

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

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At the beginning of 1953, or perhaps at the end of 1952, it is not clear but it does not matter, an energetic Juan Lladró Dolz, barely 27 years old, is negotiating his salary with Don Víctor de Nalda Frígols. He had been working in the artistic porcelain section of the company "Victor de Nalda Fábrica de Porcelana y Refractarios" for about three years. He recognizes he had become the most experienced figure assembler and decorator and thought he deserved a pay raise. At that time, he testifies, he earned 1,150 pesetas (Spanish currency before the Euro) a month and asks to go up to 1,300 pesetas.

"I'm not going to give it to you, and if you don't like it, you stay at home," answers Don Víctor, who offers him 1,200. "I stayed at home," don Juan tells me. 100 pesetas are the trigger for a decision that would change the history of porcelain and give rise to the best-known Valencian company in the world, Lladró. Lladró has already sold more porcelain figurines than any other company in history.

Juan Lladró's break with Nalda had been brewing in his mind for at least a year before, or almost since his entry, and that of his brothers, in the "artistic section" of the Almacera company, whose main production, and the base of its success, were the porcelain insulators for power lines that a Spain desperately needed at the beginning of large-scale electrification. Juan felt that his work as a decorator was not valued.

Víctor de Nalda Grifols, Juan Lladró Dolz and, among them, the sculptor Fulgencio García López, "Garcieta", are the main protagonists of our story. The surprising history of Spanish post-war artistic porcelain, at the beginning of the 40s. It is a history of artists, but it is also a history of innovators, scientists and managers. To produce hard-paste porcelain, the true kaolin porcelain, earth, chemical products and kilns that reached at least around 1350 degrees Celsius of temperature were needed, and up to three or four different firings for each piece. It represented a real technological and economic challenge, as well as an aesthetic one. Doing it on a large scale in a country without fuel like post-war Spain is almost a miracle. That miracle was operated in Valencia, in the East coast of Spain, facing the Mediterranean Sea.

HISPANIA CERAMICS

But those were not the only protagonists. Incredibly, with the European war at its decisive moments, the post-Civil War period witnessed the birth of the first great Spanish porcelain factory, Hispania. "Cerámicas Hispania" (1941-1991) began to produce earthenware and hard porcelain in Manises in 1943, by the hand of four men: Ricardo Trénor y Sentmenat, X Marqués de Mascarell de San Juan, Salvador Valero, who would be the managing director, the pharmacist and chemist Eduardo Mira and the painter and sculptor Antonio Testón Sixto.

The success of Cerámicas Hispania is explained to a large extent because it was born in a technically prepared environment, that of the ceramic industrial town of Manises (west of Valencia), with its suppliers and specialists in raw materials and earth treatment, its kilns and associated technologies and its professionals trained in all the phases of the ceramic process, and grew on its bases. Starting to make porcelain objects, necessarily expensive, in the ruined Spain of the immediate post-war period and with a European war on the horizon seems, at first sight, a utopian undertaking. Its visionary promoters did not see it that way.

At the beginning, Cerámicas Hispania continues the ceramic tradition of Manises, producing crockery, vases, coffee and tea sets and decorative centers, in quality earthenware, with experiments in hard porcelain. It was a tradition with deep artisan roots and would continue to be so to this day. The models were copied and reproduced over and over again in the pottery. But, despite explaining many things, it is not this “pottery” tradition that interests us, nor is it the object of our study. The company "Cerámicas Hispania" was born with a vocation for excellence. Utilitarian at the beginning, it was adapting to the demands of the layers of society less hit by the civil war and, after the world war, to those of the European society accustomed to those luxuries. Its economic success would lead to dedicate part of the employees to more elitist adventures, to the figures.



Figure 1. Coffee set. Ceramics Hispania

It is a model that European porcelain, from its birth in Dresden, would repeat: going from utilitarianism, from table service and complementary objects, to pure artistic expression, with true sculptural and decorative works for elites. Hispania also followed this path. We keep splendid sets of earthenware and utilitarian porcelain, great services included, from the Manises factory. Almost two hundred workers were dedicated to different specialties.



Figures 2 and 3. Hispania. Copies of a German original.

Soon, a new section was born, exclusively dedicated to figurines and artistic objects. Led by Testón and other sculptors, seven or eight, including Fulgencio García, Antonio Arnal, a man named Granero, at the beginning, and in the last times José Luís de las Heras, Miquel Navarro and even a young Japanese woman called Junko, figures would begin to appear in the domestic market, mostly copied from German models or in its style.



Figure 4. Concert. Cerámicas Hispania. Unidentified sculptor.

Cerámicas Hispania allowed itself few stylistic liberties. His production follows the Central European aesthetic over and over again with innovations that are more utilitarian than sculptural. In its figures, the company remained unshakable and faithful to that tradition until its sale to the successful Lladró brothers in 1975, due to an internal and sales crisis and the difficult fit of two new partners who joined after the departure of Testón and the Valero manager, one of them Alfonso Pastor Galvañón, who also served as technical director. The last artistic director was Emilio Portolés.

Juan Lladró confesses that he took advantage of the opportunity and bought the company for its building sites, located in what is now Carrer de Ribarroja, in Manises. Until he urbanized them, the Lladró family changed the course of production and dedicated Hispania to producing, in their words, "large animal figures", which did not compete with their own brands. Life-size figures of purebred dogs and other animals still appear in the international and Spanish art markets under the Cerámicas Hispania brand.

Workers of Cerámicas Hispania, in its successive crises, left it and gave rise to more than twenty workshops and companies, in Manises and surrounding towns, most of them short-haul and whose works continue to appear on sales portals. without any brand, or with the simple mention "Made in Spain", dedicated to souvenir shops, or with their own brands. The sculptor Antonio Testón himself left the company to found Cerámicas Arcola, still active in the hands of his grandson and of a more industrial nature, in the years when it seems that Fulgencio García had already been sculpting figures for Hispania for some time.

The historical-artistic memory of Cerámicas Hispania has been preserved almost exclusively in its classical, baroque and romantic figures, very “German”, which are the ones that appear on those same internet portals and in auction houses.



Figure 5. Man with apple. Hispania.



Figure 6. Shepherd. Hispania.

The great production that the company had at the beginning of the 60s, before Lladró dominated the market, means that these figures and decorative objects still circulate in good numbers. Table china, due to its utilitarian nature, is much more perishable and few complete sets are preserved outside museums.

VICTOR DE NALDA

Our next company, on this tour of post-war Valencian artistic porcelain, should be the "Victor de Nalda Porcelain Factory for Electricity and Refractory Products", then "Victor de Nalda Porcelain and Refractory Factory" and then "Nalda S.A.", from Almacera (a small town 5 km north of Valencia).



Figure 7. Insulators. Nalda.

The company was born in 1913, when Bernardo de Nalda Pla bought the Ramón Canals factory, founded in 1898, which already specialized in dielectric material, with a small section of utilitarian and artistic porcelain. His son, Víctor de Nalda Frígols, transformed it, after the war, into a large supply company for the electrical industry, the largest in Spain, together with the "Sociedad Española Gardy", from Meliana, until 1923 "Gran Fabrica de Mosaico Nolla", more focused on small insulators and material for domestic electrical installations.

Nalda, as a great manufacturer of industrial porcelain, had something that few of these companies in the world could enjoy: it had its own mines in Chera and Sot de Chera, in Valencia; Talayuelas, Algarra, Landete and Santa Cruz de Moya, in Cuenca, as well as exclusive contracts with various owners in Guadalajara. Special kaolin came out of all these mines, with different chemical compositions and, above all, the clays for the characteristic Nalda porcelain slips, technically "engobes" in Spanish. To the wife of this first Víctor, Doña Ernestina Pujol, true promoter of the adventure, we owe the appearance of the artistic section, which was maintained by her son, the second Víctor de Nalda, until the decorative porcelain section disappeared definitively in 1971.



Figures 8 and 9. Nalda's first figures. Ballerinas. Sculptor Vicente Beltran. 1947.

The artistic section of Nalda was born, surely, for reasons of prestige and social advancement of the owners of the company. Constantly protected by Doña Ernestina, it was “her hobby”, according to Fina Inglés, sister of the sculptor Ramón Inglés Capella. Nalda opened a luxury boutique, exclusively with her figures, on Calle de la Paz, in the center of Valencia, with inordinate prices, which sold little but which, encouraged by the presence of its owner, became a meeting place for part of the educated bourgeoisie, and even the Valencian nobility.

Its appearance is, therefore, atypical in the dynamics of European artistic porcelain factories, and it marked the way for the following initiatives that were born in Valencia, especially Lladró. Nalda was not born due to the evolution of a pottery tradition, or as its substitution, at the tables of the bourgeoisie, for the noblest pieces of porcelain, but for aesthetic and image motivations, within a very powerful and successful company in the electrical insulators industry, the true and inexhaustible source of financing for Ernestina's hobby. On the contrary. His few “table” and decorative objects, such as sets of jugs and glasses, trays, ashtrays, vases or floor lamps, date from his sculptural splendor and are the result of a failed attempt to profit from workers and techniques.

This is a key point, which explains its technical and artistic excellence. Without economic problems, with the best kaolin, special clays and kilns, with a quasi-monopolistic presence in the Spanish electricity market for many years, and with competent technical personnel in all areas of its industry, it had to achieve the best on an artistic level.

Víctor and Ernestina found it in the sculptor Vicente Beltrán Grimal, a great artist, already well-known in Valencia, some of whose creations can be seen on the façade and halls of the Valencia City Hall, the Ateneo Mercantil or the Museum of Fine Arts, in Valencia. .



Figure 10. Sculptures by Vicente Beltrán. Facade of the Valencia City Hall.

Vicente Beltrán, whose biography as a left-wing intellectual and academic sculptor is well known, even though his numerous production of sculptures for Nalda was practically ignored until now, began the postwar period as a prisoner of the Franco regime in the Modelo Prison in Valencia. A significant event for our history, there he coincided, among other artists, with two important figures in this story: the sculptors Fulgencio García "Garcieta" and José Doménech, also imprisoned for ideological reasons and accusations of insignificant political relevance.

Released, as were other artists in successive years, including the two aforementioned sculptors, through the intercession of the famous musician Maestro José Serrano and "a member of the clergy" from Sueca, his town, in 1941, Beltrán recovered finally, in 1946, his teaching position at the School of Fine Arts in Valencia.

There he looked for him Víctor de Nalda, who offered him the direction of the new artistic section of Nalda. Vicente Beltrán, yearning to resume his academic activity at the School, of which he would be director, handed over the position to José Doménech, remaining as sculptor and supervisor, while attracting, in addition to Fulgencio García, as an established sculptor already famous for his works for the world-known valencian artistic event, the "Fallas", some of his disciples in Fine Arts School, especially Amparo Hueso and Amparo Montoro, the last a great artist and his favorite student, with extensive work in Nalda.



Figure 11. The bear and the arbutus tree. Nalda. Sculptor Vicente Beltran.

Always looking for the best, Víctor de Nalda also embarked on his artistic adventure the famous ceramicist and chemistry expert Alfonso Blat Monzó, who was already working as a chemist and engineer for Nalda in the industrial section. With the enormous diversity of materials, kaolins and earths in very different and secret formulations, which were available within the company, and with its industrial kilns, in which it took advantage of the constant firing of technical porcelain to locate the refractory boxes in which artistic porcelain was fired, Alfonso Blat is a key piece in the singularity of the unique aesthetic characteristics of Nalda's patinas, colors, slips and crystallizations, immediately recognizable and still technically surprising for specialists.

After a more classicist first stage, until well into the second half of the 1950s, the time when Beltrán and his style had the greatest prominence, and in which the usual enamels and varnishes in European porcelain tradition were preferably used, begins the splendor of Nalda's "engobes", or slips.

In fact, most of the Nalda pieces, figures and objects, from the late 50s and throughout the 60s can be identified by these slips of full, intense colors, full-bodied, with ochres, browns and deep blacks that their decorators do not stop applying to their traditional figures and to the experimental sculpture that their young sculptors are launching. There is no other porcelain factory in the world with patinas and colors like those of Nalda, resulting from Blat's mastery and the competence of the company's technicians, headed by Bernardo de Nalda, Víctor's brother. With the appearance of the ceramic industry and specialized trade in ceramic materials, well into the 70s, other porcelain brands had access to formulations similar to those that Alfonso Blat created for Nalda.

Beltrán and his art-deco sculpture and Blat, with his innovative materials, slips and colors and his firing techniques, allowed Nalda not to fall into the mere imitation of Central European porcelain, which Cerámicas Hispania did fall into.



Figure 12. Characteristic slips. Nalda. Vase.



Figure 13. Complete crystallization. Nalda. Violetero.

But soon, unfortunately, the ordeal of egos among the artists would begin, from which the great beneficiary would be Lladró. The most brilliant and creative of the first three sculptors of Nalda, Beltrán, García and Doménech, was undoubtedly Fulgencio García López, a prolific sculptor and artist from Fallas, with a complex biography. The primacy of Doménech, a more mediocre sculptor but Beltrán's protégé, over García, introduced an element of disunity that did not go unnoticed by Juan Lladró.

Nalda began producing figures in May 1947, when the first of a series of eight splendid sculptures by Vicente Beltrán came out of the kilns, in which his characteristic and recognizable style shines through, especially in the spectacular female nudes called "Leda and the Swan" and the "Ottoman". They were followed by another seven or eight by Fulgencio García, with Doménech as a "collaborator" and as author of copies of German originals, until he began his own production, also of a more classical nature, making extensive use of the porcelain tulle technique, characteristic of the Dresden figures, which Beltrán had already begun to use from his first figures. It is an early wink to the tradition of Central European porcelain, which Nalda found difficult to master and which would be learned, used and improved by the Lladró, as can still be seen in the figures preserved from his first stage.

Throughout 1948, Vicente Beltrán continued as the most prolific sculptor, with Fulgencio García still in a classicist style, to gradually give prominence to his disciples and to another great sculptor, Francisco Catalá Blanes, also graduated from the School of Fine Arts. Garcieta, and his genius, although he continues to create incredible sculptures of impressive artistic and technical quality, real challenges for the company's assemblers, decorators and technicians, is losing out to Nalda. His name ceased to appear as a Nalda sculptor at the beginning of 1952. He would continue as a sculptor for Cerámicas Hispania and soon for the Lladró brothers when they began to take off from 1953.



Figure 14. Leda and the swan. Nalda. Sculptor Vicente Beltran, 1947.



Figure 15. Ottoman. Nalda. Sculptor Vicente Beltran. 1947.

Although highly supported by the industrial section and its specialists, the artistic section of the Nalda company is small. In addition to the sculptors, first 12 people and then more than 30, elaborate the cutting apart, assembly, modeling and retouching of the pieces. Together with them, some of the best and most talented painters from the School of Fine Arts in Valencia, led by Vicente Beltrán. They have left a record, in his preserved work, and especially in the features of his figures, of the exceptional quality and requirement in which Beltrán placed the production of Nalda.

First in more mechanical tasks and then in more artistic tasks, men and women from the villages Almacera, Alboraya and Tavernes Blanques, began to work in the section, training under the direction of Doménech and Beltrán. Precisely three of them would be the young brothers Juan, José and Vicente Lladró, first assemblers and then decorators, until they left in 1953 to settle on their own in their house in Almacera. Juan Lladró, who acknowledges his debt to Beltrán, whom he always praised, is proud that in 1950 none of the figures he mounted cracked when they were fired in the kilns, nor did the joints of the pieces show, as can be seen, exaggeratedly, in some of the first Nalda figures that have come down to us.



Figure 16. Couple of the tree. Nalda. Sculptor Fulgencio Garcia. 1948.



Figure 17. Hortelana. Nalda. Sculptor Fulgencio Garcia.



Figure 18. Hunter. Nalda. Sculptor Fulgencio Garcia.

Faithful to his elitist origins, Nalda produced figures that were not commercial at all, in very short series and mostly of excessive technical difficulty, but of incredible stylistic variety and originality, until 1971, which fortunately remain to follow their different stages and managers. Hand in hand with Beltrán, who collaborated with Nalda until his death in 1963, his students create art for Nalda. Unfortunately, and although his works remain, many of those names have been lost to history, perhaps at the expense of preserving and opening the Nalda family archives, but oral tradition keeps the testimonies and the certainty of their origin. academic. Nalda never repressed the aesthetic experimentation of his sculptors and painters, the vast majority of whom came from the School of Fine Arts, a higher education center, on occasion with aesthetically dubious results, judging by the pieces preserved.



Figures 19 and 20. Dancers. Nalda. Sculptress Amparo Montoro.



Figure 21. Hunter. Nalda. Detail of the face in two figures. Unidentified painters.

Except in a few large-circulation series, rare in Nalda, the decoration of the figures shows notable differences between them, testimony to the freedom and materials that painters and decorators had, scarcely limited by technical and firing considerations that did limit other European factories. Juan Bautista Llorens Riera, for example, a founding member of the important collective of artists known in Valencia as "Els Set", a group emerged from the School of Fine Arts, that in 1957 married to the Nalda sculptress Amparo Montoro, was a painter in Nalda from 1954.

After the first figures, many of those from the intermediate period, between Beltrán and Ramón Inglés, still surprise, judging by those preserved to this day, for their stylistic variety, typical of the natural daring of young academic sculptors in the hectic artistic environment of the Valencia of that time. Unlike Cerámicas Hispania, Nalda thus exemplifies the artistic currents that circulated in Valencian porcelain sculpture and had the courage to materialize them in figures and commercial objects, until Lladró imposed his styles, as can be followed in the works that we have analyzed.



Figure 22. Silhouette. Nalda.

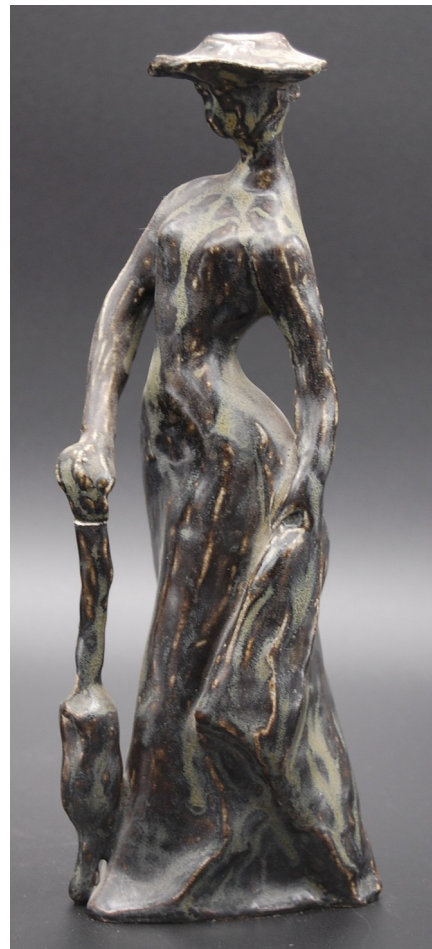


Figure 23. Woman in black. Nalda.

Nalda's artistic section, Doña Ernestina's hobby, was, however, a money-loss machine, maintained by the splendid business of insulators at a time of expansion of the electrical industry in Spain. The number of copies was small, sometimes a few dozen pieces, as attested by the labels on the numbered pieces, or even less in some especially difficult challenges. Not the slightest mistake was allowed and hundreds of figures ended up broken, so that they would not appear defective on the market. Never, until the end, was a figure sold with defects, as many other brands did. A few, such as his heavy bookends, images of monks, scribes, human heads, egyptian vases or mexican men and women, apparently from Ramón Inglés' time as a sculptor, reach thousands of reproductions and continue to appear, their history practically ignored, in the present day art business.

Victor de Nalda, businessman at last, tries, however, alternative sources of financing. He reaches an agreement with José Vidal, a well-known businessman and owner of the "Casa de las Comuniones" a well known party clothes store in Valencia, for the financing and sale of his figures to a wide public. He sets up a large network of representatives, which Lladró would take advantage of, who share Spain and some European country and go to the sector's fairs. At the same time, with Ernestina omnipresent, he approaches figures such as Manuel González Martí, ceramicist, director of the National Museum of Ceramics and president of the cultural association "Lo Rat Penat", and other great men of the time, in search of artistic and social recognition and endorsement.



Figure 24. Horses. Nalda. Sculptor Fulgencio Garcia. 1949.

His first major media milestone occurred in 1957, when Nalda was selected by a committee, with the participation of González Martí, to represent Spanish porcelain in the exhibition "La ceramique espagnole du XIIIe siècle à nos jours", held from 15th February to April 22 of that year at the Palais Miramar, in Cannes. He brought his spectacular figure with two rearing horses, a sculpture by Fulgencio García, made in 1949, of which very few and very expensive pieces were made, due to their enormous technical difficulty, and some works by Beltrán and his disciples.



Figures 25 and 26. "Picassian figurines". Nalda. Unidentified sculptor.

It is noteworthy that Pablo Ruíz Picasso collaborated in the presence and work of this exhibition, presenting his “Plats espagnols”, in ceramics, and maintaining close contact with Victor de Nalda. From this relationship came various "Picassian" style figures by Nalda and some objects such as lamps or vases, fortunately preserved.

The section, in the 60s, however, was languishing in its elitism and high cost, in front of the populism of the Lladró, which had Fulgencio García and Juan Huerta as reference sculptors, and their demolition prices, until before Víctor de Nalda Pujol, the sculptor Ramón Inglés Capella, born in Bétera, a town near Valencia, introduced himself. Ramón Inglés at that time had returned to Valencia after passing through Paris, Sèvres and Porcelanas Bidasoa (Irún, Basque Country) around 1966, and had even begun, as we shall see, to work at Lladró.



Figure 27. The magic of Nalda “engobes”. The fisherman. Nalda. Sculptor Ramón Inglés.

The Ramón Inglés period, a tireless creator, as the main sculptor in Nalda, is easily recognizable in most of his preserved works. The section, however, failed to recover from its elitism and high prices, its low production and its poor sales. Ramón Inglés became independent, setting up his own company together with his sister Fina, a well known painter, in his workshop in Bétera, in 1970.

Nalda, with its top painters and decorators, was still launching innovative experiences in porcelain art, with original objects for everyday use and decoration, in which painting assumed a more leading role, and even curious porcelain plaques to hang on the walls, such as the Sagrada Familia presented at the figure 28.

Inspired by this, the technical section tried to innovate in its products, absorbing the workers and producing construction materials such as aesthetic porcelain covering plates for building facades, in which the mastery of slips, enamels, varnishes, was recognized. colors, textures and aesthetics of the artistic section.



Figure 28. Holy Family. Nalda. Plates on table. Unidentified decorator.

In vain. Despite the simplification and automation of technical processes and the improvement in firing processes represented by tunnel kilns, decorated slabs were too expensive as a lining material in construction. The final blow was dealt by the illness and death of the manager in whose hands the artistic section was in charge, Amparo Ros Puig, a worker at Nalda since the beginning of the section, who disappeared in 1971. That meant, the protagonists confess, the end of Nalda's artistic adventure, despite the fact that, In 1972, Víctor de Nalda Pujol still considered one of the Fine Arts painters who had already collaborated with the company as a possible artistic director in a hypothetical new stage of the section, which had no major consequences.

Affected by the appearance of stiff competition in the industrial insulators sector, Nalda continued with its technical division of dielectrics until its disappearance as a manufacturer in the 1990s, the company maintaining commercial activities related to the sector.

LLADRO

The resounding, and historical, "I stayed home" by Juan Lladró changes, in effect, the history of artistic porcelain, worldwide, if one looks at the number of pieces sold and the influence of Lladró from the 1960s to the early of the 21st century.

Juan, the soul of the team formed by the three Lladró brothers, was born on June 6, 1926. At the age of 15 he began to work "painting tableware" in a Ceramics company, established in Meliana, a village near Almacera, named "Azulejera Valenciana", owned by Bernardo Vidal. José, the second brother, born on January 3, 1928, began working there shortly after. Vicente, born on March 5, 1933, helped his parents on the family farm until he was able to enter Nalda as an operator. They will spend 4 years at Azulejera Valenciana, during which, as they admit, they keep their eyes and ears wide open and learn techniques for handling ceramic materials, painting and firing, which will be very useful in the future.

Shortly after joining the Azulejera Valenciana, and on the advice of his mother, Juan, who wanted to be a mechanic worker, enrolled in 1941 at the School of Arts and Crafts in Valencia, where he would attend "7 or 8 years, two hours per night" in various courses, above all, he recalls, with the professors Juan Bolos and Enrique Navas Escuriet, studying "decorative composition". José and Vicente follow in their footsteps at school, José specializing in sculpture, with Professor Roberto Rubio Rosell, and Vicente in drawing, with Salvador Tuset, even though his passion, already taken over by his brothers, was sculpture. Vicente will be the most sculptor of the three and the one with the most artistic work preserved.

At the school they enroll in the subjects closest to ceramics and attend a course by the ceramicist and professor Alfonso Blat. From Blat, outside of class because that subject was not on the agenda, they obtained valuable advice on the construction of porcelain firing kilns, a fact that will be key in his professional career, as recognized by Juan Lladró himself.

In 1949, after military service, Juan started working in Nalda, where his younger brother, Vicente, was already working. José enters next. They begin with the molds and the assembly of the figures to become decorators. Nalda's sculptors, and the painters specializing in the more difficult parts of decoration, were an "educated" elite within the company and unskilled workers had little access to them. At the same time, with the experience of La Azulejera Valenciana and the training in Arts and Crafts, when leaving work the brothers paint fans on their own to sell them. In the patio of his house in Almacera they build their first kiln with their hands, a "Moorish kiln", suitable for ceramics, and then another, his second, at a neighbor's house. They burn what they find: gorse, rosemary, bushes... They do not get the necessary temperature for porcelain with that.

In 1953, all the three left Nalda and, at home, they worked to improve their kilns, firing their first ceramic flowers with the help of the first workers they hired. At the same time, they look for suppliers of ceramic "paste" in Manises, testing various combinations, which Vicente confesses that he brings by tram or tricycle from Manises in consignments of up to 40 kilos. Finally, they find a supplier "from Quart de Poblet", a certain "Mr. Vila", who sells them a kaolin paste, of which he refuses to reveal the composition. Ceramic stains and glazes are purchased from a guild trader named Maximo Klopeck.

With all this, they seek to improve cooking technology, the means available to them up to that moment being clearly insufficient. Another neighbor, who had a small ceramic shop in the Plaza Redonda, in Valencia, also had an kilns in his house. They ask him to "leave it for 3 months" to remodel it, this time already burning fuel. It is his third kiln and, finally, with it they manage to produce hard-paste porcelain for the first time, even without knowing the composition of the

material they used. After that, and taking advantage of refractory waste from the Blasts Furnaces Company, in Sagunto, they remodeled the old kiln they had at home and easily reached 1300 degrees Celsius.

Intrigued by the "Sr Vila" formula, and not wanting to depend on a single supplier, they asked for various advice, including the Almacera pharmacist, who advised them to add a surprising product, which we have identified as Arabic gum, as a binder and softener, to some of the mixtures of white clays that they tested and of which they knew the composition. It works to the point of surprising and intriguing Vila himself, who takes an interest in it. They don't tell anything. Finally they had achieved their own paste, but the search for the best formula continued.



Figure 29. Fawn. Vincent Lladro, 1955.



Figure 30. Conch. Jose Rausell, 1956.

In Nalda they had found out about Fulgencio García's problems with Beltrán and Doménech. "Garcieta", who was not an employee of Nalda and was freelance, charging 40 pesetas per hour although he "was very fast", Juan admits, worked, among other activities, as a sculptor for La Hispania. By comparison, the brothers would be assigned 5 pesetas as salary/hour in their own company. As soon as they could technically approach the production of figures, around 1955, Juan asked him for a work. Fulgencio García began to sculpt his first figures for them, adapting perfectly to the style, original but still with Central European resonances, that the three Lladró brothers wanted to define. The first Almacera workers remember him as a good and sensible easy-to-work-with man. With them he moved to Tavernes in 1958 as a reference sculptor at practically full time. With the magic of Fulgencio García, the golden era of Lladró will begin.



Figure 31. Dancer. Lladro. A. Amador. 1956.



Figure 32. Girl. Lladro. F. Garcia. 1956.

Lladró, in Almacera, went from a few employees, almost all of them women from Almacera and Alboraya, all sitting next to Juan and José, who taught and corrected them, with Vicente and a companion at the School of Arts and Crafts, Manolo Leonor, modeling, taking care of the molds and assembling, to thirty people. In addition to the little flowers for important lamp manufacturers such as Mariner and later Ricardo Soriano Cerdán, who would become a great friend of the brothers and introduce them to the world of commercial fairs, they made small copies of Disney characters, centerpieces, vases and any other work for which they find demand.

After mastering the firing of hard-paste porcelain, they began to produce some figures, with Vicente Lladró, José Rausell, Antonio Arnal and also Manolo Leonor, as sculptors and mold technicians, and Juan and José as decorators, and later with Fulgencio García and Amparo Amador as sculptors. The first Lladró figures appear with characteristic tulle decorations, in the Dresden style, which they learned from Nalda and improved considerably. The addition of gum arabic as a binder and softener to the classic porcelain mix, kaolin, quartz and feldspar, as opposed to the special silicate combinations that Blat used in Nalda to improve the mix, made the paste more ductile and malleable, more suitable for delicate details.

Another innovation was introduced in the treatment of the tulle. Juan Lladró explains that, in Nalda, the paste was simply poured onto a tulle cloth and then its workers modeled it. The Lladró began by varnishing the fabric until it was quite rigid and then dipping it into the porcelain paste until it acquired the mass and consistency required to mold it. It was less “ethereal” than Nalda's, but also easier to work with and less fragile.



Figures 33. Tulle. Lladro. Amparo Amador, 1957 Figure 34. Tulle. Lladro. Fulgencio Garcia. 1957.

The “Lladró tulle”, more resistant than that of Nalda and even that of the figures of the Dresden brands themselves, as can still be seen in existing porcelains, became the first distinguishing mark of style of the young company. His employees became true virtuosos, with elaborate porcelain ornaments on the dresses of the figures, which the brothers also managed to bake perfectly. They begin to be known, to sell figures and, above all thanks to the tulle figures that they popularized, at much lower prices than Nalda, to earn money.

They no longer fit in his house in Almácer. In the town, Juan admits, it was impossible to find another suitable place. So, in 1958, they moved the workshop to the house of José's wife, in Tavernes Blanques, in front of where, in a large warehouse, they built an entirely new kilns, their fourth kilns, designed from the beginning with oil as fuel.

Led by Fulgencio García, by Amparo Amador, who appears as the author of numerous figures, and even by the Nalda sculptress Amparo Montoro, who also worked on her own and made "4 or 5 figures" for them, as Juan Lladró acknowledges, the models are multiplying . They open a small store in Pasaje Rex, on Calvo Sotelo street, in Valencia, whose own small assortment is complemented with pieces from La Hispania and other small manufacturers. Juan Lladró affirms that the store helped them "get to know the market". This was followed, immediately after, by another store in Poeta Querol street, still existing in 2023. They would eventually sell more pieces of La Hispania, Juan acknowledges, than the "Sutileza" store that Hispania opened on San Martín street, in Valencia.

A peculiar character enters the scene here. Adolfo Pucilowski was a Polish chemist who met the sister of a Spanish pianist on a concert tour in Poland. Due to legal problems in his country, he went to Italy and from there he arrived in Valencia looking for the woman, that he arrived to marry. That woman appeared one day at the Lladró store in Pasaje Rex, with some figurines that Pucilowski had produced in Manises. Juan Lladró saw his potential and, despite his neglected appearance, hired the Polish chemist. Pucilowski finally provided LLadró with a technically and commercially adequate porcelain and glazes formulas. Despite some betrayal on his part, for many years he was solely responsible, until his retirement, for this key materials in Lladró porcelain. He would be replaced by another chemist, Claudio Guillém Monzonís, from the University of Valencia.



Figure 35. First printed marks of Hispania, Nalda, Lladró, Nao and Inglés.

The company, under the iron hand of Juan and José, prospers rapidly. They start exporting in 1960 and add "Spain" to their first signature. They need a proper "brand". They hire Mariano Canut, owner of the advertising agency that would later be called "Canut&Bardina", who is looking for a designer for the emblem, the characteristic identifying shield of Lladró. The chosen one is the ceramist from Alboraya Enrique Mestre. Yes, the famous Enrique Mestre, together with another employee of Canut, creates the universal Lladró logo.



Figure 36. Lladró brand, by Enrique Mestre. The sculptures are by Juan Huerta.

The three Lladró brothers are looking for their own aesthetic, which Fulgencio García gives them and, above all, an inexpensive product that can be sold in large quantities. Juan decides to simplify the expensive classic process, that can be described, after the work of the sculptor, as cutting apart the figurines, mold, mounting them again without the joints being noticeable or cracking, first firing, the biscuiting, varnishing them where appropriate, firing them at 1350 degrees, decorating them and annealing them at between 700 and 900 degrees to integrate the enamels into the porcelain, with one more step, in a low-temperature kilns, at about 400 degrees, if gold details were included.

Inspired by Royal Copenhagen porcelain, they try and manage to obtain models of pieces that are easy to assemble or, directly, that do not require assembly and refinishing, a process that took many hours of work and always with the risk of firing cracks or ugly highlights of the joints between the pieces. Juan Lladró was well aware of the technical difficulties encountered in Nalda and that Vicente Beltrán and Doménech had been slow to overcome, and he boasted that he had managed to solve them better than any other operator in their assemblies of Nalda figures.

The next step is painting and decorating. Led by Fulgencio García, Juan and José opted for simple and unobtrusive decorations, far from the intense slips characteristic of Nalda, for which they also did not have the necessary clays and the expensive enamels used by other brands. In a technical leap

that Juan recognizes as risky and far from more traditional practices, they manage to decorate them with "salt-based" paints and varnishes, right from the biscuit phase and, therefore, fire them directly at around 1,300 degrees, without more expensive intermediate steps.

It is Lladró's "single firing", the third leg of the revolutionary industrial process they build. They get it. The figures, although technically more limited, came out at a ridiculous price and with just 3% failure. Along the way, with the metallic salts: copper, cobalt, iron, manganese... instead of the more widespread oxides, the soft pastel tones, cream, grey, blue, characteristic of the first Lladró figurines, appear.



Figure 37. Child sleeping. Modeling, assembly and decoration simplified by Lladró.

Juan Lladró confesses that the main motivation for these techniques and appearance was essentially economic, not artistic. It was the cheapest procedure and, simply, in a context of limited, expensive and scarce fuels, they still did not have the money to do it in the costly and slow traditional way, in the style of Cerámicas Hispania, Nalda and practically every previous artistic porcelain company. They make virtue of necessity. They look for the simplest method: no or simple assembly, salt-based colors, single firing. And a lot of creativity. They achieve all their technical goals. His success is indisputable.

In the search for that peculiar aesthetic, they are going to take a new and transcendental step that will mark the entire history of Lladró and of the artistic porcelain brands that will follow in their footsteps. On a trip to Madrid and Toledo, on an undetermined date but in the early 1960s, José returned with the idea of exaggerate the stylizing of the figurines, the "aesthetic of El Greco", he acknowledges. Meeting with his brothers a short time later, in the original decision-making meeting that will be their working method until the end in the choice of the models for the figures, Juan and Vicente approve it and the three of them go, with the idea, to see Fulgencio García at his workshop. They take a figure model that they deem appropriate to capture the innovation. They ask him to repeat it by stylizing and lengthening it. Garcieta, in his search for an aesthetic typical of Lladró, had already stylized figures that responded to Juan's simplification criteria, but still with a classical appearance. Reluctantly, he reshapes the figure.

More stylized! Exaggerate! The three exclaim in chorus. Garcieta, already resigned to the desires of the three brothers together, puts his hands on the figure again... and the miracle is done.



Figure 38. Sad harlequin. Lladro. Sculptor Fulgencio Garcia.

The new “Harlequin” by Lladró is born, whose serial production is usually dated circa 1969, although preparations for its launch had already been taking some time ago. Tens of thousands of the Harlequin, as Don Quixote, another of his mythical figures, exhibited in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, would be sold, in different editions, shapes, and finishes. The image was even taken up by other Lladró sculptors, such as Salvador Furió, Antonio Ramos, and others, in a series of figures that soon transcended the limits of that first breakthrough aesthetic by Fulgencio García.

With the success of the Harlequin and the new way of understanding porcelain, the "Lladró aesthetic" would triumph in the world. And, very importantly, at unbeatable prices for the classic porcelain figures of the most established brands. Porcelain art expanded its social frontiers.

Royal Copenhagen, Delft, Rosenthal and other European factories had already explored similar paths, but always as filler pieces, simpler and more accessible, in their catalogs of more luxurious pieces. Lladró elevates that aesthetic to the pinnacle of his visibility, trusting in his perception of what the middle-class market demanded. As Juan Lladró confesses in an interview: “We did what was most salable”. The evolution of the artistic porcelain market, from the 70s of the 20th century and until the end of the century, would show that they were right.



Figure 39. Harlequin in love. Lladro. Sculptor Antonio Ramos.

The training of workers was also a hallmark of Lladró. The innovative creative process launched by the three brothers required specific skills, which were not found in the job market. In the large Tavernes warehouse, they created the first of their training schools for sculptors, painters and ceramic technicians, in 1962. This was followed by an official professional training school, already integrated into the state educational system, with Fulgencio García as director and its first sculptors and painters as teachers. Still, the ship quickly became too small. They set out to build the City of Porcelain, between Tavernes Blanques and Alboraya, inaugurated on October 13, 1969. They reached 500 workers. Then a thousand. They ended up with 2,650. Half the region of L'Horta worked for the Lladró family.

Since the early 1970s, Lladró has literally conquered the world porcelain market. His enormous City of Porcelain sees a river of figures flowing towards more and more countries, especially in America and Asia. The Lladró brothers attract the entire organization of commercial representatives from La Hispania and Nalda, whose exquisite pieces, but in short series and unaffordable for the middle class, gave a lot of work and little benefit to the representatives.

But the path was not easy. Nalda, with its enormous consumption of materials, its industrial power and its large production of technical porcelain dielectrics, had better suppliers and could choose the best porcelain earths wherever they were. At first, the owners of the kaolin and clay mines in the Los Serranos region, in Valencia, and Guadalajara, did not sell to the Lladró family, alleging lack of production, or they sold it to them at a higher price. They even had a lawsuit in Guadalajara with an industrialist whom they had financed a clay washer. Nalda, easily absorbing most of the production, was more reliable.

Juan Lladró had to speak with Víctor de Nalda, who offered to sell him raw kaolin, cheaper than what the Lladró were charged, and with a more reliable delivery. He became his direct supplier although, significantly, he refused to sell him the clays used for Nalda's characteristic and distinctive slips, some of which were kept secret within the company.

Despite this, Víctor de Nalda Frígols and Juan Lladró, he confesses, always appreciated each other and maintained a fluid relationship, if not friendship, then respect. At the end of the 1960s, when Nalda's artistic section was on the verge of disappearing, Juan Lladró even went so far as to propose to Victor de Nalda Pujol the purchase of all the molds in the artistic section. Nalda, who at that time already had Ramón Inglés as his artistic director, refused to sell it.

The difficulties did not end with the materials. In a little-known and jealously hidden episode, Fulgencio García, their main sculptor and the creator of their aesthetics, seeing the great business in the making, already in the 1960s, left them to found, with Antonio Ruiz, also sculptor, and another partner, taking Pucilowski with them, the T'ang brand, sometimes spelled Tang, in Chirivella, near Manises.

To replace him, Juan Lladró hired the sculptor Juan Huerta Gasset, also a renowned Fallas artist. Juan Huerta would be a key piece of the Lladró school of sculptors. Huerta's incorporation would be followed by other great Lladró names: Salvador Furió, Salvador Debón, Francisco Catalá, who came from Nalda, Vicente Martínez, Antonio Ballester "Tónico", Julián Puche, all of them also Fallas artists and teachers in the Lladró school, together with Julio Fernández and Julio Ruiz, these oriented to decoration and painting. It should be noted here, once again, that, unlike Nalda, with its Fine Arts sculptors, Lladró opted for the great pool of Valencian Fallas sculptors, academic or not. The next generation of Lladró sculptors, like the painters, would come, for the most part, from the outstanding students of the school.

The appearance of T'ang, and the "betrayal" of Garcieta and Pucilowski, greatly annoyed the Lladró brothers, who were also aware of their immense potential and the threat they represented in a possible competition. They did not doubt it. In a warehouse also in Xirivella, next to T'ang, they founded a new artistic porcelain company, the seed of Nao. There they sent some of their workers, such as Vicenta Montañana, a historical figure from the early days, as head of decoration. They produced cheap figures, copied from those that T'ang copied from them, with some litigation involved, and they attracted T'ang's first competent workers at wages higher than an early company could pay.

They drowned them. They bankrupted them. Garcieta and Pucilowski tried, with a new capitalist partner, to set up a factory in Tangier, Morocco. They failed. In the end, they return to Lladró, who takes them in, pays their bills and turns them back into key figures in the company...

Nao, born to destroy T'ang, spearheaded its introduction into the American market, which was not yet ripe for large Lladró pieces. It begins, at a confusing beginning, signing pieces as "Rosal" and changes its name to enter the American market as "Zaphir", which will be the international name of Lladró in the 1970s. In 1982 the name Nao is recovered as a great second brand by Lladró for the USA. and for everywhere.

It was not a great tradition of artistic porcelain in the United States of America. There was the Precious Moments brand, cheap china. The market of the American middle class and the popular classes, which was practically untapped, had nothing to do with that of the great German brands, which dominated the artistic ambitions of the elites. Juan Lladró, more than his brothers, saw the business opportunity clearly. Led by an American merchant, Stanley Nagler, founds a 50/50 company to expand Lladró. In the end Lladró buy Nagler and company their 50%. Lladró tackles

the American adventure alone. But that is another story, although commercially and legally complex, somewhat better known.



Figure 40. Cecilia and her goat. Nao. Sculptor Fulgencio Garcia.

It should be noted that, as with La Hispania, apart from the "desertion" of Garcieta, other entrepreneurs emerged from Lladró, either dismissed as Lladró workers upon leaving their training school or too independent to be simple employees, trying to build on the success of its crowd-pleasing china. Most of the companies that light up, already in a more favorable technological and social context, are of short production and duration, given the pressure from Lladró to maintain its domestic market.

Of these brands and their creators, artists and technicians, of which it is very difficult to gather reliable data, is easy to find in the world of art and collecting through internet portals, more or less successful creations, generally of poor quality, almost always with styles similar to the first and successful Lladró aesthetic. Together they make up, from the 70s to the end of the century, the golden age of Valencian porcelain.

Indeed, the diffusion of gas kilns, and even electric ones, the improvement of insulation and the reduction in the price of raw materials, coupled with the appearance of a large industry supplying advanced ceramic materials, facilitate this proliferation. Added to this are the fantastic processes of cheaper production introduced by Lladró, which we have already commented on and which popularize, outside the company, some ways of understanding the business of artistic porcelain when the Lladró had flown to stylistic, formal, decorative heights and much higher materials, surpassing the "Greco" style and pastel tones.

To already historical brands such as Momparler, Peyró or Nadal, this last still active and surviving the hurricane of the Lladró aesthetics, all of older origins and that fall outside our history, it is worth adding brands, not always coincident with companies, such as Arman, Barro Art , Bonart, Casades, Cases, Ceramher, D'Art, Dávila, Davor, Franju, Llafesa, Marco Giner, Miguel, Miquel Requena, Mirmasu, PAL, PTA, Pales, Porceval, Porcegama, Rex, Sanbo, Sango, Santa Rufina, Santa Mónica, Suima, Tengra, Turís and several others, some of them also absorbed and closed by Lladró.

Its history and that of its sculptors, some of them also active Fallas artists, is difficult to reconstruct and should deserve more detailed studies by local historians, who with their creations on view and still the possibility of physically meeting and interviewing their entrepreneurs and workers, would contribute to value the explosion of art, technique and industry that took place in Valencia in the last third of the 20th century.



Figure 41. Flower seller. Saint Rufina.



Figure 42. Horses, Miquel Requena

Lladró enters the 21st century at the peak of its worldwide success, with museums and stores in the United States and in many other countries, especially Japan, which will become the most important market for the company, thanks to the chain of Takashimaya department stores and also in partnership, or Joint Venture with the Mitsui & Co. group. In China, by the hand of a local entrepreneur, they had till 34 stores open.

Its aesthetics has now completely moved away from its beginnings, diversifying its artistic styles and its materials, with the appearance, among others, of the line of stoneware figures in which Lladró once again manages to impose style on the world.

And at the peak of his success, when his works of art begin to enter the great museums, such as the Hermitage, in Saint Petersburg, the first cracks appear. A world crisis changes the economic situation. And the losses of his gigantic business network begin. The irreconcilable differences between the brothers, especially between Juan and José, when facing the changes in the art ecosystem and the company's strategy to face them, make them retire, giving prominence to their sons, who in turn reproduce stress from their parents.

But that is another story, which the brothers, with no other control systems than their simple will, despite the enormous volume reached by the company, focus in opposite ways. José, as he had done so far, expansively, and Juan considering the market saturated and trying to reduce volume, models and sales positions. The company will continue to make losses, despite the new artistic adventures it undertakes and the successive new and contradictory leaderships of the next generation, until its sale to an investment group in 2017.

RAMÓN INGLÉS PORCELAIN

Only one company, apart from the Lladró brothers, breaks away from Nalda, that of its last sculptor, Ramón Inglés Capella. Due to its artistic importance and an undoubted emotional and personal continuity, and partly aesthetic, with Víctor de Nalda Pujol and his employees, it requires a special mention in this story.

Ramón Inglés Capella (Bétera, 1932-1997) entered the School of Ceramics in Manises in 1949. In 1953 he began his studies in sculpture at the Superior School of Fine Arts in Valencia, where he was a classmate of Lola Sala, wife of Juan Lladró. After some prizes and institutional successes as a sculptor, in 1963 he traveled as a pensioner to the School of Fine Arts in Paris. While there, through the then ambassador José María de Areilza, he obtained a personal invitation to work at the Sèvres National Porcelain Manufacture, where he would spend two years, between 1964 and 1965.

Despite being invited to stay in Sèvres as a sculptor, an honorable and rare recognition, in 1965 he began working as a technician at Porcelanas Bidasoa, in Irún, one of the sponsors of his stay in France and to which he believed he owed a service. But Porcelanas Bidasoa, more famous for its tableware, and with a very consolidated style, hardly fulfills his artistic ambitions.

He does not adapt, he does not find his place among the other creators of the company and he suffers, spiritually and materially, as his sister Fina admits with regret, longing for the Sèvres stage. Ramón soon returns to Valencia and, through the direct mediation of his classmate in Fine Arts Lola Sala, Juan's now wife, he approaches the Lladró family and ends up working for "three or four months" as "in charge". They don't give him a position as a sculptor. Juan Lladró, well supported by his sculptors from the world of the Fallas, is critical of him and his art. Ramón Inglés feels humiliated and looks for new horizons.

In 1966 he agreed to Víctor de Nalda, at that time without renowned sculptors on staff, after his traumatic time at Lladró. The relationship is consolidated on an artistic and personal level, both with Nalda and with the workers, who, according to their own testimonies, are won over from the beginning.

Ramón Inglés thus joined as the main and almost sole Nalda sculptor until 1970, when he left the artistic section of Nalda, whose poor economic results had become too much of a burden for the parent company, and set up a workshop in the family home.

The firm Porcelanas Inglés, from Bétera, is born in an adventure in which Ramón is accompanied by his sister Fina Inglés, also a graduate of the Superior School of Fine Arts, in Valencia, and a renowned painter who has won various artistic prizes.

The company, with great and utopian expectations, at a time when Lladró had become a monster that devoured the entire market, began by creating medium-large figures, with clear sculptural ambition, but which are very expensive to manufacture. Ramón Inglés also bought all the molds for the Nalda figures, which Víctor de Nalda Pujol had not wanted to sell to Juan Lladró despite his great insistence, and he began a short series of classic Nalda figures and others modeled by him in Nalda, already with the "Inglés" mark, which did not have greater continuity. Some are still on the market, but they are extremely rare, and the circumstances of their creation are completely unknown.



Figure 43. Nalda in Inglés. Above: Child with bathtub. Nalda. Sculptor J. Domenech. On the right with the Inglés mark. Below: Country woman. Sculptor Ramón Inglés. Left, Nalda. Right, Inglés.

At the same time, he began to introduce innovations in the finishes, such as relief details on the dresses, which paved the way for an original style of understanding the porcelain figure, a path in which the sculptor was always restless, groundbreaking, and creative.



Figure 44. Water carrier. Sculptor Ramon Inglés

In addition to the transfer of all his models and casts, Víctor de Nalda made other concessions to Inglés when he became independent. He makes available to him, with preferential and personal treatment, the raw materials that the new company needed and even the technical formulas that Inglés had limited access at Nalda.

Although important, it was not only the kaolin from Nalda mines. Furthermore, Nalda's unique "engobes", its exclusive earths mixed with a very fluid porcelain paste, to obtain textures applicable to the tender figure, and its singular colors, appear from the beginning in the Inglés figurines. Inglés belongs, in the composition of colors and pastes, to the aesthetic universe that Alfonso Blat and its technicians created for Nalda.

This panoply of materials and colors, and the intensive use of slips rather than glazes, is easily recognizable for its uniqueness, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, even if Ramón Inglés used them in new combinations and with less vivid, intense and aggressive tones than the fearless painters and decorators of Nalda. Lladró would only have access to these products when, by the mid-1970s, the ceramic materials industry had developed exponentially in Spain and the company was a great economic and industrial power.



Figure 45. Students. Sculptor Ramón Inglés.



Figure 46. The fisherman group. Sculptor Ramón Inglés.

After these self-willed beginnings, Ramón Inglés quickly began to produce new work, cheaper pieces as well as the most expensive ones that should fulfill his artistic desires. Notable among them are his long series of traditional figures of Valencian men and women in regional dress and of very different sizes, destined for massive sale through fairs and souvenir shops in the Valencian Community. The "Inglés style", with prominent cheeks, is consolidated.



Figures 47, 48, 49. Valencians. Sculptor Ramón Inglés.

The next stylistic step by Ramón Inglés is the introduction of the characteristic raised eyelashes in many of his figures, an aesthetic innovation certainly discussed in artistic circles. Inglés tabs. Unrealistic, they are undoubtedly an artist's eccentricity, eager to find innovative aesthetics. Undoubtedly they singles out his work, in exchange for giving them an artificial appearance, typical of a Pop culture, 70s, which has not had a continuation.



Figure 50. Couple of the tree. Sculptor Ramón Inglés.

At the same time, Porcelanas Inglés floods the market with curious little heads of characters, many of them little falleros and little falleras or characters, which he gives as present to buyers who visit his factory in Bétera and also sells in souvenir shops. It is easy to find these little heads, and some slightly larger busts, on specialized internet portals.

Hand in hand with Fina, after some incursion into the world of mixed porcelain figures and textile clothing, Ramón also entered the world of porcelain dolls, perhaps, in the end, the most famous and popular of the brand. , with precious textile dresses, created and supervised by Fina and which constituted the true financial support of the company. His store, in Bétera, began to become famous and was integrated into the tourist routes offered in Valencia.



Figure 51. Lady. Sculptor Ramón Inglés. The interior is a simple porcelain foot



Figure 52. One of the first dolls. Fina and Ramon Inglés



Figure 53. Doll. "Fina Inglés, Artistic Porcelains"

Hundreds of sculptures, thousands of different figures testify to the creativity of Ramón and Fina Inglés at this stage, with an excess of models that was not bearable at a business level, a facet in which Inglés was certainly incompetent. The Bétera factory clearly insufficient, a new one opens in the enormous building of an old mill, built in the 17th century by the friars of the Cartuja de Valldecrist, located in the countryside, between the municipalities of Segorbe and Altura.

At the beginning of the 1990s, while Lladró porcelain and its imitators filled the popular markets and the large Lladró pieces filled the bourgeoisie, Ramón Inglés's health problems began to worsen, which he would drag on until his death. As the only creative engine and sculptor of the company, which would only hire assistant sculptors, production and management are dramatically affected by these vicissitudes. Ramón Inglés died in 1997. Porcelanas Inglés, as a factory of artistic figures, would disappear with him.

Fina Inglés tries to continue the trajectory undertaken in the world of dolls with a new brand, this time alone, as "Fina Inglés Artistic Porcelains", as she signs her latest creations. In his short evolution, she repeats the models created together with his brother, with few stylistic novelties, although further enriching, if possible, its textile splendor.

But the Segorbe factory soon fell into disrepair and ruin. Fina Inglés sells the old mansion with all its machinery and contents and the new property, which intended to make it a residence for the disabled, disappears without doing anything to preserve them. In 2016, the Segorbe City Council, which had started a protection project within the framework of a new General Urban Planning Plan, declared the building in ruins. There, the infinity of molds that Nalda did not want to sell to Lladró have disappeared, abandoned, as well as the Ramón Inglés molds themselves, a loss of Valencian artistic heritage that is difficult to understand.



Figure 54. Molds of porcelain figures in the abandoned factory of Ramón Inglés (2011)



Figure 55. Sculptures and molds in the abandoned factory of Ramón Inglés (2011)

Thus, the original model parts of the figures of Ramón Inglés, and those of Vicente Beltrán Grimal, Fulgencio García, José Doménech, Amparo Montoro, Francisco Catalá, and other lesser known sculptors, are lost to art and history. His splendid porcelain sculptures remain, especially the large ones, which still appear, more or less frequently, in the art market and internet portals, and their incredible dolls, all with a style far away from the omnipresent “Lladró air”. The “air” that the work

of Garcieta and the three Lladró brothers, starting with the Sad Harlequin, succeeded to dominate the porcelain aesthetics until the first decade of the 21st century, when Lladró had entered another artistic dimension.

THE ART OF PORCELAIN

Porcelain is an art. Plus, there are there many arts and many techniques combined and harmonized. Just as there are good and bad paintings, good and bad sculptures, good and bad buildings, or good and bad movies, there are good and bad porcelain figures. But artistic porcelain is more like cinema than sculpture and painting. More professions are involved, more talents are involved... and more things can go wrong. Many minds, many sensibilities, many hands and even many machines must be coordinated for a perfect work to appear and, furthermore, to be reproducible at will. Architecture, another multidisciplinary art, is more limited to these effects and, in the current era, more "utilitarian", a characteristic more associated with crafts.

Who is the "author" of a porcelain figure? The sculptor? The painter? The assembler? The chemist? The furnace engineer? Even though, to simplify, the porcelain figure tends to be associated with the sculptor who creates the first model out of clay, the true author, as in the cinema, is the director, the one who holds all the levers of art in his hand. Perhaps that is why there are sculptors and painters, who feel uncomfortable when porcelain takes away the full role of "their work", that denigrate porcelain art by reducing it to repetitive "craftsmanship". Porcelain, like cinema, is a choral work. With its main and secondary actors, with its composers and photographers, with its sets, specialists and technicians... and with its economists and mass psychologists.

Again, the Lladró brothers understood this fact more clearly than their contemporaries. Always, while they were the directors of the company, they decided in conclave which figure projects were undertaken, which of the ones they were proposed met their technical requirements and what was the final appearance that the finished work should have.



Figure 56. Horses. Lladro. Sculptor Fulgencio Garcia.

In addition to his increasingly daring simple figures, the basis of his sales, when the company could afford it, was launched into large compositions of incredible artistic and technical complexity, with prices commensurate with the excellence of the work and target audiences far removed from the popular and middle classes that had exalted them.



Figure 57. The arrival of Cinderella. Lladró. Sculptor Francisco Polope.



Figure 58. The Queen of the Nile. Lladró. Sculptor Juan Carlos Ferri Herrero

These works are not a business. Its runs are necessarily very short and its management very complex. They are a gigantic and all-encompassing expression of porcelain art, in which set designers, sculptors, painters, designers, decorators, assemblers, chemists, material technicians, furnace engineers, earth and varnish suppliers... under the will and in accordance with the decisions of the director, come together to produce beauty. It is not easy, just as it is not easy in the cinema to produce masterpieces, but when you do, you can reach another pinnacle of human creativity.

These porcelains, unfortunately far from the reach of the majority of buyers, can hardly be denied, therefore, the honor of being art. Through them, neither can be denied to more humble porcelains in their conception and execution, if they are capable of to bring, to the spirit that contemplates them, to artistic delight. Delight is the true function of what has been called "art", in any of the multiple meanings that have occurred throughout history and continue to occur in our time. It is not a problem of matter, nor of size, nor of reproducibility. It is a matter of tuning in with the aesthetic desires of an era. And a good way, in today's world, to verify that harmony is... to offer them to their audiences... and put them on the world market. And let them to judge.

From the humble figure of a child lying down, to the largest serial piece ever made, the famous "Carnival of Venice", with its dimensions of 144x91x85 centimeters, and the work of 35 artists, Lladró toured, with varying degrees of success, the entire scale of porcelain art, submitting to the market and selling more than anyone else.



Figure 59. The Carnival of Venice. Lladró. Sculptor José Santaaulalia.

Undoubtedly more spectacular porcelains have been made. The Dresden Porcelain Museum, in the Zwinger Palace, houses perhaps the largest. But they were the unrepeatable whim of a monarch. The Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, near Paris, produced the most perfect ones. But these were also the unrepeatable whim of other monarchs. The Imperial and Royal Manufacture in Augarten, in Vienna, created the most balanced between perfection and reproducibility.

Lladró, in Tavernes Blanques, near Valencia, took on the challenge of making porcelain for the masses and porcelain for the elite. To get them to buy. Some have accused the porcelain factory that has sold the most figures in the world of kitsch aesthetics. Nalda had the best and most innovative sculptors from the Superior School of Fine Arts. It also had the Lladró brothers and Fulgencio García available to it and it could not or did not know how to make the most of her talent. It is difficult to speak pejoratively of kitsch aesthetics when an entire era has surrendered at Lladró's feet.

Without a doubt, there is good art and bad art. History has taught us, but it has been after the fact. History purges its excesses. We can only admire, in the context of porcelain art, for its reproducible nature, what history has preserved for us. An illustration of this can be the following sculptural, pictorial, architectural and decorative ensemble that has come down to us through that history, the eighteenth-century equivalent of big ensembles like the ones we have seen by Lladró.



Figure 60. Composition with a mirror. Augarten. Vienna.

The admiration that it arouses in us, like many other examples that could be cited, has spanned the centuries and continues to surprise and excite us due to its aesthetic quality, its spectacular scenic architecture and its technical perfection. Likewise, history will preserve for us, or in its case will forget, those great Lladró pieces and also the more modest ones, and with them those of many and many porcelain factories that emerged in the last third of the 20th century and, among them, pioneers and outstanding ones, the Valencia's Hispania, Nalda and Inglés, which we have followed here.

What is already an undoubted historical fact is that the Lladró brothers, Juan, José and Vicente, more than Valero, from Hispania, more than Víctor de Nalda, more than Ramón Inglés, were magnificent "directors", masters of porcelain art, transformed, with time and age, into "producers", following the cinematographic simile. They were a family that dominated almost all the trades that come together in the porcelain figure. And they alone, from Almácer and from Tavernes Blanques, next to Valencia, placed their brand at the top of world artistic porcelain.

That was their great merit and their great weakness. The three brothers together, they tried to personally control from their Valencian offices, despite their deep disagreements and until the end of their time in charge of the company, each and every one of the steps of the selection of originals, production, marketing and expansion throughout the world. Despite their humble origins, they moved like nobody else in the artistic, technical and social ecosystem in which they were born and in it they proliferated to almost infinity.

But in the 21st century, the ecosystem changed, and they were already too veterans to adapt to the new ecosystem and the generational change that followed them, in a world that continued without them. A renewed Lladró has picked up the baton in 2017 and has the challenge of proving to be a worthy heir to the emporium that the Lladró family built.

Lladró, the porcelain brand that has sold the most figures in history, was not born out of nowhere. As we have seen, in Valencia and its surroundings, from the second third of the 20th century, based on its ceramic tradition, a powerful technical porcelain industry, the art of its Fallas and generations of sculptors and painters from very different origins, talents and knowledge, came together to produce the traditional Hispania, the exquisite Nalda, the original Ramón Inglés and, finally, Lladró, the greatest creator of porcelain figures in the world to date. Along with them, many other brands struggled to gain a foothold in the taste of citizens. The artistic, industrial and social phenomenon of Valencian porcelain, in the Mediterranean Coast of Spain, is a legacy that deserves to be remembered, preserved and promoted.

SOURCES

The present study is supported, for the most part, on primary sources, especially oral history, collected by the author from the protagonists to whom it has been possible to access, and preserved in recordings when they have been obtained, or personal notes when not it has been. Special mention should be made of the contributions of some of the first employees of the artistic section of Nalda, Amparo Ros Puig, in charge of the section, and María Dolores Ros Puig among them, and Ramón Inglés in his time, and Juan Lladró, Fina Inglés, Enrique Mestre and Ana Beltrán, Mestre's wife and one of the first Lladró workers, in more recent times.

The archives of the companies studied have either disappeared or remain closed to scholarly study. The sales catalogues, in which Lladró has published practically all of his production, and Cerámicas Hispania, more irregular and more difficult to access, have also served as a guide, in the absence of more internal documents. Likewise, an important source has been the direct study of collections of the figures themselves and other objects, preserved in public and private collections.

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A spanish version of it, together with other works of Antonio Ten Ros on Nalda Porcelain, mainly on "The Magic od Biscuits in Nalda Porcelain", and "The Holy Family in Nalda Porcelain", can be found, in pdf format, at the links of the adress:

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