



“By order of His Majesty the King”: The Painter-Restorers of the Art Collection of Ferdinand II of Portugal

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Abstract: This study reveals and discusses the role played by five painter-restorers – António Manuel da Fonseca, António Tomás da Fonseca, Carl Kathan, Gaetano Marmocchi, and Étienne Le Roy – at the service of King Ferdinand II of Portugal, from 1850 to 1864. It draws on a dataset of more than one hundred and fifty restored paintings, used here as evidence of the painter-restorers’ activity and versatility in the private art market, as well as of the king’s commitment to managing, repairing and preserving his collection of paintings. Ultimately, by identifying the paintings that have been restored by order of the “Artist King” and relating them to the restorers, this research opens the door for direct analyses and a more precise characterization of the methods and techniques used by these painter-restorers in 19th century Europe.

Keywords: painter-restorers, history of conservation, royal collections, art market

“Por orden de Su Majestad el Rey”: Los pintores-restauradores de la colección de arte de Fernando II de Portugal

Resumen: Este estudio revela y analiza el papel desempeñado por cinco pintores-restauradores – António Manuel da Fonseca, António Tomás da Fonseca, Carl Kathan, Gaetano Marmocchi y Étienne Le Roy – al servicio del rey Fernando II de Portugal, de 1850 a 1864. Se basa en un conjunto de datos de más de ciento cincuenta pinturas restauradas, que se utilizan aquí como evidencia de la actividad y versatilidad de los pintores-restauradores en el mercado privado del arte, así como del compromiso del rey con la gestión, reparación y conservación de su colección de pintura. Al final, identificando las pinturas que han sido restauradas por orden del “Rey Artista” y relacionándolas con los restauradores, esta investigación abre la puerta a análisis directos y a una caracterización más precisa de los métodos y técnicas utilizados por estos pintores-restauradores en la Europa del siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: pintores-restauradores, historia de la conservación, colecciones reales, mercado de arte

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Resumo: Este estudo revela e analisa o papel desempenhado por cinco pintores-restauradores – António Manuel da Fonseca, António Tomás da Fonseca, Carl Kathan, Gaetano Marmocchi e Étienne Le Roy – ao serviço do rei D. Fernando II de Portugal, de 1850 a 1864. Baseia-se num conjunto de dados de mais de cento e cinquenta pinturas restauradas, aqui apresentadas como testemunho da actividade e versatilidade dos pintores-restauradores no mercado de arte privado, bem como do compromisso do rei com a gestão, conservação e preservação da sua colecção de pintura. Como resultado, ao identificar as pinturas restauradas por ordem do “Rei Artista” e relacionando-as com os restauradores, esta investigação abre a porta a análises directas e a uma melhor caracterização dos métodos e técnicas utilizados pelos pintores-restauradores na Europa do século XIX.

Palavras-chave: pintores-restauradores, história da conservação, colecções reais, mercado de arte

Introduction

The fact that Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg-Gotha-Koháry (1816-1885) [Figure 1], a prince of the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, became known soon after his marriage to Queen Maria II of Portugal (1819-1853) by the affectionate name of the "Artist King" (Castilho 1841: 78), is very enlightening regarding the artistic pursuits of this somewhat internationally overshadowed nephew of King Leopold I of the Belgians (1790-1865), and first cousin to Queen Victoria (1819-1901), Prince Albert (1819-1861), and Duke Ernest II (1818-1893). Notwithstanding, Portuguese historiography has long acknowledged King Ferdinand II as the country's leading art collector in the 19th century, as well as his role in encouraging and shaping collecting practices (França 1981).

At the same time, however, unlike the extensively studied attention devoted by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to the care and maintenance of their collections (Marsden 2010), little is known about the strategies outlined to preserve the myriad of artworks brought together by Ferdinand II in his official residence in Lisbon, Necessidades Palace, and at his summer house in Sintra, Pena Palace, as well as in others estates located in the same mountain range.

Indeed, while the king's contribution, in the form of political influence and funding, to the protection of national architectural heritage has been addressed since the 19th century (Coelho 1878; Teixeira 1986; Neto 1997), the conservation of his private art collection has mostly been ignored, probably because of the lack of solid evidence. As a result, up until now, the state of the art in this subject area was limited to the restoration of three pictures: the "Martyrdom of Santa Auta", "The Temptation of St. Anthony" by Hieronymus Bosch, and the "Fons Vitae" by Holbein.^[1]

These restoration works were first disclosed by the art historian Joaquim de Vasconcelos (1914), and by the painter-restorer Luciano Freire (2007). The former claimed that the king had told him in 1879 that the restoration of the Holbein was commissioned in Germany. However, his writings show some uncertainty in this regard, as suggested by the question mark placed after the name of the country where the picture was supposedly reframed and restored. What is certain is that Vasconcelos had seen the picture at the Holbein exhibition held in Dresden in 1871 (Zahn 1871), which could have been the catalyst for the restoration commissioned by the king. In turn, in his role as chief painter-restorer at the restoration atelier of the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, the latter restored the three above mentioned Old Masters in the first quarter of the 20th century, having removed at that time the greyish varnishes said to have been applied (presumably to match the age of the painting, which was very much appreciated by art collectors at the time) in Germany, to where the pictures were allegedly sent by Ferdinand II.



Figure 1. - Photograph of King Ferdinand II of Portugal. Source: Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021.

This essay therefore aims to expand the current knowledge base of this topic, as it unveils a set of restoration works commissioned by the king, from 1850 to 1864, from five different painter-restorers: António Manuel da Fonseca (1796-1890), António Tomás da Fonseca (1822-1894), Carl Kathan (?-?), Gaetano Marmocchi (?-?) and Étienne Le Roy (1808-1878). In addition to unveiling a so far overlooked facet of Ferdinand II as art collector, that is, his attention and care in the preservation of his private and royal collection of paintings, our aim is to characterize the nature of the work of the artists to whom those payments were made, while framing it in the wider context of their careers and of conservation-restoration in the period.

It will take as its point of departure a two-page accounting record where twenty-seven payments for restoration interventions on pictures from the king's collection were systematically listed spanning fifteen years, from 1850 to 1864 (Restauração n.d.). Twenty-four out of the twenty-seven entries correspond to restoration works undertaken by the above-mentioned restorers on a total of ninety-eight pictures. The three remaining payments refer to repairs made to other artefacts. Overall, the content of the document is neither extensive nor consistent, as in some cases, besides the date of payment and the name of the

painter-restorer, nothing else was reported, while other entries include descriptive titles.

Therefore, in order to obtain a more detailed overview of these and similar expenses, we will combine different sources of information, mostly new archival evidence from the king's secretariat, such as accounting books and documents of expenses. Moreover, in order to analyse such a large and dispersed volume of material, a complete dataset was built and made available online (Mariz 2021 a), with the description of the painting, the artists tasked with the job, and the type of work undertaken.

An overview of the state of conservation of King Ferdinand's collection of paintings

The death of Ferdinand II triggered the making of the first comprehensive inventory of his art collections (and of all the other assets), which preceded the division of the inheritance between the heirs and a set of public auctions (Inventário 1885). In this context, following the selection made by the heirs and the court, the collection of paintings was described and appraised by a team of experts composed by three painters: António Manuel da Fonseca, António da Silva Porto (1850-1893), and Adolfo Greno (1854-1901).

Although the large number of restorations commissioned during the period under review can be understood as strong proof of the care and attention devoted by the king to the collection, the report made by those appraisers upon the death of the royal art collector shows that the overall state of conservation was not flawless. The large size of the collection, consisting of around 557 items scattered over four different estates (Mariz 2021 b), can of course explain this fact. At the same time, unlike his cousin, Queen Victoria (Marsden 2010), and even his son, King Luís I (Xavier 2013), who employed curators to oversee the organization and maintenance of their collections of pictures, Ferdinand II seems not to have followed the same example.

In fact, in the above-mentioned inventory there are several references to paintings that were not only "damaged"^[2], but also "quite damaged" (Inventário 1885: 2400, 2347).^[3] The number of "much damaged"^[4] (Inventário 1885: 2783 v.) artworks appears to be even higher, and it is worth noting that age was not the only factor of deterioration, since several of the paintings in such condition were modern. Therefore, one must consider the role played by other factors, such as light, humidity, heat, as well as biological agents.

This was the case of several pictures from Pena Palace, which makes it reasonable to believe that the characteristic high humidity of Sintra could have been a decisive atmospheric factor in the deterioration of these pictures. Still, some paintings in Necessidades Palace were also said to be much damaged, very likely by the widespread use of gas lighting and wood burning stoves, two causes

of deterioration pointed out by Luciano Freire (2007) on restoring a group of paintings that came from that royal residence. In this regard, it is worth noting that the main gallery at Necessidades Palace had but one single window at one end and, indeed, was extensively illuminated by gas lighting (Silva 1886), as otherwise it would be impossible to admire the artworks, especially in the evening.

While fulfilling their duty, the appraisers of the paintings also identified a considerable number of signs of restoration and even made a few remarks as to its extent and quality, having classified several of them as having been "very badly restored"^[5] (Inventário 1885: 2182 v.). Even though these references do not detail the methods used in the said restoration, at times it is possible to ascertain that the pictures were "relined"^[6] (Inventário 1885: 2186 v.), thus reinforcing weak or split fabric, or even partially repainted. Some of these interventions were certainly undertaken by painter-restorers other than those addressed below, since we have limited the scope of the essay to 1850-1864, as was the case of António da Costa Oliveira (?-?), from whom the king commissioned the restoration of ten paintings in 1866 (Livro de Caixa 1866) [Figure 2].



Figure 2.- One of the paintings restored by Costa Oliveira in 1866: "Moses Striking the Rock with the Rod", attributed to Jacob de Wit. Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga 1484 Pint. Carlos Monteiro, 1994, Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/ Arquivo de Documentação Fotográfica (DGPC/ADF).

Yet, as we shall see, António Manuel da Fonseca and António Tomás da Fonseca, father and son, were two of the main, if not the principal, painter-restorers at the service of the king [Figure 3]. In total, between 1850 and 1864, they restored an impressive number of eighty-nine pictures: sixty-two were restored by the father, while twenty-seven were restored by the son (Mariz 2021 a). In this regard, it is important to clarify that these artists were probably only responsible for the artistic part of the work, that is, the retouching, while others who worked under their supervision would execute other tasks, such as the relining, the cradling, the making and application of new stretcher frames, and so on.

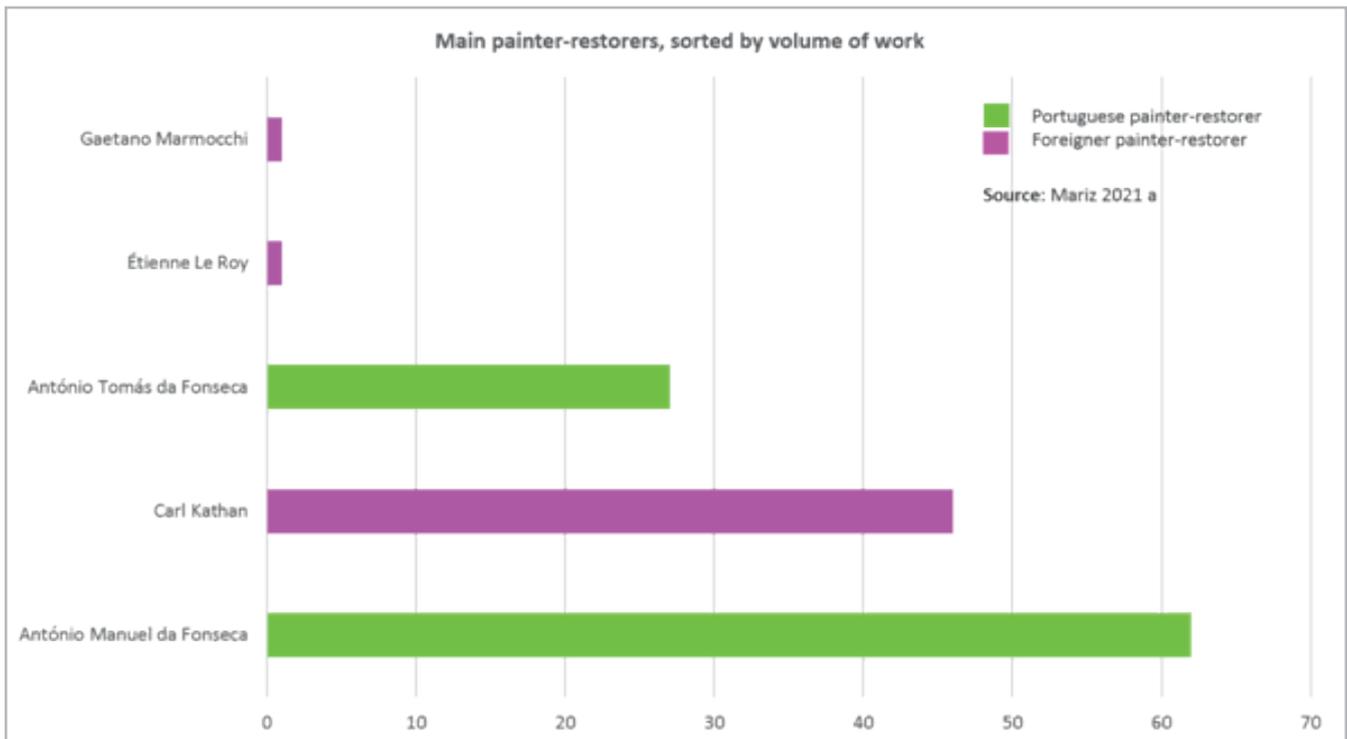


Figure 3.- OList of the painter-restorers who worked at the service of King Ferdinand II from 1850 to 1864, sorted by the total volume of paintings restored during that period.

António Manuel da Fonseca

The father, António Manuel, was one of the most famous and esteemed neoclassical painters in Portugal, but he is also known for having played a pivotal role in the conservation and restoration of paintings in the Academia Real de Belas-Artes de Lisboa (Alves 2014). Indeed, as professor of Historic Painting, Fonseca was automatically the first person in charge of the paintings that entered the aforesaid academy from the religious houses suppressed in 1834, a task that encompassed supervising the interventions carried out by other artists. Despite having played this role from 1836 to 1863, until now only two references to direct interventions on paintings performed by him were known. These referred to the 1878 restoration of a set of oil and fresco paintings in Quintela Palace, which he carried out sixty years earlier (Viterbo 1903), and the restoration of a picture by Cornelis van Cleve, then attributed to Holbein (Vasconcelos 1913).

However, as we shall see, his activity as painter-restorer was far more prolific. In any case, given some of his known remarks on this subject (Alves 2014), it is likely that in terms of approaches Fonseca was consistent in advocating and enforcing mimetic inpainting techniques, as was common at the time (Cruz 2010). Moreover, due to his sojourns in Italy and his frequent copies of paintings by Raphael, Domenichino and others (Soromenho 1967), he had an in-depth knowledge of Old Masters that must have enabled him successfully to achieve his goals as painter-restorer. In this regard, one must keep in mind that at that time copying the work of great masters,

thereby understanding and gaining direct and in-depth knowledge of their style and techniques, was understood as a crucial if not the main step, in the training of a painter-restorer (Macedo 1885).

As regards Ferdinand II's art collections, the presence of António Manuel da Fonseca is quite unique. In fact, the artist was represented in the collection with his original oil paintings, but also with copies and sculptures (*Catalogo* 1892 a; *Catalogo* 1892 b), apart from the several pictures he had restored. Furthermore, as we have previously mentioned, Fonseca would also be appointed to value the paintings and prints that were part of the king's estate, which once again attests to the longevity and strength of his relationship with the royal collector.

The first name to appear on the list of restoration works made from 1850 to 1864 is, indeed, that of António Manuel da Fonseca, then specifically referred to as "figure painter"^[7] (*Livro de caixa* 1850: 11, 26), from whom the restoration of six Old Masters, mostly religious scenes, was commissioned. Unlike other invoice-receipts, this document does not provide any details about the nature and extent of the job, but others such as that referring to the restoration of twenty-five paintings, also in 1850, allow us to determine the nature of the task (*Documentos* 1850: 40). Then, a self-portrait by Guido Reni, two landscapes by Claude Lorrain and a view by Pieter Bruegel were cleaned, retouched and put into new stretcher frames. Others were only cleaned and retouched, as was the case of a portrait attributed to Holbein, while two pictures were varnished.

During the same period, Fonseca also worked on three other paintings, including a Flemish panel depicting the martyrdom of several saints, which was in poor condition. For this reason, and likely advised by Fonseca, the king eventually suspended the ongoing restoration, which suggests his close monitoring of the processes. A similar situation occurred again later that year, when upon delivery of another set of paintings (Documentos 1850: 62), Fonseca stated that four seascapes in the manner of Bruegel, which were most likely in an advanced state of deterioration, had been restored in the only way possible.

Among the forty-five paintings restored by Fonseca in 1850, were works on canvas, wood and copper, which attests to his versatility. Furthermore, his actions in this field were not limited to a single category of artworks, as in September of that same year the eminent painter was tasked, along with Francisco de Assis Rodrigues (1801-1877), the sculptor and his fellow professor at the Academia Real de Belas-Artes de Lisboa, with inspecting and giving an opinion on how to carry out the restoration of Nicolau de Chanterene's altarpiece in the church of the former convent of Pena, in Sintra (Documentos 1850), which had been acquired by King Ferdinand II in 1838 and converted into a summer residence and collector's house (Schedel 2019).

Possibly due to the difficulty in reconciling this activity with a demanding career as a professor and artist, the number of works commissioned from Fonseca decreased significantly after 1850. Still, in 1858 he restored twelve paintings in his atelier (Documentos 1858: 110), presumably in the Academia Real de Belas-Artes, and this time the description of his work included a number of references to the state of conservation of the paintings prior to their restoration. Therefore, based on this information, one can determine the usual response of the painter-restorer to a particular problem.

In general, these paintings, including one considered by Fonseca as "exquisite"^[8], as well as two Bassanos, were largely damaged, ruined by "terrible"^[9] retouches and covered in several layers of oil varnish. In fact, the former was so badly damaged that the artist felt the need to point out that this specific restoration required a lot of work, a particularity which was reflected in the price of the procedures: 24\$000 réis, the highest cost for any work undertaken by Fonseca in 1858. Given the overall situation of this set of paintings, the general aim as was common at that time was to "re-establish the primitive originality"^[10]. To this end, Fonseca used an unspecified cleaning method to remove dirt, retouches and varnishes, followed by the restoration itself, which, according to his notes, was carried out with the original artist's intent in mind. The intervention on two 16th century battles by Jacques Courtois was slightly different, as these pictures were not only cleaned, but also relined and put into new stretcher frames in order to successfully maintain in place the painted canvas.



Figure 4. - "Aeneas saving his father Anchises from burning Troy", by António Manuel da Fonseca, Palácio Nacional de Mafra 1772. Unknown photographer, Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/ Arquivo de Documentação Fotográfica (DGPC/ADF).

After Fonseca's departure from the Academia Real de Belas-Artes in 1863, his artistic production decreased (Soromenho 1967), as did his activity as painter-restorer. Nonetheless, in 1873, at a rather advanced age, Fonseca was asked by Ferdinand II to restore one of his most iconic works: "Aeneas saving his father Anchises from burning Troy" (Documentos 1873: 188) [Figure 4]^[11]. In view of the large sum of money paid to the artist, that is, 183\$395 réis, the highest known sum ever paid to Fonseca for a restoration and paid in instalments, it is likely that major efforts were required by this task, which is probably related to the monumental size of the picture (W. 178,000 cm x H. 260,000 cm). Nonetheless, the only information on the extent of such intervention is that it included the making of a new frame.

António Tomás da Fonseca

Unlike his father, António Tomás was not considered a talented or a skilful painter by fellow artists and art critics (Soromenho 1967). Perhaps for this reason, he devoted himself mostly to architecture, a field where he would achieve considerable success, having also been involved

in a few restoration projects, mostly from the late 1850s onwards (Soromenho 1967). In turn, his activity as painter-restorer, which precedes this moment in his life, appears to have remained absolutely unknown, and might even come as a surprise. Particularly if one considers that at a time when mimetic restoration was the dominant practice, drawing and painting skills and specifically the ability to "imitate with rigorous accuracy the style, the colouring, the touch of the painter"^[12] (Macedo 1885: 38), would have had a great weight.

In this regard it is, however, important to remember that unlike others, Athanasius Raczyński (1788-1874) saw some potential in the young artist, whom he met during his stays in Portugal, in the 1840s, as ambassador to the King of Prussia. Consequently, in 1844 he would grant a stipend that would allow Fonseca to pursue his studies in Germany (Deswartes-Rosa 2010). Once there, António Tomás trained within the academic parameters, having spent much time studying and copying old pictures at museums, but also from Raczyński's private gallery (Deswartes-Rosa 2010). Such training, we believe, is likely to have played an important role in the development of his career, not as a successful painter, as expected by his patron, but as a painter-restorer.

Indeed, soon after returning from his study trip around Europe, António Tomás joined his father as a restorer at the service of King Ferdinand II. In 1850, the young artist returned to Necessidades Palace five paintings said to be the last pictures restored "by order of H. M. the King"^[13] (Documentos 1850: 12), which indicates that he had previously worked for the royal collector in this capacity. In any case, on this occasion Fonseca proved capable of restoring sacred, historic, still life and architectural paintings, both on canvas and wood. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the receipt of this transaction includes the rental of a cart to go to Ajuda Palace to choose the paintings that should be restored. This means that, despite not having a full-time curator, the king relied on the expertise of these artists to help him select the artworks in need of a physical intervention.

The work carried out by António Tomás must have pleased Ferdinand II, as several other commissions would take place between that year and 1853, when the grief caused by the death of Queen Maria II (late that year) must have led the king-consort to interrupt such endeavours [Figure 5]. Yet the absence of payments to other painter-restorers from 1851 to 1853 confirms the king's preference for this particular artist, but also suggests that the previously mentioned decrease in the number of commissions addressed to António Manuel from 1850 onwards might have resulted from the father "abdicating" in favour of his son [Figure 7]. However, with the exception of a painting by Francisco José Resende, which was relined (Documentos 1852: 76), it is not possible to determine the exact nature of the methods used by António Tomás to restore the pictures then attributed in the main to famous Old Masters, such as Rubens, Teniers, Simons Vos, Paul Bril or Adriaen Brouwer [Figure 6].



Figure 5.- Portrait of Queen Maria II by Ferdinand Krumholz, restored by António Tomás da Fonseca in 1853 and copied, in the same occasion, by António Manuel da Fonseca for the Duke of Montpensier. Palácio Nacional da Ajuda 15432 DIG. Henrique Ruas, s/d, Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Arquivo de Documentação Fotográfica (DGPC/ADF).



Figure 6.- "A Bambocciata", signed by Adriaen Brouwer, restored by António Tomás in 1850. This painting was purchased by the Count of Ameal in 1893 at the auction of the collection of paintings of King Ferdinand II, and its current location is unknown. Sousa and Matos Sequeira 1921.

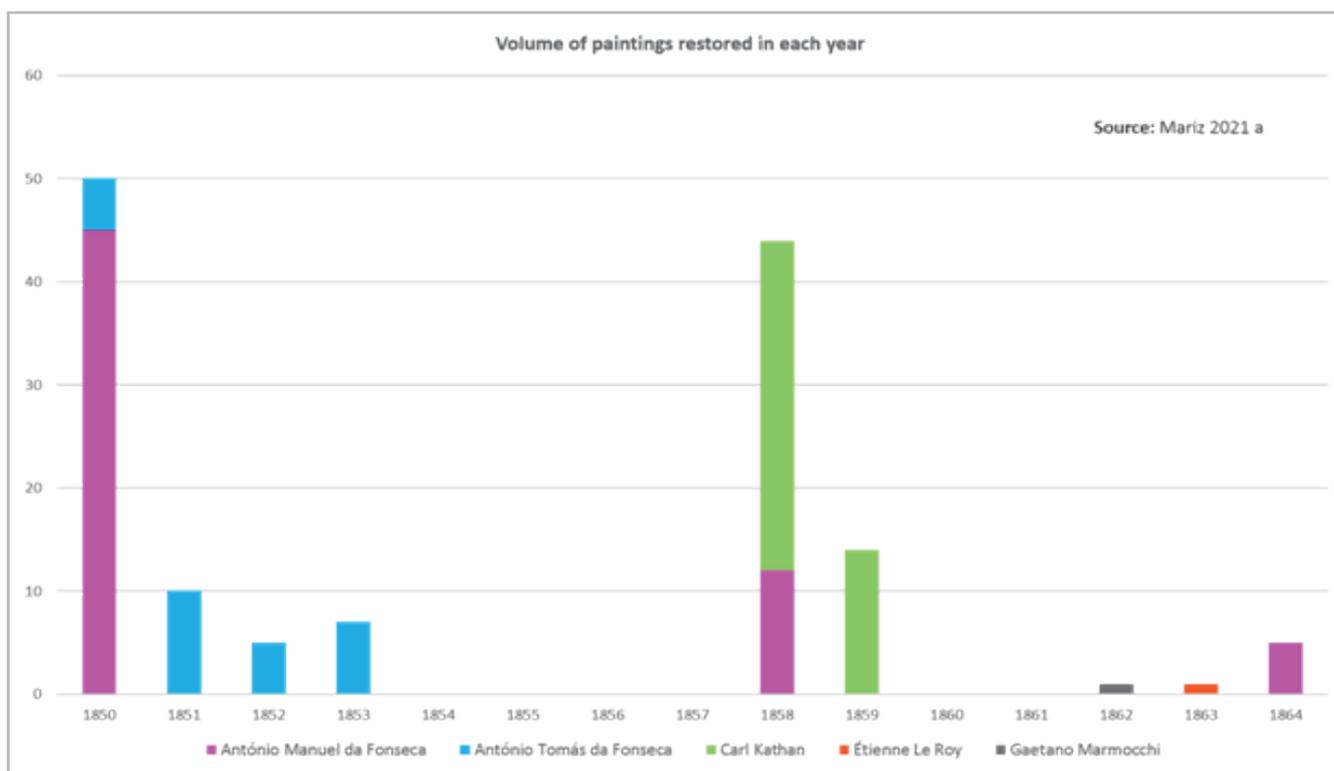


Figure 7.- List of the total volume of paintings restored in the course of each year, from 1850 to 1864, with the names of the painters-restorers to whom the payments were made.

Carl Kathan

The first man to break the predominance of Portuguese painter-restorers at the service of Ferdinand II, in the late 1850s, would be Carl Kathan. The connection between the so far virtually unknown artist, most likely of German descent and probably based in the region of Bavaria, and the king, dates back at least to 1855, when the royal collector purchased a picture depicting the interior of a convent directly from Kathan (Palácio Nacional da Pena n.d.), at the time in Lisbon.

Given this information and the fact that in 1854 a painting by Kathan was displayed in an art exhibition held in Würzburg (Morgen 1854), it is possible that the artist arrived in Lisbon in early 1855. Moreover, his stay in Portugal appears to have been a long and fruitful one, as he would continue to restore pictures from the king's collection at least until 1859. In fact, in 1860 the *Neue Augsburg Zeitung* reported that a painting by Kathan depicting a young fishwife from the Lisbon environs was on display at the Augsburg Art Association, which would continue to exhibit his works in the coming years (Im Runftverein 1860; Lokales 1862), giving us the idea that in the interim he had moved back to his native country.

Regarding Kathan's activity as painter-restorer, we have determined that in 1858 he was offered his first royal commission to restore a set of eight pictures, which included works attributed to Maratti, Teniers, and Rubens

(Documentos 1858: 12). Despite ignoring the state of condition of these paintings and the extent of the works then carried out, it is worth mentioning that the amount paid to Kathan was much higher than the prices practiced by the Fonseca family. In turn, the second bill issued by Kathan in February 1858 is a little clearer as regards the nature of his services (Documentos 1858: 77), in which he stated having "retouched"^[14] nine pictures depicting still lifes, portraits, etc., which probably presented missing or damaged areas. The intervention carried out by Kathan on this set must have greatly impressed the king, for he kept receiving commissions until at least 1859 (Documentos 1859: 19, 67). Although the documentation does not provide many details, it does confirm that most of these payments referred to the application of overpaintings, probably with the purpose of reintegrating paint loss and so re-establishing the original aesthetic value of those pictures.

Gaetano Marmocchi

In terms of foreign painter-restorers who were active in Portugal in the period under analysis, Ferdinand II also resorted to one "Caetano" (Restauração n.d.). By crossing different records, we can now determine that the artist who in 1862 restored a picture from the king's collection was, in fact, Gaetano Marmocchi, also known as G. Marmocchi (British Museum, n.d.). The Italian draughtsman and painter, who just the year before had unsuccessfully applied for the position of Professor of Historical Drawing at the

Academia Real de Belas-Artes de Lisboa (Faria 2008), was indeed paid 45\$000 réis for the restoration of a picture depicting Saint Mary Magdalene (Documentos 1862: 31). However, the circumstances that led the king to invite the "distinguished"^[15] Italian painter, as he was referred to in a Portuguese magazine (Mendonça 1858: 193), to undertake this task and the nature of the intervention, remains unknown.

Étienne Le Roy

So far, we have been dealing with restoration works executed by both Portuguese and foreign artists in Lisbon. Notwithstanding the fact that, at this point, the number of interventions carried out within Portugal appears to surpass those carried out abroad, this duality must be taken into consideration, especially because a number of these works was performed in Brussels by Étienne Le Roy, the famous painter-restorer, art expert and dealer, active both in France and in Belgium (Goddeeris 2008).

The international recognition gained by Le Roy and his in-depth knowledge of Old Masters is unquestionable and it is likely to partially explain the option made by Ferdinand II. Indeed, immediately after Le Roy's death, a tribute was published in *L'Art: revue hebdomadaire illustrée*, where the deceased is acknowledged as a painter-restorer who early on acquired "an in-depth knowledge of the Old Masters and had already gained a reputation abroad at an age when others still wonder what career they will follow."^[16] (Mancino 1878: 332). And, in fact, when Le Roy was first commissioned to restore one picture from the collection of Ferdinand II, he was already a well-established painter-restorer to whom the Musée royal des Beaux-Arts resorted on several occasions (Goddeeris 2008). Furthermore, he was also well-known for having successfully treated Ruben's altarpiece in Antwerp Cathedral, which would be followed by the infamous restoration of Rembrandt's masterpiece "The Anatomy Lesson" (Broos and Wadum 1998; Van Duijn and Marvelde 2016).

Regarding the reasons that led Ferdinand II to entrust restoration of his pictures to Le Roy, we must consider the possibility that the king was indirectly acquainted with the Belgian painter-restorer and his work. The link between them was probably José Maurício Correia Henriques (1802-1874), 1st Viscount of Seisal, the Portuguese Ambassador to Brussels, who actually acted as intermediary for Ferdinand II in a number of transactions on the Belgian art market during the 1860s (Documentos 1866: 85-86). Interestingly, one of these transactions would even involve Henri Le Roy (1815-1916), the brother of Étienne, who was himself a well-known expert, art dealer and painter-restorer (Goddeeris 2008).

Nonetheless, the first time that the Viscount of Seisal acted as intermediary in a restoration carried out by Le Roy of pictures owned by Ferdinand II was in 1863 (Documentos 1863: 33). Then, according to the invoice, 500 francs would cover the

cost of the "restoration of a triptych by Van Dyck belonging to His Majesty Dom Fernando King of Portugal."^[17] This was very likely the exquisite Flemish picture depicting the Holy Family with Saint Catherine and Saint Barbara [Figure 8]^[18], that used to hang in the King Consort's private office at Necessidades Palace, and that upon his death was said to be a Jan Van Eyck (Inventário 1885: 2214).



Figure 8.- Flemish triptych depicting the Holy Family, that has been attributed to Jan Gossaert, and more recently to an unknown artist. Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga 1479 Pint. Luísa Oliveira, 2017, Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Arquivo de Documentação Fotográfica (DGPC/ADF).

The small triptych would also be listed in the king's after-death inventory as the most valuable painting of the collection (Mariz 2021 b), an opinion shared by the connoisseur John Charles Robinson (1824-1913). He had seen it in 1866 when visiting the royal collection, and four decades later not only praised its artistic excellency, but also its "most perfect state of conservation" (Robinson 1910: 13). This suggests that the treatment applied by Le Roy was successful, unlike the case of the above-mentioned Rembrandt, in which blisters and fissures appeared shortly after restoration (Broos and Wadum 1998), which could also explain why the relationship between the Belgian painter-restorer and the "Artist King" turned out to be such a fruitful one.

In fact, although a detailed analysis of this relationship is beyond the scope of the present paper, it is worth mentioning that Ferdinand II continued to resort to Le Roy in the following years, having entrusted with him some of the most valuable items in his collection. These were invariably Old Masters, the artist's specialty, corresponding to a large extent to the 15th and 16th century pictures loaned by the king and his second wife, Elise Hensler (1836-1929), fifteen years later to the *Retrospective Exhibition of Portuguese and Spanish Ornamental Art*, held in Lisbon (Catalogo 1882).

For instance, in 1867, the painter-restorer was commissioned to restore two 16th century paintings on wood depicting

“The “Nativity” and “The Adoration of the Magi”. According to Le Roy, both paintings “had suffered considerably and are much deteriorated”^[19] (Documentos 1867: 21). Therefore, the panels needed to be “refined, cleaned and completely restored”^[20], as well as to be attached to new mahogany cradles, before getting Gothic frames with gilded colonnetes, which were provided by Dulac, a gilder.

The next year, Le Roy would be asked to restore a “Saint Gregory’s Mass”, which was then described as “a very precious painting from the 15th century”^[21] (Documentos 1868: 30). Once again, the picture was in a “poor state of conservation”^[22], hence it was restored and cradled before receiving a Gothic frame, again supplied by Dulac. Years later, it went on temporary display at the 1882 exhibition along with the other two religious scenes restored by Le Roy, where it was highlighted by the German art historian Carl Justi (1888) as one of the most interesting pieces on display in that occasion.

In 1869, two other pictures were sent to Le Roy to be restored, although in this case the details are scarce (Livro de caixa 1871: 531). Notwithstanding, at this point it is fair to say that Le Roy was one of King Ferdinand II’s favourite painter-restorers, especially as regards the restoration of Old Master paintings on wood, which raises a question: was the Belgian the author of the restoration works which in the bibliography were said (without solid references to sources) to have been carried out in Germany?

Conclusion

The reports made by the experts who valued King Ferdinand II’s estate after his death suggest that the substantial size of the galleries of paintings, itself only a part of a much bigger and diversified art collection, was an obstacle in ensuring its excellent state of conservation. Notwithstanding, one must acknowledge that this enthusiastic art collector devoted great dedication and effort to conserving and preserving his paintings, as we have determined that over a period of twenty years the king commissioned more than one hundred and fifty-three conservation and restoration works.

Therefore, although resulting from an exploratory research based on a case study, the large number of restored paintings now identified can be understood as a unique testimony to the existence of preservation and management policies of the king’s collection. These policies included the use of direct measures and actions to assure the preservation of the artworks, which were carried out in Portugal and abroad by both Portuguese and foreign painter-restorers. Among these, António Manuel da Fonseca exerted his dominance until having apparently decided to hand over this duty to his son, António Tomás.

Both FONSECAS had the opportunity of studying abroad which allowed for a privileged immersion in the Old Master’s world: whether in Italy or in Germany, they spent long

hours studying and copying works by artists of the same schools that later they would find in the king’s collection. At a time when imitative inpainting was the most common method of restoration, those experiences fostered a deep artistic and technical understanding of Old Masters that is likely to have been valued by the king. The importance and appreciation of such skill is also clearly attested by the commissions made to German, Italian or Belgian painters, such as Le Roy, who was internationally renowned as a specialist in the restoration of Old Masters, and to whom some of the chef d’oeuvres of the collection were entrusted. Either way, it is likely that all these artists, both Portuguese and foreigners, shared another common denominator, which is the incursion into painting restoration given their need to find a more lucrative occupation than the one they had as painters, draughtsmen, etc.

The scarce details included in the accounting documents that support this research made it challenging to critically analyse the methods, techniques and materials used by these painter-restorers. However, it is undisputable that they unequivocally testify to events themselves, allowing us to bring to light the role played by painter-restorers in the private art market, thus expanding their range of action, from the more commonly discussed institutional field to a much wider arena.

Ultimately, once combined with the king’s after death inventory, auction records and subsequent accounts of the royal collections, the dataset gathered in the course of this research is now set to enable many of the restored paintings to be identified and also to ascertain their location in public museums and private collections, thus allowing for direct analyses and more critical and fundamental characterizations of the painter-restorers’ work.

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Notes

[1]. Now at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (MNAA): 1462 Pint, 1498 Pint and 1466 Pint.

[2]. Original quotation (hereafter O. q.): “estragado”.

[3]. O. q.: “bastante estragado”.

- [4]. O. q.: "muito estragado".
- [5]. O. q.: "muito mal restaurado".
- [6]. O. q.: "contratelado".
- [7]. O. q.: "Pintor de figura".
- [8]. O. q.: "preciozo".
- [9]. O. q.: "pessimos".
- [10]. O. q.: "restabelecida a primitiva originalidade".
- [11]. Now at Mafra National Palace, PNM 1772.
- [12]. O. q.: "imitar com rigorosa exactidão o estylo, o colorido, o toque, do pintor".
- [13]. O. q.: "por ordem de S. Mde. El Rei".
- [14]. O. q.: "retoques".
- [15]. O. q.: "distinto".
- [16]. O. q.: "une grande connaissance des maîtres anciens et avait déjà conquis une réputation à l'étranger à une âge où d'autres se demandent encore quelle carrière ils suivront."
- [17]. O. q.: "restauration d'un tryptique de Van Dyck appartenant à Sa Majesté Dom Ferdinand Roi de Portugal."
- [18]. Now at the MNA, 1479 Pint.
- [19]. O. q.: "avaient beaucoup souffert et se trouvent dans un grand état de dégradation".
- [20]. O. q.: "refiné, nettoyé et restauré complètement".
- [21]. O. q.: "une peinture très précieuse du XVIe Siècle".
- [22]. O. q.: "grand état de détérioration".
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