queen were absolutely loyal. Their mediation would save him from death after the Aranjuez Mutiny in 1807, and he shared the exile with them until the death of the queen, who looked after the education of Carlota Godoy, daughter of the court favorite and the Countess of Chinchón.

The fidelity and absolute support of Godoy, who not only became affluent but was powerfully ennobled even if the court and population thought it was a scandal, was used to damage the queen's figure and thus the monarchy of Carlos IV, who was never interested in State Affairs and let Godoy run them.

The support of Godoy also turned their son Fernando against the kings, jealous of the power of the court favorite and wishing to seize power at all costs, and who played an active part helped by the ones who supported him politically, in a damaging campaign against his own mother. This campaign was based on her alleged adultery. France's



## Carlos IV's family. Francisco de Goya. Room 32.

Convención would contribute to the spreading of this adulterous image of the queen when in 1793 Godoy supports the war against the Convención, establishing a parallel with the late queen María Antonieta, wife of Luis XVI.

The conflicts mother-son gave rise to the concept of “unnatural mother” that the historiography of the XIX century shall support, defending a specific model of motherhood and femininity. The historiography and literature of her years as princess of Asturias were a constant praise to her motherhood. But criticism will be associated to her participation in a sphere, the political one, in which queens should not meddle, as they are a role model for women. The bourgeois liberal historiography kept that negative image of the queen: it could not accept a leader that broke the role of angel of the home, far away from any participation in public space.

The criticism of her actions cannot be avoided, but it seems timely to drive your attention to the need of applying certain less asymmetric criteria to men and women when valuing their way of being in the world, independently from the place in which they are.

The XVIII century was a time of significant changes. Women, moreover elites, aspired to new social roles. But the enlightened discourse, that liberalism shall take on and enact as law, shall see them essentially as mothers and wives; for all social groups.



## The Countess of Chinchón. Francisco de Goya. Room 36.

We are in front of one of the most delicate portraits Goya paints in his maturity.

María Teresa of Borbón, countess of Chinchón, was the daughter of M<sup>a</sup> Teresa of Vallabriga and Luís Antonio of Borbón, one of the significant figures of the Enlightenment, patron of painters and musicians, and brother of king Carlos III. The marriage, carried out without the king's consent, meant the loss of honors and rights for Luis and his family, as well as the obligation to leave the court. The strong will presented by Luis as regards carrying out this marriage meant the disobedience to the royal authority of Carlos III, who also jealous of the effects it could have as regards heirs, could not consent to it in a moment in which he is passing laws so as to reinforce parent's authority over children through the control of their marriages.

When Luis dies, she is confined together with her sister in a convent in Toledo, and thus taken apart from her mother and brother. They will reside there for ten years. When María Teresa is 17 years old, her brother Luis María arranges her marriage, under the influence of the kings M<sup>a</sup> Luisa de Parma and Carlos IV, with Manuel Godoy, who at the time was the Prime Minister. With this wedding, the kings are able to grant a nobility status to their prime minister, and at the same time the family of Luis is accepted once again by the Royal House. María Teresa was; therefore, used to restore her family's honors and privileges – it could use the last name Borbón again and the title of Grandes de España, as well as several titles and ecclesiastic privileges for Luis María. This restitution, which gave María Teresa the acknowledgment of Princesa de la Paz, entailed a personal high cost for her due to the strong differences of opinion with her husband.

The daintiness we can see in this painting does not show that María Teresa was for sure a strong woman who tried to abandon Godoy. The opposition of the queen, M<sup>a</sup> Luisa de Parma, prevented it, but she never accepted to recognize her husband's authority.



## The Countess of Chinchón. Francisco de Goya. Room 36.

The countess of Chinchón would finally abandon Godoy in 1808 when he lost power due to the events related to the Aranjuez Mutiny. While Godoy flies to France, the countess of Chinchón not only abandons Spain but places herself at the forefront of the political events, travelling with her brother Luis María of Borbón to Cádiz. Both had a leading role in the development of the liberal Constitution of 1812 and the attempt that Fernando VII would recognize her as a tool in the government.

The countess of Chinchón, who Goya met and portrayed as a little girl and also seems to have been fond of, is presented in this painting pregnant of her daughter Carlota – who shall receive her education from the queen M<sup>a</sup> Luisa - with wheat spikes as a symbol of fertility.



## María Isabel de Braganza, queen of Spain, as founder of the Prado Museum. Bernardo López Piquer. Room 75.

The presence of Isabel de Braganza in this itinerary is associated to how queens have shown to have the skill to influence royal decisions, in certain circumstances.

Isabel was Fernando VII second wife. The king, a widower, planned his new marriage when he came back to Spain after the war of Independence. Concern on the situation of American colonies, where liberal and independent thoughts confronting absolutism had risen, must have prompted him to think on a Portuguese princess, due to the presence of the Portuguese king Juan VI in Brazil since the Napoleonic occupation of Portugal. The agreement between the royal houses meant the marriage of Isabel and María Francisca de Braganza to the king Fernando VII and his brother Carlos María Isidro respectively. Her arrival to Spain was in 1816. In this painting Isabel de Braganza directly looks to the spectators, while showing the building of the Prado Museum through the window with her right hand, and places her left hand on the table where the blueprints of the museum are placed; she tells us the story of a project and a personal desire. Even if the idea of having a museum with the royal collections had already been stated in the times of José I Bonaparte, the idea was taken once again in 1814 by Fernando VII, considering the idea of setting the museum at the Palacio de Buenavista, at the Plaza de Cibeles.

Nevertheless, it was later decided that the seat of the museum should be the building designed by Villanueva in the times of Carlos III for the Museum of Natural Science, in the Paseo del Prado. And thus the “Real Museo de Pintura” was born, the starting point of the Prado Museum we enjoy today.

Apparently Queen Isabel de Braganza had a leading role in the genesis of the Museum, accessing in this way the group of women, patron of arts, we are discussing in this journey.

Isabel died at childbirth in Aranjuez in 1818, surrounded by all family heirlooms that traditionally accompany the queens at childbirth. The fear of childbirth and superstitions associated to it



María Isabel de Braganza, queen of Spain, as founder of the Prado Museum. Bernardo López Piquer. Room 75.

joined women of all social classes and conditions.

The Real Museo de Pintura was inaugurated on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1819, a month after the wedding of Fernando VII with his third wife, María Josefa Amalia of Sajonia.



## María Cristina of Borbón, Queen of Spain. Vicente López. Room 75.

With this wedding portrait of María Cristina of Borbón, painted by Vicente López in 1830, we start a journey by the XIX century, in which we are going to encounter three women at the center of the political power. Two as regents, María Cristina of Borbón and María Cristina of Habsburg, and one as a queen: Isabel II. The three embody the significant step in the History of Spain that goes from Fernando VII's absolutism to the bourgeois liberalism.

María Cristina of Borbón was Fernando VII fourth and last wife. This marriage repeated once again the king's tradition to marry a young niece in the hope of having heirs. Bearing in mind the possibility of a woman in the line of the throne, the king issued the "Pragmática sanción" which abolished the Salic law, enforced since 1713, which prevented women from reigning. As it was not accepted by his brother Carlos María Isidro and the absolutists, Isabel's birth directed the royal actions towards the liberals, looking for the support that was necessary to guarantee the succession with her. The liberals, moderate and progressive faction, got involved with no doubts as they were conscious of the opportunity that was opened for a political change.

That's why the first years of María Cristina as queen consort were a source of hope for the liberal sectors which had been persecuted by Fernando's absolutism. In 1832 they were granted an amnesty, which was the source of Mariano José de Larra's words: "Our Queen, to whom we shall be so grateful, is who inspires us with confidence: her resolute protection in all what is good". When Fernando VII passed away in 1833, she was appointed regent and the Carlist war broke out; she represented the resistance against the ultra-apostolic ones, and was in favor of developing a program to limit absolutism and consider liberal reforms.

María Cristina always was near the most moderate sector of liberalism and accepted the progressive faction in the government only when circumstances left no other way out,



## María Cristina of Borbón, Queen of Spain. Vicente López. Room 75.

as the uprising of the sergeants in La Granja in 1836, or when four years later Espartero demanded the nullification of the law of Town Councils she had enacted that assumed the Crown's imposition on the mayor's appointment. This confrontation was the reason for her first exile, in which she continued to collaborate with the moderate sector. In 1844, after the appointment and access to power of general Narváez, who run the progressive faction from government, María Cristina came back to Spain with the strong will of intervening in the politics of her time.

She was criticized and caricatured for her private life, since only three months after the death of Fernando VII she secretly married a guard de corps, Fernando Muñoz, with whom she had eight children, and who she protected in businesses that turned them wealthy. In spite of the lights and shadows of her regency, it should be acknowledged her political insight when she did not consent at any moment to make an agreement with the ultra-conservative faction that even tried to marry her daughter Isabel II to the son of Carlos María Isidro, with the intention of accessing the Court through the end of the dynastic and ideological conflict that shall devastate the Spanish XIX Century. Again in 1868, after the so called "Revolución Gloriosa", she once again left Spain in exile to go to Paris as company to her daughter Queen Isabel II.

At a later date she represented the dynastic interests in the negotiations with Cánovas del Castillo to promote the reinstatement of the Borbón family by way of her grandson, prince Alfonso.

María Cristina of Borbón also promoted the revival of the Spanish cultural scene, especially in the musical field, where opera became popular again. Her daughter Isabel II shall continue her work by inaugurating the Royal Theatre in 1850.



## Isabel II, veiled. Camilo Torreggiani. Room 63B.

This work of art, the only sculpture in our itinerary, was sculpted by Camilo Torreggiani in 1855; the most renowned Italian Sculptor of the XIX Century, who changed the traditional way of making official portraits. The work of art was very valued in her times, since it represents in a very delicate way the queen's features through a transparent veil that covers her. Today we can see it as a metaphor of what has happened to the political and personal figure Isabel II has been and who the historical criticism had no interest to unveil until recently.

Isabel was the first child of Fernando VII and his fourth and last wife, María Cristina of Borbón. Her birth meant the frustration of her uncle's ambition to the crown, the ultra-conservative Carlos María Isidro who yearned for the reinstatement of the Old Regime. Her reign shall be under the shadow of the Carlist Wars, which break out in 1833 when the princess was only three years old. When she was only ten, her mother was forced to be in exile due to the progressive faction outbreak that would take General Espartero to the Regency, and her education was the responsibility of court members and political groups, that used her as an extra pawn in the political chess.

In 1843, as a result of the conservative outbreak against Espartero, Isabel II is hastily proclaimed an adult when she was only thirteen years old.

She survived as she could to the court schemes and was forced to marry her cousin Francisco of Asís Borbón when she was only sixteen. Both organized a private life that was on the fringes of marriage and this significantly damaged the royal image, especially the queen's one, given the ideal model of femininity dominant in her times. The transgression of the model bears consequences for all women and is used as a political tool to damage and discredit the ones who have a public role.

Her education was not the most appropriate, even if at certain times she surrounded



## Isabel II, veiled. Camilo Torreggiani. Room 63B.

herself by intellectual women of the times such as Fernán Caballero or Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. In spite of all this, she was a patron of the music and arts and inaugurated the Royal Theatre in Madrid in 1850.

During her reign the seeds of industrialization started in Spain. The First General Law of Public Studies or Ley Moyano was published – which limited the education possibilities of women –, the first railroad lines were laid, important hydraulic works such as the Canal de Isabel II were carried out, the Civil Guard was created, the Treasury was reformed and several banks were created. There was also a project to improve the Navy and Universities were opened once again; but women were excluded.

This queen, referred to as “the one of the sad destiny” by Galdós, was questioned since her birth in all areas of her existence, not only public but private ones as well. She should have been constitutionalist if we bear in mind the European historical background, but she looked for support in the most conservative politicians of her time. She did not know how to contribute to encourage the deep reform Spain needed, and that neither the politicians knew how to manage. In 1868, the progressive liberalism, separated from power since 1856, promoted the outbreak known as “La Gloriosa”, which caused her exile and a change of regime in Spain.

When she came to terms with the idea that she was not an option but the Borbón dynasty had the possibility of returning to government in Spain, she supported the proposal of the conservative politician Antonio Cánovas del Castillo to reinstate the monarchy represented by her son Alfonso, due to the lack of clear political options as the I Republic had failed.

Both her contemporaries and historians have questioned the role of Isabel II, using aspects of her private life as the main tool to attack her, thus damaging her public image. History has established a clear separation between the monarch's private life and political life, but



## Isabel II, veiled. Camilo Torreggiani. Room 63B.

has not read in the same way the life of queens and women in politics.

The Prado Museum was really favored by Isabel II. When her father died, she compensated economically her sister María Luisa Fernanda to keep the royal collection of paintings together, specially the works of art that were part of the Real Museo de Pintura. At a later date, in 1865, the palaces and royal sites and the Museo de Pintura stopped being the private property of the kings to become assets linked to the Crown, and therefore they became non-transferable and non-divisible.

Isabel II died in Paris in 1904, in the city she chose for her compulsory exile.



With the queen María Cristina of Austria we finish our itinerary analyzing some of the women that have had a political or representative power throughout our history.

María Cristina started to be part of the history of Spain when in 1879 she married Alfonso XII, a widower who needed an heir. Educated in the court of Vienne, she represented the cultivated and refined woman. She was an exceptional student, who spoke German, Italian, French and English; and followed studies in Political Science, Philosophy and Economy. She was also a music lover, piano performer and singer. She had many common features with some of the consort queens that came before her.

As regards María Cristina of Borbón and Isabel II, the figure of María Cristina of Habsburg presents a strong contrast, since this consort queen was an example of discretion and moderation at the time of executing the power in a state where the monarchy starts to play an exclusively representative role.

She was regent in Spain for seventeen years, after six years of marriage to Alfonso XII, who died in 1885 when María Cristina was expecting a son, the future Alfonso XIII.

During the Regency she was able to maintain a delicate balance between the progressive faction and the moderate to defend the dynastic rights of her son and the monarchy. After the agreements of El Pardo, the leaders of the two principal parties, the moderate Cánovas and the liberal Sagasta, took turns in power in a peaceful way ensuring the stability of the regime and laws of diverse social content were enacted, even if discrimination against women was maintained: the so called universal suffrage was established, excluding them from voting, the Labor law of children, the Law of accidents at the workplace or the Law of Associations, which made easy the development of the workers movement. María Cristina was especially concerned with modernizing the services and treatment of pregnant women, as she was conscious of the delay Spain suffered in those years as regards this issue.



## Queen María Cristina of Habsburgo-Lorena. Raimundo de Madrazo. Room

She ordered the construction, for example, of the Maternidad de Santa Cristina in Madrid, where the first Official School of Midwives was set up, which acknowledged the professional right of women to participate in childbirth in a legal standing. With this organization she showed a social conscience in face of one of the most serious problems for the life and health of women. Dramatically, the queen would see her daughters Mercedes and María Teresa die at childbirth.

At a social level, the regent queen saw the social conflicts increase as the century went by: the anarchist unrest in Andalucía in 1892, the uprising of the peasants in Jerez the following year and the revolutionary general strike in Barcelona in 1902, the same date when Alfonso XIII reaches adulthood.

She also lived one of the most significant events of the turn of the century: the Cuban war of independence and the war with United States, which meant the loss of the colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

María Cristina of Habsburg, described by her biographer the count of Romanones as a “discreet regent”, received the title of “Queen Mother” when her son married María Eugenia of Battenberg in 1906, and retired to spend long seasons in San Sebastián, where she commissioned the construction of the Palacio de Miramar in 1888.



Our itinerary analyzing the life and activities of outstanding women who have been in power or have been really close to it throughout the history of Spain is finished here. We hope you have enjoyed your visit.