

## Malaganian Painting in the XIX Century

Nationally, Malaga was one of the most distinguished artistic centers. Local painters were viewed favorably due to the good economic situation of the oligarchy and the middle class that supported the teaching of the arts and maintained a large commercial demand. But one cannot understand the development of Malaganian painting without the School of Fine Arts in the city, dependent of the Academy of Fine Arts of San Telmo. This was founded, together with twelve others in Spain – all affiliates of the San Fernando Center- by a Royal Decree in 1849. The objective, at a national level, was to reorganize artistic teaching; with the hopes to educate people specialized in industrial arts. The Academy inaugurated its School in January, 1851, in the old College of San Telmo, in the Plaza de la Constitución. In its first phase, it started imparting classes centered in drawing, in addition to one in sculpting, all free of frills. The students were adults, artisans and workers that were going to perfect their respective trades. Progressively, interest grew in imparting purely artistic teaching. The naming of the Valencian, Bernardo Ferrándiz as professor of painting in 1868 caused a definite move in that direction. So in little time he gathered a group of booming young painters. A Royal Decree in 1892 separated the School from the Academy, now under the control of the rector of the University of Granada. Finally by another Royal Decree in 1900, the teaching acquired its artisanal aspect once more.

Before Ferrándiz, Carlos de Haes (1826-1868) could be considered as the first teacher of the Malaganian painters. Haes, the initiator of modern Spanish landscaping, lived in Málaga between 1835 and 1850 (due to his fathers work); he left for Belgium for five years and returned for a few months. The evocations of the provincial landscape, that mix realistic techniques with romantic concepts, are very significant in his work. As professor at the School of San Fernando in Madrid he taught various Malaganian students, the most distinguished of whom being Emilio Ocón.



**Bernardo Ferrándiz y Bádenes** (1835-1885) revolutionized the panorama of painting and its teaching in Málaga. Valencian, educated in his city of birth as well as Paris, friend and devotee of Mariano Fortuny, from his arrival in 1868 as professor, he fought to instill his vision of things. As a teacher, he left a decisive mark on his students, and when he was named director of the School of Fine Arts, he restructured the curriculum

to match the Superior Schools. He also brought about the respect and valuation of art among the Malaganian society, which translated into local art collecting and institutional support and encouragement (holding classes, organizing scholarships and prizes, organizing expositions, and acquiring artwork for its funds).

He is practically owed for the direction adopted by the Malaganian artists, those who predominated the “bourgeois realism” or commercial fortunismo, including the genre of “casacas”. Ferrándiz, who had been in Paris since 1860, did not stick to the Realism of Courbet, Daumier, Millet or Manet, rather that of Meissonier. It consisted of a superficial use of the realist technique in order to give a likeness to the represented scenes (objectivism, luminism, préciosité, precision of lines, and instantaneousness), but without falling into any moral provocation and forgetting any social commitment. He had to adapt to the preferences of the market, that was made up of middle class bourgeois or official institutions. In accordance with said preferences, the Malaganian painting of that time—as a major part of Spanish painting—he dedicated himself fundamentally to the genre of customs, using popular characters and scenes (both quotidian and festive), from a light and friendly eye. It can also be said that in many cases there was a nationalist or regionalist intention in certain atmospheres and iconographies. He did not neglect the portrait, landscape, still life, or the painting of history, executed out of respect for academic formalism.



**Antonio Muñoz Degrain** (1841-1924), also Valencian, was tied to Málaga through Ferrándiz who brought him there as a student of the School of Fine Arts in 1870 (where he did his work intermittently until 1895). Here he honed his style, a very eclectic mix in which a force of realism stands out, displaying excellent drawing and composition skills. His romantic and

literary vein grew throughout his career, with a dramatic and theatrical quality, the sense of the grandiose, emotion, poetry and mystery becoming distinct aspects of his work. He cultivated historical, literary, and religious themes, as much as he did with landscape and “casaconismo”. He was a professor at the School of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid, where he taught classes to Picasso, whose father was a friend of his. He also spent time in Rome, Venice, the Middle East, Granada, Morocco etc. but he always returned to Málaga, the city in which he would eventually die. The path to landscaping was started thanks to him and Carlos de Haes.

Denis, Ocón, and Martínez de la Vega, were already painters when Ferrándiz arrived to Málaga in 1868. The three, as professors at the school, transmitted the esthetic of their teachers (Haes, Ferrándiz, and Muñoz Degrain) and those responsible for the consolidation of distinct lines, esthetics and iconographies practiced by their students, leading figures in Malaganian painting in the last third of the XIX century and beginning of the XX century.

**José Denis Belgrano** (1844-1917) started with romanticism and ended up being the most genuine representation of the fortunist bourgeois realism, although more

essential and pure in his portraits and landscapes. One of his lesser-known sides is his role as the decorator of a good part of the buildings of the Malaganian oligarchy and bourgeoisie, a side in which he achieved a quality much higher than that achieved by his contemporaries.



**Emilio Ocón y Rivas** (1845 -1904) was a student of Haes and the Belgian, Cleiss between 1863 and 1867 in the Netherlands, thanks to a scholarship awarded by the Málaga City Council. Established in Málaga, from his studio in front of the port he dedicated himself to reflect upon the views of the city and it's

bay, or the corners of the port. His presuppositions were late romantic ones; in his landscapes he portrayed anecdote, emotion and feeling, from a decorative and friendly perspective. Nevertheless, he would gradually start imposing the direct translation of what he would see. He was the only professor that created the school of the Malaganian marine artists of the XIX century.

**José Martínez de la Vega** (1846-1905), From Almeria, studied in Madrid, and ultimately taught in Málaga, where he never left. He tried out various styles and genres: pure realist costumbrismo, historicism with a character of political liberalism, orientalism, and fortunysmo. He had a peculiar personality and from 1887 until his death he found himself battling with depression, alcohol and drugs, which all gave light to works of art that border 'end of century' modernity, with his decadent women, his symbolist Christs and Virgins, carried out with light pastels and a reduced palate of pinks and blues.

Other important painters from that time in Málaga were the following:

**Enrique Simonet Lombardo** (1866-1927), also born in Valencia, but taught in Málaga. At boarding school in Rome, the study of renaissance painting influenced his work. Upon returning, he established himself in Madrid as head professor at the School of Fine Arts of San Fernando. As an historic painter, his biggest successes were harvested with a religious subject matter, although his realist works, genre works, African themes ("Azotea en Tangier") and portraits were all equally viewed.

**Sarafín Martínez del Rincón** (1840-1892), from Palencia, was also a professor at the School of Fine Arts, and headed up in a certain way a different line of work from Ferrándiz and Muñoz Degrain. Horacio Lengo Martínez (1840-1890) from Torremolinos was his disciple who worked in Paris and dedicated himself to making portraits and the representation of flowers and birds. José Morillo Bracho (1827-1882) from Seville, professor at the School also, dedicated himself to the floral genre and the Malaganian Manuel Criado Baca (1839-1899), to landscapes.

Among the 'Malaganian Orthodox', **Leoncio Talavera** (1851-1878), **Pedro Sáenz** (1863-1927), **José Nogales Sevilla** (1860-1939) and **José Moreno Carbonero** should

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all be mentioned. The last one being the most distinguished, as a precocious artist with ample studies in Seville, Rome and Paris, where he was a disciple of Gérôme, owner of an impeccable technique, he left realist costumbrismo in order to lean towards the literary genre (scenes of Quixote) and historic matters, subscribing himself in the end to realist portraits.

Some of the lesser known artists that should be mentioned were Antonio Maqueda, Emilio Herrera Velasco, José Blanco Coris, the brothers Félix y Pedro Iniesta Soto, José Fernández Alvarado, José Ponce Puente and José Ruiz Blasco, Picasso's father.