Women and the Making of the Arts in 17th-Century Madrid: Some Considerations[1]

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The role of women in the development of the arts has frequently been overshadowed by the prevailing belief that their involvement in artistic professions was rare and exceptional, marked by significant obstacles. Although traditional historical narratives have predominantly highlighted the roles of the "great masters" in the production and sale of artworks, recent research has revealed that artistic production was often a collaborative endeavor that involved numerous trades and different people, including women. Evidence from various European cities, including Madrid, shows that women were actively engaged in artistic activities. This raises the question: under what conditions did women contribute to the arts? This inquiry will be explored through the lens of 17th-century Madrid.

Legal Possibilities for Women to Develop an Artistic Trade

The arts became fundamental to the city's economy, particularly after the royal court was established in 1561. Their development involved a complex variety of activities, including the production, transport, and commercialization of materials and artworks. Managing these processes required formal agreements, such as sales contracts, leases, letters of obligation, and other legal documents. While many of these arrangements were made orally, they were also often formalized before a notary. To engage in these transactions, one needed legal standing. Did women possess such standing?

Contrary to the prevailing historiographical view that women lacked legal autonomy, a closer examination of the Spanish legal system during the Early Modern period reveals a more nuance reality. Women's legal circumstances were far from uniform or static, varying significantly depending on their social and legal status. Enslaved women, as described in the *Partidas* of Alfonso X El Sabio, were denied legal autonomy because they were treated as the property of others, who exercised control over every aspect of their lives. The legal compendium stated that commercial transactions involving enslaved people were prohibited. However, if those who exploited enslaved people were merchants or involved in trades where such transactions were relevant, and if permission was granted, the enslaved person could be forced to conduct business on their behalf. This practice was likely widespread, as will be discussed further.

Free women's legal autonomy, on the other hand, was influenced by their marital status and age, as outlined in *Recopilación de las leyes destos reynos* (1569) and *Novísima Recopilación de las leyes de España* (1804). Single women who had been emancipated from paternal authority—typically by reaching the age of majority at 25 without having married, or due to other circumstances—along with widows, had the legal autonomy to manage their personal affairs and property independently. In contrast, single women still under paternal authority and married women lacked legal independence. They needed permission from their guardians, usually their fathers or husbands, to undertake legal actions. If granted this permission, they were allowed to perform such acts.

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The preserved historical records reveal numerous instances of women in such situations. Two notable examples illustrating this reality are the embroiderer María de Arratia and the tapestry maker María Rodríguez. On July 13, 1649, María de Arratia and her husband, Manuel Alonso, appeared before a notary to commit to making five dresses for the Duke of Osuna. As a married woman, she needed her husband's permission to sign the contract, which he granted at the time of signing, following the usual procedures for such cases:

> [...] Manuel Alonsso bordador y doña Maria de Arratia marido y muger veçinos desta villa de Madrid con liçencia autoridad y espresso consentimiento que primero y ante todas cosas yo la dicha doña Maria de Arratia pido y demando al dicho mi marido para hacer otorgar y jurar esta escrittura y obligarme a todo lo que en ella yra contenido y declarado e yo el dicho Manuel Alonso doy y conçedo la dicha liçençia a la dicha mi muger para el efecto que me es pedida [...] (Obligation of María de Arratia and Manuel Alonso, 770r).[2]

Turning to the second example, María Rodríguez managed a tapestry business for which she independently executed various legal acts. As a widow, she did not require any permission to conduct her affairs, so she went to the notary by herself and acted independently. For instance, on January 4, 1656, she signed a receipt for 3,816 *reales* for tapestries that had been dispatched from her store to the Duke of Osuna. The record affirms that:

> En la villa de Madrid a quatro dias del mes de henero de mill y seiscientos y cinquenta y seis años ante mi el escrivano publico y testigos parecio Maria Rodriguez tapicera vecina desta villa, y confesso aver recivido de Feliciano Diaz Mendez administrador de las rentas pertenecientes al excelentisimo señor don Juan Tellez Xiron Henrriquez de Rivera duque de Ossuna conde de Ureña en su villa de Ossuna tres mil ochocientos y diez y seis reales de vellon que la a pagado [...] (Payment receipt from María Rodríguez for money received from Feliciano Díaz Méndez, 7r-v).[3]

After all, women were capable of performing the legal acts required for the daily operation of an artistic business. Some could do so independently and autonomously, while others required legal permission from those in authority over them or were coerced by their enslavers. Therefore, contrary to some historiographical interpretations, women were not universally or absolutely prohibited from directing or participating in businesses involved in artistic production or commercialization due to their legal status. However, being women in certain circumstances sometimes imposed restrictions on their ability to act independently.

[2] "[...] Manuel Alonso, embroiderer, and Mrs. Maria de Arratia, husband and wife, residents of this town of Madrid, with the permission, authority, and express consent that, first and foremost, I, the aforementioned Mrs. Maria de Arratia, request and demand from my said husband in order to execute and swear to this deed and to bind myself to all that is contained and declared within it; and I, the aforementioned Manuel Alonso, grant the said permission to my wife for the requested purpose [...]".

[3] "In the town of Madrid, on the fourth day of January in the year one thousand six hundred and fifty-six, before me, the public notary, and witnesses, appeared María Rodríguez, tapestry maker and resident of this town, and acknowledged having received from Feliciano Díaz Méndez, administrator of the revenues belonging to the Most Excellent Lord Mr. Juan Téllez Girón Henríquez de Rivera, Duke of Osuna and Count of Ureña, in his town of Osuna, three thousand eight hundred and sixteen *reales*, which he has paid [...]".

Religious Doctrine and Women's Involvement in Artistic Trades: The Moral Framework in the 17th Century

As observed, the legal framework governed women's status concerning their capacity to manage their own person and property. This had implications for their competence to engage in artistic activities, affecting both their participation and their ability to manage artistic businesses with varying degrees of autonomy based on their individual circumstances. However, from a moral standpoint, was it acceptable for women to engage in the arts in 17th-century society?

Moral treatises published in Spain during the Early Modern period helped establish gender-based archetypes, shaping the roles expected of free women, while enslaved women were largely ignored and excluded from these discussions, likely due to their dehumanization. These treatises, written by religious figures and moralists, were grounded in the scientific understanding of the time, which viewed women as incomplete beings due to a perceived deficiency of heat and dryness in their bodies, according to the theory of humors (Ballester Añón, 52-53). Women were seen as lacking intellect, which was used to justify controlling them by enforcing behavioral models, similar to the laws of the period that also reflected their civil status.

Single women were expected to be submissive, obedient, and honest, dedicating themselves to mastering the skills necessary for managing a household, such as cooking, caring for family members, and overseeing domestic servants—duties they would assume once married. Married women were expected to fulfill these responsibilities as well, while also being obedient, modest, discreet, and devoted to motherhood. Widows were expected to be devout, moderate, prudent, wise, and pious, focusing on religious activities, caring for their family, educating their children, and managing the household (León, 21v-22r; Luxán, 12v-13r, 27v-28r, 49r-59v, 93r; Mora 1589, 135v; Cerda, 9v-11r, 74v-78v, 86r, 428r-440v; Astete, 33, 50, 65-102, 132-152, 198, 275-276).

Additionally, moralists decreed that women, regardless of their marital status, must avoid idleness, which was considered highly dangerous. Juan de la Cerda warned that idleness could lead women to become "comedoras y golosas, bevedoras, luxuriosas, y grandes parleras"[4] (Cerda, 88r). Another moralist, Antonio de Ezcarat, expressed similar concerns:

> A la muger ociosa llama S. Geronimo, y S. Ciprinao saco de luxurias*,* por que como el natural las fuerça a ocuparse en algo, y ellas no quieren trabajar, necessariamente se han de ocupar en cosas vanas, y lascivas, y assi dan en ser comedoras, golosas, bebedoras, luxuriosas y grandes parleras, amigas de andar de calle en calle, de visita en visita, y hechas perdicion, y lazos de muchos miserables, son confusion, y deshonra de sus padres, y de sus maridos (Ezcarat*,* 255-256).[5]

To combat idleness, moralists advised women to stay busy with handwork, which included tasks such as *labrar*. Sebastián de Covarrubias defined this in his dictionary, *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana*, as "la ocupacion de las mugeres en telas, y las labores

[4] "[...] gluttonous and greedy eaters, drinkers, lustful, and great talkers [...]".

[5] "St. Jerome and St. Cyprian refer to the idle woman as a source of lust because, as nature compels them to engage in something, and they refuse to work, they necessarily occupy themselves with vain and lascivious things, and they become gluttons, drinkers, lustful, and great talkers, fond of wandering from street to street, from visit to visit, becoming a ruin and a trap for many unfortunate souls [...], being confusion and dishonor to their parents and husbands".

que hazen en ellas con la aguja."[6] He also used the term more broadly, equating it with *obrar* in general,[7] not just agricultural labor but also "comprehende las obras mecanicas, y otras que no lo son."[8] Covarrubias noted that one could work with silver, iron, wood, or stone, and cited various craftsmen such as silversmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, stonemasons, sculptors, and image makers as examples of this work (Covarrubias, 511r).

Some moralists advised that women engage in these activities not only for the sake of avoiding idleness but also to assist their parents or husbands in managing the family economy. For instance, Luis de León suggested that married women should support their husbands "con la vela e industria suya y de sus criadas, sin hazer nueva costa, y como sin sentir," so that "quando menos pensase hallara abastada y llena de riquezas su casa"[9] (León, 23v-24r). Similarly, Gaspar de Astete noted that

> [...] las donzellas [...] unas vezes han de entender en las cosas necessarias para la casa de sus padres, otras en hazer alguna labor de manos para remediar sus propias necessidades, otras en labar, adereçar, o bordar palias, frontales, casullas y otros ornamentos de las yglesias (Astete, 200).[10]

Therefore, free women's work was morally sanctioned as a way to keep them occupied and prevent idleness, as well as to contribute to the family economy. This acceptance aligned with the behavioral norms outlined by many moralists and theologians of the Early Modern period, which specified the roles they were expected to fulfill. As a result, their participation in artistic trades was both accepted and regulated by the society of their time.

The Role of Women in Artistic Trades: Artists, Traders, Administrators, Transmitters and Directors

In Madrid, artistic trades were often practiced in spaces integrated into the urban landscape, frequently sharing space with residential buildings (Cámara Muñoz, 127). Workshops were sometimes located within the homes of those running the business, but others were situated separately, either in courtyards or in distinct structures. Stores typically occupied the ground floors of residential edifices, though they did not always coincide with the residences of those managing the trade. Consequently, the variety of artistic workspaces was more diverse than traditionally acknowledged, extending beyond the home-workshop model commonly considered the typical artistic production space of the Early Modern period.

For example, the silversmith Juan de Arfe lived at the corner of Mayor and Santiago streets in a building with five floors. The layout was such that the ground floor housed a store, the floor above served as a workshop, and the three upper floors each contained a room (*Composición de aposento* of Juan de Arfe's house, 516r-532r). In contrast, the potter Sebastián de Frutos had his workshop, which included "material de

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[6] "[...] the occupation of women with fabrics, and the work they do with them using a needle [...]".

[7] It could be translated, in this context, as "to work" in something.

[8] "[...] It includes mechanical work and other types that are not [...]".

[9] "[...] with their own efforts and those of their servants, without incurring additional costs and almost imperceptibly," so that "when least expected, their home would be found well-stocked and filled with wealth".

[10] "[...] maidens [...] should sometimes manage necessary household tasks for their parents, sometimes engage in handwork to meet their own needs, and sometimes work on preparing, decorating, or embroidering church vestments, frontals, chasubles, and other ecclesiastical ornaments".

alfareria y un orno para coçerlo"[11] in some *colgadizos*[12] on a property he owned on Embajadores Street (*Composición de aposento* of Sebastián de Frutos's Property, 1050r-1057r).

Women engaged in these workspaces in various ways—some were born into domestic groups already involved in the trade, while others entered from outside. This influenced how they learned the craft. Women born into the trade typically received informal training within their own families (Zucca Micheletto, 11-12). In contrast, those who entered from outside might acquire skills through marriage, formal apprenticeships, domestic service, or, in some cases, through slavery.

Formal apprenticeships could vary in length and typically involved young people joining a household where they received training in the trade. Upon completion, they would acquire the necessary skills to practice it independently (Córdoba de la Llave, 244). While this was a common path for men learning an artistic profession, it was less frequently available to women. In Paris, only about 14% of apprenticeship contracts recorded during the Early Modern period were for girls (Crowston, 32). In Lyon, the percentage was under 9% between 1553 and 1560 (Zemon Davis, 50). In Madrid, current data indicates that less than 2% of apprenticeships were held by women (López Barahona and Nieto Sánchez, 45-46).

Given the statistics, formal apprenticeship was not the main approach for women to receive training in artistic trades. Instead, domestic service appears to have been the primary route, due to the similarities between domestic service contracts and apprenticeship contracts, both in terms of formal structure and the tasks involved. Many apprenticeship contracts included duties related to domestic service, and conversely, some domestic service contracts included provisions for learning a trade (Gállego, 84; Segura Graíño, 115; Moreno Romera, 132; García Herrero, 141-142).

For instance, on May 5, 1654, 12-year-old Manuela Guijarro was placed in service with the *joyeros*[13] Juan de San Carlos and María de Villafranca, who agreed to house her and "enseñarla todo lo tocante al officio de calcetería"[14] (Service contract of Manuela Guijarro, 29r-v). A similar situation occurred with men. For example, Francisco Serrano, who was a domestic servant to the booksellers Antonio de Castilla and Francisca de César, declared himself a bookseller in 1633 when he was named executor of Francisca de César's will (Agulló y Cobo 1991, 105), demonstrating that he had learned the trade.

Regarding enslaved women, the focus was primarily on their productive capabilities rather than their reproductive roles, contrary to some claims (Martín Casares 1998, 231-232). They were frequently compelled to perform domestic labor and, when exploited by family groups occupied in the arts, were also involved in the production and sale of artistic materials and artworks (Córdoba de la Llave, 241). Of the estimated 2,000,000 people enslaved in the Iberian Peninsula during the Early Modern period (Larquié, 55), a significant number were women, reflecting the fact that they were specially affected by the system of slavery (Martín Casares 1995, 156-157; López García, 34).

In a society that dehumanized enslaved people by treating them as commodities, a significant number were trafficked to carry out tasks for merchants, traders, and artisans.

[11] "[...] pottery materials and a kiln for firing them".
[12] The term "colgadizos" was defined by Covarrubias as "el sobrado, o techumbre que no estriva en el suelo, sino que esta arrimado a la pared", meaning they were structures built against or supported by walls (Covarrubias, 223v).
[13] Although the literal translation would be "jeweller," the term *joyero* in 17th century Spain, according to the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana*, referred to a person who ran a *joyería*—a store where small silk items and other embellishments were sold (*Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana* 1739).
[14] To "teach her everything related to the trade of hosiery".

For example, in 16th-century Granada, between 6.6% and 9.9% of enslaved individuals were exploited by artisans and manufacturers, while between 34.2% and 58.6% were subjected to slavery by sellers and merchants (Martín Casares 1998, 281-287). In 17th-century Madrid, around 10% of enslaved individuals were forced by merchants, traders, and artisans (Castroviejo Salas, 19). Similarly, in other Spanish cities, artists including Diego Velázquez, Francisco de Burgos Mantilla, Vicente Carducho, and Luisa Roldán also exploited enslaved people (Vizcaíno Villanueva, 172-173; Hall-Van den Elsen, 56).

Free women could enter the trade through their marriages, acquiring skills in the activities practiced by their husbands to support the family economy. It has been proposed that their work, often regarded as unpaid, might have occurred while they were co-owners of the artistic business with their husbands (Zucca Micheletto, 1-18). This is particularly evident in cases where they contributed artistic materials, artworks, or even the shop's structure as part of their dowry.

For example, on December 3, 1685, the dowry contract for the marriage between Clara de Sierra and Diego de Logroño was formalized. She was the daughter of the bookseller María del Ribero who had recently passed away, and she provided a dowry that included 3,013 *reales* in "diferentes libros enquadernados de todos jeneros," meaning various bound books of all kinds. Additionally, she contributed 5,565 *reales* for paper, bookbinding tools, and shop furnishings, including the counter (Dowry contract for the marriage of Clara de Sierra and Diego de Logroño, 226r-231r).

Within artistic workspaces, women played diverse roles depending on the nature of the trade. In productive crafts, they were actively involved in the creation process as artists. In commercial trades, they engaged in marketing and sales, functioning as merchants, sellers, or traders. Additionally, they could participate in business administration or help sustain the trade through their connections, often through marriage, thereby acting as facilitators and transmitters of the business (Gómez de Zamora 2020, 65-84; 2021, 51-63). These last roles were generally available to free women. Some of them also managed their own businesses, frequently stepping in for a master who was absent due to travel or death, and assuming a leadership role by delegation (Vicente i Valentín, 140-141). In these cases, they were responsible for representing the business to the outside world, including dealings with trade guilds that regulated aspects of artistic activity during this period.

Women in the Guilds: Rethinking the Topics

The prevailing historiography has long asserted that guilds excluded women, which supposedly hindered their ability to engage in artistic professions. However, recent research informed by gender studies and feminist art theory has revealed that women were, in fact, members of guilds in various European cities (Crowston, 19-25; Schmidt, 170-171; Bellavitis, 49-52). This evidence underscores the importance of examining each case individually and avoiding broad generalizations (Gómez de Zamora 2022, 244-248).

In Madrid, historical records on guilds suggest that women were regularly involved in their activities. Some participated through businesses represented in the guild by another individual. Typically, individual guild membership was restricted to the person who led and represented the business, often the master and head of the household, even though the business depended on the labor of many others who operated within the guild's framework. This likely included women who, as apprentices and domestic servants, were involved in artistic work in the city's workshops and stores, as well as enslaved women subjected to labor. Wives, widows, or daughters of masters were also included, and along with other family members, might have been integrated into the guilds as their familiars (Crowston, 20; Schmidt, 173).

Moreover, some ordinances that imposed restrictions on women's work often did not apply to those last ones. For instance, certain guilds in Gouda restricted women from becoming members, except for widows or wives of certified masters (Schmidt, 173). Similarly, the 1617 ordinances of the silk guild in Zaragoza prohibited unexamined individuals from practicing the trade but made exceptions for the wives and daughters of certified masters, allowing them to continue working (Mateos Royo, 263-264). In Madrid, when it came to artistic guilds, only the 1677 regulations for ribbon-makers explicitly prohibited the work of certain women. However, these restrictions did not apply to the wives or daughters of certified masters, who were permitted to work in their family workshops (Ordinances of the ribbon-makers' guild).

On the other hand, some women did not participate in the guilds as members of businesses represented by others; instead, they managed their own businesses, were individually admitted to the guild, and represented both their enterprises and the workers within them. Sometimes they achieved this by passing the master's examination of the relevant guild and becoming masters themselves, thereby leading their own workshops or stores. At other times, they assumed the role of a master without having passed the examination, taking over responsibilities from a previous master as noted earlier.

In Madrid, between 1640 and 1706, 459 women are documented as participating in the *repartimientos del soldado*, a fiscal obligation managed through the city's trade corporations, as members of guilds that regulated their productive or commercial activities (Gómez de Zamora 2024, 228-229). This explains cases like that of Benita de Castro, a brickmaker involved in the brick production and sales business managed by her husband, Juan de Garate, a guild member. After his death, she succeeded him, taking charge of the kilns in Torrejón de Ardoz and Madrid itself until she was replaced by a new husband, Juan López, who took on the responsibility of representing their business, although she likely continued directing it (Gómez de Zamora, forthcoming b).

However, many women operated outside the guild framework. While guilds were able to regulate only a portion of trade practices, a significant portion remained unregulated. Consequently, some trades never organized into guilds, and some individuals practiced guild-regulated trades in businesses without formal guild representation. Trade corporations sought to regulate this situation by targeting those who operated workshops or shops where their profession was practiced, particularly if the business was run by someone who had not passed the master's examination, which most guilds considered essential for leading a business. Some of these individuals, including several women, petitioned the *Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte* for permission to practice their trades without facing interference.

For example, on February 6, 1621, Mariana García requested permission to keep her bladesmithing workshop open. Her request implies that she took over the workshop following the death of her husband, Juan de Almendrales, a sword-maker. She indicated that she had been granted permission to operate by hiring a certified worker, but due to financial constraints and the difficulty in finding one, she was unable to employ such a worker. As a result, she sought permission to continue her business while one of her sons completed his training in the guild. The *Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte* consulted with the guild inspectors, who affirmed that they "consienten y tienen por bien" to grant her:

> [...] liçençia a la susodicha para que pueda tener tienda despadero en el ynterin que un hixo que tiene aprendiendo el dicho oficio despadero lo acava de aprender

para poderse exsaminar o por el tienpo que los dichos señores alcaldes dixeren ser [...] (License for Mariana García to continue her bladesmithing business).[15]

This case, like several others, illustrates that some women worked outside the guilds that regulated their trades, which often led to harassment by guild inspectors. As a result, many of them sought permission to practice their professions without interference. They often obtained temporary licenses while resolving their status with the guild, either by hiring a licensed man or by having one of their sons complete the master's examination.

It was not only women who faced these challenges; others experienced similar issues as well. For instance, on March 24, 1637, the gilder Gabriel Fernández appeared before the *Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte* to address harassment by the guild inspectors. He sought permission to continue operating his shop, which he had been running for over 12 years without being examined. He explained that his inability to pay the examination fees, due to his poverty, had prevented him from passing it.

Gabriel Fernandez dorador de fuego, digo que a mas de doçe años que uso y exerço el ofiçio de dorador y por ser pobre y no tener aora de presente dinero con que poderme exsaminar, a vuestra señoria pido y supplico me mande dar un año de termino para podello haçer o el tiempo que vuestra señoria fuese servido y que por el y tener mi tienda y usar el dicho mi ofiçio no me molesten los vehedores del ni las justiçias desta billa y corte pues es justiçia la qual pido [...] (License for Gabriel Fernández).[16]

Thus, while the prevailing notion suggests that women were barred from guilds and that this hindered their ability to pursue artistic professions, the historical reality appears to have been more complex. Many women worked within the guild system, either by being directly affiliated with guilds or by engaging in businesses represented within these organizations. Additionally, a significant portion of artistic production and commerce took place outside the guilds. Therefore, even if there were restrictions on women becoming guild members—which, as evidence suggests, did not hold true in many cities—this would not have entirely prevented them from practicing artistic trades.

The Arts Practiced by Women in Madrid

In Madrid, women played a crucial role in the development of numerous artistic processes within the city. They were actively involved in architecture and construction, engaging in both the production and supply of materials like stone, brick, plaster, iron, and lime, as well as in the construction of many buildings. Their work included tasks such as laboring on-site and transporting the earth excavated from foundations (Gómez de Zamora, forthcoming b).

For example, several women were paid for "conducir la arena," meaning transporting the sand, from the excavation of one of the walls of the Casa de la Moneda in Madrid in 1706. In the records, they are listed as "the widow of Villaberde" and "la Pulida," and were among the 25 people compensated for this work. While payments ranged from 8 to 24 *reales* per day, these two women received 12 and 10 *reales*, respectively (Gómez de Zamora, forthcoming b).

[15] They "consent and agree" to grant her "permission to operate her blade-making shop in the interim while her son completes his training and is examined, or for such time as the aforementioned lords may deem appropriate".

[16] "Gabriel Fernández, gilder, state that I have practiced the trade of gilder for over twelve years and, due to my poverty and lack of funds to pay for the examination, I requests and pleads with Your Lord to grant me a term of one year or any period that Your Lord deems appropriate to complete the examination, to be allowed to keep my shop open and continue my trade without being harassed by the guild inspectors or the authorities of this town and court, as I seek justice".

Other women were involved in the textile arts. While traditionally studies of women's work and the arts have often focused on such trades, assuming they were the only roles women undertook—especially in amateur contexts (Canavan, 26-27; Ágreda Pino, 31-32)—their involvement in Madrid during the seventeenth century extended beyond these activities. They were engaged in sourcing materials essential for textile work—primarily silk, linen, and wool for artistic production—and also in creating the finished artworks. Their roles included embroiderers, tapestry-makers, weavers, dyers, and ribbon-makers.

For instance, María Pachona and Inés Antolín were silk merchants who formed a partnership with their husbands, Pedro Antolín and Agustín Jiménez, starting on January 1, 1638. María Pachona and Pedro Antolín contributed 229,164 *reales* in cash and *efectos*, while Inés Antolín and Agustín Jiménez contributed 36,608 *reales* in cash, merchandise, and other effects. Despite the differing contributions, all parties agreed to share profits and losses equally. However, María Pachona and Pedro Antolín were exempt from daily store operations, whereas Inés Antolín and Agustín Jiménez were responsible for these tasks. The partnership was dissolved on May 4, 1647, by Agustín Jiménez, the last surviving partner, and Catalina Díaz Jiménez, who had married Pedro Antolín after María Pachona's death and was also involved in the business (Account settlement between Catalina Díaz Jiménez and Agustín Jiménez for a silk merchandise partnership).

Women were also actively involved in trades related to the book arts. Their roles encompassed a wide range of activities, from supplying essential materials such as tanned leather and paper to participating directly in production processes, including printing and bookbinding. Additionally, women were engaged in the sale of books, with many of these tasks overseen by bookstores. These trades, like many others, were carried on by domestic groups which passed down their knowledge and practices through generations, thereby ensuring the preservation and continuity of these important crafts over time.

An example of this is the printing house known as *imprenta de Madrigal*. Pedro de Madrigal directed it until 1594, but as was typical in artistic workshops, the work was supported by others, including his wife, María Rodríguez de Rivalde. After her husband's death, she took over the business until she remarried another printer, Juan Íñiguez de Lequerica, who then succeeded her. When he was absent, she once again took charge of the printing workshop, overseeing tasks such as procuring paper. For instance, on May 10, 1596, she arranged to pay Antonio Rodríguez, a bookseller, 600 *reales* for 48 reams of "papel de corazón," a specific type of paper she had purchased (Agulló y Cobo 1991, 279).

Before her death, she transferred the business to Juan de la Cuesta and his wife, María de Quiñones, although she continued to work in the workshop. When Juan de la Cuesta had to travel to Seville, both of them and Juan Berrillo, another printer, took over the operation of the printing house. This arrangement was officially documented when Juan de la Cuesta granted them power of attorney before a notary (Moll Roqueta 2005, 475-484). After Juan de la Cuesta's death, María de Quiñones, now a widow, assumed full control of the business and continued to work there until her own death in 1669 (Establés Susán, 416-417).

Before that, she sold the printing business to Melchor Alegre and Catalina Gómez, both of whom were also printers. While Alegre managed the operations, Gómez actively participated in the business and handled administrative responsibilities, as evidenced by her signing notarial documents related to contracts and payment obligations. Following her husband's death, she remarried Roque Rico de Miranda, another printer, and included the printing house and its materials as part of her dowry (Agulló y Cobo 1991, 515-516).

Other women were engaged in trades related to the art of sculpture and its associated crafts. Their roles included supplying materials such as wood and gold, creating sculptures, and working in silverwork, carpentry, glassmaking, and pottery. They were also involved in selling these items. In Madrid, records document women working as sculptors, fine cabinetmakers, assemblers, carpenters, wood turners, silversmiths, *joyeras*, gold thread makers, gold sellers, glassmakers, and potters. One example is María Martínez, a fine cabinetmaker. In her 1673 will, she noted that she was married to Bernabé Montero, who was also involved in the trade, and mentioned several debts related to the business, reflecting her active participation. She also bequeathed a pair of shoes to a young man named Diego Ramírez, referring to him as "mi aprendiz," indicating that he was her apprentice (Agulló y Cobo 1994, 198-200).

There were also women involved in the arts of painting and gilding. In the field of painting, women were organized into various trades, including the painting of *sargas*—a type of canvas–. The regulations of their guild from 1543 indicate the presence of female members (Gómez de Zamora 2020, 31-32). Gilding, defined by Covarrubias as "cubrir alguna cosa con oro," meaning covering something with gold (Covarrubias, 327r), was another significant area of work. For example, Mariana de Antequera specialized in gilding and was commissioned by Luis de Haro, Count-Duke of Olivares, to gild the altarpiece of the church at the convent of *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* in Loeches. This is confirmed by a document dated August 31, 1657, in which she stated her commitment to the project and noted that she had already received an advance of 2,000 *reales* (Gómez de Zamora, forthcoming a).

Final thoughts

The examples provided represent only a fraction of the more than 800 documented cases of women working in artistic trades in 17th-century Madrid, as detailed in the research on which this article is based. This figure, along with the information presented, underscores that women were actively, consistently, and extensively engaged in artistic trades throughout 17th-century Madrid. The reality appears to have been more complex than simply attributing works of art to the master of the workshop where they were created. Artistic creation involved the contributions of many individuals who, within artistic spaces that sometimes had guild representation, played crucial roles in the arts.

Many of these women worked in workshops and shops where materials and artworks were produced and sold. In some cases, these establishments were run by their own families, while in other instances, they worked under others as apprentices, domestic workers, or, in the case of enslaved individuals, were subjected to exploitation. Free women sometimes managed these businesses themselves. Regardless of their specific circumstances, they were actively involved in production, commerce, and management. Additionally, they often passed these roles down through generations and leveraged their personal connections. Their contributions were crucial to the development of the arts in 17th-century Madrid and merit recognition

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