

TANYA KLOWDEN SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

I am incredibly grateful to have been awarded the 2024 ARTES-CEEH UK PhD Scholarship for my research into the presence and practices of Sofonisba Anguissola and Alonso Sánchez Coello in the court of Philip II of Spain. With the support and professional connections coming from ARTES and CEEH, I have been able to travel to several notable historic sites and museums to study specific portraits, explore key royal, religious, and feminine spaces that were critical centres of artistic production, cultural expression, and devotion to both the Catholic faith and the far-reaching Habsburg dynasty. I have also had the ability to attend conferences focusing on the technical study of art and on both the socio-political and art historical impacts of the Spanish Habsburgs.

In May I travelled to Madrid, where I was able to directly examine several surviving works that had originally been part of the prized family galleries established by Philip II in El Pardo. I also had the opportunity to visit the more intimate family gallery established by his sister, Juana of Austria in the convent of Las Descalzas Reales and the works within the royal residences of El Escorial. Both of these historic sites, where the portraits are displayed in situ and largely untouched since they were initially displayed under the patronage/matronage of the Habsburg royal family, were extremely useful in helping me to grasp the context in which these works were created, how they were used by family members, and further clarify the relationships that the royal family had cultivated with the circle of artists they had brought together from across Europe.

I also had the opportunity in Madrid to meet with scholars and conservators who have studied and preserved these works over many decades and could offer significant insights into them. Because Philip employed a large number of artists within his court for a broad assortment of purposes, there remains little clarity regarding which artists contributed to which works, particularly as archives hold records in which named artists are not only creating portraits of living family members and prominent members of court, but are also making copies of each other's works, creating large-scale works of religious devotion to fill the many private and public spaces that Philip built, and often working to preserve, restore, and recreate important works of art that Philip had inherited from the previous generation of Habsburg kin—works that were brought to Madrid through arduous journeys which caused significant wear and tear on the priceless inheritance.

Following the summer months spent reading much of the available material on the artistic production that flowed out of Philip's court and contextualizing it together with what I had directly seen in Spain, I was able to recognize that, in addition to the crucial influence of Sofonisba Anguissola on Philip's third wife, Elisabeth of Valois and on her two daughters, Infantas Isabella Clara Eugenia and Catalina Micaela, that a much larger tradition of feminine influence and matronage emerged in the

Habsburg courts, both through Philip's significant inheritances from the courts of Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary, but also through Juana of Austria and Elisabeth of Valois cultivating close relationships with Sofonisba Anguissola, Alonso Sánchez Coello, and Jorge de la Rúa and bringing these artists and their trusted associates within the circle of royal influence.

As the summer drew to a close, I was able to attend two excellent conferences centred around influential figures in Spanish art. The first conference on Isabella Clara Eugenia was held at the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) and Instituto Cervantes in collaboration with the AGENART project at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM). Papers presented on the Infanta Isabella's diplomatic and political skill and generous artistic and cultural patronage enriched my understanding of this remarkable woman whose formative artistic understanding was profoundly influenced by her relationship with Sofonisba Anguissola. The second conference was a celebration of the career of Spanish-centred art historian Peter Cherry. Presented papers there looked at significant Spanish works of art within the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland, including preliminary reporting on the technical studies of a portrait of Alessandro Farnese, a central figure in Philip's court whose portrait has very credibly been suggested to be by either Anguissola or Sánchez Coello. This study provides an excellent model for the kind of data gathering and close technical examination that will be critical to begin to distinguish the contributions of these two artists in the production of multiple portraits of prominent members of the Spanish court.

Beginning in the fall, the passing of my advisor and mentor Austin Nevin necessitated a re-evaluation of the technical components of my research. A data bottleneck and difficulty establishing some artistic ground truths had hindered my ability to develop a functioning computational algorithm to perform the required analysis on the Spanish court portraiture. Meeting with my supervisors and other key faculty at the Courtauld, it was decided to focus the technical component of my research on a model system using reproductions of a 16th c. Venetian work on canvas made in like materials on canvas by Courtauld students to develop methods which could then be extended to apply to analysis of 16th c. Spanish court portraits. Working with paintings where the artists were not only alive, but available to answer direct questions about their works enabled me to easily establish ground truths of authorship and easily get clarification of the methods and materials used in the works. The model system turned out to have another significant advantage when I discovered, on meeting with the artists, that they had spontaneously collaborated on one painting in addition to using the exact same materials within the same studio. As one of the principal hypotheses of my research is that the Spanish court artists were closely collaborating, it was exciting to be able to seek for evidence of similar collaboration within this cohort of living artists to serve as a control for whether such collaboration could be detected within an individual canvas.

I have subsequently spent the last several weeks gathering technical imaging of the set of reproduction canvases to use as the data for developing the computational model. The anticipated model will produce a “heat map” where different regions of the collaborative canvas are marked with the probability that they are by each of the artists that they are trained on (using the other canvases which were painted individually by each artist). The results of the analysis can then be compared to the artists’ own reports of which portion of the painting they contributed to. Subsequent iterations can apply different computational methods (edge-finders, wavelets, etc.) and additional imaging modalities (infra-red, x-ray) to seek for results that show the highest levels of accuracy compared to the artists’ reporting.

Through the generosity of ARTES and CEEH, I have been able to significantly increase my understanding of the complex hierarchical and interpersonal relationships that directed the production of portraiture in Philip’s court through first-person observation of the monumental and personal spaces they occupied and the artworks they produced. I have also had the opportunity to grow my network of scholarship in meeting with others who share my passion for this slice of Spanish history (and for the ripples that this court sent through Europe and across the world). And, finally, following the loss of my principal mentor, I have been able to make forward progress in the technical component of my research utilizing both the financial resources and networking opportunities that ARTES and CEEH have provided.

Images:



The family gallery at the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales, Madrid.



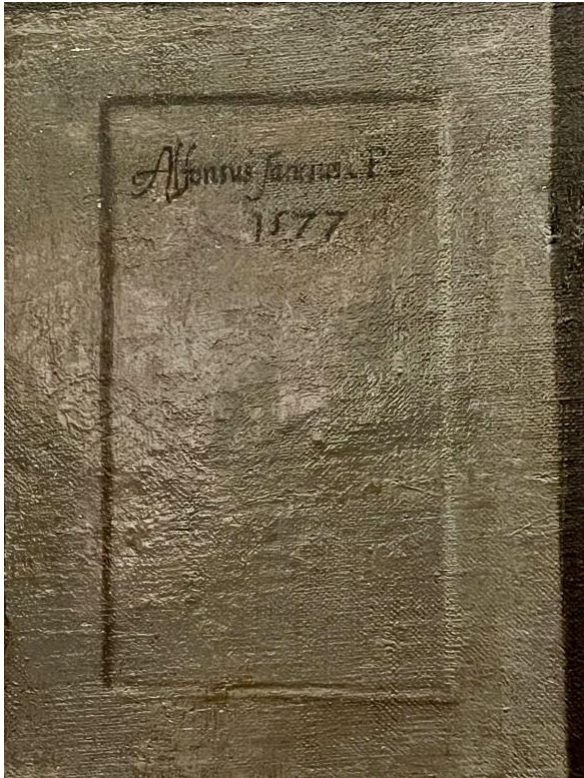
Detail of the procession of Archdukes Albert and Isabella Clara Eugenia on Pilgrimage, 1601 by Hans van der Beken, at the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales, Madrid.



Library of Philip II of Spain at the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial.



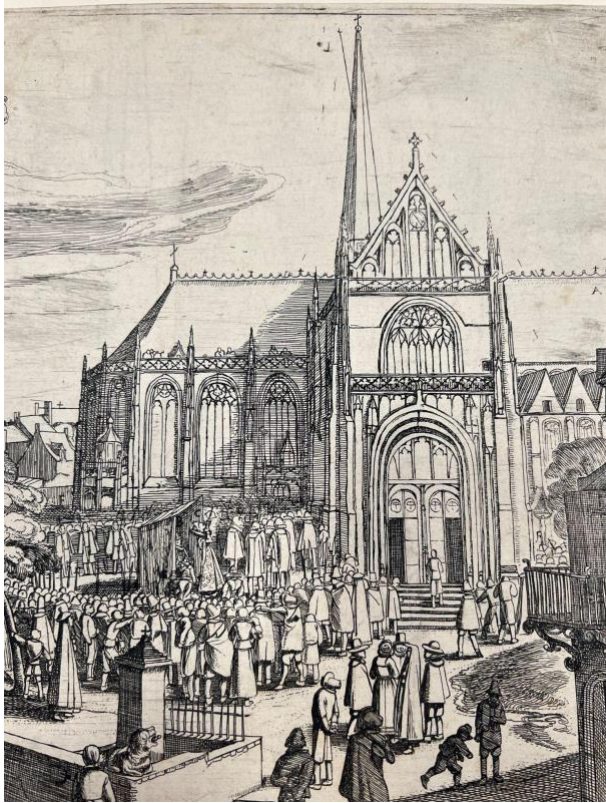
Detail showing the signature of Alonso Sánchez Coello in a devotional painting at the chapel of the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial.



Detail of the signature of Alonso Sánchez Coello in a portrait at the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales.



Reliquary belonging to Juana of Austria, made by Antonio Carmona c. 1554, in the collection of the Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid.



Detail of 1615 print of Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia winning an archery tournament, collection of KIK.



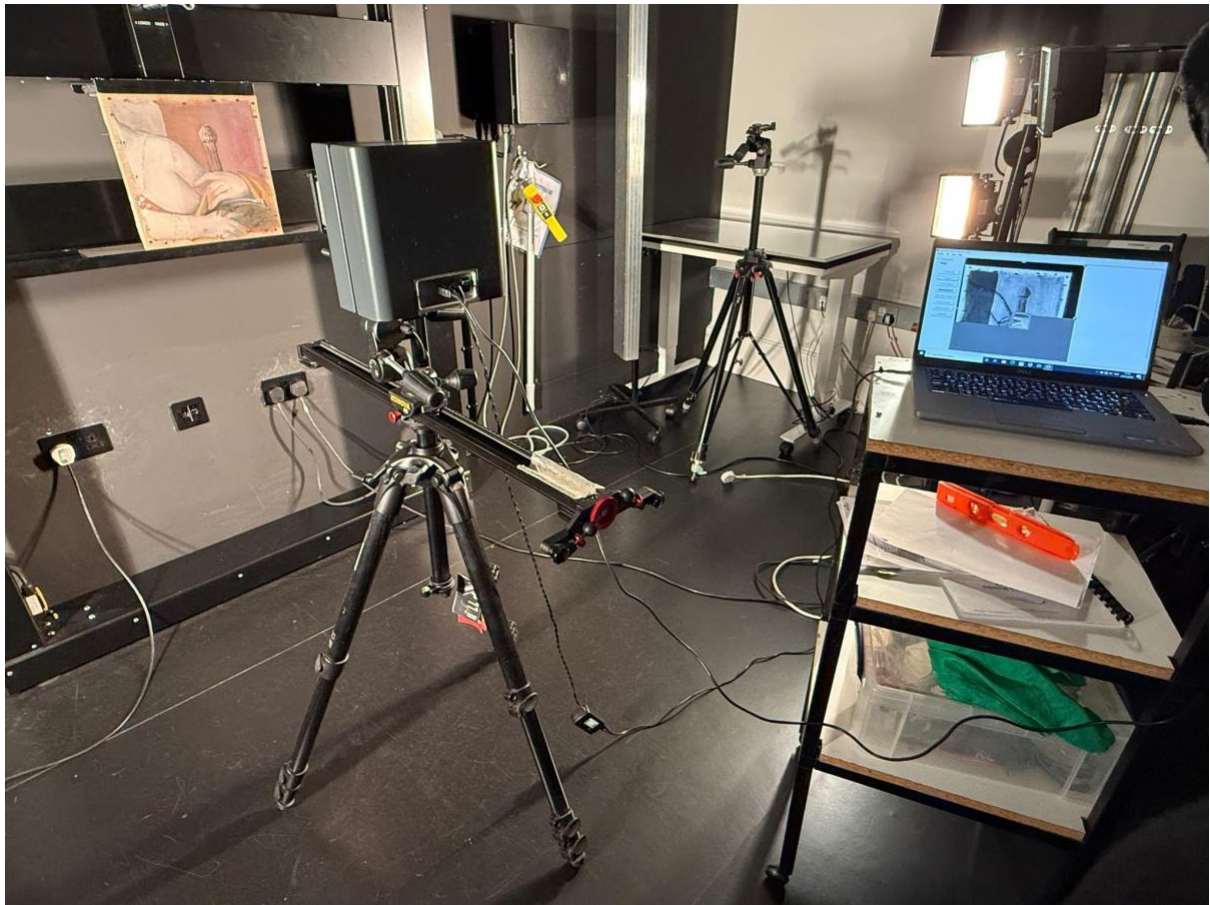
Drawing of a soldier by Rubens, collection of KIK. Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia appointed Rubens to be her court painter in 1609.



Portrait of Alessandro Farnese, c. 1560 attributed to Sofonisba Anguissola, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.



Detail of Alessandro Farnese portrait.



Infrared imaging of reproduction painting made by a Courtauld conservation student.