

D. Fernando II de Coburgo

Vienna, 1816 – Lisboa, 1885

Vienna was, already at the time, an important cultural center where the young Prince of Saxony Coburg and Gotha developed his taste for science and the arts, as well as a remarkable language skills for: German, Hungarian, French, English and Portuguese. From an early age expressed his taste for etching collection. Ramalho Ortigão says that the King of Portugal collected engraving from an early age¹, showing preference for the German engraving school.

Married to the queen, D. Maria II of Portugal, D. Fernando II is known as the King-artist, not only for its great appreciation for the arts, but also in addition to his facet of artist that developed in the fields of ceramics, sculpture, painting and engraving. He was the great booster of engraving on metal and Maxime Lalanne said that the list of members of the Société des Aqua-Fortistes, D. Fernando II ranks 1st place².

D. Fernando was president of the Royal Academy of Sciences and, along with the queen, protector of the arts. In particular He was a great supporter of the Fine Arts Academy.

After the death of D. Maria II, he married the Countess d'Edla which left as her legacy to the National Art Museum a box containing 129 arrays of prints D. Fernando.

The engravings of D. Fernando are a very important part of FBAUL collection, not only for its historical and artistic value, but at substantial number of scheduled works: 123 different prints.

But his importance is accentuated even more if we take into consideration the fact that already Ernesto Soares pointed out, which

is that isn't very usual to find works by this author in private Portuguese collections³. Soares refers as the likely cause few proof that would have been taken, as the artist has not produced for a commercial end.

Ernesto Soares, who has devoted himself a lot of attention to the study of the work of D. Fernando, lists a total of 170 prints of this artist. In the descriptions that Ernesto Soares makes of the monarch engravings, in his History of the engraving, mark up several inaccuracies, which may be due to the difficulty that sometimes presents a reading of registration and subscription due to the fact that these meet superimposed on drawing reasons. As well as certain dates, especially in Cassos in that it does not in the picture, do not know how the Soares found.

In the work the king D. Fernando II, Ernesto Soares makes a new listing of the monarch's works, including copies that had not been mentioned in the history of engraving. Although safeguarding possible mistakes due to poor clarity of descriptions, there remains some engraving cited in a work and not the other. The author also makes a description of each engraving, now more complete and meaningful in some cases correcting inaccuracies that were mentioned above.

The engravings of the D. Fernando, for his spontaneity and notes "scribbled" seem almost treat yourself leaves a note pad where the king made quick sketches of scenes that aroused his attention or other fruit its fanciful character.

It is very interesting to see the ease with which D. Fernando addressed a medium such as plates, like ordinary paper. However Ernesto

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Soares indicates that “all his etchings were the result of previous drawings, then offered or unused”⁴.

This easyness in the drawing is found especially in scenes involving the main reason of the engravings. As Ernesto Soares points out “a large part of the plates have open by the monarch, as if framing the main subject of the picture little chisel tests or tip”⁵, which reveal great spontaneity in the dash and portray small notes in the most heterogeneous nature. And while the central scene is crafted etching, these frameworks are generally designed to dry point, which further accentuates its immediacy and approaches the draft concept fast that as Raczyński said, “l’impression du moment the fait naitre”⁶.

But not all the work of D. Fernando reflects this spontaneity. Some engravings are over worked, with greater detail.

D. Fernando use on his work several subjects such as people (portraits, exotic characters, beggars, knights, horses, cats, monkeys, dogs, etc.); Landscapes; customs scenes (rural workers, cobblers, fish sellers, acrobats, etc.); fantastic scenes (*hofmanianos*⁷ motifs, characters from stories linked to their germanic origin; demonic beings, fantastic animals, small beings like gnomes, etc.).

There are many patterns in which the king himself appears as the main figure. Ernesto Soares says that the “work of D. Fernando are to consider some figures here represented as true self-portraits, though veiled by the artist’s fantasy, and therefore valuable as iconic species.”⁸

But his own person is not the only character drawn from reality and portrayed by the monarch. Other figures populate his work: members of the royal family (his father, wife, infants their children), society, the arts (theater and opera), military and friends.

1 TEIXEIRA, José – D. Fernando II – *Rei Artista, Artista Rei*. Lisboa: Fundação da Casa de Bragança, 1986, p. 18.

2 Cf. Citado por TEIXEIRA, op. cit., nota 34, p. 230.

3 SOARES, Ernesto – *El-Rei D. Fernando II Artista*. Lisboa: Fundação da Casa de Bragança, 1952, p. 59.

4 SOARES, Ernesto – *História da gravura artística em Portugal: os artistas e as suas obras*. Paris: [s.n], nota 2, p. 80.

5 SOARES, *História...*, op. cit., nota 2, p. 261.

6 RACZYŃSKI, Le Comte A. – *Les Arts en Portugal. Lettres adressés a la Societé Artistique et Scientifique de Bérlin, et accompagnées de documens*. Paris: Jules Renouard et Cie, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1846, p. 403.

7 SOARES, *História...*, op. cit., nota 2, p. 50.

8 SOARES, *História...*, op. cit., nota 2, p. 17.