

# Charles V and the Habsburgs' Inventories. Changing Patrimony as Dynastic Cult in Early Modern Europe

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## Abstract

Apart from a deep respect for the achievements of the Habsburgs, Emperor Maximilian I transmitted to his heirs a practical attitude towards their art collections. Pearls and precious stones were extracted from set pieces to produce new ones; old-fashioned jewellery or silver objects were melted down; and tapestries, paintings and sculptures were publicly sold to pay off debts. By studying how some of these goods were reused, recycled, and recirculated among the Habsburg family members, I will explain how crown patrimony changed owners and kingdoms, and how the cult of their dynasty, actively promoted by Charles V, heightened the notion of a collective consciousness which served as a *topos* for aristocratic collecting in the Renaissance.

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## Introduction

[1] The royal inventories of the Habsburgs are documents of extraordinary importance for the analysis of art collecting in the Modern Age. They are often the only available tools to interpret the value, arrangement, uses and original functions of the ever-changing princely possessions – today just partially preserved –, and provide us with references about the best European painters, sculptors, goldsmiths, weavers, or armourers of the time, to name but a few. Besides Emperor Charles V's inventories (1500-1558), those of his closest dynastic milieu are quite significant because of the direct contribution and influence that some of these figures exerted on his intellectual education and the shaping of his tastes. This applies especially to his aunt, Margaret of Austria (1480-1533), and his sister Mary of Hungary (1505-1558) who, through their privileged status among the most outstanding patrons and collectors of the period, furnished Charles with a multicultural background during his formative years (Margaret) and later on from circa 1530 (Mary). Their impact was made manifest in his own inventories, which constitute a basic resource to assess the depth of his stamp on his lineage's aesthetic judgment in general and on Philip II's (1527-1598) in particular.

[2] Most of the records once so carefully kept by the Habsburg bureaucrats fell prey to fire and poor management in later centuries, so that a reconstruction of the dynasty's expenditure on art necessarily depends on the chance availability of documents. All in all, sixty-three inventories and working lists scattered over several European archives (Brussels, Copenhagen, Dijon, Lille, Lisbon, Madrid, Oslo, Paris, Simancas, and Vienna) and written in diverse

languages (Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Danish, and Latin) have been identified and transcribed.<sup>1</sup> This alone gives a good account of the supranational horizon of the Habsburgs and their collecting, characterised as a typical family trait passed down from generation to generation and reflecting distinctive tastes. In order to analyse these patterns, I will base my claims not just upon Charles V's own inventories, but also upon those of some major figures of his immediate family, descendants not included, that is: Joanna of Castile (1479-1555), his mother; his siblings Ferdinand I (1503-1564), Mary of Hungary and Catherine of Austria (1507-1578); and his spouse Isabella of Portugal (1503-1539). Purposely, I will address only fourteen significant inventories dated between 1509 and 1558 and made, for a variety of reasons to be duly explained, in Spain, Portugal, Austria and the Low Countries.

[3] Despite their geographical, chronological and even linguistic spread, and above and beyond the fact that they record Habsburg collections, it can be safely assumed that these inventories constitute a singular group. Through time and space they share the same driving forces, features and – to a certain extent – contents, and were recorded by the same officials who belonged to the Habsburg courts, all of them regulated by the strict Burgundian protocol. By studying these Habsburg inventories as a group we can trace the manipulation of the objects they possessed and better understand their taste and motivations. Additionally, this study will demonstrate a gradual shift from a primary interest in the value of objects to the promotion of the family dynasty through collecting.

[4] This essay is organised into two parts, each one consisting of two headings. The first part explains why the Habsburg inventories were made, how they are organised and how they differ among them. Here I will typify the importance of the provenance of the objects for the creation of the dynasty together with the utilitarian value conferred in the documentation to some these belongings, mainly jewels and items made of gold and silver. Appreciated above all for their material worth, they functioned as a genuine treasury that was dipped into as a source for financing a broad range of family requirements by way of melting down or recycling. In the second part I will specifically deal with Charles V's inventories and discuss their most relevant examples to define the nature of his collections. At first glance, it is difficult to assess to what degree Charles V's acquisition of works of art was influenced by the prevailing taste in other royal courts in Europe. Definitely, his preferences in armour or tapestry collections, for instance, cannot be seen in isolation from those of his contemporaries Henry VIII of England (1491-1547) or Francis I of France (1494-1547). This trend was politically rather than artistically driven: while Charles visited England in 1520 and 1522 to forge an alliance against France and could have seen Henry's armours, the rivalry between the Emperor and the French King, who sought to outdo each other in magnificence, probably provided a powerful impetus to the textile decoration of Habsburg palaces after 1540, when Charles V had been able to see Francis I's residences for himself on his way from Spain to the Low Countries in order to suppress the Ghent revolt.

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<sup>1</sup> See Fernando Checa Cremades, dir., and Juan Luis González García, ed., *The Inventories of Charles V and The Imperial Family*, 3 vols., Madrid 2010.

[5] If armour and tapestries played a key role in the unification of court style throughout Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century, it was the extensive commissions and purchases of the Habsburgs that left an enduring mark on the cities of Augsburg or Brussels. The relationship between the patronage exercised by the Habsburgs in South Germany and the Low Countries and the flourishing of the art of arms and armour and tapestry, respectively, merits more extensive study than is possible within the scope of the present essay. However, it is apparent that this influence would have been much lesser if both centres of production had eluded Charles V's authority. When he was unable to exercise it by himself, the Emperor placed his trust in the women of his family to build up a system of government and political networking. He had little reservation about contracting foreign marriages in the interests of the dynasty, and his sisters could easily be forfeited for reasons of state. Ironically, it was two Habsburg widows who best promoted the dynastic interests of Charles V. Once Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary became widowed (Margaret in 1497 and 1504, and Mary in 1526) and successfully rejected any further nuptial plans, they were officially made regents of the Netherlands. This position was especially created for them on account of their widowhood – i.e., they would not share their power with a foreign prince. No longer wives or candidates for marriage, Margaret and Mary assumed responsibilities which only they could personally define. Their cosmopolitan background resulted in an active interest in literature, music and art, and their palaces at Mechelen and Brussels housed their quite considerable collections, which included portraits and religious paintings, books, sculptures, decorative objects and exotica. They were known to their contemporaries as patrons with a discerning taste, who enjoyed receiving artworks as gifts. Charles grew up and lived most of his life in these enlightened surroundings, where French was the everyday language. He brought together most of his works of art in his Netherlandish residences and, as it could not have been otherwise, they were minutely inventoried there.

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### **The Organization of Early Habsburg Inventories and the Hierarchy of Media**

[6] Given that monarchs could amass a considerable number of rich objects, inventories were drawn up periodically for different reasons. Most frequently they instructed their court officials to prepare a written record of all their moveable items, either with the intention of going somewhere else or to record their posthumous estate or will. These were meant, correspondingly, to protect the owner from theft and loss while travelling across Europe, or to guarantee the integrity of the possessions which had to pass on to their heirs. For instance, promptly after Joanna I arrived in Tordesillas (Valladolid) in 1509, her collection was inventoried. Ferdinand the Catholic (1452-1516), who governed Castile owing to his daughter's incapacity, had decided in this manner to establish order in her household, for which he needed to ascertain the exact nature of the Queen's treasure.<sup>2</sup> A decade later, in 1518, when the future Ferdinand I was forced to travel from Spain to the Netherlands by his elder brother, an

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<sup>2</sup> Real Biblioteca, Madrid (hereafter RB), Ms. II-3283. Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 913-1197.

inventory of his jewels and wardrobe was made at Santander.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, post-mortem inventories and estate partitions were the most common procedure to settle the shares in succession among the Habsburgs. Some of these documents – e.g., those relevant to Eleanor (1498-1558) or Isabella of Austria (1501-1526) – remain to be discovered, but others never existed. Such is the case of the aforementioned Joanna of Castile's inventory, whose authors were chamberlains to the queen from 1509 to the year of her death: *Libro de cuenta de Diego y Alonso de Ribera, su hijo, camareros que fueron de la reina doña Juana nuestra señora, de las joyas y ropas y otras cosas de la recámara de su Alteza que fueron a su cargo desde el año de MDIX hasta el año de DLV que fallecio su Alteza*. It is not the inventory of the objects the Queen possessed during her nearly five decades at Tordesillas, but of those that were brought with her to the palace, as hardly anything remained of them by the time she died. Her inventory underscores the quantity and quality of objects taken from her residence along less than thirty visits, from 1509 until her death in 1555. The withdrawal information states precisely when the different objects were removed from the palace and where they went, and served to distribute the remainder of her collection among her grandson Philip II and her granddaughters, Joan of Austria (1535-1573) and Empress Maria (1528-1603).

[7] As stated above, the person in charge of this inventorial task was the jewel keeper or chamberlain (generally referred to as *garde-joyaux/varlet-de-chambre* or *guardajoyas/camarero* in the documents). That was part of the responsibilities of these court officials, so they had to name all objects in their care and account for the movements of items, including both new additions and the destination of withdrawals. Such a routine reflects an intricate system of accountability within the court set up to ensure the safekeeping of the Habsburgs' personal property. For that purpose, most inventories were annotated on both margins. On the left column each piece was checked with previous inventories or bore explanations on its provenance or function. The right column usually repeated key words to locate these objects at a glance and reflected the value of the appraisal or sale. This assessment of the objects' potential monetary value was almost a fetishistic mandate: in order to reassure the owners and future owners of the collection, objects had to be represented in the documents as if their socioeconomic value were inherent in them. Indexes were finally appended at the end of the major inventories, ordered by groups of objects and sorted alphabetically.

[8] Each inventory usually began with the most valuable pieces, in accordance with their material or class. Since the early sixteenth century, the massive arrival of luxury goods to the ports of Seville and Lisbon had started to change European jewellery, which ceased to employ glazing as the principal ornament and gave way to mounting huge quantities of pearls and precious stones. This made jewels the most expensive items recorded on Renaissance inventories. Their high price was not determined by their size, the amount of gold used, or their workmanship, but by the presence of large gemstones or pearls.

<sup>3</sup> Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Diversos-Colecciones, leg. 291, no. 18. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 2665-2687.

[9] Gold and silver were recorded on the following pages of the inventories. Images framed in such metals, as well as rich bindings or gilded manuscripts, were also quoted along with gems and jewellery, noticeably far from the rest of paintings or books. Tapestries, when in existence, went after precious stones and metals in the inventories, since they were frequently woven with gold and silver thread. The rest of the contents listed differed considerably in categorisation depending on the nature of the documents.

[10] In general terms, earlier Habsburg inventories are much shorter than those dated from circa 1530 on. For example, Charles V's inventory of his palace at Ghent, dated on 1521, consists of just eight folios,<sup>4</sup> although his post-mortem inventory of 1558 reaches almost nine hundred.<sup>5</sup> This not only means that his goods were (logically) fewer during his youth, but also reveals the influence of Margaret of Austria's way of maintaining and recording her own collection by means of partial working lists, grouped according to its location and the diverse responsibilities of the administrators which then belonged to her small household.<sup>6</sup> The inventories can also be classified by their proprietors, whether they are male or female. Most Habsburg women favoured precious objects – easily transportable and ideal for palace decoration – which they housed in their wardrobe and treasury: jewels, gems, plate, illuminated manuscripts, rich clothes and textiles. Painting and sculpture, unless small religious paintings and devotional objects for their oratories and chapels, played a secondary role in their collecting objectives, perhaps with the sole exceptions of Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary. An obvious difference between female and male inventories is that the latter usually included arms and armour, which both Charles V and his brother Ferdinand I collected avidly.

[11] Dowry inventories must be considered separately for two reasons: firstly, for epitomising female inventories; and secondly as typical examples of registers drawn up when a change of residence took place – unlike palace inventories, which denote continuity in a particular location. This entails a new, functional taxonomy between transnational and permanent inventories which deserves an explanation. In a period when marriages between royal persons were a social contract rather than a love match, the dowry inventories listed all the moveable objects with which the young brides travelled from their homeland to the foreign courts. A princess's trousseau thus reflected her family's expectations and hopes and would therefore be able to give us some indication of her interests, together with valuable information about the international exchange of works of art.

[12] Some stylistic anomalies found in dowry inventories can only be elucidated because certain objects travelled to and fro between countries accompanying the royal brides. A significant case concerns the Infantas 'exchanged' between Spain and Portugal in 1524-1526. Catherine of Austria arrived in Portugal in 1525 to marry her cousin, King John III (1502-

<sup>4</sup> Archives Départementales du Nord, Lille (hereafter ADN), Chambre des Comptes (hereafter CDC), no. 123963. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 75-85.

<sup>5</sup> Archivo General de Simancas, Valladolid (hereafter AGS), Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas (hereafter CMC), 1ª Época, leg. 1145. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 281-834.

<sup>6</sup> Dagmar Eichberger, "Margaret of Austria and the documentation of her collection in Mechelen," in: Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 2351-2363.

1557), equipped with a choice assortment of Flemish tapestries dated well before her birth. Actually, great trouble had been taken at Tordesillas to find high-quality panels in their mother's collection. As benefited her rank, the Emperor wanted Catherine to arrive at the Lisbon court well-endowed in order to impress her new subjects.<sup>7</sup> Fourteenth tapestries from Joanna's wardrobe were included in her daughter's dowry (1524), based on the Exodus, the historical books of Joshua, Samuel and Kings, and deeds of the prophet Daniel. Three religious panels (scenes from the Life of Christ), from the collection of Isabella of Castile (1451-1504), were also included, and can be clearly identified with the first three tapestries listed in an inventory of Catherine's property dated in Lisbon in 1528.<sup>8</sup> The latter tapestries had originally been given by Joanna to her mother, but shortly after Isabella's death in 1504, these were returned by her father, Ferdinand of Aragon, to Tordesillas from which wardrobe they were then selected for his granddaughter.<sup>9</sup>

[13] Just the other way round, if we overlooked the inherited nature of the Spanish Gothic silverware inventoried in the dowry of Isabella of Portugal (1526), it would be difficult to justify its presence there. Of the three crosses in her chapel, two were Gothic. The largest (4,6 kg), a fleur-de-lis cross, had a tracery stem and was gilded. It made a return journey to Spain since it bore the coats of arms of Castile and Portugal and the *saetas* (arrows) of Isabella the Catholic, so it may have first travelled to Portugal as part of the dowry of one of her daughters, Isabella (1480-1498) or Maria (1482-1517), when they went to marry their royal husbands in the neighbouring country. Another three chalices that came with the Empress were also Gothic. One of them, like a fine pair of candlesticks (almost 4 kg between them), had returned to Spain, as it bore the shield of the Catholic Monarchs, while the second displayed Queen Isabella's arrows.<sup>10</sup> The most significant book that the Empress brought with her from Portugal, and one of the few from her library that has survived to the present, made also a return journey. This *Officium Breviarum in nativitate D. N. Jesuchristi*, which is housed in the Royal Library of the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, had originally belonged to her grandmother and to her mother. This late fifteenth-century manuscript was used for markedly dynastic purposes, as its first pages mention the dates of birth of the children of the Catholic Monarchs, as well as of Charles V, Isabella of Portugal and their three children, while the last sheets give details of the births of the nine children of Queen Maria and King Manuel I of Portugal (1469-1521), and of other subsequent births. It passed successively to Joan of Austria, Philip II and Philip III (1578-1521), as evidenced by the various annotations on the births of their issue.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Annemarie Jordan Gschwend, "Verdadero padre y señor: Catherine of Austria, queen of Portugal," in: Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 3016-3017.

<sup>8</sup> Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais / Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Núcleo Antigo 790, 61-63. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 3135-3136.

<sup>9</sup> Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón, *Libros, tapices y cuadros que coleccionó Isabel la Católica*, Madrid 1950, 149-150.

<sup>10</sup> AGS, Estado (hereafter E), leg. 14, 29-33. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 2, 1290-1292.

<sup>11</sup> José Luis Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero, *Regia Bibliotheca. El libro en la Corte española de Carlos V*, vol. 2, Mérida 2005, 210.

[14] As Habsburg collections were generally distributed across the living quarters of their owners, works of art could only rarely be viewed in autonomous, museum-like spaces, but had to fit into the ritual of everyday life at the court. To gain a more precise appreciation for the visual appearance of the Habsburgs' residences, one has to imagine the astonishing ubiquity of tapestries. These wall hangings, which had an important function as a status symbol, are testimony to the pomp and circumstance that prevailed at the Habsburgs' palaces. Such immensely expensive objects enabled them to impress all their contemporaries, both through their sheer monumentality and through the material riches they represented. Besides, the itinerant nature of the imperial court precluded long-term palace decorations, such as frescoes or galleries of paintings. This is one of the main reasons for the great importance attached to textile components, which were light and could be rolled or folded, but once the new destination was reached could be displayed over vast surfaces and achieve powerful visual effects. With their rich colours and costly materials, tapestries must have given the rooms in the palaces an air of overwhelming magnificence.<sup>12</sup>

[15] Charles V's appreciation of the art of tapestry stemmed from his exposure to his aunt Margaret's superb collections. That tapestries were one of the main features of his artistic possessions is borne out by the fact that a specific inventory of them was drawn up in 1544, a year after the Emperor arrived in Brussels.<sup>13</sup> This collection was placed in the care of Jehanim Nycolay, tapissier to His Majesty, a post separate from that of jewel keeper. The inventory lists some of the most famous sets that belonged to the Habsburgs, some since the generation previous to that of the Emperor, such as the so-called *Paños de Oro* and the *Passion of Christ* set, the first collected by Joanna of Castile and the second by Margaret of Austria, along with the hangings of *The Honours*, and the Joshua set commissioned by Mary of Hungary. Others were acquired at Medina del Campo (Valladolid), such as the Story of David and Goliath, that of Esther, that of Agamemnon and that of David and Absalom. Their iconography also expressed the Habsburgs' triumphalism – in the series depicting the Emperor's glorious victories, but also in the many sets with classical subjects, in the allegorical triumphal processions and even in the biblical series, which graphically illustrated the triumph of the Catholic faith that the Emperor defended. Altogether they formed a coherent and abundant collection, to which should be added the very copious and notable section of tapestry furnishings. Descriptions of bedspreads, ceiling pieces, canopies and other items completed this part. Not only were the themes, measurements, materials and even the colours of these textile items specified in the 1544 inventory, but an assessment was made of their condition and even of how up to date the themes were, that is, whether or not they were old, indicating how verdure-type or peasant folk sets, for instance, were no longer in vogue.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Fernando Checa Cremades, *Tapisseries flamandes pour les ducs de Bourgogne, l'empereur Charles Quint et le roi Philippe II*, exh. cat., Bruxelles 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels (hereafter AGR), *Papiers d'État et de l'Audience*, leg. 1238. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 145-148.

<sup>14</sup> On this theme, see Paul Saintenoy, "Les tapisseries de la Cour de Bruxelles sous Charles V," in: *Annales de la Société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* 30 (1921), 5-31, here 6.

## Changing Taste and the Manipulation of the Object

[16] The Habsburg possessions were not put together for eternity, but had a much more ephemeral character. Works of art could as easily be 'de-accessioned' as they had entered the collection. We learn from the inventories themselves that jewels were frequently manipulated, reworked or altered beyond recognition. Precisely to facilitate their identification, some of the better pieces of jewellery were dubbed with special nicknames in the documentation. Thanks to this practice we know that a brooch known as that of the 'Compasses', from which Isabella the Catholic had given orders for a certain amount of gold to be removed in order to make another piece of jewellery, came to be possessed by her daughter Joanna of Castile.<sup>15</sup> The most significant jewels Joanna owned were indicated in the 1509 inventory by the fact that they had names of their own: that of the 'Emperor' – which, judging by its name, must have belonged to Maximilian I (1459-1519) –; or those of the 'Jesus', 'Ostrich', 'Fleece', or 'Margaret', the latter given to Queen Joanna by her sister-in-law Margaret of Austria.<sup>16</sup> Certain jewels of Empress Isabella of Portugal, her daughter-in-law, were recognisable as well in her post-mortem inventory (1539-1542) on account of some striking feature, such as the shoulder necklace known as *de las margaritas* owing to the use of pearls in some of the pieces,<sup>17</sup> possibly inherited from Manuel I;<sup>18</sup> and the brooch of the 'Seraph'. The value of this piece changed dramatically over the years, since when it arrived from Portugal in 1526 it was appraised at 900 ducats,<sup>19</sup> but Charles V had the baroque ruby in the centre replaced by a large elongated diamond and its price soared to 6,000 ducats, even though one of its three original pearls was lost.<sup>20</sup>

[17] The inventories hence provide information on alterations and parts of certain jewels being used to make others. Perhaps the most extraordinary piece of Empress Isabella that underwent such an operation was a shoulder necklace. Its links were shaped like castles and it contained 24 diamonds, six balas rubies, six emeralds and dozens of large pearls. Using some of these materials and others, one of her goldsmiths crafted a costly necklace called *de los balajes y diamantes* (12,000 ducats). The brooch *de los penachuelos* also underwent major changes before being sent as a gift to the wife of the Infante Edward, Duke of Guimarães (1515-1540), as two of the most significant pieces of Isabella's treasure were removed from it: a large diamond and a drop pearl pendant (3,000 ducats). When the Empress's assets were distributed in 1555 among her heirs, certain precious stones and pearls were removed from their settings in order to be incorporated into pieces of jewellery or were left over from others that had been remade. Some were extremely valuable, such as an emerald called *del lagartico*

<sup>15</sup> AGS, CMC, 1ª Época, leg. 93, 91. In 1524 this brooch passed into the hands of Charles V.

<sup>16</sup> RB, Ms. II-3283, 7v-14v. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 918-921.

<sup>17</sup> AGS, CMC, 1ª Época, leg. 464, 1. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 2, 1401.

<sup>18</sup> Manuel I also owned a very similar necklace of these stones. See Anselmo Braamcamp Freire, "Inventário da guarda-roupa de D. Manuel," in: *Arquivo Histórico Português* 2 (1904), 381-415, here 382.

<sup>19</sup> AGS, E, leg. 14, 201. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 2, 1300.

<sup>20</sup> AGS, CMC, 1ª Época, leg. 464, 10. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 2, 1411.



after the lizard's head that emerged from a hole in the stone (10,000 ducats), a button pearl (2,000 ducats) and two diamonds, each from a bracelet (1,200 ducats).<sup>21</sup>

[18] Together with jewels, the Habsburgs spent astronomical sums on hundreds of goblets, vases, dishes and plates. Of course these objects had a prosaic function in addition to their decorative value: they were used for the numerous lavish banquets, and were also sound investments. In times of financial hardship, the gold and silver could be sold fairly easily, or used to strike coins. The inventories allow us to see examples of both practices. When Charles V was only six, his father Philip I (1478-1506) died unexpectedly in Burgos.<sup>22</sup> Fearful of being isolated in a foreign country at the Castilians' mercy, Philip's Flemish courtiers hastily pillaged and sold his treasury, as recounted clearly by an anonymous chronicler who did not hesitate to justify this action.<sup>23</sup> These plates, cups, serving platters and other items, weighing up to 666 kg, were used to pay the royal coterie.<sup>24</sup> Haste led everything to be sold off cheaply and, ultimately, to its disappearance. If Philip's luggage suffered the predatory instincts of his court, his wife's coffers were ruthlessly plundered by her own family.<sup>25</sup> Joanna's grandfather, Ferdinand the Catholic, started all by taking 345 kg of silverware on 4 November 1512, leaving behind hardly any liturgical object.<sup>26</sup> It was deposited at the Hieronymite monastery of Montamarta (Zamora) as security for a loan granted by Diego Enríquez, Count of Alba de Liste (c. 1490-1550) to the King, who needed money for the campaign in Navarre. For similar reasons, many of the items belonging to the legacy of Louis II of Hungary (1506-1526), who was killed in the famous Battle of Mohács, were taken to Vienna's mint. The rights to his treasure were legally held by his widow Mary, sister of Ferdinand I. She reached an agreement on its partition with her brother, then overwhelmed by the costs of the war against the Ottoman Empire. The portion that passed to Ferdinand was taken from Bratislava to Vienna and inventoried there.<sup>27</sup> The total value of the items that were melted down amounted to more than 20,340 pounds.<sup>28</sup>

[19] Only a fraction of the royal treasuries remained with their proprietors throughout their lives, and it was not exceptional that old-fashioned jewels or unused silver plates and cups were recast. In this way, Charles V gave instructions in 1521 for all the silver services of

<sup>21</sup> AGS, CMC, 1ª Época, leg. 953, 5-24. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 2, 2154-2161.

<sup>22</sup> On Philip's collections, see Miguel Ángel Zalama, "Joanna I of Castile: the inventory of the queen's artistic property," in: Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 876-885.

<sup>23</sup> Anonymous, "Segundo viaje de Felipe *el Hermoso* a España en 1506," in: José García Mercadal, ed., *Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal*, vol. 1, Salamanca 1999, 550.

<sup>24</sup> ADN, CDC, no. 123827. See Bernhard Roosens, "Dos inventarios *post-mortem* de los bienes de Felipe el Hermoso (1506 y 1509)," in: Miguel Ángel Zalama and Paul Vandebroek, dirs., *Felipe I el Hermoso. La belleza y la locura*, exh. cat., Madrid 2006, 241-261.

<sup>25</sup> See Miguel Ángel Zalama, *Juana I. Arte, poder y cultura en torno a una reina que no gobernó*, Madrid 2010, 235-356.

<sup>26</sup> RB, Ms. II-3283, 227. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 1019.

<sup>27</sup> Hans Zimerman and Franz Kreydzi, eds., "Urkunden und Regesten aus dem K. u. K. Reichs-Finanz-Archiv," in: *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 3/2 (1889), LXX-LXXVI, no. 2914.

<sup>28</sup> Zimerman and Kreydzi, *Urkunden*, CXLII, no. 3006.

Archduke Sigismund of Austria (1427-1496) to be melted down to fashion new services for his sister Mary and his sister-in-law Anna of Bohemia and Hungary (1503-1547).<sup>29</sup> Analogous motives explain why trace has been lost of many jewellery pieces. Those belonging to Maximilian I which were in Wiener Neustadt and inventoried at Graz in 1521 were divided between his grandsons Ferdinand and Charles.<sup>30</sup> The former used them to settle his debts and the old and damaged items were melted down.<sup>31</sup> In 1522 Ferdinand, at last ruler of all his paternal grandfather's territories, attempted to secure the treasure from Innsbruck castle throughout another inventory dated in 1524. It included rings and jewels with rubies, emeralds, diamonds and other precious stones, some of them from the bequest of Bianca Maria Sforza (1472-1510), Archduke Sigismund and his wife Eleanor of Scotland (1433-1480), Archduke Albert VI (1418-1463) and also Emperor Frederick III (1415-1493), Maximilian's father.<sup>32</sup> Many of the items were incomplete and partly broken or damaged. The inventory merely lists them and does not state their value, but altogether they would have been worth some 15,000 florins. It is very doubtful whether Ferdinand ever set eyes on these jewels, as he used them again to pay his debts. The largest share – worth some 10,000 florins – came into the hands of Kasimir, Margrave of Brandenburg-Bayreuth (1481-1527), who allowed them to be melted down.<sup>33</sup>

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### **Charles V's Inventories and the Creation of an Empire**

[20] These recycling customs help to explain the relatively small number of items belonging to the Habsburgs made from precious metals that have survived from their time, except for a few liturgical objects, reliquaries and vestments. Like most of his relatives, Charles V was not an art lover, but an art user interested in its devotional and propagandistic capabilities.<sup>34</sup> It can be said that he barely knew his parents when they decided to travel to Castile and left the Low Countries in 1506, so he could not be educated by them, nor could he inherit much of their artistic taste. Nonetheless, some of their possessions managed to pass on to young Charles. If, as we have seen, aesthetic appreciation of his mother's legacy appears to be very scarce – except for taking care of squandering the royal treasure –, Philip I's arms and suits of armour were among his most cherished possessions. The Archduke had received various items of this kind from his childhood, some of which are now housed in Vienna, to which they were moved from Brussels in the eighteenth century. There are also several examples in Spain, as Charles V brought them with him, such as armour, helmets and a sword bearing Philip's motto

<sup>29</sup> Alphons Lhotsky, *Die Geschichte der Sammlungen. Erste Hälfte: Von den Anfängen bis zum Tod Kaiser Karls VI. 1740*, Wien 1941, 120.

<sup>30</sup> Franz Kreytzi, ed., "Urkunden und Regesten aus dem K. u. K. Reichs-Finanz-Archiv," in: *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 5/2 (1887), XXV-XXXI, no. 4026.

<sup>31</sup> Lhotsky, *Geschichte*, 124-125.

<sup>32</sup> David Schönherr, ed., "Urkunden und Regesten aus dem k. k. Statthaltereii-Archiv in Innsbruck," in: *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 2/2 (1884), CIII-CVI, no. 1511.

<sup>33</sup> Lhotsky, *Geschichte*, 121-123.

<sup>34</sup> Juan Luis González García, "La memoria del Emperador: libros, imágenes y devociones de Carlos V en Yuste," in: Fernando Checa Cremades, ed., *El monasterio de Yuste*, Madrid 2007, 109.

(QVI VOVLDR), which undoubtedly belonged to him.<sup>35</sup> Philip the Fair must have owned many more arms and sets of armour, as the chronicler of his first journey to Spain, Antoine de Lalaing (1480-1540), gives a detailed account of the tournaments and hunts in which he took part, both in France – he travelled overland from the Netherlands – and in Spain.<sup>36</sup>

[21] Charles V's passion and taste for arms and armour is conveyed among an inventory relating to withdrawals of his possessions.<sup>37</sup> This list, known as the *Relación de Valladolid*, should be viewed in connection with the so-called *Inventario iluminado*, which is kept at the Royal Armoury in Madrid. This codex with miniature illustrations is comprised of two volumes and depicts in watercolours the arms the Emperor owned; it should be dated between 1544, the date of the Mühlberg armour which is featured, and 1558, the year Charles died.<sup>38</sup> The *Relación* provides a detailed description of the arms of the Emperor, from the gilt garniture for field and tournament (*arnés granado y dorado de justa y guerra*) with which it begins, to the white royal tournament armour (*arnés de justa real blanco*) and the gilt field armour engraved in strips (*arnés de guerra dorado y grabado a bandas*), including key examples of imperial symbolism such as the lightweight gilt field armour Charles took to Tunis (*arnés de guerra a la ligera que Su Majestad llevó a Tunez todo dorado*), the broadsword of El Cid (*espada vieja ancha del Cid*), harquebuses, maces, crossbows, breastplates and other items. The entire contents were acquired by Philip II, well aware of the high material, artistic and, above all, symbolic value of this portion of his father's possessions. In 1556 King Philip instructed royal architect Gaspar de Vega (1523-1575) to construct stables opposite the Real Alcázar, the first floor of which would be used to display the monarchy's collections of arms and armour, one of its most highly prized treasures.<sup>39</sup>

[22] Apart from these military preferences, greatly indebted to Emperor Maximilian and Philip I, the inventories of Charles' artistic possessions convey an image of continuity and traditionalism that is consonant with the logic of a personage more interested in magnificence and courtly luxury than in developing a personal artistic taste of his own. This had its initial and main reference point in the courts of his direct ancestors, the Grand Dukes of Burgundy.<sup>40</sup> The surviving lists of Charles V's objects described in his inventories relate mainly to those stored and amassed in Brussels: many of these items were inherited from Margaret of Austria, particularly the religious ornaments and books from the luxurious Burgundian library. The earliest record, dated 1517, shows how he was already inclined to read history, chivalric and,

<sup>35</sup> Pierre Terjanian, "La armería de Felipe el Hermoso," in: Zalama and Vandenbroeck, *Felipe I*, 143-162.

<sup>36</sup> Antoine de Lalaing, "Primer viaje de Felipe el Hermoso a España en 1501," in: García Mercadal, *Viajes*, 402-517.

<sup>37</sup> AGS, Casa y Sitios Reales, leg. 134, leg. ant. 13, 352. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 267-279.

<sup>38</sup> José Antonio Godoy, "Renaissance Arms and Armor from the Patrimonio Nacional," in: *Resplendence of the Spanish Monarchy. Renaissance Tapestries and Armor from the Patrimonio Nacional*, exh. cat., New York 1991, 101.

<sup>39</sup> See Álvaro Soler del Campo, "La armería de Felipe II," in: *Reales Sitios: Revista del Patrimonio Nacional* 135 (1998), 24-37.

<sup>40</sup> Fernando Checa Cremades, "Emperor Charles V: inventories, possessions and collections," in: Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 57-58.

naturally, devotional books, but the first known full inventory dated 1536, to which I will refer shortly, points to a library formed above all by the works inherited from his aunt Margaret. The Emperor must hardly have used it, as it remained in Brussels, and beneficial enjoyment was granted to his sister Mary at Margaret's death.<sup>41</sup>

[23] Despite the fact that Charles' world and social milieu was a male-oriented one, in which tutors, preceptors and scholars raised him in the lingering traditions of the court of Burgundy, in reality it was Margaret who would hold a key position in his education. At an earlier time, Maximilian I had transmitted to his daughter a deep, inherent respect for the achievements of the Habsburgs. Commissions which glorified his ancestors had motivated much of his auspices, and his widespread use of imperial iconography to glorify his reign and dynasty redefined the later patronage undertaken by his descendants. It was due to the early demise of Archduke Philip and the mental illness of Joanna of Castile that Maximilian appointed his daughter Margaret regent of the Netherlands in 1507 and at the same time gave her responsibility for bringing up Charles and three of his sisters. She also acted as educator of his brother Ferdinand later on, between 1518 and 1521. Thus, Charles and his siblings – with the exception of Catherine – were raised by their aunt Margaret, whom they worshipped and adored. She trained them to respect and serve the dynasty they were born into, bequeathing to her nephews and nieces an ideology in which art was appreciated both in a family and in a political sense.

[24] The veneration of the Habsburg house ignited by Maximilian I and actively promoted by Margaret of Austria, evolved into a collective family consciousness which served as a *topos* for aristocratic collecting in the Renaissance, systematically accentuated by the importance attached to emblems and images of the knightly Order of the Golden Fleece, funded by Duke Philip of Burgundy (1396-1467) in 1430, and the imperial symbols. In a set of records (c. 1505) referring to Emperor Maximilian, there is a list of gold and silver items – some newly crafted and others remade or redecorated – that relates to Philip I.<sup>42</sup> Its total cost was very high, over 78,000 pounds, owing mainly to the price of the raw materials used, but also to the craftsmanship of objects such as the *Fleur de Lys*, an exceptionally prized reliquary inherited by Mary of Burgundy (1457-1482), who married Maximilian of Austria in 1477. The *Fleur de Lys*, the most respected symbol of the house of Burgundy, was decorated with countless diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds and pearls, and held to contain pieces of the True Cross and even one of the Holy Nails. This object was pledged by him in 1508 as security for a loan of 50,000 crowns from Henry VII of England (1457-1509), and it did not return to the Habsburgs until after the Treaty of Cambrai (1529) whereby Francis I handed it over as ransom in exchange for his sons imprisoned in Spain.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero, *Regia Bibliotheca*, vol. 1, 228-233.

<sup>42</sup> Zalama, "Joanna I", 877.

<sup>43</sup> See Yvonne Hackenbroch, *Renaissance Jewellery*, London 1979, 114-115, and Dolores María del Mar Mármol Marín, *Joyas en las colecciones reales de Isabel la Católica a Felipe II*, Madrid 2001, 407-408.

[25] It was in May 1536, when Charles was ending his triumphal journey around Italy following the capture of Tunis, that an inventory of his precious items was drawn up in Brussels.<sup>44</sup> The purpose of the document was to update an earlier inventory of 1523, and began, as we have seen was common in these documents, with various very rich altar adornments embroidered in gold with gemstones and a great many pearls, which had belonged to Philip the Fair. These were followed by a long list of sacred ornaments, some mentioned as bearing the emblems of the Golden Fleece. Its symbolic significance was again conveyed in a collection of eleven silver and enamel goblets described as being crafted in German style, which were used for the ceremonies of this Order. The most complete inventory of those compiled in Brussels after this time is dated on 1545, when the Emperor was attending the Diet of Worms.<sup>45</sup> It states expressly that these belongings came from his very noble ancestors, and that he had purchased others himself. The then returned *Fleur de Lys* was recorded at the beginning of the inventory. Of particular interest is the long and detailed description of the imperial ornaments, one of the main sections of Charles V's treasure which his son Philip disposed of years later, as we shall see at the end of this essay. If there is one set of art objects that best represents the imperial symbols of Charles it is this one, which the document divides into two groups: the ornaments in current use (*dont sa mageste se sont a present*) and the older ones (*vieulx ornementz imperiaux*). The first consisted of the imperial crown, extremely richly crafted from gold and precious stones, whose table-cut diamond was presented to the Queen of Bohemia after Charles' death – that is his daughter Maria, who became Empress through her marriage to Maximilian II (1527-1576) – and the rich mitres, capes, hoods, sword, pectoral and other pieces. The second section, beginning with the gold crown of his grandfather Maximilian, listed, among other regalia, the imperial cape and hood which displayed the image of Charlemagne seated on the throne, below him a sea of dolphins and above him the face of God the Father in pearls and three gold crowns over his head. In this inventory of 1545, the imperial ornaments were followed by those of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and prominence was also given to 'unicorns' horns', one of which was also from the treasures of Margaret of Austria.

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### **Dynastic Marriages, Dynastic Inventories**

[26] It was the dynasty what justified the exercise of an imperial power which, although supranational, largely respected local peculiarities, as it drew on their support to do so efficiently. The unifying element of the conglomerate of territories that ultimately constituted Charles V's legacy, from which he governed for half a century, was the idea of family. This dialectic between local and international is also reflected in the possessions listed in the inventories, which very often specify the geographical provenance of part of them, indicating the diversity of the territories that made up Charles' empire. It also explains the importance of

<sup>44</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Cinq Cents de Colbert, 129, 1-8v. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 85-90.

<sup>45</sup> AGR, CDC, leg. 99, 14-36v. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 172-183.

heraldry, which is often described in detail in the prolific entries for the inventoried objects, as the coats of arms denote the lands, geographical areas, kingdoms, counties and other entities. A plethora of heraldic symbols, naturally headed by the imperial eagle or the two pillars of the Plus Ultra, lends the Habsburg patrimony described in these documents a decidedly late medieval air.

[27] Dynastic marriages, such as those Charles V arranged for his sisters, provided a platform upon which Habsburg prestige and influence could be extended and consolidated internationally. The unwavering commitment of his female relations proved indispensable, and by positioning them at strategic European courts as spouses of his associates or enemies, Charles was able to preserve and maintain invaluable alliances throughout his reign. Family bonds were nurtured over time and space through extensive correspondence, diplomatic ties and other forms of exchange. News travelled quickly despite difficult travel conditions in the sixteenth century: ambassadors, courtiers and servants traversed Europe many times with letters, verbal communications and gifts, so that Charles' sisters kept him regularly apprised of vital news and events at their respective courts in Brussels, Madrid and Lisbon or Vienna, Innsbruck and Prague. Through the acquisition of art works, portraits, luxury goods and exotica, as well as undertaking cultural sponsorship, these Habsburg women were able to promote themselves and carve out their official position at court. Eleanor, subsequently in turn Queen of Portugal and of France,<sup>46</sup> and Isabella, Queen of Denmark, Sweden and Norway,<sup>47</sup> together with Empress Isabella of Portugal,<sup>48</sup> put substantial effort into creating an imposing public image of themselves via their attire and jewels, accumulated in such quantities and so minutely detailed that the inventories allow monitoring the current fashion at the moment.

[28] If patronage provided Eleanor, Isabella or Catherine with means to advance their very own interests and tastes, consolidating their status within the family hierarchy, Mary of Hungary preferred to promote the dynasty itself and its legacy throughout her collecting. In contrast to them, who acted mainly as consorts and mothers, and whose power at France, Denmark or Portugal was curtailed, Charles V created a unique situation for her sister Mary by allowing her to operate with a great deal of political freedom. Like her predecessor Margaret of Austria, she yielded a considerable amount of power as regent of the Netherlands for almost twenty-six years. As a result, her interests in the arts extended beyond domestic spheres into the international arena, where a concern for self-identification manifested itself.<sup>49</sup> The permanence of her court (unlike her brother's) in a fixed place also enhanced the possibility of founding a stable collection. It is therefore not surprising that figures like Margaret and Mary –

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<sup>46</sup> Annemarie Jordan Gschwend, "*Ma meilleur soeur: Leonor of Austria, queen of Portugal and France*," in: Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 2569-2592.

<sup>47</sup> Jørgen Hein, "Isabella of Austria, queen of Denmark," in: Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 2613-2623.

<sup>48</sup> See María José Redondo Cantera, "The inventories of empress Isabella of Portugal," in: Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 2, 1245-1278.

<sup>49</sup> Bob Cornelis van den Boogert, "Mary of Hungary as a patron of the arts," in: Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 2807-2822.

that is, those based more permanently in locations like Mechelen and Brussels – were those who developed more extensively a genuine sense of collecting among the Habsburgs.

[29] It is impossible to identify a sharp dividing line in the art collected by the two regents from documental evidence, because a significant proportion of Mary's collection, left behind in her castle of Turnhout in 1556 and inventoried there, came from the estate of her aunt – books and musical manuscripts, a number of classical Roman statues and several paintings – and she also took on several of Margaret's court artists.<sup>50</sup> Among the works of art that she inherited was a magnificent assortment of tapestries, which she herself was later to expand through purchases of her own. Mary owned in fact one of the leading tapestry collections of the sixteenth century, not only in terms of quantity (two hundred and fifty-four) but, more importantly, in terms of the unparalleled quality of the pieces, which went with her to Spain and are painstakingly cited in her post-mortem inventory of 1558.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, inventorial data do not always clarify to whom specific works of art belonged or who commissioned them – the Emperor or herself, especially in the years between 1548 and 1556, when Charles V resided more or less permanently in Brussels. It was Mary who was truly active in commissioning *The Conquest of Tunis* (1548-1554),<sup>52</sup> a late addition to Charles' tapestry collections, and quite possibly *Charles V on Horseback at Mühlberg*, painted by Titian in 1548.<sup>53</sup> However, inventories have a huge testimonial value here with respect to the initiative behind the commissions, since these artworks, like many others, are mentioned less frequently among the Emperor's possessions than among those of his sister. The fact that a woman who lived austere and dressed in unrelieved black financed such a lavish display of wealth can only be explained by the function that works of art must have had for her, and even more for her brother: they were objects that were acquired for their representative function and the effectiveness with which they could add lustre to the regal dignity of Charles V and the members of his family.

[30] Tapestries, portraits by Titian and Antonis Mor (c. 1517-1577) and life-size sculptures by Leone Leoni (1509-1590) account for the lion's share of the physical objects that have survived from Mary of Hungary's property, and passed to Philip II after her death. When Charles V died, his possessions were inventoried for the last time and sold between 1558 and 1560 to pay off his debts. As a final point, this sale – naturally attended by King Philip – allows us to understand inventories as part of a dynamic process of transmission, where items previously belonging to other owners passed on to new proprietors influenced by new interests. Thus, if Charles V had seen art mainly as an instrument and affirmation of his own

<sup>50</sup> AGR, Papiers d'Etat et de l'Audience, 1242. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 2823-2840.

<sup>51</sup> AGS, CMC, 1ª Época, leg. 1093, 76-81v. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 3, 2876-2879.

<sup>52</sup> Juan Luis González García, "Pinturas tejidas. La guerra como arte y el arte de la guerra en torno a la Empresa de Túnez," in: *Reales Sitios: Revista del Patrimonio Nacional* 174 (2007), 24-47.

<sup>53</sup> On this painting, see Fernando Checa Cremades and Miguel Falomir Faus, dirs., *La restauración de El emperador Carlos V a caballo en Mühlberg de Tiziano*, exh. cat., Madrid 2001.

sovereignty, Philip II would be guided by his personal taste and aesthetic preferences.<sup>54</sup> The Emperor's post-mortem inventory of 1558 reveals that Philip acquired the most important works of art of his father's collection, among them the jewels and objects relating to the Golden Fleece, but practically at the end of the document we find an account of the sad fate that befell one of the most important and symbolically valuable sets of Charles V's possessions: the imperial ornaments. Following bitter family quarrels, King Philip did not inherit the title of Emperor; instead it went to Charles' brother Ferdinand I, who had been King of Romans since 1530. The spectacular imperial ornaments were dismantled in order to share out the pearls and precious stones to facilitate their sale; some of the fabrics were burnt in order to make use of the silver; other pieces were sold to Spanish and Flemish individuals, and some possessions were reappraised. These included imperial jewels such as a diamond mounted in gold from a pectoral; another larger one, which was above it; two square faceted point-cut diamonds from the main crown; a ruby under the heading of borders, skirts and edging of the hood of the cape; and several emeralds, some from the imperial globe, or sapphires from the crown.<sup>55</sup>

[31] The dismantling and disposal of the imperial ornaments, described in such minute detail in this inventory, indicates the beginning of a new, different period, but also expounds how the Habsburgs' patrimony changed owners and kingdoms, and how the cult of their dynasty heightened the notion of a family collective, from one generation to the next. As art collectors, these rulers were unequalled in the sixteenth century. Their patronage, very much governed by their own strong personal preferences, covered every conceivable form of art, and they made huge sums available to acquire works in order to indulge their passion.

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<sup>54</sup> Juan Luis González García, "La sombra de Dios: *Imitatio Christi* y contrición en la piedad privada de Felipe II," in: Fernando Checa Cremades, dir., *Felipe II. Un Príncipe del Renacimiento*, exh. cat., Madrid 1998, 185-201.

<sup>55</sup> AGS, CMC, 1ª Época, leg. 1145, 382-412. See Checa Cremades and González García, *Inventories*, vol. 1, 786-814.