

# The enigma of Mexican folklore figures in Valencian porcelain

*Antonio Ten Ros, January 2024*

©Antonio Ten Ros

It is still a mystery, which perhaps this work will encourage other researchers to attack it. Museums, private collections and porcelain catalogs of Valencian brands keep, among their pieces attributable to the last third of the 20th century, a number of figures from Mexican folkloric themes unparalleled with other thematic lines and with the porcelain of other countries. Some of these brands are among the best known today. Others, now disappeared, have only left us the testimony of the objects that their artists created and, at most, fragments of an almost forgotten history. With the obvious exception of figures with a folkloric Valencian theme, we do not find, among the figures that have come down to us, another theme as well represented as the Mexican topic.

Without a doubt, Valencian porcelain, more than that of other Spanish regions and followed by Germany as a whole, has become the first in Europe, if we look at the number of figures produced and different brands, since the middle of the 20th century. until the first years of the 21st century. Other factories, such as the French, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Austrian, Danish or Soviet factories, heiresses from the great era of German porcelain, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, and despite their great quality, sometimes exceptional, have had much less diffusion among the European and American public.

Thanks especially to Lladró, Valencian porcelain has indeed been, if not for some aesthetes the most renowned, then at least the most successful worldwide of the 20th century. Since the mid-60s, and especially after the opening, in 1969, of its Porcelain City, in Tavernes Blanques, north of Valencia, on the east coast of Spain, Lladró invaded the world. From its kilns came rivers of porcelain figures destined for all corners of the planet.

But Lladró, although exceptional, is not an isolated case nor is its appearance a singularity. Rather, the Lladró brothers grew up in a time and environment, after the end of the Spanish Civil War and the beginning of World War II, that, surprisingly, gave birth to some of the best Spanish porcelain brands that have ever existed. Indeed, perhaps in contradiction with the Spanish situation in the so-called "hunger years", from 1939 to 1945, and even in the following years, we see hard-paste porcelain, kaolin and feldspar factories beginning to appear in Valencia. We are at the golden age of Spanish porcelain (Ten Ros, 2023 a).

Directly and indirectly responsible for this phenomenon is, without a doubt, the large industrial and artisan ceramic ecosystem of the Manises area, west of Valencia. It is well known (Coll Conesa, 2009) that Manises enjoys a very long tradition of ceramic industries that dates back to the Middle Ages. After the civil war (1936-1939), this tradition permitted the maintenance of technical infrastructure, sources of raw materials and specialized personnel, which allowed the resumption of production in its traditional artistic and utilitarian potteries.

## **CERÁMICAS HISPANIA**

It is in this ecosystem that Cerámicas Hispania appears. Cerámicas Hispania was founded in 1941 in Manises, by four entrepreneurs, Ricardo Trénor de Sentmenat, 10th Marquis of Mascarell de San Juan; Salvador Valero, who would be the managing director; the pharmacist and chemist Eduardo Mira and the sculptor Antonio Testón. It began to produce quality tableware and, since 1943, hard-paste porcelain, which already required kilns capable of reaching the around 1350 degrees Celsius at which the sintering, or crystallization, of such material occurs. Producing artistic porcelain in a ruined Spain without fuel seemed like a utopian enterprise but, not without difficulties, its successive owners achieved singular success both in Spain and abroad. First its objects and

accessories for the table and the house, and soon its figures, became a reference in Spain in the 1940s.

We still don't know if Cerámicas Hispania produced any Mexican folkloric themes among its figures. Hispania was always aesthetically faithful, in its figures, to the classic baroque and romantic Central European porcelain, especially German, throughout the years in which it was active, between 1943 and 1975, when it was acquired by the Lladró brothers. No example we have found yet. Therefore, Hispania is not here of interest for our object of study. Its interest lies, rather, in the fact that its success, sponsored by a marquis, inspired other businessmen to consider their activity honorable and emulate it. Furthermore, its successive crises, especially the last one, the entry of the Lladró brothers and their clear intentions to close it, stimulated the flight of workers capable of managing similar projects in the towns around Manises. The popularization of gas kilns, which greatly simplified and made cooking the pieces cheaper, allowed many of these workers to undertake their adventure alone, with greater or lesser success.

## THE MEXICANS OF NALDA

In a very different technological and economic context, we assist to the birth of our next porcelain brand: the “artistic section” of the “Fábrica de Porcelain y refractarios Víctor de Nalda”, located in Almacera, north of Valencia. The mother company, the industrial Nalda, dedicated to the production of refractory and insulating products for the electrical industry, had its origins in Ramón Canals' company, appeared in this small village of Almacera, in 1898, and already dedicated to the production of small insulators and domestic porcelain. In 1913 the company became the property of Bernardo de Nalda Plá, who followed the industrial path of his predecessor and fought to monopolize the Spanish production of porcelain insulators, until this time imported from Germany and England, at the beginning of the large-scale electrification of Spain.

After the break of the civil war, Bernardo's son, Víctor de Nalda Frígols, transformed the company into a large producer of porcelain dielectrics of all sizes, practically taking over the Spanish market for large insulators for the electrical production, transformation industry. and distribution. As seen in its advertisement, Nalda was too a supplier of “kaolin and sylica”, specialized earths for the ceramic industry. The company grew up with great success and this economic success is what allowed its owners to embark on a new and unexpected adventure.

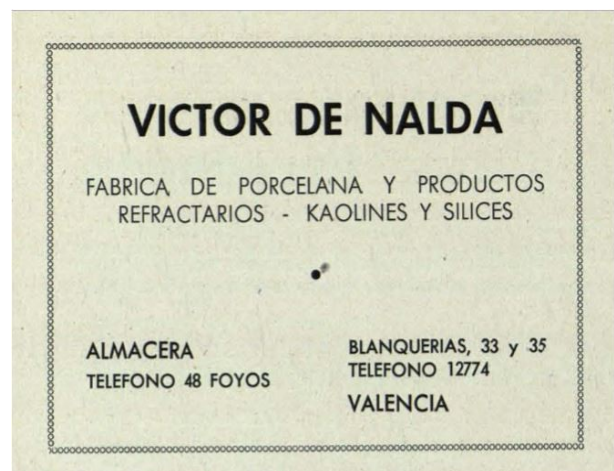


Figure 01. Nalda advertisement. National Architecture Magazine, 1943.

With the example of Hispania in their minds, in 1947 Víctor de Nalda and his wife Ernestina Pujol envisioned a path to prestige and social advancement in the creation, within their successful industrial factory, of an “artistic section”, dedicated from the beginning to sculptural porcelain: to the figures, and with a well-defined target audience: the Spanish elites with high purchasing power. .

The industrial Nalda, to meet its market, had at that time some of the best workers, the best kilns and the best raw materials in Spain. This last point is important. Effectively, Nalda owned their own kaolin, feldspar, silica and clay mines, of very varied composition, in the provinces of Valencia,

Cuenca, Teruel and Guadalajara, which, in the hands of its chemists, fed their gigantic industrial production. A unique case among European brands, Nalda was even a supplier of raw materials for other industries and this is announced in the media of the time.

In his artistic adventure, in an environment different from that of Manises and its artisans,... it lacked the artists. Victor and Ernestina de Nalda find them in the figure and environment of a great sculptor: Vicente Beltrán Grimal and his characteristic style between classical and Art-Deco in his stone and wood sculptures (Diez Arnal s/f). Vicente Beltrán, professor at the School of Fine Arts in Valencia, already before the war, and author of a famous “Allegory of the Republic” installed in the plenary hall of the Valencia City Council, held various positions during the republic and the civil war, for which he was imprisoned from 1939 to 1941. Rehabilitated between 1945 and 1946 and restored to his position as a sculpture professor at the School of Fine Arts, Victor and Ernestina de Nalda went to look for him there to place him at the head of their new artistic section.

But Vicente Beltrán prefers to remain a simple sculptor and supervisor of artistic production and continue as a professor at the School, of which he will be director. For the position he proposes another graduate of the School, José Doménech, who will be the nominal director of the artistic section of Nalda, and also brings in another notable academic sculptor; Fulgencio García López, nicknamed “Garcietta”, already famous in the world of the Fallas festival and who, also a Republican, had shared prison with Beltrán. The section, led by Vicente Beltrán, José Doménech and Fulgencio García, began to produce, since May 1947, figures of extraordinary quality, which fortunately have reached us. Beltrán soon incorporated new sculptors: Amparo Montoro, Amparo Hueso and Francisco Catalá, whose works we have studied in detail (Ten Ros, 2023 b).

But around 1955, all of those sculptors, except Vicente Beltrán himself and Francisco Catalá, who would also soon leave the company, left Nalda for one reason or another and began to collaborate with the newly created company of the brothers Juan, José and Vicente Lladró. also in Almacera.

The details of the Lladró brothers relationship with Nalda were shrouded in the mists of history until our 2023 study (Ten Ros, 2023 a). Vicente Lladró (born March 5, 1933) began working in the artistic section of Nalda at the age of 14, as a simple worker. His brothers Juan (born June 6, 1926) and José (born January 3, 1928) began working at Nalda in early 1949, once their military service had concluded.

They had already worked in the artistic ceramics industry, in the “Azulejera Valenciana” in Meliana, a town north of Almacera, and had begun to attend classes in decoration, drawing, sculpture and ceramic technology at the School of Arts and Crafts, From Valencia. Upon entering Nalda, directly in the artistic section, they begin to work as piece assemblers, decorators and, as they recognize themselves, painters.



Figure 02. Juan Lladró as assembler and decorator in Nalda, in 1950

However, in accordance with the certainly elitist and demanding character of Vicente Beltrán Grimal, Nalda's sculptors and the elite of its painters were rigidly separated from the rest of the workers. All of them graduated from the School of Fine Arts, they created and supervised the rest of the workers without mixing with them.

The Lladrós brought out, along with valuable knowledge, bitter experiences for people who also considered themselves more artists than artisans. In 1953 they left Nalda to found their own company, "Porcelanas Lladró", first modestly in their house in Almacera and then in Tavernes Blanques. Shortly after establishing themselves, they attract to their company the sculptor Fulgencio García "Garcieta", without a doubt the most brilliant of the sculptors around Vicente Beltrán and the one who will create the "Lladró aesthetic", according to the three brothers.

The artistic section of the Nalda company after 1955 differs in important aspects from that of previous years. Except for Francisco Catalá Brines, who will soon also go to Lladró, we no longer know the names of his sculptors. Vicente Beltrán continues to send his best students from the School of Fine Arts, of which he is already director, but he does not collaborate with sculpture models. Nalda evolves towards a more daring, less traditional and central European style. The change has been clearly perceived since 1957, when after its participation as a representative of Spanish porcelain in the exhibition "La ceramique espagnole du XIIIe siècle à nos jours", held from February 15 to April 22 of that year at the Palais Miramar, in Cannes, south of France, and their contact with Pablo Ruiz Picasso, the young sculptors of Nalda set out to produce increasingly daring figures, encouraged by the freedom that the company granted them, without too many concerns about profitability and sales. Central European realism gives way to aesthetic experimentation in themes, forms and decoration.



Figure 03. Nalda. Woman with book.  
Unidentified sculptor.

But the company remains faithful to its elitist character, with figures that are very expensive to produce and market, and with very short runs, some counting in dozens of copies and very few in hundreds, when at this time Lladró was already producing them in thousands. We have not, therefore, any name of the sculptors of Nalda in the period between 1956 and 1966, the year in which an already renowned sculptor, Ramón Inglés Capella, of whom we will talk below, joined the artistic section of Nalda, practically as the sole creator. It is the moment when Nalda addresses new thematic lines, some of which we have already studied (Ten Ros 2023 c) (Ten Ros 2023 d) and in which some of the Mexican-themed figures that interest us here appear.

To our knowledge, Nalda produces four figures or groups of figures of this type: A couple dancing a typical dance from the state of Jalisco, the "Jarabe Tapatío", a Mexican with his rooster, a typical symbol of virility and courage, and two massive figures identified as bookends in the art market, a



dozing Mexican covered in his typical hat and a Mexican woman with her hair tied up in its traditional braid, surrounding a hat with her arms:



Figures 04, 05. Nalda. Couple dancing the “Jarabe Tapatío”, typical of Jalisco State, Mx.



Figures 06, 07. Nalda. Mexican with rooster





Figures 08, 09, 10. Nalda. Mexican couple as bookends

## THE MEXICANS OF LLADRÓ

The Lladró brothers, Juan, José and Vicente, after spending four years the first two and six years the third, in Nalda as laborers, and then as assemblers and decorators, learned artistic, technical, economic and commercial lessons from which would be proud to have used it throughout their careers. The main thing, as Juan liked to emphasize, was that we had to give the public what they demanded and at the lowest price possible. As he would say in an interview, “we did what was most salable.”

They began their solo adventure in 1953, when they left Nalda and began to work in their house in Almácer, where they built the first of their kilns, still unsuitable for firing porcelain at high temperatures, and they struggled to obtain porcelain paste and fuel to produce their products. first figures.

At first, the brothers were responsible for the modeling and decoration of simple little flowers to adorn the lamps of some manufacturers, such as Mariner or Soriano, vases and decorative objects signed by Juan and José, and modest figures signed by Vicente Lladró. Improving their kilns and obtaining their raw materials in Manises and Quart de Poblet, they began to hire assistants among the women of Almácer and Alboraya, and incorporated as sculptors acquaintances among the neighbors who had studied at the School of Arts and Crafts, in Valencia. Names like José Rausell, Antonio Arnal or Amparo Amador appear. Vicente Lladró, together with Manuel Leonor, was in charge of the molds.

Fulgencio García's first sculpture for Lladró, a humble bunny, dates back to 1954. In 1955 he was fully incorporated into the factory as the most prolific sculptor, followed by Amparo Amador. The Lladró exploit their innovations in the decorations of the figures with porcelain tulle, in the style of Dresden porcelain, which they had learned in Nalda and improved considerably, overcoming the fragility of the Nalda tulle with a previous varnish of the fabric. With their tulle figures they begin to become popular and earn money. They opened their first store in Valencia, where they sold their figures and those of Cerámicas Hispania and, in 1958, given the impossibility of expanding their facilities in Almácer, they moved to Tavernes Blanques to a more suitable warehouse.

In the premises of this warehouse they created their first apprentice school and began to train their workers in their work methods, which involved avoiding complexly assembled figures and decorations with enamels, which required successive passes through the kilns: the “Lladró single firing”, which would imitate the factories in Manises and surrounding areas and those of their former students who were not hired by the company. Their next figures exemplify that radical cost savings.

In an episode that is complex to interpret, Fulgencio García leaves Lladró around 1965. The Lladró brothers hire the Fallas sculptor Juan Huerta to replace him and after that they incorporate the sculptors Salvador Furió, Salvador Debón, Francisco Catalá, who came from Nalda, Vicente Martínez, Antonio Ballester "Tónico" and Julián Puche, all Fallas sculptors too.

Vicente Martínez is precisely the first figure with a Mexican folkloric theme that we have news of. In 1968 Vicente Martínez signed the first figures of his “Lupita” and “Panchito” series, which in various poses, additions and decorations would last until the 80s, and in 1972, his “Guadalupana”



lamp. Dated in 1979 we find the “Ceramic Seller”, signed by Juan Huerta, a more complex figure to assemble and review and with richer decoration, which would lead the way for the following:



Figur2s 11, 12. Lladró. Lupita and Panchito. Vicente Martínez, 1969.



Figure 13. Lladró. Guadalupeana Lamp. Vicente Martínez, 1972.



Figura 14. Lladró. Pottery seller, Juan Huerta, 1979.



In 1984, Julián Puche signed another series of “Lupita” and “Panchito”, in which the use of more powerful varnishes and slips can be seen, a good example of the excellence of the brand's chemists and the possibility of access to a wider palette of colors and materials.



Figure 15. Lladró. Lupita. J. Puche, 1984.

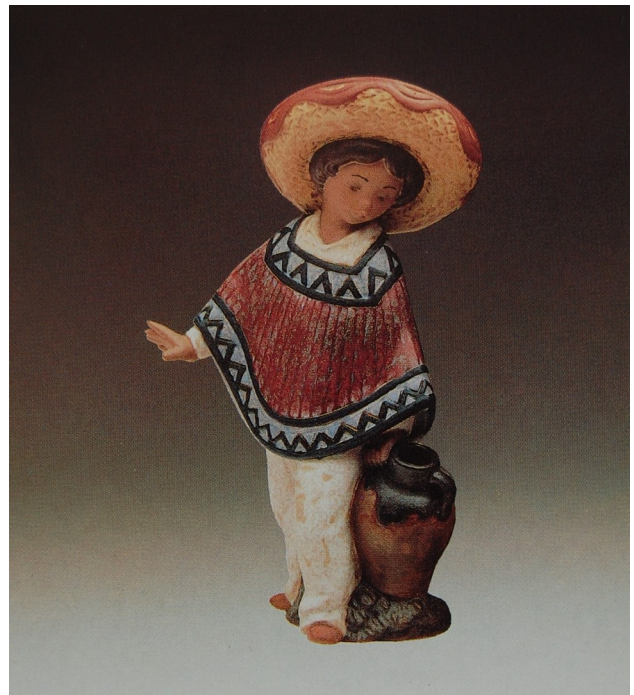


Figure 16. Lladró. Panchito. J. Puche, 1984.

They are followed by others, with different models and finishes, always within the simplicity of dismantling and assembly that Lladró imposed from the beginning, such as those of Chiquita and Pancho with their jugs, from 1987, and Fernando and Julio with their dogs, also from 1987:



Figura 17. Lladró. Chiquita. J. Puche, 1987



Figura 18. Lladró. Pancho. J. Puche, 1987





Figura 19. Lladró. Fernando. J. Puche, 1987



Figura 20. Lladró. Julio. J. Puche, 1987

From the same year 1987, its interpretation of “Jarabe Tapatio” is also one of the most complex and successful figures of Lladró, by number of sales. It is signed by the sculptor Regino Torrijos, a “house” sculptor, of whom we know nearly a hundred figures and whose production extends into the 21st century:



Figure 21. Lladró. Jarabe Tapatio. Regino Torrijos





Figure 22. Lladró. Jarabe Tapatío. Regino Torrijos. 1987. Detail.

At the same time, other thematic series appear in Lladró catalogs, more or less short depending on the markets they wanted to target or after detecting particular aesthetic interests in different countries. The number of figures of Eskimo children is surprising, much less the numerous figures dedicated to the Asian markets, with very prominent ethnic and folkloric features : Japanese, Chinese, Thai... which, given Lladró's enormous production, are blurred in a view already from a distance.

Despite the care that Lladró has taken in cataloging its figures, there are inconsistencies and gaps between its catalogs published on paper and between them and the existing online databases, both from Lladró itself and from its subsidiary companies or independent distributors.

The ones shown here do not necessarily exhaust their production of “Mexican” themes in the period we contemplate, until the 90s of the 20th century, and frequently out-of-print figures can appear on the market or have been published in singular catalogs If so, they which will be added in due course.

## THE MEXICANS OF RAMÓN INGLÉS

Ramón Inglés Capella (1932-1997) is important in our history of the figures of Mexican folkloric types of Valencian manufacture. We can try to attribute to him the authorship of a considerable number of these figures, with great probability in the case of those of the Nalda brand and surely in those from his own brand, “Porcelanas Inglés”, at least ten years before Lladró launched its Mexican series. Unfortunately again, in the published biographies of Ramón Inglés there is no direct relationship with Mexico nor commercial dealings that would justify the abundance of originals on this subject. Perhaps we are missing some key information, which may appear over time. It is also no longer possible to access direct oral sources due to the disappearance of its protagonists. The enigma of the Mexicans will not be solved this way either, but we still have the artist's work, both in Nalda and in his own brand.

Who was Ramón Inglés? Born in Bétera in 1932 (Bueno, s/f), into a modest family with no artistic tradition, he entered the Ceramic School of Manises in 1949, obtaining a scholarship in 1952 that allowed him to study at the School of Fine Arts, in Valencia, where he was a classmate of Lola Sala, future wife of Juan Lladró, and where he remained until the completion of his studies, in 1957.

After receiving various sculpture awards, in 1963 he traveled, as a pensioner from various official and private institutions, to the School of Fine Arts, in Paris. The following year, 1964, upon the recommendation of the Spanish ambassador, José María de Areilza, as his sister Josefina Inglés informs us, he joined the French National Porcelain Manufacture, in Sèvres as a guest sculptor. In this factory they proposed to him, also according to his sister's confession, that he could continue as a staff sculptor. Eager to return to Spain, he was hired as a technician, in 1965, by the company Porcelanas Bidasoa, in Irún, in which he had hard difficulties to accommodate, despite the fact that his sister moved to Irún to accompany him. Depressed, he decided to return to his Valencia.

Through Lola Sala, he came into contact with Juan Lladró, who also offered him a position as a technician, not as a sculptor. At that time, Lladró already had a large team of sculptors at his disposal, who combined work as authors of Fallas, the classic monuments of the Valencia festival, with the sculpture of porcelain figures. He worked “four or five months,” according to Juan Lladró, who confesses not to appreciate the sculptor's style.

Inglés leaves Lladró when he comes into contact, at a trade fair, with Víctor de Nalda Pujol. Nalda did not have known reference sculptors at that time and Inglés practically became its sole creator and supervisor of the work of the rest of the company's creative staff.

But Nalda's artistic section was already facing overwhelming competition from the Lladró brothers, willing to monopolize that market. Furthermore, thanks to the simplification of cooking processes and new small kilns and fuels, small businesses began to proliferate, run by former workers from Hispania and by artists and technicians trained at the Lladró professional school in Tavernes Blanques.

For the figures that have been left to us, Nalda continues to maintain its artistic and technical excellence, with notable exceptions due to the excessive audacity of some of its sculptors, but with very short runs and at unaffordable prices for the market of the moment. The sales crisis and the illness of the historic head of the section, Amparo Ros Puig, lead Víctor and Ernesto de Nalda Pujol to decide to close the artistic section and concentrate on the main business, the manufacture of dielectrics and insulators, also facing tough competition with other brands.

Ramón Inglés leaves Nalda on friendly terms, acquiring the molds of the company's historical figures, which Víctor de Nalda had not wanted to sell to Juan Lladró, and with the commitment to

continue having the materials and the secret chemical formulas for porcelain, Nalda's own enamels and slips. In 1970 he set up a workshop in his house in Bétera and began his solo career. After various more or less classical tests and some use of Nalda molds with his brand, which have left a trail of well-known figures, he begins to impose his own aesthetics. Along with the exaggerated cheeks of his characters, typical of his sculptural style, the well-known raised eyelashes appear that distinguish his following sculptures. It is an innovation typical of a pop-art style from the 80s, much discussed among professionals and which will be not continued. His Mexican figures display these characteristics, which create an aesthetic currently perceived as naive and unrealistic.

From Bétera, Inglés moves his factory to the building of an old mill, part of the Cartuja de ValldeCrist, in Segorbe. In the new adventure , the manufacture of figures is cmade ompatible with the production of porcelain dolls, the famous “Inglés dolls”. In this successful adventure he is supported by his sister Fina, who assumes thr whole responsibility for the textile clothing and the decoration of the porcelains, in a baroque and ornate style that will be very appreciated, given the lack of competition from Lladró in this area.

Since the early 90s, various ailments afflicted Ramón Inglés and considerably reduced his productivity, partially compensated by his sister Fina who, upon Ramón's death in 1997, changed the name of the company to “Fina Inglés Artistic Porcelains”. The brand, however, cannot overcome its delicate financial stability and disappears at the beginning of the 21st century.

The first figures of Mexican folkloric themes by Ramón Inglés have an undoubted stylistic resemblance to figures by Nalda previously presented. Both the sculptural and decorative details, plus the preferential use of porcelain slips over classic enamels, also suggest an aesthetic continuity that with high probability attests to the authorship of the same hand. As in so many other Valencian porcelain companies, except in the case of Lladró, there are no Local History studies, nor are there any Oral History testimonies that allow the historian to establish unequivocal links, nor historical-artistic archives from which a clear image of the chronology and authorship can be attested. Ramón Inglés, creative soul of the company, employed anonymous sculptors as assistants. We have not received their names or the dates of their time at the company. We are left with his sculptures, sometimes aesthetically surprising, but in their materiality they configure a period of Art History that, with greater or lesser aesthetic value, must emerge from obscurity.



Figures 23, 24. Inglés. Mexican man resting.





Figures 25,26. Inglés. Mexican man sitting.



7

Figures 27,28. Inglés. Mexican woman with jugs.



Figures 29, 30. Inglés. Mexican boy with rooster.





Figures 31,32. Inglés. Mexican man and woman hugging.



## THE MEXICANS OF PORCELANAS NADAL

Porcelanas Nadal is, along with Lladró and by volume of active catalogue, the most important porcelain brands currently in Valencia. According to their own testimonies, collected on their website, the company was founded in Manises, in 1915, by José Asunción Marqués (1890-1961) and his wife, Margarita Nadal. With various discontinuities in its production, Nadal remains in the hands of the founding family, first with José Asunción Nadal, since 1975 with Enrique Asunción Gabriel. In January 1994, the company reappeared as “Creaciones Nadal SL” and, since 2020, Pablo Enrique Asunción Chilet appears as at its head.

Throughout more than a century that it attributes, without further details, to his history, Nadal has produced and continues to produce figures of many thematic lines. On his website he shows a huge collection of figures, in different materials and with very different aesthetics, from classic realism to caricature.

It is notable, in our context, his “Viva México” collection. It includes 24 different figures, plus some other isolated ones, of the same type, within the framework of this comic aesthetic with naive nuances. They have been, however, executed in less expensive resins instead of in porcelain. Despite this, its existence contributes to the atmosphere of surprise brought about by the overrepresentation of Mexican topics in the porcelain art of the Valencian Community.



Figure 33. Nadal. “Let's Play”. Resins.

Neither in its published documents, nor its catalogs nor in company sources, consulted without success, have we found references to the context in which the Mexican-themed figures that we know were executed. Also, we have not being capable of assure the dates of production nor the artists under all these figures. It seems, from oral testimonies, that Nadal tried, in the 80s or 90s, to build a figure factory in Mexico itself and even proposed, without succes, its direction to a well known Spanish specialist who already had worked for them. This factory does not seem to have left public documents in Spain.

This is a clear “Mexican connection” that, if the archives of the Asunción family businesses become accessible, would contribute, at least to clarifying, within the framework of this brand, a small facet of our mystery, which in other brands is still impossible to clarify .We have been left, then, with the figures themselves, identified with the Nadal anagram impressed, and in one case with the anagram engraved with a graver on the porcelain.

So far we have found five figures: a seated Mexican man and a Mexican woman, in completely white enameled porcelain, without further decoration; two figures of children, standing, with costumes decorated in intense colors, and a child accompanied by the significant Mexican rooster.



Figure 34. Nadal. Mexican man sitting.



Figure 35. Nadal. Mexican woman sitting.



Figure 36. Nadal. Mexican boy.



Figure 37. Nadal. Mexican girl.



Figure 38. Nadal. Mexican boy with rooster.

### THE MEXICANS OF SANTA RUFINA

Porcelanas Santa Rufina S.L. is a company established on 04/16/1987 in Aldaia, Valencia, and dissolved in 2002. Among its notable production of figures, of uneven quality, which have left traces in secondary markets, it has arrived to us, at least, a couple of Mexicans sitting. The most notable thing, for our purposes, is the fact that the woman, unlike the man, seems to have come out of molds identical to those of Nadal's seated Mexican. His decoration, however, adds a debatable gold decoration that detracts from, rather than contributes to, Nadal's aesthetics:



Figure 39. Santa Rufina. Mexican man.



Figura 40. Santa Rufina. Mexican woman.



## THE MEXICANS OF PORCELANA ARTÍSTICA LEVANTINA (PAL)

Porcelana Artística Levantina S.L. was established in Alboraya (Valencia) as a limited company in May 1972 and appeared in the online registers as a trademark in 1976. It ceased its activity, according to the Commercial Registry of Valencia, in August 2020. Like most Valencian porcelain brands, it has not left public records of his intense artistic activity. Its figures, realistic in nature, have a certain naive air.

Among its enormous production, we have been able to find only two “Mexican” theme figures. Those collected here were made of porcelain stoneware, of large size and weight .



Figure 41. PAL. Mexican girl.



Figure 42. PAL. Mexican boy with rooster.

## OTHER VALENCIAN BRANDS

Along with these brands, some more claim a certain prominence, if only because they contribute to further increasing the mystery that still surrounds the proliferation of Mexican folkloric types in Valencian porcelain. Certainly Nalda, Lladró, Inglés and Nadal, and less Santa Rufina and PAL, have left us an incredible number of Mexican-themed figures, our main interest, as we have been able to verify from the figures reproduced here so far see here. But they are not the only ones. Unfortunately, the lack of documentary records continues to affect our history and we neither know sculptors nor publication dates.

Brands such as Porcelanas Sanbo S.L., from Aldaia, west of Valencia, who seems have ceased its production in 2005, or still others, already not included here, such as Casades, Porcelanas Artísticas Turís or even Nao, Lladró's second brand, thus contribute their grain of sand to the enigma of Valencian Mexican porcelain. Their quality, often debatable, does not diminish the unusual breadth of the phenomenon we have shown to the readers eyes.



Figures 43, 44. Sanbo. Mexican child with dog.

Our knowledge stops where we lack the figures themselves. Fortunately, the continued monitoring of the new means of buying and selling that the Internet has made fashionable, and the increasingly powerful online image search engines, allows us to largely limit the future scope of the mysterious phenomenon, which has not occurred, or not with as much relevance, in brands from other regions

or countries. Thus, the Valencian porcelain case remains a unique case, for one more reason, among European porcelain brands. Mexican types, still unknown, will continue to appear on the secondary market, without a doubt. But the experience of many years allows us to affirm that, unless there is a major surprise, its scope will be reduced

The phenomenon, although much smaller in size, is not exclusive to Valencian porcelain. We have not yet found examples of other Spanish brands contributing to the enigma of the Mexicans in Spanish porcelain. If they appear, may be added in successive editions of this study. Other European brands, such as Royal Doulton or Goebel, have also created some figures on this theme, but they fall outside our limits.

As an exotic example, however, we can collect, to conclude, a surprising figure from the Dulevo Porcelain brand (Дулевский фарфор. Likino-Dulevo, USSR-Russia), founded in 1832 by Terenty Kuznetsov and currently, as stated in its web, the largest porcelain factory in Russia. From Dulevo we have been able to find a dancing couple that, even labeled “Mexicans”, looks like a mixed Mexican-Russian couple!



Figure 45. Dulevo Porcelain (Дулевский фарфор, URSS-Russia). Couple dancing



## REFERENCES

Bueno, Baltasar (s.f)

Biografía de Ramón Inglés Capella (1932-1997) (in Spanish)

available in:

<https://www.centredeestudislocalsdebetera.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/INGLES-CAPELLA-RAMON-2.pdf>

Coll Conesa, Jaime (2009)

La cerámica valenciana (Apuntes para una síntesis) (in Spanish)

Asociación Valenciana de Cerámica AVEC - GREMIO

available in:

<https://www.avec.com/wp-content/uploads/LaCeramicaValenciana.pdf>

Diez Arnal J.

Personajes valencianos. Vicente Beltrán Grimal (in Spanish)

available in:

<http://www.jdiezarnal.com/valenciapersonajesvicentebeltrangrimal.html#>

Lladró (1998)

*La voluntad creadora* (in Spanish)

Tavernes Blanques: Lladró Comercial S.A.

Lladró, Dolz, Vicente (2018, 3<sup>a</sup> ed.)

*Así lo viví y así lo cuento* (in Spanish)

Valencia: Gran Angular Industries Culturals S.L.

Porcelana Nadal. Web oficial

available in:

<http://www.nadalporcelana.com/inicio>

Revista Nacional de Arquitectura (1943) (in Spanish)

Año II, n.º 23, noviembre 1943

available in:

<https://www.coam.org/media/Default%20Files/fundacion/biblioteca/revista-arquitectura-100/1941-1946/docs/revista-completa/revista-nacional-arquitectura-1943-n23.pdf>

Ten Ros, Antonio (2023 a)

A Hundred Pesetas. The History of Valencian Porcelain after the War

available in:

<https://www.uv.es/ten/pve/porcelain/>

Ten Ros, Antonio (2023 b)

The magic of the first biscuits in Victor de Nalda porcelain

available in:

<https://www.uv.es/ten/pve/ebiscuits.html>

Ten Ros, Antonio (2023 c)

Regional costumes in Halda porcelain

available in:

<https://www.uv.es/ten/tr/tre.html>

Ten Ros, Antonio (2023 d)  
The bookends in Víctor de Nalda porcelain  
available in:  
<https://www.uv.es/ten/sj/sje.html>

## CREDITS OF THE PICTURES

Antonio Ten Ros: 01,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10,23,24,25,26,29,30,31,32,34,35,38,39,40,41,42,43,44.

Lladró: 02,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22.

Antiquarium: 27,28.

Nadal: 33.

Dulevo (Дулевский фарфор): 45

\*\*\*\*\*

© ***Text and figures: Antonio Ten Ros***

*TEN ROS, Antonio, (January, 2023)*  
*The enigma of Mexican folklore figures in Valencian porcelain*  
DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.21366.37440  
available in:  
<https://www.uv.es/ten/mx/mxe.html>

*Ten Ros Web page:*  
<https://www.uv.es/ten>

\*\*\*\*\*