Empire in Portrait
Mary of Hungary's "Grande Galerie" and the Transimperial Crafting of Habsburg Identity

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Abstract
Between 1531 and 1555, Mary of Hungary—governor of the Low Countries (the Habsburg Netherlands) and sister to Emperor Charles V—transformed the grand ceremonial hall at Coudenberg Palace in Brussels, the Grande Galerie (later known as the Galerie des Empereurs), into one of the most politically charged and visually sophisticated court spaces in early modern Europe. She redefined this Great Hall as a multifunctional space serving not only as a monumental portrait gallery but also as a throne room and ceremonial hall where she presided over state affairs. While previous scholarship has referenced the gallery, it is considered in this essay, through comprehensive analysis, as an integrated political, visual, and architectural project. It demonstrates how Mary mobilized artistic patronage, gendered authority, and orchestrated ceremonial performance to assert dynastic legitimacy and female sovereignty. By situating the gallery in a broader transimperial context and linking it to those formed by her sister, Catherine of Austria (1507 – 1578), in Lisbon, the study argues that these galleries were not just displays of likenesses. They were conceived as visual genealogies—maintained through copying, exchange, and replication—and operated as early forms of dynastic *musea,* living archives, that preserved and strategically deployed Habsburg identity across political and geographic boundaries.

Keywords: Mary of Hungary, Coudenberg Palace, Catherine of Austria, Paço da Ribeira Palace, Habsburg portrait galleries, transimperial identity

Introduction

At the centre of this study stands the grand ceremonial hall in Coudenberg Palace in Brussels, the Grande Galerie (Great Hall), later known as the Galerie des Empereurs (Gallery of Emperors),[1] deliberately conceived by Mary of Hungary, dowager queen of Hungary and regent of the Low Countries, as a long, rectangular gallery.[2] It constituted Mary's first important architectural commission as regent,

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All translations in the text of this essay are by the author.

1 DE MAEYER, M.: *Albrecht en Isabella en de schilderkunst: Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de XVIIe-eeuwse schilderkunst in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*. Brussels 1950, p. 443.

2 D'HAINAUT – ZVENY, B.: Du palais de Bruxelles à la place Royale (XIIIe – XVIIe s.). In: *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts*, Vol. 11, 2000, Nos. 1 – 6, pp. 31 – 79; FOURNY, M.: Du Palais Ducal au Palais Impérial. In: *Le Palais du Coudenberg à Bruxelles. Du château médiéval au site archéologique*. Ed.: HEYMANS, V. Brussels 2014, pp. 104 – 127; DE JONGE, K.:

and it evolved into a symbol of power par excellence.[3] Serving as a model for subsequent Habsburg portrait galleries, the Grande Galerie in Coudenberg Palace demonstrates how visual culture could be strategically mobilized to assert imperial rule and the legitimacy of female governance. Through its integrated display of imperial portraits, genealogical and heraldic imagery, and monumental tapestry cycles, this gallery functioned as a coherent visual manifesto rather than as a passive repository of artworks.[4]

By tracing the transmission and adaptation of this model to the Sala da Rainha (Queen's Hall) in Lisbon's Paço da Ribeira Palace under Catherine of Austria, this essay highlights both shared strategies and meaningful divergences. In particular, it demonstrates how Habsburg women used portrait galleries to negotiate their political roles as queens, regents, and imperial sisters, deploying lineage and memory to counter contemporary constraints on female authority. Ultimately, this study positions Habsburg portrait galleries as transregional and gendered instruments of imperial ideology, revealing how identity was crafted, staged, and sustained through space, image, and display.

Appointed regent in 1531, Mary governed during a period of increasing centralization, religious tension, and geopolitical complexity.[5] Her authority, though derived from her brother Emperor Charles V (1500 – 1558), was expressed with independent agency, particularly in cultural patronage. Her Brussels court became a key site of visual diplomacy and elite interaction. Following the example of her aunt, tutor, and predecessor as regent of the Low Countries, Margaret of Austria (1480 – 1530), who had established a centre of power at the Palais de Savoye (Hof van Savoye) in Malines/Mechelen, Mary of Hungary likewise created a base of symbolic authority at Coudenberg Palace in Brussels.[6] In doing so, she reaffirmed the close interdependence of politics and aesthetics under Habsburg rule. Coudenberg Palace thus functioned as a residence, as well as a ceremonial and ideological space carefully calibrated to the needs of governance and representation. Its central gallery, in close spatial relationship to Mary's apartment, housed a sequence of portraits ranging from the dukes of Burgundy to the imperial family of Charles V, visually articulating Burgundian-Habsburg court culture across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Early Habsburg "Museums"

In the sixteenth century, portrait collections at Habsburg courts functioned as structured systems of knowledge rather than accumulations of individual likenesses.[7] Integrated into palaces, galleries, and ceremonial interiors, portraits articulated lineage, rank, and political legitimacy while shaping the experience of courtly spaces.[8] Across the Habsburg

L'iconographie du pouvoir. Les commandes architecturales de Marie de Hongrie, de Bruxelles à Binche. In: *Marie de Hongrie: art et pouvoir à la Renaissance*. Exh. cat., Morlanwelz, 2025. Eds.: CAUCHIES, J.-M. – DOCQUIER, G. Morlanwelz 2025, pp. 243 – 250.

[3] D'HAINAUT – ZVENY 2000 (see in note 2), p. 58; DE JONGE, K.: Galleries at the Burgundian-Habsburg Court from the Low Countries to Spain 1430 – 1600. In: *Europäische Galeriebauten: Galleries in a Comparative European Context (1400 – 1800)*. Eds.: KIEVEN, E. – STRUNCK, C. Munich 2010, pp. 73 – 88.

[4] Van den BOOGERT, B.: Mary of Hungary as Patron of the Arts. In: *Studies on the Inventories of Charles V and the Imperial Family. The Escorial "Delivery Books" of Philip II. The Post-mortem Inventory of Philip II*. Eds.: CHECA CREMADES, F. – MANCINI, M. Madrid 2020, pp. 171 – 186.

[5] PARKER, G.: *Emperor. A New Life of Charles V*. New Haven 2019.

[6] On Margaret, see EICHBERGER, D.: *Leben mit Kunst – Wirken durch Kunst. Sammelwesen und Hofkunst unter Margarete von Österreich, Regentin der Niederlande*. Turnhout 2002; Eadem: A noble residence for a female regent: Margaret of Austria and the 'Court of Savoy' in Mechelen, In: *Architecture and the Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Ed.: HILLS, H. Aldershot 2003, pp. 25 – 46; Eadem: A Widow of Intellect and Artistic Discernment. Archduchess Margaret of Austria (1480 – 1530). In: *Women. The Art of Power. Three Women from the House of Habsburg*. Eds.: HAAG, S. – EICHBERGER, D. – JORDAN GSCHWEND, A. Innsbruck 2018, pp. 25 – 34.

[7] POLLEROSS, F.: *Die Repräsentation der Habsburger (1493 – 1806)*. Petersberg 2023.

[8] PRINZ, W.: *Die Entstehung der Galerie in Frankreich und Italien*. Berlin 1970; BURY, J. B.: Las 'galerias largas'. In: *El Escorial. IV Centenario del Monasterio de El Escorial. Las Casas Reales. El Palacio*. Exh. cat. Madrid 1986, pp. 21 – 33.

territories of the Netherlands, Austria, Spain, and Portugal, the systematic collecting and display of portraits became a core instrument of governance, visualizing lineal legitimacy across generations and territories and transforming princely residences into what may be understood as early Habsburg museums of dynastic memory.

Within this culture of visual self-fashioning, Habsburg women played a decisive role. Mary of Hungary and her younger sister, Catherine of Austria, queen of Portugal, stand out for the scale, coherence, and political intentionality of their portrait galleries. Their collections were not ancillary to male authority but central to the articulation of imperial identity, particularly in contexts where female rule or regency required careful negotiation of legitimacy. Through portraiture, these women asserted their positions within the Habsburg dynasty while simultaneously reinforcing the claims of their brother, Charles V, to imperial authority.

As granddaughters of Emperor Maximilian I (1459 – 1519) and nieces of the preceding regent, archduchess Margaret of Austria, Mary and Catherine belonged to a generation of Habsburg women trained to operate as cultural and political agents within a transregional matrix. Placed on foreign thrones through strategically calibrated marriages, they were expected to embody imperial authority while securing dynastic continuity within their adopted realms. Acting as both formal and informal ambassadors, they sustained familial relations through correspondence, diplomatic negotiation, and the ritualized exchange of gifts. Central to these practices was the circulation of portraits, artists, and visual models between Brussels and Lisbon, which consolidated a Habsburg visual lexicon even as it accommodated regional inflexions. Within this system, portrait galleries emerged as spatial instruments; by arranging images of the imperial family within palace interiors, they rendered Habsburg lineage visible while situating it within the architectural and ceremonial environments of female regal power.

Thus, the portrait galleries assembled by Mary of Hungary and Catherine of Austria functioned as more than displays of likenesses. Conceived as visual genealogies and sustained through practices of copying, exchange, and replication, these collections operated as early forms of dynastic *musea*: living archives that preserved and strategically deployed Habsburg identity across political and geographic boundaries. In this sense, portrait galleries formed the institutional scaffolding of what would become a Habsburg visual polity, binding dispersed territories through shared images of lineage and rule. Embedded within ceremonial palace spaces, portrait galleries enabled the continual reassertion of legitimacy, positioning female patronage at the center of transimperial visual culture in the mid-sixteenth century.[9]

The networked nature of these collections is evident in contemporary correspondence and practice. Habsburg art collections were admired by a wide range of visiting dignitaries, courtiers, and foreign ambassadors, while members of the dynasty themselves were experienced travelers and cultivated viewers who took pride in their connoisseurship. In 1534, Ferdinand I (future Holy Roman Emperor) wrote to his sister, Mary of Hungary, about a portrait gallery of ancestors he was assembling at the Hofburg in Vienna. He referred to a likeness of their grandmother, Queen Isabel I of Castile, which he had seen in the Low Countries, possibly the portrait attributed to Juan de Flandes or Michael Sittow that had once hung in the "première chambre" of their aunt Margaret of Austria's palace in Mechelen, where Ferdinand himself had resided for several years:

> "Madam [Mary of Hungary]. So that I may have the effigies of my late lords and ladies, our predecessors, who rest in peace with God, except for the late Queen Dona Isabel [Isabel I of Castile], I beseech you to have her painted and her counterfeit [rendered] from life as candidly as possible and to send it to me, which would very much greatly please me. Vienna, the 2nd of September 1534."[10]

[9] MARTINDALE, A.: *Heroes, ancestors, relatives and the birth of the portrait*. The Hague 1988.

[10] EICHBERGER, D. – BEAVEN, L.: Family Members and Political Allies: The Portrait Collection of Margaret of Austria. In: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 77, 1995, pp. 225 – 248, at p. 235, n. 76; EICHBERGER, D.: Margaret of Austria's portrait collection: female patronage in the light of dynastic ambitions and artistic quality. In: *Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 10, 1996, No. 2, pp. 259 – 279.

By requesting that this image be copied by one of Mary's court painters and insisting that it be rendered "well painted and true to life," Ferdinand underscored the importance of visual fidelity in the replication of portraits. The episode reveals how Habsburg portrait galleries operated as interconnected systems of family memory, in which authoritative likenesses were preserved and reproduced across courts to ensure dynastic ties and genealogical coherence within the imperial family.

Decades later, Ferdinand I again demonstrated a highly controlled approach to portraiture in correspondence addressed to Adam Swetkowyz (Swetkowitz) (1515 – 1573), an imperial chamberlain in the household of his son, Archduke Maximilian II. In March 1563, Ferdinand entrusted Swetkowitz with a carefully specified mission: to locate two bust-length portraits housed in different imperial residences and to oversee their duplication by Maximilian's *Hofmaler* (court painter) and portraitist, Giuseppe Arcimboldo.[11] One of the portraits was a likeness of Ferdinand in armor, a reduced version of a portrait painted by Titian and his workshop in Augsburg in 1548, which at that time hung in the imperial Kunstkammer in Vienna.[12] The second was a portrait of his great-grandmother, Leonor of Portugal (1434 – 1467), wife of Emperor Friedrich III, displayed near the long ceremonial hall of the medieval Habsburg castle at Wiener Neustadt, near Vienna:

> "Likewise, in the castle at Wiener Neustadt, in a large, vaulted chamber near the long hall where the coats of arms hang, there is to be found the portrait of Emperor Frederick, of most praiseworthy memory, and that of the late Queen Leonora Augusta of Portugal."[13]

Ferdinand instructed Swetkowyz to supervise the entire process with precision: the portraits were to be removed from their walls, faithfully copied in oil

[11] KREYCZI, F.: Urkunden und Regesten aus dem k. u. k. Reichs-Finanz-Archiv. In: *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, Vol. 5, 1887, p. XCIII, Reg. 4344.

[12] One copy after Titian in Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, oil on canvas, 90 × 112 cm, Inv. No. P000453. Consult online: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/fernando-i-de-hungria-y-bohemia/a8b0a629-5ddf-415f-bc65-68601a18c0ad (accessed 15 March 2026).

[13] Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungs-, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Alte Hofkammer, Niederösterreichische Kammer, Rote Nr. 39, 16703 (April – June 1563): "To the Most Serene, Most Mighty Roman Emperor, King of Hungary and Bohemia, etc., Most Gracious Lord [Ferdinand I]. Your Imperial Majesty's most gracious command, dated at Innsbruck on the 13th of this month, a copy of which is enclosed herewith under A, I received on the 22nd in most humble obedience. *As Your Roman Imperial Majesty most graciously commands, from Your Majesty's Kunstkammer here, Your Majesty's likeness on canvas—a bust portrait painted in armour—shall be made. Likewise, in the castle at Wiener Neustadt, in a large, vaulted chamber near the long hall where the coats of arms hang, there is to be found the portrait of Emperor Frederick, of most praiseworthy memory, and that of the late Queen Leonora Augusta of Portugal. Both portraits the Roman King's court painter* [*Giuseppe Arcimboldo*] *shall without delay copy in oil colours onto canvas; and once thoroughly dried, he shall send them forthwith, well secured by post, to Your Majesty* in most humble obedience. *In this matter I have humbly wished to report to Your Roman Imperial Majesty that in the Kunstkammer here there are two likenesses of Your Majesty, entirely similar in form: one made in the year 1548, the other in 1559. Since the Roman King's painter stands ready and will begin daily, and could scarcely finish within fourteen days, and as the said portrait would require several additional days to dry, if Your Majesty should most graciously permit that one of the two existing likenesses be sent, then meanwhile the one which the painter here will complete may be placed in lieu of the one dispatched. Thus the risk of insufficient drying during transport would not need to be feared.* Concerning the matter at the castle in Wiener Neustadt, on the 23rd of this month I wrote to Lord Ulrich von Scherfenberg (copy B). He replied to me (copy C), delivered on the 25th of this month by the chamber warden. The said warden reports that near the long hall there are two towers in which vaulted rooms may be located; however, the doors are secured with large locks, and neither he nor Lord von Scherfenberg possesses the keys. After much inquiry I finally obtained these keys from the Lower Austrian Chamber, where they were sealed; I also found other keys there that were not sealed. Therefore, the Roman King's Majesty has most graciously appointed Lord Hans von Karling, since he, in the year 1547, had access to the said chamber, to open the chamber together with Lord Ulrich von Scherfenberg, and afterwards to lock it again securely. *If he brings the said portrait here, it shall first be copied for greater expedition; and thereafter Your Majesty's likeness may be produced from the portrait that remains here.* All this I have wished to communicate to Your Roman Imperial Majesty for fuller and most gracious instruction, and I remain Your Imperial Majesty's most humble and obedient servant. Given at Vienna, 29 March 1563.Your Roman Imperial Majesty's Most humble and obedient servant, Adam Swetkowyz [author's translation and italics]."



Fig. 1: Adriaen de Weerdt or Anonymous Fabriczy: Drawing of the Palace of the Dukes of Brabant at Brussels (Coudenberg Palace), Garden Façade with the Grande Galerie, c. 1570, pen and brown ink, gray-brown wash over a slight sketch in black chalk, 140 × 353 mm. Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris, Inv. No. 2645. Photo: Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

on canvas by Arcimboldo with the utmost care, and then rehung in their original locations. The completed copies were to be tightly rolled, packed in a metal tube, and dispatched to Tyrol, where Ferdinand intended to install these replicas by Arcimboldo in the Hofburg in Innsbruck.

The surviving correspondence reveals the extent to which, by the end of his reign, Ferdinand had assumed a role akin to that of a modern curator. He commissioned portraits while actively managing their movement, replication, placement, and preservation. More importantly, these letters underscore the significance Ferdinand attributed to portraits of his extended Habsburg ancestors, which he deliberately mobilized across imperial residences to construct, sustain, and spatially distribute dynastic memory.

Mary of Hungary's "Grande Galerie" in Brussels

In 1531, Mary of Hungary took up residence at Coudenberg Palace in Brussels, the seat of Charles V's imperial government, which became her principal residence and the primary site for housing and displaying her collections. As acting regent from 1531, Mary held court at Coudenberg, where state receptions, diplomatic audiences, and courtly entertainments were held. The palace thus functioned as a residence and centre of political authority, and Mary's interventions in its decoration and spatial organization were informed by an ideological agenda befitting her role as regent and governor of the Low Countries. While she also maintained secondary residences at Mariemont, Turnhout, and Binche (one of the earliest Renaissance palaces in the Low Countries), Coudenberg remained the symbolic and administrative heart of her rule.

Between 1533 and 1537, early in her regency, Mary undertook substantial renovations of Coudenberg Palace to accommodate new living quarters for herself. As part of this campaign, she added, adjacent to her apartment, an imposing gallery, the Grande Galerie (Great Hall), which extended more than fifty meters in length and would become the principal ceremonial and representational space of her regency.

The gallery was articulated in an Italian Renaissance idiom, featuring "antique doors" framed by columns and ornate chimneys, painted between 1539 and 1540 by Pieter Coecke van Aelst, her *painctre de la Royne* (court painter).[14] Decorated *all'antica* with putti and classical motifs, these architectural and decorative elements underscored the gallery's engagement

[14] DE JONGE 2010 (see in note 3), p. 79.

with antique forms and reinforced its function as a space of cultured display and imperial aspiration. Oriented along the garden façade and built above a vaulted colonnade that resembled an Italian loggia, the gallery was articulated above by fifteen large windows that flooded the hall with light. It connected directly to the palace gardens and the surrounding hunting forest by an independent monumental staircase, as depicted in a pencil drawing attributed to Adriaen de Weerdt, c. 1570 (Fig. 1).[15] Mary's gallery above the colonnade is clearly delineated at the far left. The regent's apartment, to the right of her gallery, was situated within the former lodgings of the Burgundian dukes, the last resident having been Charles the Bold, her great-grandfather. It comprised a suite of four rooms, including a bedchamber, private cabinet, and a small chamber (*salette*) that directly abutted her gallery, underscoring the close physical and symbolic relationship between Mary's private quarters and her representational hall.[16]

The Grande Galerie was a multifunctional space. It served as a setting for banquets and ceremonial occasions, and during the winter months, it could be used for exercise. Whenever Charles V visited Brussels during his itinerant reign, Mary staged fêtes, banquets, and tournaments in his honor. More significantly, when the emperor was not engaged in military campaigns or travelling across his far-flung dominions, he continually returned to the Brussels court, where Mary presided over a center of governance and ceremonial representation. One such event took place in the Grande Galerie on 10 December 1545, when a mock combat was staged there. The scale of this space made possible what would otherwise have been unthinkable indoors: a sustained *combat à pieds* (foot combat) performed before Charles, the regent Mary, and a courtly audience of nobles and ladies. A select group of elite aristocrats, including the counts of Mansfeld and Egmont, entered the gallery clad in full knightly armor, engaging in a choreographed martial display that lasted several hours.[17] The very fact that this could take place within Mary's gallery underscores its monumental dimensions and its role as a site of display, an arena for the enactment of chivalric identity.

Weavings of Splendor and Empire

One of Mary's surviving account books records the furnishings of her gallery, listing a large dining table and chests, and referring to the space as the "grand salle" (Great Hall).[18] Architecturally clear and classically ordered, this hall provided an ideal setting for the display of monumental tapestry cycles.[19] Tapestry collecting, long cultivated at the Burgundian court and actively promoted by her aunt Margaret, became central to Mary's own decorative and political agenda. In addition to inheriting Burgundian tapestry series, Margaret had commissioned major cycles from designers such as Jan van Roome (active 1498 – 1521) and had received important panels from Isabel I of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon. Building on this legacy, Mary engaged two of Margaret's artists, Barend van Orley (c. 1487 – 1541) and Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502 – 1550), to design tapestries that would articulate her own vision of dynasty.

At Mary's instigation, van Orley designed two sets of tapestries for Charles V between 1528 and 1533: the celebrated *Hunts of Maximilian* (now in the

[15] Paris, Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Inv. No. 2645.

[16] EICHBERGER, D.: Portrait Galleries for the House of Habsburg in the Low Countries. Margaret of Austria in Mechelen and Mary of Hungary in Brussels. In: *Portraiture, Gender, and Power in Sixteenth-Century Art: Creating and Promoting the Public Image of Early Modern Women*. Ed.: GARCÍA PÉREZ, N. New York 2024, pp. 121 – 134.

[17] GACHARD, L. P.: *Collection des voyages des souverains des Pays-Bas*. Brussels 1874, Vol. 2, p. 270.

[18] For monies paid Thomas Bouche (*aide de tapissier*) in charge of Mary's tapestries, see Valladolid, Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), Casa y Sitios Reales (hereafter CySR), leg. 377, 8 (Brussels, 3 August 1556): "*Pour faire porter trois grands coffres et autre meubles sur la grand salle* […]" / "To carry three large chests and other furniture into the great hall."

[19] BUCHANAN, I.: The Tapestry Collection of Mary of Hungary. In: *Marie de Hongrie. Politique et culture sous la Renaissance aux Pays-Bas*. Mariemont 2008, pp. 145 – 155. Also CHECA, F.: Les Collections de tapisseries de Marie de Hongrie. In: *Tapisseries Flamandes pour les Ducs de Bourgogne, L'Empereur Charles Quint et le Roi Philippe II*. Exh. cat. Ghent 2008, pp. 192 – 211.

Louvre, Paris), in which the regent herself appears participating in a hunt near Coudenberg Palace; and the *Battle of Pavia* cycle commemorating the emperor's victory over Francis I of France in 1525. Mary's collection encompassed mythological, biblical, and classical narratives: the *Labours of Hercules*, *History of Aeneas*, *History of Vertumnus and Pomona*, *Seven Deadly Sins*, *Cupid and Psyche*, *History of Scipio*, *Moses*, *David*, and *Esther*, among others—subjects that fused antique virtue, moral exemplarity, and allegory. Particularly significant was the figure of Esther, the paradigmatic intercessory queen, with whom Mary could readily identify as regent.[20] Mary understood the monumental scale and mobility of tapestry as uniquely suited to political display.

For Mary and Charles, tapestry was the preferred medium for glorifying Habsburg power. These sumptuous textiles were stored in the Coudenberg Palace *garderobe* (wardrobe) and, for specific political and festive occasions, were installed along the walls of the Great Hall.[21] The allegorical, mythological and religious cycles converted Mary's gallery into a stage for spectacle, aligning Habsburg lineage, imperial conquest, and courtly magnificence within carefully orchestrated spatial programs.

The most significant work of art hung in the Great Hall during Mary's regency was the set of monumental *Conquest of Tunis* tapestries, a propagandistic visual account of Charles's 1535 campaign in North Africa, modeled after cartoons by the court artist, Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen (c. 1503 – 1559) and woven beginning in 1546.[22] The twelve enormous panels were produced under Mary's exacting supervision and produced at immense expense in the Brussels workshop of Willem de Pannemaker (1512 – 1581). The cycle converted recent imperial history into a triumphal narrative of conquest and divine favor, dramatizing the campaign with striking clarity—depicting the emperor's arrival with his fleet, the defeat of Ottoman forces, and the liberation of Christian captives. Through their scale, sequencing, and narrative emphasis, the scenes elevated Charles V's military victory into a providential event, aligning imperial action with the defense of Christendom. Installed in the Great Hall (Grande Galerie), the tapestries articulated a visual synthesis of lineage and destiny, presenting the emperor as both a temporal ruler, a crusader and a divinely sanctioned protector of the faith. In this setting, the *Conquest of Tunis* cycle reinforced the gallery's ideological setting, reorienting the space into a coherent narrative of Habsburg authority.

Denis van Caudenberge, Mary's *aide de la tapisserie* (tapestry assistant), was instructed in July 1556 to hang a set of her tapestries in the Great Hall—the *History of Hercules* (stored in the palace's *garderobe*)—together with *verdures* (depictions of nature, foliage, and gardens) taken from her private *salette* (small chamber).[23] Later that same year, Jehan Schootz, Mary's *maître de garderobe*, installed the *Conquest of Tunis* there, too, almost certainly in preparation for the ceremonies surrounding Charles V's abdication, which took place on October 25.[24] In these tapestries, Hercules—long appropriated by Habsburg ideology and embedded in the emperor's device of the Twin Pillars with the motto "Plus Ultra"—represented Charles V as a divinely sanctioned laborer of empire, whose trials culminated not in decline but in apotheosis. The Tunis tapestries transformed the Great Hall into a woven eschatology of empire: the emperor's abdication was staged not as renunciation but as the consummation of a divine mission.

Mary deployed these woven narratives as instruments of dynastic statecraft—textile articulations of sovereignty, virtue, and imperial dominion. Suspended beneath the painted portraits of her Habsburg family, the tapestry cycles monumentalized and amplified the genealogical claims staged above them. Portraiture asserted succession; tapestry en-

[20] Mary's post-mortem 1558 inventory listed 214 tapestry panels.

[21] LARUELLE, A.-S.: A New Perspective on Mary of Hungary's Labours of Hercules Tapestries (Patrimonio Nacional, series 23). In: *Mary of Hungary. Renaissance Patron and Collector. Gender, Art and Culture.* Ed.: GARCÍA PÉREZ, N. Turnhout 2020, pp. 123 – 134.

[22] For bibliography regarding this series, see JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: Serie La Conquista de Túnez. In: *Flandes en Hispania. Rutas de seda, plata y oro.* Consult online: https://www.flandesenhispania.org/zoomin/zoominViewer.action?id=d2B8mKDmnFGXFsAVtzo5ZY9g (accessed 30 November 2025).

[23] AGS, CySR, leg. 377, 20 (Brussels, 18 July 1556).

[24] BUCHANAN 2008 (see in note 19), p. 155, n. 73.

acted conquest and exemplarity. The Great Hall thus functioned as an integrated diplomatic platform in which woven history and painted lineage operated in deliberate visual concordance. Visitors encountered a stratified concept in which fabric and panel, myth and memory, collaborated to construct imperial authority as both inherited and actively performed. Presiding over this carefully calibrated ensemble was its most consequential spectator, Charles V himself, whose likely approval transformed Mary's decorative objectives from familial homage into an authorized extension of imperial magnificence.

Alessandro Nogarola's 1553 Testimony: The Grande Galerie in Coudenberg Palace as a Ceremonial and Political Space

Although Alessandro Nogarola, courtier and biographer of Mary of Hungary, never names Coudenberg Palace explicitly, nor does he refer to Mary's gallery as such in his *La Vita della serenissima reina Maria d'Austria*, his 1553 account nevertheless provides unusually rich textual evidence for the ceremonial use of a large, fixed, and public interior space in Brussels. The practices he describes correspond closely to what archival and architectural evidence reveal about Coudenberg Palace during Mary's rule, and in particular to her long gallery there.

As acting regent and female representative of the emperor, Mary held court regardless of Charles's presence, maintaining a household of more than 150 individuals and ensuring imperial authority. Nogarola repeatedly specified that Mary's public dinners were not private or domestic affairs but highly ritualized events staged before an elite audience. He noted that she "never eats alone" but dines in the presence of dukes, princes, marquesses, counts, and knights, all served by gentlemen, "with ceremonies more beautiful than those observed either by the emperor or by the king of France."[25] The hierarchical arrangement of participants, the presence of spectators, and the elaborate choreography of service strongly imply a representational, ceremonial space of considerable size, capable of accommodating rank, visibility, and movement, precisely the type of space embodied by Mary's Grande Galerie.

Significantly, Nogarola described how, once the long table was removed, the same space was immediately reconfigured for governance. Mary remained standing to hear petitions and to grant audiences "to all, with the greatest kindness and with incredible patience."[26] This seamless transition in the room's function from dining to audience underscores its multifunctional nature. Nogarola stressed the gallery's role as a hybrid space where display, accessibility, and authority converged.

The biographer was equally explicit about Mary's throne-like seating during these audiences, describing her as seated in "majesty" on her *consueta sedia* (a fixed chair-throne, raised on a platform) in a prominent place (*luogo eminente*), flanked symmetrically by knights and captains.[27] The vocabulary of elevation, fixity, and symmetry leaves little doubt that this was a permanent ceremonial arrangement. Such descriptions resonate strongly with Burgundian traditions of seated rulership in elongated, axial spaces and help to explain how her gallery functioned as a locus of sovereign visibility.

Nogarola's account further confirms the scale of these assemblies. In his description of a diplomatic gathering in Brussels in 1552, he records that more than three hundred ambassadors were present, listening as Mary delivered a formal oration whose eloquence surpassed that of the president of Brabant.[28] The logistical and symbolic requirements of such an assembly again point to the largest ceremonial spaces in the Coudenberg complex, among which the Grande Galerie occupied a central position.

Finally, Nogarola underlined the public accessibility of these events. He remarks that any gentleman,

[25] NOGAROLA, A.: *La vita della serenissima reina Maria d'Austria: reina di Ungheria, non meno brievemente che veramente da un cavalliere di sua corte scritta*. Venice 1553, p. 10v. Nogarola's *Vita* of Mary of Hungary first published and studied by JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: Alessandro Nogarola's Rediscovered *Vita* of Mary of Hungary, Regent of the Netherlands. In: *Mary of Hungary. Renaissance Patron and Collector. Gender, Art and Culture.* Ed.: GARCÍA PÉREZ, N. Turnhout 2020, pp. 59 – 75.

[26] Ibidem, pp. 10v – 11.

[27] Ibidem, pp. 11v – 12.

[28] Ibidem, pp. 11v – 12.

even one not belonging to the royal household, was permitted to enter freely wherever the queen dined in public, and that no one ever left her table without having been personally addressed by her. This controlled openness closely aligns with the gallery's political logic as a space that balances hierarchy with approachability, reinforcing the regent's authority while cultivating loyalty among the elite.

Nogarola's testimony makes it possible to reconstruct the gallery's performative reality. His biography demonstrates that Mary deliberately used a large ceremonial interior at Coudenberg, almost certainly the Grande Galerie, as a stage on which dining, audience, diplomacy, and governance were melded into a single continuum of princely representation. In this sense, Mary's purpose-built hall functioned not merely as a display of high-quality portraits and outstanding tapestry cycles but as a living political instrument in which space, ritual, and authority were inseparably entwined and made legible to elite spectators.

Reconstruction of Mary of Hungary's Collection

Mary's 1558 post-mortem inventory, preserved in the Archivo General de Simancas (and partially published by Alexandre Pinchart in 1856 and Rudolf Beer in 1891),[29] permits a reconstruction of the collection she transferred to Spain in 1556.[30] Central to this process was Rogier (Roger) Pathie, who entered Mary's service by 1534 after an earlier sojourn at the French court of Francis I. Initially employed as an organist and harpsichordist in Mary's chapel, he was referred to as *Maistre* Rogier Pathie (1510 – 1565?), a title that reflects both musical distinction and courtly standing. Over the following decades, his responsibilities expanded significantly: by the 1540s, he had become Mary's *valet de chambre* (valet of the chamber), later *premier valet de chambre*, and eventually her court treasurer. He played a key organizational role in putting on major spectacles, such as the festivities at Binche Palace curated by Mary in 1549. He also recruited musicians for the Habsburg court and increasingly assumed financial and administrative oversight of Mary's household and chapel, including supervising expenditures for court festivities, musical venues, and the circulation and movement of her paintings and tapestries between royal residences.

Pathie was very familiar with Mary's collections at Coudenberg Palace. He acquired instruments on her behalf, most notably a spinet purchased in Paris in 1539 for her private chambers,[31] and was instrumental in managing her departure to Iberia in 1556, overseeing the packing and shipment of portraits, tapestries, musical instruments, furnishings, and other movable property to Laredo, Spain.[32] After her death in 1558, he supervised the compilation of her estate inventories and was appointed one of her testamentary executors. He continued his long career at the court of Mary's nephew, Philip II of Spain (1527 – 1598), where he was appointed overseer of the royal palace at Aranjuez.[33] He died in Spain, still in loyal service to his Habsburg patrons.

[29] PINCHART, A.: Tableaux et Sculptures de Marie d'Autriche, Reine Douairière de Hongrie (1558). In: *Revue Universelle des Arts*, Vol. 3, 1856, pp. 127 – 146. Rudolf Beer (1863 – 1913), a specialist in Romance Languages and former Director of the Manuscripts Collection (Handschriften Sammlung) of the former imperial library (K.u.K Hofbibliothek) in Vienna, conducted a research trip to Spain between 1886 and 1888, working at the Archivo General de Palacio in Madrid and the Archivo General de Simancas near Valladolid. His archival findings were subsequently published in Vienna in two volumes of the *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* (Vol. 12, 1891 and Vol. 14, 1893).

[30] Mary's last will and testament located in the Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Vienna) is transcribed by Maxim Hoffman in the Appendix of this volume. A copy in Spanish in Valladolid, AGS, Patronato Real, Testamentos Reales, 31 – 25.

[31] THOMPSON, G.: Music in the Court Records of Mary of Hungary. In: *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis*, Vol. 34, 1984, No. 2, pp. 132 – 173.

[32] For Mary's retirement years in Spain (1556 – 1558), see MARÍN, C. M. M.: "Vida Estrecha" o "Vida Larga": Contemplación, recreo y ostentación en el retiro de María de Hungría en España. In: *Identidades femeninas y su relación con las artes durante la Edad Moderna en España. Aportaciones y Revisiones*. Eds.: ALONSO, J. H. – CANTERA, M. J. R. Madrid 2024, pp. 43 – 58.

[33] For salaries paid Pathie after 1559, see Madrid, Archivo General de Palacio, Registros, Libros de Cédulas, 2, 1556 – 1565, fol. 188: "*El Govierno de Aranjuez*", and Maestro de la Camara, leg. 6723[1], fols. 64 – 65 (Madrid, 15 March 1563) for Pathie's 300 ducats annual pension granted by Philip II.

Pathie's career exemplifies the fluid boundary between artistic, ceremonial, and administrative service within Mary's court and underscores the bureaucratic structures that sustained her cultural agenda, patronage, and supervision of an extensive collection.[34]

Mary of Hungary's Portrait Collection

No complete inventory of Mary's Brussels collection survives prior to her departure to Spain, and the documentation from her regency remains fragmentary.[35] Pathie's detailed post-mortem inventory therefore provides essential evidence for reconstructing the arrangement of portraits, tapestries, objects of art, and furniture in the Grande Galerie and her private chambers prior to 1556.

As the principal setting for official ceremonies and diplomatic audiences, Coudenberg Palace was furnished by Mary with exceptional care.[36] Alongside major tapestry cycles celebrating Habsburg history, she displayed paintings by artists active at her Brussels court, including van Orley, Coecke van Aelst, and Vermeyen (all three mentioned above) as well as Michiel Coxcie (1499 – 1592);[37] several of them had previously served her aunt Margaret. Following Margaret's example at the Palais de Savoye in Mechelen, Mary made portraiture the conceptual core of her decorative plans, integrating family likenesses into both the Grande Galerie and her adjoining private apartment.[38]

After inheriting Margaret's portrait collection in 1531, Mary expanded and reorganized it in the Coudenberg gallery and her private quarters, particularly after the partial destruction of Margaret of Austria's palace in Malines/Mechelen in 1546. Soon after assuming office and initiating its rebuilding, Mary commissioned van Orley to execute a series of eighteen portraits between 1532 and 1535. The group included seven likenesses of Mary herself; four of her late husband, Louis II of Hungary; portraits of Emperor Charles V and their brother Ferdinand I and his wife, Anna of Bohemia and Hungary; and a full-length portrait of her niece, Christina of Denmark, commissioned as a nuptial portrayal to send to eligible European princes.[39] Vermeyen entered Mary's service in 1530, when he painted her portrait. Upon her orders, he traveled to the Reichstag in Augsburg to execute portraits of Ferdinand and Anna.[40] In

[34] A cursory overview of Mary's cultural politics in MARÍN, C. M. M.: La Corte de María de Hungría en Bruselas (1531 – 1555): Un modelo cultural europeo. In: *IX Congreso Virtual sobre Historia de las Mujeres (15 al 31 de octubre de 2017). Comunicaciones*. Eds.: ESPINOSA, M. C. – CORDERO, J. A. L. Jaén 2017, pp. 529 – 537.

[35] Van den BOOGERT 2020 (see in note 4), pp. 171 – 172.

[36] RODRÍGUEZ-SALGADO, M. J.: Captive in a Portrait Gallery. Titian's Portraits of John Frederick I of Saxony (c. 1548 and c. 1551) and the Collection of Mary of Austria, Queen of Hungary. In: *Portraiture, Gender, and Power in Sixteenth-Century Art. Creating and Promoting the Public Image of Early Modern Women*. Ed.: GARCÍA PÉREZ, N. New York 2024, pp. 136 – 162. Rodríguez-Salgado has challenged the view that Mary systematically collected and displayed portraits and tapestries in the Grande Galerie at Coudenberg Palace. Such a position, however, risks narrowing the interpretive frame. It underestimates both the scope and the strategic coherence of Mary's patronage in the Netherlands, where she consciously fostered local artistic industries while shaping a distinctly Habsburg visual language. Taken cumulatively, the archival record—surviving inventories, commissions, payments to painters and tapestry workshops, and references to specific display contexts—alongside the material evidence of extant works, complicates Rodríguez-Salgado's conclusions. Rather than ad hoc accumulation, these sources point to a deliberate and programmatic orchestration of dynastic imagery within the Coudenberg Palace, in which portraiture, heraldry, and textile cycles operated in concert to articulate lineage, legitimacy, and imperial succession.

[37] SORIANO, V. F.: Michel Coxcie, pintor grato a la casa de Habsburgo. In: *Archivo Español de Arte*, Vol. 81, June 2008, pp. 191 – 196.

[38] EICHBERGER, D.: Margaret of Austria and the Documentation of her Collection in Mechelen. In: *Studies on the Inventories of Charles V and the Imperial Family. The Escorial "Delivery Books" of Philip II. The Post-mortem Inventory of Philip II*. Eds.: CHECA CREMADES, F. – MANCINI, M. Madrid 2020, pp. 109 – 121.

[39] For the portraits of Louis II of Hungary and Mary's cult of her husband in the Netherlands, see BÁRÁNY, A.: Queen Mary of Hungary and the Cult of King Louis II in the Low Countries. In: *Történetek a mélyföldről. Magyarország és Németalföld kapcsolata a kora újkorban*. Ed.: BOZZAY, R. Debrecen 2014, pp. 362 – 397.

[40] PINCHART 1856 (see in note 29), pp. 136 – 138.

1545, Coxcie, who had been appointed *schildere der Coninclycke Majesteyt* (queen's painter) a few years earlier, painted a set of four portraits depicting Charles, Empress Isabella of Portugal, her sister Eleanor of Austria, queen of France, and Mary herself.[41] While some of these works were intended as diplomatic gifts, others were reserved for display in Mary's public and private spaces in the Coudenberg residence.

Titian and Anthonis Mor

Mary's court attracted some of the greatest portraitists of the sixteenth century. Titian, who was frequently commissioned to portray her family, brought psychological depth to his imperial subjects. With his patrons, Charles and Mary, Titian developed an exemplary Habsburg portrait,[42] and became their portraitist of choice. His portraits of Charles V and his captive enemies, such as John Frederick I of Saxony (c. 1548 – 1551), were displayed prominently within her collection, reflecting both victory and magnanimity. They conveyed diplomatic meaning, translating captivity into an imperial narrative. Anthonis Mor (c. 1517 – 1577), a Netherlandish artist favored by Mary, was introduced to the Brussels court after 1548 through the patronage of the Habsburg minister Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1517 – 1586). Mor became known for his severe and dignified portraits. His precise style provided a counterbalance to Titian's painterliness, reinforcing Mary's cultivated image as a cultured, discerning patron. Through these commissions, Mary constructed a portrait gallery that combined psychological immediacy and underscored authority.

Between 1548 and 1553, Mary restructured her existing portrait collection into a coherent ensemble designed to hang as a unified group.[43] By 1556, she owned forty-five portraits of her immediate family: nineteen by Titian and his workshop, including the monumental equestrian portrait of *Charles V at the Battle of Mühlberg* (1548), the centrepiece of the Grande Galerie in Coudenberg Palace, which Mary is thought to have commissioned.[44] Nine of the portraits were by Mor, with four large-scale portrayals of Austrian archduchesses (Mary's nieces) by Jakob Seisenegger (1505 – 1567), executed at the imperial court in Vienna. The remaining thirty-five were by Guillaume (Willem) Scrots, Jan Vermeyen, Francisco de Holanda, and Lucas Cranach, who painted the celebrated *Hunts of Charles V and John Frederick of Saxony*.[45] Smaller portraits inherited from her aunt Margaret were redistributed among her residences at Binche, Mariemont, and Turnhout. The Brussels gallery functioned as Mary's primary site of public display.[46]

Like Margaret's gallery at Mechelen, the Coudenberg ensemble projected a carefully calibrated political message. It affirmed Charles V as *pater familias* of the Habsburg dynasty while situating Mary within a transregional network spanning Austria, Germany,

[41] Coxcie paid 35 *écus* for each portrayal. Cf. SORIANO 2008 (see in note 37), pp. 192 – 193, n. 12.

[42] BODART, D.: *Pouvoirs du portrait sous les Habsbourg d'Espagne*. Paris 2011 (with previous bibliography).

[43] Qualified as "Mary of Hungary's Late Portrait Collection," by RODRÍGUEZ-SALGADO 2024 (see in note 36), pp. 138 – 139 and p. 142, who questions the existence of Mary's dynastic portrait collection and its display in her Grande Galerie.

[44] AGS, Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas (herefter CMC), 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, 1558, unfoliated.: "*otro rretrato grande del emperador don carlos nuestro señor armado sobre un cavallo sobre lienço con su caxa grande en que se mete* […]" / "Another large portrait, on canvas, of Emperor Charles our Lord [Charles V], armed on horseback, with its large box in which it is stored […]." Of all the Habsburg portraits Mary hung in the Grande Galerie, Titian's largescale portrait of Charles V on horseback had no frame.

[45] Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, oil on panel, 335 × 283 cm, Inv. No. P002175. AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 145v: "[…] *una tabla grande pintada quale a una caça y monteria donde estava el emperador nuestro señor Retratado al natural con su balesta y el duque de saxonia e otros de Flandes* […]" / "a large painted panel depicting a hunt and hunting scene where our lord the emperor [Charles V] is portrayed true to life with his crossbow with the Duke of Saxony and others from Flanders […]." Consult online: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/caceria-en-el-castillo-de-torgau-en-honor-de/bae46ca1-6c17-40cf-bc65-8db73353a8ea?searchid=81b7a68e-5e3d-b490-6e85-02735344b924 (accessed 30 November 2025).

[46] EICHBERGER, D.: Like Aunt like Niece? Assessing the value of Margaret of Austria's collection for Mary of Hungary. In: *Mary of Hungary. Renaissance Patron and Collector. Gender, Art and Culture*. Ed.: GARCÍA PÉREZ, N. Turnhout 2020, pp. 43 – 57.

Spain, and Portugal. Uniform in format and scale, with gilded wooden frames, her three-quarter- and full -length portraits of family members were intended to be read collectively, forming a visual genealogy of lineage, alliance, and imperial permanence.[47] The Grande Galerie was not a static display but a diplomatic and political theatre. Ambassadors, aristocrats, and foreign envoys were conducted through it during official ceremonies presided over by Mary, while her portraits, suspended above monumental tapestries, unfolded in a ritualized sequence that reinforced Habsburg legitimacy.[48] Through the calculated orchestration of expansive space, light (emanating from fifteen windows), and visual progression, the gallery functioned as an instrument of power.

The gallery's reach was further extended through the inclusion of portraits of Mary's sister, Catherine of Austria, and members of the Portuguese royal family, painted by Mor during his stay at the Lisbon court in 1552.[49] These five works recorded in Mary's 1558 post-mortem inventory not only reinforced familial bonds but also exemplified the circulation of artists, images, and visual strategies within the Habsburg network. Inspired by Mor's visit, his portraits, and the Coudenberg gallery itself, Catherine would subsequently establish a comparable dynastic portrait gallery at the Portuguese royal palace in Lisbon (the Paço da Ribeira), demonstrating how Mary's gallery in Brussels served both as a political instrument and as a model for transregional Habsburg self-representation.

Mary's portrait by Titian, painted during the Reichstag of Augsburg in 1548 and known today only through copies, occupied a central position within the Grande Galerie (Fig. 2).[50] Since the death of her husband, Louis II of Hungary, at Mohács in 1526, Mary had adopted the austere dress of perpetual widowhood: a white silk veil and bonnet framing her face, and a voluminous black mohair overcoat,



Fig. 2: After Titian: Portrait of Mary of Hungary, Regent of the Low Countries, after 1548, oil on canvas, 125.7 × 112 cm (with frame). Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, Inv. No. PE 243. Photo: Legs Emile Peyre, 1905

[47] PINCHART 1856 (see in note 29), p. 140: "*Todos los retratos de lienzo, que sucesivamente se han inventoriado, tienen sus molduras de por si de madera, de ellas doradas, é otras por dorar, ecepto el retrato grande del emperador nuestro señor, que este no tiene molduras*" / "All the portraits on canvas, which have been successively inventoried, have their own wooden frames, some gilded, others ungilded, except for the large portrait of our lord the emperor [*Emperor Charles V on Horseback*], which has no frame."

[48] FRASER JENKINS, A. D.: Cosimo de Medici's Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence. In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 33, 1970, pp. 162 – 170; DaCOSTA KAUFMANN, T.: The Representational Role of the Collection in Diplomacy. In: *Variations on the Imperial Theme: Studies in Ceremonial, Art, and Collecting in the Age of Maximilian II and Rudolf II*. New York 1978, pp. 103 – 118.

[49] JORDAN, A.: *Retrato de Corte em Portugal. O legado de António Moro, 1552 – 1572*. Lisbon 1994.

[50] Paris, Musée des Art Décoratifs, oil on canvas, 125.7 × 112 cm (with frame), Inv. No. PE 243. Cf. AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 143v: "*Cargasele mas otro Retrato de la reyna Maria de Ungria con su tocado e vestido que traya de ordinario, hecho sobre lienço, por Tiçiano* […]" / "Another Portrait of Queen Maria of Hungary, on canvas, with her headdress and dress that she usually wears, by Titian," and PINCHART 1856 (see in note 29), p. 139, No. 5, who consulted a copy (dated before 1856) of Mary's 1558 post-mortem inventory in Archivo General de Simancas at the Archives générales du Royaume in Brussels.

lined in winter with sable or ermine. In her portrait, positioned in front of a column, she aligned herself visually with Charles V's emblem of the twin columns of Hercules, situating her authority within the emperor's ideological framework.[51] By consciously adapting the widowed self-fashioning of her aunt Margaret, Mary reactivated an established Habsburg visual formula to assert her legitimacy as regent. The portrait projects not passive mourning but disciplined authority—an image of female governance grounded in dynastic fidelity and political resolve.[52]

As a female regent in a male-dominated political culture, Mary was required to negotiate multiple, often conflicting roles. She achieved authority through cultural patronage and the strategic management of visual representation. Charles recognised her acumen in state and financial matters, granting her an exceptional degree of autonomy and entrusting her with the governance of the Low Countries for nearly twenty-five years. The confidence, discipline, and pride reflected in Titian's portrait attest to this authority.[53] It is therefore not surprising that Titian became Mary's favored painter, and that by 1558 her post-mortem inventory recorded multiple large-scale portraits of prominent Habsburg figures by Titian and his workshop.

The Coudenberg gallery thus established a template for subsequent Habsburg displays of works of art and tapestries, demonstrating how visual culture could be strategically mobilized to assert imperial claims and the legitimacy of female rule. In doing so, it articulated an imperial language of power grounded in antiquity, genealogy, and myth.

Private Spaces

Mary's gallery in Coudenberg Palace extended far beyond a series of family likenesses in her representative hall.[54] She actively relocated and recontextualized paintings throughout the palace, while tapestries were moved from site to site, carried in a *malle de tapisserie*—a specially designed leather case.[55] Her collection permeated her private apartments, where paintings were hung on walls, arranged on tables and shelves, or carefully stored in chests and caskets within her *cabinet* (study). Twenty-one folders of tapestry cartoons, preparatory designs for major cycles and other projects, large and small, including Coxcie's *petits patrons*—smaller designs for weavings—were recorded in her 1558 inventory, while watercolors and drawings of Roman antiquities, such as Trajan's Column, formed part of a treasured corpus kept close for study and contemplation.[56]

Her small but select collection of antiquities, likely to have been displayed in these rooms, underscored her engagement with mythology and ancient Rome: marble heads of children, bronzes of male and female nudes, a mounted horse with a nude rider, a bronze Scipio Africanus, a colossal bronze hand, a bust of the Emperor Hadrian, and an alabaster replica of the Hellenistic *Spinario*. These objects inserted classical *exempla* directly into her domestic sphere.[57]

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[51] For Mary's taste for sumptuous clothes and jewels, see JORDAN GSCHWEND 2020 (see in note 25), pp. 74 – 75.

[52] EICHBERGER, D. – JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: Portrait of Mary of Hungary. In: *Women. The Art of Power. Three Women from the House of Habsburg*. Eds.: HAAG, S. – EICHBERGER, D. – JORDAN GSCHWEND, A. Innsbruck 2018, p. 124, cat. 3.6.

[53] For Mary's patronage of Titian, see the essay by Charles Hope in this volume.

[54] Mary's artistic inheritance from her aunt Margaret has yet to be thoroughly investigated.

[55] AGS, CySR, leg. 377, 8 (Brussels, 3 August 1556): "*Pour deux homme qui ont porte et raporter pluisent tableaux en court a pluisent fois*" / "For two men who carried and brought several paintings to court, several times;" one chest moved from the Grande Galerie to the first floor the Coudenberg Palace: "*Pour faire porter ung coffre de la grant salle en bas*"; and "*Item pour garder, porter et rapporter d'une lieu a aultre une malle de tapisserie.*"

[56] AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 141v: "*Dos enboltorios de papeles de pintura que diz que heran de la coluna de Trajano* […] ;" and fol. 142v: "*Cargansele mas veynte e uno enboltorios de papeles para patrones de tapiçeria y otras cosas grandes y pequenos* […]."

[57] AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 145v: "[…] *un honbre desnudo de bulto hecho de alabastro que se esta sacando una espina del pie* […]" / "[…] a naked man, a sculpture made of alabaster, removing a thorn from his foot." Cf. ESTELLA MARCOS, M.: El mecenazgo de la reina María de Hungría en el campo de la escultura. In: *Carlos V y las artes: promoción artística y familia imperial*. Eds.: ZALAMA, M. A. – CANTERA, M. J. R. Valladolid 2000, pp. 282 – 322; Eadem: Las Cuentas del Tesorero Roger Pathie y otros documentos. Esculturas y antigüedades de María de Hungría y los Jardines de Aranjuez. In: *Archivo Español de Arte*, Vol. 395, 2001, pp. 239 – 256.

Genealogies, heraldic devices, and coats of arms of Savoy, France, Burgundy, and England, executed on canvas, parchment, and paper, articulated claims of lineage and alliance within a carefully structured framework.[58] Traversing media, geography, and chronology, they bound Burgundian, Habsburg, French, English, and Spanish lineages into a dense visual genealogy that extended well beyond the confines of the Grande Galerie.

Sculpture further amplified this rhetoric of authority: a marble bust of Eleanor of Austria, queen of France, by Jacques de Dubroeucq;[59] a bronze of Francis I; and a relief of Charles V attributed to Leone Leoni.[60] Wax portrait medallions of French monarchs signaled Mary's attentiveness to Valois politics. Together, these works transformed Mary's spaces into three-dimensional memory, deliberately bringing contemporary rulers and classical antiquity into dialogue.

Dwarfs occupied a recognized role within Habsburg court culture as figures of amusement and ceremonial performance, and their portraits were regularly commissioned to record and memorialize their place within the House of Habsburg. Mary's collection comprised portraits of favorites. Two of a dwarf couple by Jan Gossaert and a wooden bust of her grandfather Emperor Maximilian I's beloved jester, Conrad van der Rosen, were inherited from her aunt Margaret.[61] Another depicted a female jester, *a loca*, named Elisabeth, from the Viennese court of Mary's brother Ferdinand and his wife Anna. These images documented the intimate social fabric of court life in Brussels and across other Habsburg courts.

Inherited works included Jacopo de' Barbari's portrait of Margaret in widow's weeds; a gold and enamel likeness of Jean, duke of Berry; Burgundian diptychs; a panel portrait of Catherine of Aragon, possibly by Michael Sittow; Coxie's *David and Goliath*; and Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*—among Mary's most prized possessions.[62]

Vermeyen's preparatory drawings for the *Conquest of Tunis* tapestries, together with his nine paintings from 1548 commemorating Charles's victories over John Frederick of Saxony, reframed his recent military campaigns into enduring triumphs.[63]

Geography and global expansion likewise served imperial self-representation. Maps, city views, and territorial surveys visualized legal authority across

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[58] AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 146v.

[59] AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 143v: "*Cargasele mas un rretrato dela Christianissima Reyna de Françia Madama Leonor hecha de marmol blanco ded bulto de medio cuerpo arriva puesta sobre un pedestal escrito Leonor hecha por Maestre Jacob escultor*" / "Another portrait of the Most Christian Queen of France, Madame Leonor, made of white marble, a half-length sculpture placed on a pedestal inscribed, *Leonor*, made by Master Jacob [Jacques], sculptor." – DIDIER, R.: *Jacques Dubrœucq sculpteur et maître-artiste de l'empereur (1500/1510 – 1584)*. Mons 2000.

[60] CUPPERI, W.: Des réseaux plutôt que des ethnies La place des portraits de souverains dans les anciens Pays-Bas. In: *Marie de Hongrie* (see in note 2), pp. 251 – 257 (with previous bibliography).

[61] AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 1v: "[…] *otro retrato de la loca de la rreyna Ana de Ungria* […]." TREMAYNE, E.: *The First Governess of the Netherlands: Margaret of Austria*. London 1908, p. 306, No. 14 (1524): "*Item delivré audit garde-joyaulx depuis cest inventoire fait, la pourtraicture des nayns et nayne du Roy de Danemarque faicte par Jehann de Maubeuge, fort bien fait*" / "Item. Delivered to the Keeper of Jewels since this inventory was taken, a portrait of the dwarf couple of the King of Denmark, [Christian II] painted by Jean de Maubeuge, very well done;" and p. 323, No. 235: "*La portraiture du feu Conralt, fol de l'empereur* [Maximilian I]*, taillé en bois*" / "The portrait of the late Conrad, the emperor's jester, carved in wood." Consult online: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1845-0809-1372 (accessed 30 November 2025).

[62] EICHBERGER 2020 (see in note 46), pp. 54 – 55. AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 145v: "[…] *mas una tabla grande con dos puertas con que çerrava y en ella un hombre e una muger que se tomaban los manos con un espejo en que se muestran los dos / honbre e muger y en las puertas las armas de Don Diego de Guevara* […]" / "Another large panel with two doors that close, and inside a man and a woman holding hands with a mirror in which the two of them are shown, and on the doors, the coat of arms of Don Diego de Guevara."

[63] AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 142v: "[…] *nueve lienços pintada que es la presa que hizo el emperador nuestro senor al Duque de Sajonia* […]." Vermeyen's twelve lifsize cartoons, 1-to-1 templates made for the Brussels weavers in Willem Pannemaker's workshop, are located in Vienna, Kunsthistorsiches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, 1546 – 1550, paper on canvas, charcoal, and gouache, height 385 × length varying from 662 to 1145 cm, inv. nos. 2038 – 2047.

dispersed Habsburg lands; four of these were by Vermeyen—"portraits" depicting London, Madrid, Naples, and Valladolid.[64] Charts and chronicles of the Portuguese conquests, together with exotica sent from the Lisbon court, extended Habsburg identity into overseas spaces.

Beyond the Grande Galerie itself, Mary's collection functioned as a multilayered archive—classical, genealogical, military, and global—through which imperial authority and female regency were articulated across interconnected spaces. The Coudenberg gallery stood at its center, but the broader ensemble demonstrates how visual culture could construct a coherent representation of power rooted in antiquity, lineage, and conquest.

Sisterhood at a Distance: Dynastic Exchange between Brussels and Lisbon

The logic that structured the Coudenberg gallery did not remain confined to Brussels but extended across Habsburg Europe through Mary's sustained artistic dialogue with her sister, Catherine of Austria. Their relationship served as a crucial axis between the Low Countries and Portugal.[65] They never met in person, since both women were raised in different countries. Mary grew up in Low Countries (along with her siblings Eleanor, Charles, and Isabella) under the care of her aunt Margaret; but Catherine, the youngest child, was raised in Spain by their mother, Joanna I of Castile. Archival documentation in Lisbon demonstrates that the sisters maintained regular correspondence, exchanging views on governance, court ceremonial, artistic patronage, and collecting. Their epistolary relationship functioned as a substitute for physical proximity: through letters, portraits, and diplomatic gifts, they constructed what might be termed a "virtual courtly encounter," linking Brussels and Lisbon within a shared dynastic culture.

Material exchange was central to this relationship. During the 1550s, Catherine intensified her artistic exchange with Mary, whose tapestry collection at Coudenberg Palace rivaled and superseded that of Charles.[66] Their shared commitment to Flemish tapestry production is documented in a remarkable thirty-four-page report sent from Brussels in 1551 by Catherine's agent and valet, Francisco Carneiro. Acting under Mary's guidance, Carneiro recorded major purchases while listing the weavers, dealers, and workshops recommended by the regent. Through these transactions, the sisters cultivated a remarkable artistic dialogue: Mary, whose own Grande Galerie integrated monumental tapestry cycles into a selective decorative scheme, served as Catherine's intermediary in the Netherlands, granting her access to the leading German merchant-financier, Lazarus Tucher in Antwerp, and the tapestry weaver-dealer, Cornelis de Ronde, in Brussels. In that single year, Catherine acquired twenty-nine panels, including the cycles *Esther*, *Ahab*,[67] and *Solomon*, depicting subjects that closely paralleled the biblical and genealogical themes woven into Mary's decorative scheme in Brussels.

The sisters' parallel efforts to acquire the *History of Aeneas* tapestry series further reveal this shared visual strategy. Carneiro had been dispatched from the Lisbon court to obtain the prestigious cycle, as Mary had recommended, only to find that it had entered

[64] PINCHART 1856 (see in note 29), p. 145.

[65] JORDAN, A.: Patterns of Patronage among Habsburg Queens, Regents and Princesses. In: *The Development of Catherine of Austria's Collection in the Queen's Household: Its Character and Cost*. PhD Thesis. Providence, R.I. 1994, pp. 417 – 431; EICHBERGER, D.: Options and Choices. New Insights into the Most 'Important' 16th-Century Habsburg Women. In: *Beiträge zur Repräsentation der Casa de Austria. Frühneuzeit-Info*, 2024, pp. 1 – 12.

[66] JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: The Manufacture and Marketing of Flemish Tapestries in Mid-Sixteenth Century Brussels. Two Habsburg Patrons and Collectors: Mary of Hungary and Catherine of Austria. In: *Ao Modo de Flandres. Disponibilidade, Inovação e Mercado de Arte na Época dos Descobrimentos (1415 – 1580)*. Eds.: GARCÍA GARCÍA, B. – GRILO, F. Lisbon 2005, pp. 91 – 113; Eadem: *Verdadero Padre y Señor*: Catherine of Austria, Queen of Portugal. In: *Studies on the Inventories of Charles V and the Imperial Family. The Escorial "Delivery Books" of Philip II. The Post-mortem Inventory of Philip II*. Eds.: CHECA CREMADES, F. – MANCINI, M. Madrid 2020, pp. 194 – 200.

[67] One panel (*King Ahab preparing for battle*) of Catherine's *Story of Ahab* cycle, comprising 9 panels purchased in Brussels in 1551, recently sold on the art market. See JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: *Metaphors of Princely Rule. Magnificent Flemish Tapestries at the Lisbon Court*. In: https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2024/royal-noble/king-ahab-preparing-for-battle-a-flemish-old?locale=en (accessed 30 November 2025).

Mary's collection shortly before her departure for Spain in 1556. This convergence suggests not rivalry but coordination: both sisters recognized Aeneas as a powerful emblem of lineage, *pietas*, and imperial destiny, central to Habsburg mythography.[68] Just as the Coudenberg gallery articulated the consolidation of power through portraiture and tapestry, Catherine sought to transpose this imperial language to Lisbon. Tapestry thus operated as a woven extension of the Brussels gallery—a transregional platform through which the sisters collaboratively articulated ancestry, regal power and political legitimacy across geographically distant courts.

Catherine's own patterns of patronage, particularly her marked preference for Flemish painters, tapestries, and craftsmen, mirror models long established by Mary in the Low Countries. This alignment was reinforced by Catherine's early exposure to the substantial holdings of Flemish tapestries and objects owned by their mother, Joanna I of Castile, at Tordesillas, which provided a template for her collecting practices rooted in Netherlandish production.[69]

Mary's 1558 post-mortem inventory provides concrete evidence of this transnational exchange with her younger sister. Catherine also dispatched exotica to Brussels, sourced through Portugal's Asian trade networks. These gifts were not curiosities, but politically charged artifacts embedded in the structures of global empire.

That inventory records an extraordinary concentration of overseas luxury goods: Indian, Ceylonese, Gujarati, and Far Eastern objects, which were probably housed in Mary's private apartment at the Coudenberg residence. Among the items identifiable as Catherine's gifts were a Ceylonese ivory casket containing a jasper stone believed to stanch bleeding;[70] a tortoiseshell fan and a silver incense burner from India; Gujarati mother-of-pearl caskets and tables;[71] Chinese or Japanese lacquer boxes;[72] a painted ivory gaming board; a rhinoceros-horn cup, the first carved Chinese Ming vessel recorded in northern Europe;[73] a nautilus shell from the Indian Ocean; and a mounted coconut.[74] Such luxury artifacts, circulating through Portuguese global trade routes, introduced Asian material culture directly into the ceremonial spaces of the Brussels court.

These objects performed several functions simultaneously. They advertised Portugal's maritime reach and signaled Catherine's access to global resources; and, once displayed in Brussels, they enhanced Mary's prestige within the imperial court hierarchy and her Habsburg family. The possession of Asian rarities aligned Mary with Iberia's overseas expansion,

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[68] TANNER, M.: *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor*. New Haven 1993.

[69] JORDAN, A.: Portuguese Royal Collecting after 1521: The Choice between Flanders and Italy. In: *Cultural Links between Portugal and Italy in the Renaissance*, Ed.: LOWE, K. J. P. Oxford 2000, pp. 265 – 293; JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: Juana de Castilla y Catalina de Austria: La formación de la colección de la reina en Tordesillas y Lisboa'. In: *Juana I de Castilla, 1504 – 1555. De su reclusión en Tordesillas al olvido de la Historia. I Symposio Internacional sobre la Reina Juana de Castilla. Tordesillas (Valladolid), 23 y 24 de Noviembre 2005*. Ed.: ZALAMA, M. A. Valladolid 2006, pp. 143 – 171.

[70] This rare, now lost, casket was gifted to Mary after the historic visit of an embassy from Ceylon to the Lisbon court in 1542. – *Elfenbeine aus Ceylon: Luxusgüter für Katharina von Habsburg (1507 – 1578)*. Exh. cat. Eds.: JORDAN GSCHWEND, A. – BELTZ, J. Zurich 2010.

[71] Lisbon, Direção-Geral do Livro, dos Arquivos e das Bibliotecas (hereafter DGLAB), Torre do Tombo (hereafter TT), Núcleo Antiga (hereafter NA), 792, 1542, fol. 161: "*10,800 reais em compra de hun cofre de madre perola guarneçido de prata forrada de çetim carmesim que foy entrege em maos da Rainha nosa señora*" / "10,800 *reais* for the purchase of a mother-of-pearl casket, mounted with silver lined with crimson satin, which was delivered to the Queen our Lady [Catherine]." This casket recorded in AGS, CMC, 1ª época, leg. 1017, fol. 170v: "[…] *una caxa de nacar de yndias con la guarniçion e çeradura de plata blanca con quatro bolicas sobre que stava con su tapador de lo mismo e su asa de plata blanca* […]" / "a mother-of-pearl casket with silver mounts and lock, with four balls upon which it stood, with its lid of the same [mother-of-pearl] and its handle of silver."

[72] AGS, CMC, 1ª época, leg. 1017, fol. 170v: "*Un cofre de yndias pintado de oro e negro* […]" / "One casket from India [probably Japan] painted gold and black."

[73] JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: A Masterpiece of Indo-Portuguese Art: The Rhinoceros Cup of Maria of Portugal, Princess of Parma (1538 – 1577). In: *Oriental Art*, Vol. 46, 2000, pp. 48 – 58 (with previous bibliography).

[74] Mary's exotica from the Lisbon court are cited in respective entries in AGS, CMC, 1ª época, leg. 1017.

even though her political authority was exercised in the Low Countries. Through Catherine's gifts, she participated in Portugal's global economy. And the exchange was ideologically reciprocal. Mary's established modes of display—her systematic use of portraiture, tapestries, and curated interiors to articulate lineage and authority—provided Catherine with a template for queenly self-fashioning in Lisbon. Thus, the sister relationship was structurally formative: it facilitated the circulation of objects, artists, and models of representation across Habsburg territories. In this way, their "virtual encounters" produced a shared visual and political language that bound Brussels and Lisbon into a coherent dynastic network, mediated through female agency and the material culture of empire.

Projecting Presence: Portraiture between Lisbon and Brussels

Mary of Hungary and Catherine of Austria shared a sustained engagement with portraiture as a medium of political presence. For two sisters who never met in person, painted likenesses functioned as instruments of intimacy and authority.

In this context, the Portuguese theorist and painter Francisco de Holanda (c. 1518 – 1585) assumed a central role. Holanda grew up in the close circles of Catherine's court and under her patronage; there he wrote the earliest known treatise on portraiture in the sixteenth century, *Do Tirar polo Natural* (*On Portraiture*, 1549), conceived as a supplement of eleven dialogues to his first treatise, *Da Pintura Antigua* (*On Ancient Painting*, 1548).[75] In this treatise, Holanda articulated a theory of portraiture grounded in direct observation. He underscored portraiture not only as mere likeness but as the truthful rendition of princely dignity, outlining how a painter should approach portraiture and how a sitter should be portrayed from life. Portraits, he debated, were intended to honor and immortalize people of outstanding social, intellectual, or moral worth; they not only provided the princely or royal owner with a visual family genealogy but also served as suitable exemplars for imitation and association.[76] Portraits were intended to inspire the owner to match the achievements of those represented.[77] Holanda repeatedly praised Titian's portraits in his treatise, particularly his ability to invest imperial, royal, and princely sitters with majesty and dignity—an achievement admired and debated at the Lisbon court

In 1549, Alonso Sánchez Coello (1531 – 1588), a painter raised at the Portuguese court, was dispatched to the Low Countries by King John III of Portugal (r. 1521 – 1557) and Catherine of Austria, supported by a royal subsidy to refine his training with Anthonis Mor in Antwerp and Brussels. This deliberate movement of artists between Lisbon and the Low Countries signals more than professional advancement; it reveals a coordinated investment in the highest standards of court portraiture. Encouraged by the close connections between the two sisters, such exchanges strengthened artistic and family ties between their courts. Mary, a discerning connoisseur of portraiture, would almost certainly have been attentive to developments in Lisbon, while Catherine, cognizant of her sister's cultivated eye and extensive gallery, commissioned Holanda to paint her likeness expressly for dispatch to Brussels. Holanda's portrait of Catherine thus emerged within a transnational framework of artistic ambition, imperial representation, and sisterly exchange.

At the palace of Almeirim, between October 1550 and January 1551, Holanda began to execute the full-length portrait of Queen Catherine—now lost, although archival records make it possible to reconstruct its sumptuous material presence. The canvas was accompanied by a gilded, varnished wooden frame, crafted under Holanda's supervision and probably designed by him in a Renaissance (Italianate) style. Green-and-gold silk taffeta cur-

[75] BURY, J. – JORDAN GSCHWEND, A. – BAPTISTA PEREIRA, F. A. *On Portraiture (Do Tirar polo Natural). Francisco de Holanda*. London 2026.

[76] ALVES, J. F.: *Francisco de Holanda. Do Tirar polo Natural*. Lisbon 1984, p. 41.

[77] Paolo Giovio's portrait collection at Como, the model for later sixteenth-century portrait galleries, originated from the literary tradition of the histories of famous men (*uomini illustri*). – JOOST-GAUGIER, C. L.: A Rediscovered Series of *Uomini Famosi* from Quattrocento Venice. In: *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 58, June 1976, pp. 184 – 195; STARN, R. – PARTRIDGE, L.: *Arts of Power. Three Halls of State, 1300 – 1600*. Berkeley 1992, pp. 9 – 80.

tains (green being the color of majesty during the Renaissance) were sewn by her tailor, António Lopes, and hung in front of the painting on a gilded iron rod with ten rings made by the court gilder, Simão Dias. A protective leather travel case lined with green Castilian velvet cloth was also prepared to ensure the portrait's safe transportation to Flanders.

Queen Catherine's meticulous coordination, with all arrangements overseen by Holanda, indicates that the portrait was intended to convey status, underscoring her visual authority and her position within her immediate Habsburg family. This carefully assembled ensemble reveals her ambition, with every detail designed to make an impression at its unveiling and to secure a prominent place in Mary's portrait collection. Holanda's portrait was monumental in scale, measuring approximately two meters high and more than one meter wide.[78] The luxurious velvet curtains staged protection and performance simultaneously.

Months in the making, the portrait was finally dispatched to Brussels in 1551. Her gesture was calibrated. Mary, an exacting patron and avid collector of portraits, had assembled an extensive gallery of Habsburg portraits in the Netherlands. Catherine's life-size image, painted *ad vivum* (from life), inserted the Portuguese queen into Mary's dynastic display, which already counted Mor's five state portraits of her and the Portuguese royal family, painted in 1552 (mentioned above). Through this exchange, the Lisbon and Brussels courts were symbolically aligned, and Catherine's corporeal presence was twice projected into Mary's political space.

Holanda's life-size portrait was recorded in Mary's 1558 inventory when she transported her collection to Spain, confirming its integration into her holdings, although the painting has since disappeared.[79] Its reception cannot be reconstructed; yet Catherine's decision to give Mary such an elaborate and theoretically informed portrait suggests confidence in its success. This sisterly exchange unfolded amid a broader transformation of Habsburg court portraiture, shaped by the prestige of masters such as Albrecht Dürer, van Orley, Vermeyen, Cranach, Seisenegger, Titian, and Mor, whose formulations of sovereign presence set the international standard. In this context, Catherine's portrait was more than a familial token: it was a consciously theorized and materially sumptuous image that projected her power across geographic distance. Through it, likeness operated as a proxy, a diplomatic gift, and an assertion of Catherine's Habsburg legitimacy—an image through which two courts and two sisters sustained a visual and theoretical dialogue.

Anthonis Mor and the Queen's Gallery in the Paço da Ribeira Palace

In mid-sixteenth-century Europe, portraiture functioned as a critical instrument of identity, political alliance, and princely virtue. While Italian courts and the Low Countries had long cultivated sophisticated traditions of portrait display, Portugal consolidated a sustained and codified court portrait culture only after the arrival of Mor in 1552.[80] At the centre of this shift stood Catherine of Austria, whose establishment of a portrait gallery in the Paço da Ribeira Palace signaled an intentional program of dynastic representation.

Catherine's gallery, installed in her Sala da Rainha—a hall rebuilt for her by King John III between 1534 and 1540, smaller than the Grande Galerie at Coudenberg—was located adjacent to her private quarters. It emerged from the convergence of royal ambition, artistic innovation, and intellectual theory.[81] Mor's presence in Lisbon as a portraitist,

[78] JORDAN 1994 (see in note 49), p. 159, cat. 15.

[79] AGS, CMC, 1ª epoca, leg. 1017, fol. 145: "*Cargasele mas al dicho rrogier patie otro retrato de la rreyna de Portugal dona Catalina hermana del Emperador don Carlos entero hecho en lienço questava metido en una caxa aforrada en terçiopelo verde* […]" / "To the said rrogier patie another full length portrait of the Queen of Portugal Doña Catalina, sister of the Emperor Don Carlos, on canvas, stored in a box lined with green velvet." PINCHART 1856 (see in note 29), p. 141: "*34. El retrato de la reina de Portugal doña Catalina, hermana de nuestro emperador, entero, hecho en lienzo, por Francisco de Olanda, metido en una caja aforrada en terciopelo verde.*"

[80] JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: O Manierismo e o retrato da corte em Portugal: as fontes, as inovações e a importação de um estilo. In: *A Pintura Manierista em Portugal. Arte no Tempo de Camões*. Ed.: SERRÃO, V. Lisbon 1995, pp. 114 – 121.

[81] The precise measurements of Catherine's hall were not recorded during her reign, but the adjacent king's hall, the Sala

together with Francisco de Holanda's theoretical discourses, elevated portraiture beyond representation to an articulation of majesty. In its stylistic discipline, ideological coherence, and spatial organisation, Catherine's gallery marks a foundational moment in Iberian court culture and a forceful expression of female agency within the Habsburg world.

Yet Catherine's spatial politics predated Mor's arrival. Her collection of mythological and religious tapestries, most acquired in the Low Countries with Mary's intervention, hung throughout the private and public rooms of her apartment, most prominently in the Sala da Rainha, a feminine ceremonial space reserved for banquets, receptions and fêtes. The decoration of this hall reflected the queen's own objectives and iconographic program, suggesting that the arrangement of her quarters was tailored to her political and representational needs. An eyewitness to the wedding festivities of her niece Infanta Maria of Portugal to Alexander Farnese in 1565, which were celebrated in Lisbon in the Paço da Ribeira Palace,[82] described Catherine's "rich and fine panels with diverse ancient and modern stories" covering the walls from top to bottom, while the queen's hall was recorded as having been "richly decorated with tapestries made of gold, silver and silk."[83] The effect was immersive and total.

The iconography of Catherine's tapestries articulated a language of imperial and heavenly rule consonant with claims of succession by the Avis and Habsburg dynasties. Scenes of *Romulus and Remus* invoked the founding of empire; a smaller set of the *Conquest of Tunis* series recalled the Habsburg triumph over Islam; the *Months of the Year* signaled dominion over time and nature; panels from the *History of Trajan* emphasized the dispensation of just rule; and the *Spheres* series presented Catherine and John III as joint rulers of a celestial and terrestrial order.[84] Through this collection, and through the adjoining rooms housing her treasury of exotica and curiosities from Asia and the Far East, Catherine fashioned a Kunstkammer that rendered her global rule materially immersive.

Mary of Hungary did not just collect dynastic imagery; she organized and activated it. By means of the Grande Galerie and her strategic display of authoritative likenesses, she converted portraiture into an instrument of governance. In doing so, she assumed the role not only of patron but of architect, constructing a Habsburg visual polity that stabilized the dynasty's identity and projected imperial authority across mid-sixteenth-century Europe.

Catherine's strategies closely align with those cultivated by her sister Mary in Brussels. Both queens mobilized architecture, textile cycles, and portraits to transform their residences into arenas of political stagecraft. While Mary curated dynasty and lineage within the Grande Galerie at Coudenberg, Catherine articulated imperial cosmology within the Sala da Rainha. Rather than a simple transmission from north to south, their relationship underscores a shared and mutually reinforcing vocabulary of Habsburg female rulership, developed in parallel courts yet calibrated to distinct ceremonial environments.

Mor's arrival in 1552 further intensified this transregional dialogue. He was commissioned by Mary as part of a diplomatic exchange to portray the Portuguese royal family, operating as a conduit

Grande, built by King Manuel I (r. 1498 – 1521), measured 22.7 metres in length and 12.1 metres in width, suggesting that Catherine's hall, though perhaps smaller, was nevertheless expansive enough for the display of large-scale tapestries and portraits. – JORDAN, A.: *Portuguese Royal Collections (1505 – 1580): A Bibliographic and Documentary Survey*. Master's Thesis. Washington, D.C. 1985, p. 37, n. 18: "[…] *ffazer as obras abaixos declaradas: saber-a obra* […] *dos paços da Ribeira da cidade de Lixboa, as varandas, sala, e escada, capela, e casas da Rainha* [Queen Catherine] *sobre todas muito amada e presada molher* […]" / "[…] to carry out the works declared below: to know, the work […] of the Ribeira Palace in the city of Lisbon, the balconies, hall [Sala da Rainha], staircase, chapel, and houses [apartment] of the Queen [Catherine], my, above all, much-loved and esteemed wife […]."

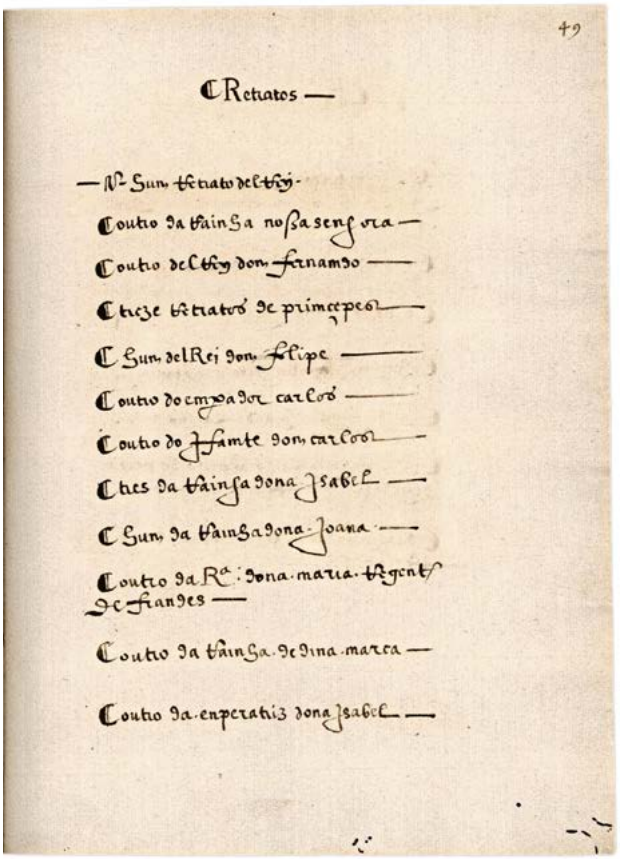
[82] D'HAINAUT – ZVENY 2000 (see in note 2), p. 58.

[83] An eyewitness from the Parma court, described Catherine's quarters in a letter to Prince Farnese. – BERTINI, G.: *Le Nozze di Alessandro Farnese. Feste alle corti di Lisbona e Bruxelles*. Parma 1997, p. 79: "*L'appartamento era ricchissimamente addobato di tapezzaria d'oro, di argento e di seta*;" JORDAN, A.: *A rainha colecionadora: Catarina de Áustria*. Lisbon 2017, pp. 161 – 185.

[84] For Catherine tapesties, see JORDAN GSCHWEND 2020 (see in note 66), pp. 194 – 200 (with previous bibliography). For the Spheres, see JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: Hércules sostiene la esfera celeste. In: *Flandes en Hispania. Rutas de seda, plata y oro*. Consult online: https://www.flandesenhispania.org/zoomin/zoominViewer.action?id=3nFhbxxVf3vm-9PdV0MKDx8fP (accessed 30 November 2025).

between Brussels and Lisbon, and translating a codified Habsburg portrait idiom into an Iberian context. His portraits of Queen Catherine, King John III, and their family articulated a disciplined and austere visual language consonant with ideals of majesty and authority already cultivated within the wider Habsburg sphere. Painters active at the Lisbon court, including Sánchez Coello, Jooris van der Straeten, and Cristóvão de Morais, absorbed and disseminated Mor's models across the peninsula, embedding Portugal more firmly within an international court aesthetic.

The transformation was swift. By 1558, twenty-nine state portraits of Habsburg and Avis relatives were recorded in Catherine's inventory, and more than fifteen of them, executed by Mor, were three-quarter length. They signaled not just accumulation but the deliberate consolidation of a structured dynastic gallery in the Lisbon palace, with their arrangement probably having been under Mor's guidance (Fig. 3). Two particularly significant works were listed: portraits of Charles V and Mary of Hungary. The two sisters were thus intentionally—if only virtually—present at one another's courts, their portraits serving as surrogate bodies within parallel dynastic theatres. The inclusion of the emperor and Mary, portrayed as *Regente de Flandes* ("Regent of the Low Countries"),[85] indicates that Catherine's gallery functioned as a visual articulation of imperial Habsburg governance, materializing a network of female regency that bound Lisbon to Brussels within a shared political imaginary.


49

Retratos —

— Hun retrato del Rey

Outro da Rainha nossa senhora —

Outro del Rey dom Fernamdo —

Treze retratos de principes —

Hum del Rei dom Felipe —

Outro do emperador carlos —

Outro do Jfamte dom carlos —

Tres da Rainha dona Jsabel —

Hum da Rainha dona Joana —

Outro da Rª dona maria tRgent de Frandes —

Outro da Rainha de Dinamarca —

Outro da emperatriz dona Jsabel —

Fig. 3: Anonymous: Inventory of Catherine of Austria's Portrait Gallery, Lisbon Royal Palace (Paço da Ribeira), 1558, ink and paper. Direção-Geral do Livro, dos Arquivos e das Bibliotecas, Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Códices e documentos de proveniência desconhecida, CF 56, fol. 49. Photo: Public Domain

Between 1530 and 1532, Seisenegger (a Viennese court painter mentioned above) executed two early portraits of Charles.[86] In 1531, he painted one version, measuring approximately 222 by 111 cm, that

[85] Author's translation. Cf. JORDAN GSCHWEND 2020 (see in note 66), pp. 191 – 192; and Lisbon, DGLAB, TT, Códices e documentos de proveniência desconhecida, CF 56, fol. 49: "*Retratos. Hun retrato del Rey* [King John III, Anthonis Mor]; *Otro retrato da Rainha Nossa Senhora* [Catherine of Austria, Anthonis Mor]; *Otro del Rey Dom Fernamdo* [Ferdinand, King of the Romans, Jakob Seisenegger?]; *Treze retratos de Principes* [13 portraits of Avis princes and princesses]; *Outro do Principe Dom Felipe de Castela* [Prince Philip of Spain, Titian or Anthonis Mor?]; *Outro do Emperador Carlos* [Charles V, Jakob Seisenegger]; *Outro do Imfamte Dom Carlos* [Prince Carlos of Spain, Anthonis Mor or Alonso Sánchez Coello?]; *Tres da Rainha Dona Isabel* [Isabel I of Castile]; *hum da Rainha Dona Joana* [Joanna I of Castile]; *Outro da Rainha Dona Maria, Regente de Frandes* [Mary of Hungary, Titian or Anthonis Mor?]; *Outro da Rainha de Dinamarca* [Isabel of Austria, Queen of Denmark, Jan Gossaert?]; *Outro da Emperatriz Dona Isabel*, Empress Isabella of Portugal, Titian?]".

[86] This monumental portrait, now in the collection of the Marquess of Northampton (Castle Ashby, England), depicts Charles V, full-length, standing within an ornate architectural setting, dressed in black Spanish attire. Charles does not wear the Order of the Golden Fleece, nor is he portrayed here as Holy Roman Emperor, but as King of Spain, *Rex Hispaniae*, according to the inscription, with short hair and beard he adopted after his 1530 coronation. The Ashby portrait may the same once in Catherine's Lisbon gallery. – BODART 2000 (see in note 42), pp. 7 – 24; MATTHEWS, P.: Jakob Seisenegger's Portraits of Charles V, 1530 – 32. In: *The Burlington*

was sent to the Portuguese queen.[87] Catherine's replica thus introduced the first full-length royal image of Charles to circulate in Iberia after his coronation in Bologna in 1530. Seisenegger's format was innovative in the Habsburg context. The life-size standing figure, articulated through emphatic vertical lines and a courtly costume, reconfigured the emperor's body into a site of imperial rhetoric.[88] No longer a prince, Charles was presented as an embodied axis of authority. By acquiring this image so early in her reign, Catherine did more than demonstrate filial loyalty and her cult of the emperor; she positioned the Lisbon court within the emerging visual language of Habsburg imperiality. The portrait functioned as both political proxy and ceremonial presence, aligning the Portuguese monarchy with the emperor's newly consolidated image as Holy Roman Emperor.

From Brussels to Lisbon: Dynastic Memory and Imperial Projection

The deaths of Charles V and Mary of Hungary in 1558 did not diminish their authority within Catherine's Lisbon gallery; instead, their portraits assumed heightened commemorative and dynastic force. In the Sala da Rainha, they functioned as posthumous guarantors of imperial legitimacy, stabilizing succession and transforming her gallery into a site where memory was not passive remembrance but an active instrument of Habsburg projection.

It is not documented when Mary's portrait as "Regent of the Low Countries" entered Catherine's collection in Lisbon. Her 1558 inventory does not record the names of painters. Whether the likeness derived from a work by van Orley or Vermeyen, or from a replica after Titian's 1548 imperial portrait type (see Fig. 2), remains unresolved. One might also consider whether Anthonis Mor painted a now-lost image of Mary at the Brussels court. Mor's documented presence in Portugal in 1552 raises the plausible—though unproven—possibility that he conveyed Mary's likeness to Lisbon, perhaps as a diplomatic gift from the regent to her sister.

The scribe who redacted Catherine's 1558 inventory appears to have recorded the portraits according to their hierarchical placement in the queen's hall, the Sala da Rainha. The sequence began with the Portuguese monarchs, King John III and Queen Catherine,[89] and continued with thirteen portrayals of their children and immediate kin. At the compositional and dynastic centre stood Emperor Charles V, visually anchoring the display. He was flanked nearby by his heir, Philip II, and to his immediate left by his grandson and namesake, Infante Prince Carlos, thereby articulating vertical succession across three generations of Habsburg rule.[90]

Magazine, Vol. 143, February 2001, pp. 86 – 90. A comparable Seisenegger version of Charles, c. 1530, in Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional, oil on canvas, 205 × 127.5 cm, Inv. No. 10018673. Consult online: https://www.patrimonionacional.es/microsites/retratos/obras_principales.htm (accessed 15 March 2026).

[87] First recorded in Catherine's 1545 inventory in Lisbon, DGLAB, TT, NA, 754, fol. 121: "*Otra figura que vyno de Flandes de homen que dise que es el Rey en un rretablo grandè*" / "Another figure [portrait] sent from Flanders of a man said to be the King [Charles V as King of Spain] in a large frame." Cf. JORDAN GSCHWEND 2020 (see in note 66), pp. 191 – 192.

[88] For another Seisenegger depiction of Charles V in court costume with his hunting dog, see Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, 1532, oil on canvas, 203.5 × 123 cm, Inv. No. GG A114. Consult online: https://www.khm.at/kunstwerke/kaiser-karl-v-1500-1558-mit-seinem-englischen-wasserhund-1777 (accessed 30 November 2025).

[89] Mor's signed and dated portrait of John III in Madrid, Museo Lázaro Galdiano, oil on Baltic oak panel, 101 × 81 cm, Inv. No. 08481. Inscribed: *Anthonis Mor faciebat 1552*. Consult online: https://www.museolazarogaldiano.es/fondos/joao-iii-rey-de-portugal (accessed 30 November 2025).

[90] Catherine's portrait of Prince Philip was likely a replica of the first portrayal Anthonis Mor painted of her nephew in Antwerp in 1549, one version of which is in London, Royal Collection Trust, oil on panel, 98.2 × 66.5 cm, Inv. No. RCIN 406044. Consult online: https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/27/collection/406044/phillip-ii-1527-1598-king-of-spain (accessed 30 November 2025). The full-length portrait of Philip's son, Infante Carlos, aged seven, taken by Anthonis Mor in Toro (Spain) in early 1552, is now lost. It was listed for the first time in Philip II's unpublished 1553 wardrobe (*guardaropa*) inventory in Valladolid, AGS, Consejo Real de Castilla (CRC), 761, 3, unfoliated: "*Un Retrato del señor ynfante don Carlos todo entero.*" It should be noted here that Philip also owned in 1553 a replica of Mary of Hungary's 1548 portrait by Titian: "*Un Retrato de la Reyna Maria.*" See Fig. 2 above.



Fig. 4: Francisco Zuzarte: View of the Lisbon Royal Palace (Paço da Ribeira) with the Torreão (Tower, far left) and Queen Catherine of Austria's former hall (in yellow box), before 1755, pen and ink on paper, 55 × 84.5 cm. Present whereabouts unknown. Photo: Public Domain

The next tier comprised three portraits representing the emperor's matrilineal forebears: Isabella I of Castile (grandmother) and Joanna I of Castile (mother). Their inclusion underscored the dynastic consolidation effected by Joanna's marriage to Archduke Philip the Fair in 1496, through which the Burgundian-Habsburg line acquired the Spanish crowns after 1500. Catherine's arrangement thus rehearsed a genealogical argument: legitimacy was grounded in Trastámara inheritance as much as in Burgundian patrimony.

The portrait of Mary of Hungary was placed next to that of her mother, Joanna, a queen she barely knew, followed by those of her elder sister, Isabella of Austria, queen of Denmark, who died prematurely in 1525, and by Charles's consort, Empress Isabella of Portugal. This sequence condensed three generations of Habsburg women into a single dynastic axis, aligning maternal lineage, sibling alliance, and imperial marriage within Catherine's Lisbon setting. The portrait of Empress Isabella, probably derived from Titian (whose prime version is preserved in the Museo del Prado), thus bookended this succinct royal and imperial Avis-Habsburg configuration.[91] In doing so, it did more than complete a genealogical sequence: it visually stabilized Catherine's gallery through a female Habsburg continuum that bound Castile, Burgundy, Portugal, and the Low Countries into a coherent dynastic composition.

The Sala da Rainha, embedded at the core of the Lisbon residence and delineated here within the yellow box (Fig. 4), extended outward to a covered

[91] Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, 1548, oil on canvas, 98 × 117cm, Inv. No. P000415. Consult online: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/la-emperatriz-isabel-de-portugal/d4eddf35-c76c-4c11-8f2b-099f7b71d696?-searchid=9d00a323-982a-4e07-4f5f-7e5ba478c93b (accessed 30 November 2025).



Fig. 5: Anthonis Mor: Portrait of Catherine of Austria, Queen of Portugal, 1552, oil on panel, 107 × 84 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, Inv. No. P002109. Provenance: 1552, Portrait Gallery of Catherine of Austria, Lisbon Royal Palace; after 1580, Collection of Philip II of Spain, Alcázar Royal Palace, Madrid. Photo: Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado

loggia with eight columns—the varanda da Rainha (queen's balcony). This elevated terrace, with a staircase leading to the ground floor, commanded expansive views over the Tagus River waterfront—the aquatic gateway to Portugal's maritime empire—and across the vast palace square, the Terreiro do Paço, Lisbon's principal urban stage. The spatial articulation is significant. The queen's interior portrait gallery did not terminate at its enclosing walls; it projected symbolically into the civic and imperial landscape. From this liminal threshold between the chamber and the city, dynastic imagery in the Sala da Rainha was visually and conceptually aligned with the arteries of overseas commerce and with ceremonies of royal authority performed in the square below. Yet Catherine's gallery did more than replicate Brussels. If Mary spatialized genealogy to stabilize dynastic continuity in the Netherlands, Catherine expanded that logic within a maritime and imperial monarchy whose claims extended across continents. Lisbon did not only receive a Habsburg model; it recalibrated it within a global horizon.

Together, the galleries of Brussels and Lisbon reveal not a hierarchy of influence but a network of sisterly courts. Through architecture, tapestry, portraiture, and display, Mary and Catherine each fashioned settings in which lineage became spatial, memory visible, and performed power materially present. Their projects demonstrate that female agency operated through sustained visual conversation across Habsburg dominions.

Constructing a Habsburg Visual Polity

On 22 September 1552, Catherine of Austria paid 500 *cruzados* to Mor, sent from Flanders by her sister Mary, to paint the Portuguese royal couple and their family from life. The commission marked a decisive shift in Portuguese royal imagery. Before Mor's arrival, royal portraiture in Lisbon had been episodic; afterwards, it was standardized. His elevated three-quarter format, dark background, and restrained symbolism established a durable visual grammar of power that would serve as the official prototype for the Portuguese crown.

Catherine's portrait (now in the Museo del Prado; Fig. 5) articulates authority through minimal signs: the green velvet-covered table as surrogate throne, the folded parchment as emblem of governance, the Habsburg-eagle-shaped belt clasp and Asian gemstones as markers of imperial reach.[92] Even

[92] Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, oil on panel, 107 × 84 cm, Inv. No. P002109. The portrait was recently restored and cleaned by the Prado Museum's Conservation Laboratory, a treatment that has substantially clarified Mor's handling. The removal of discoloured varnish and surface accretions has restored chromatic depth and tonal modulation, revealing the artist's precise articulation of Catherine's physiognomy, the dense gold embroidery of her black velvet gown, and the calculated interplay between material opulence—her dynastic heirloom jewels and imported gemstones—and dynastic restraint that structures the portrait's authoritative presence. The painting evidently held a prominent place in the

the trompe-l'oeil fly (a *musca depicta*), on the queen's handkerchief (at the lower left), which functions simultaneously as memento mori and an assertion of Mor's artistic mastery, reinforces the intellectual sophistication of the image.[93] After 1552, Catherine permitted no deviation from this likeness. Mor's portrait became a fixed policy: a stabilized construct of queenship.[94]

Read alongside Mary's own self-fashioning, most notably her 1548 portrait by Titian, and her visual program at the Coudenberg Palace, Catherine's image reveals something larger—it exposes a system. Across Brussels and Lisbon, portraiture formed the structural armature of royal authority, binding geographically distant courts into a coherent language of power. By "visual polity," the author refers to the structured system of images, spaces, and rituals through which dynastic identity was projected across territories.

In November 1565, the Avis-Farnese-Habsburg union, first celebrated earlier that spring in the Lisbon Paço da Ribeira Palace, was consummated at the Coudenberg Palace in Brussels, where the banquets and festivities were staged in the Grande Galerie.[95] The choice of setting was intentional. For decades, Mary's gallery functioned as a dynastic theatre, a space architecturally and pictorially structured to monumentalize Habsburg lineage and authority. Celebrating an Avis marriage within that milieu was to inscribe the Portuguese alliance into the visual rhetoric of imperial continuity. The two halls were symbolically linked through Habsburg matrimony—Lisbon and Brussels connected not only by blood but by space. Catherine's Sala da Rainha and Mary's Grande Galerie operated as parallel stages of dynastic representation, each transforming architecture into a medium of political kinship. This marriage bridged courts materially and symbolically, binding two curated environments into a shared language of dynastic spectacle.

Conclusion

In reassessing the Grande Galerie at the Coudenberg and the Sala da Rainha at the Paço da Ribeira Palace, this study demonstrates that Habsburg portrait galleries were not ancillary embellishments to princely residences but constitutive instruments of rule. Through architecture, tapestry, portraiture, and the calibrated choreography of ceremony, Mary of Hungary and Catherine of Austria reconfigured domestic interiors into theaters of dynastic permanence. Their galleries spatialized genealogy, rendered lineage visible, and staged Habsburg governance as both inherited and enacted. Operating at a distance yet in sustained dialogue, the two sisters consolidated

Coudenberg gallery and would have made a powerful impression within Mary's dynastic display. I thank María Antonia López de Asiaín, Maite Jover de Celis and Alejandro Vergara for permission to study the portrait in person in early February 2026. Consult online: https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/la-reina-catalina-de-austria/1c4821f2-d46b-4222-bc98-cfa57745b203?searchid=7e108227-e92f-85dd-a483-b5ec57229346 (accessed 10 February 2026).

[93] JORDAN 1994 (see in note 49), pp. 31 – 47; FERINO-PAGDEN, S. (ed.): *Musca Depicta. There is a Fly on the Painting.* Milan 2024.

[94] Anthonis Mor kept large and small copies of his Habsburg portraits in his Brussels workshop, which were replicated and sold on demand, providing him extra sources of income. In January 1560, the Portuguese resident ambassador in Spain, Francisco Pereira, requested Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle acquire for him a replica of Mor's 1552 portrait of Queen Catherine, which Granvelle sent to Iberia through the Spanish merchant in Flanders, Antonio del Río. For the minute of Granvelle's letter to Pereira, Madrid, Real Biblioteca de Palacio, II/2188 (Granvelle Archive), Antwerp, 30 January 1560: "*Illustrissimo Señor. Yo mande hazer luego aquel retratto que Vuesto Signoria desseava de la Serenissima Reyna de Portugal y se ha entragado empacado entre tablas y cubierto con encerado por que no se gaste por el camiño por el Señor Antonio del Rio aqui en Enveres para que el le encamine a Vuestro Signoria con esta mi carta / y pues vee que aunque ausente, me he acordado de servirle en esta por ello juzgara que tengo gana y voluntad para hazer* […]" / "Most Illustrious Sir. I ordered that portrait which your Lordship desired of the Most Serene Queen of Portugal [Catherine] to be made, and it has been delivered packed between boards and covered with wax cloth so that will not damage during transport. Given to Antonio del Rio in Antwerp, so that he may send it to Your Lordship with this letter of mine." I am grateful to Maxim Hoffman for this reference.

[95] LICHTERT, K.: The Wedding of the Century and the Brussels Album. In: *Margaret Duchess of Parma. The Emperor's Daughter between Power and Image.* Exh. cat. Ed.: LICHTERT, K. Oudenaarde 2024, pp. 102 – 109.

a Habsburg visual polity that bound Brussels and Lisbon within a coherent language of authority while adapting it to distinct political environments. Their galleries became exempla for subsequent generations of Habsburgs, shaping the collecting and display strategies of their niece, Joanna of Austria (1535 – 1573), princess of Portugal, and their nephew, Philip II of Spain, whose dynastic portrait collections were later installed in the Descalzas Reales Convent in Madrid and the royal hunting lodge at El Pardo.[96] Female regency in this context was not accommodation within a masculine structure of power; it was a force in the construction of imperial identity. Through the patronage and political acumen of these two women, the Habsburg portrait gallery became an enduring architecture of memory through which the dynasty, empire, and rule were made manifest across a transimperial world.

Empire in Portrait
Mary of Hungary's "Grande Galerie" and the Transimperial Crafting of Habsburg Identity

Summary

Between 1531 and 1555, during her regency in the Low Countries, Mary of Hungary established Brussels as a significant centre of Habsburg dynastic authority. Central to this transformation was Coudenberg Palace, where the grand ceremonial hall—later known as the Galerie des Empereurs—integrated governance, ritual, and representation. The hall (Grande Galerie) functioned as a throne room, council chamber, diplomatic reception space, and portrait gallery. As regent for her brother, Emperor Charles V, Mary was engaged in continual negotiation, and, in the emperor's absence, the gallery of family portraits reinforced her supremacy. When presiding over meetings or receiving ambassadors beneath these portraits, her governance appeared rooted in hereditary legacy rather than temporary delegation. The visual impact of the gallery was complemented by luxurious tapestries from the Burgundian and imperial collections, made and chosen for ceremonial occasions. These tapestries depicted sacred narratives, heroic exploits, conquests, and imperial triumphs. Their grand scale and costly materials created an atmosphere that communicated divine favor and strength. During diplomatic negotiations, the tapestries highlighted themes of deliverance and moral fortitude, while for celebrations or military events, they emphasized Habsburg victories and ambitions.

However, the ceremonial hall was more than an exhibition space; it also served as an active political arena. Councillors convened for policy deliberations, and foreign envoys followed prescribed routes during formal visits. The room's design orchestrated these interactions. The spatial arrangement, the placement of Mary's throne, and the organization of portraits all articulated the prevailing political hierarchy, with the regent occupying the central position. Mary demonstrated considerable skill as both patron and curator. Archival records confirm that she was personally involved in the selection and arrangement of the works of art. Through this, Mary transformed dynastic imagery into an effective instrument of governance.

[96] Juana inherited Mary's portrait collection in 1558. JORDAN GSCHWEND, A.: Affection, Identity, and Representation: Juana of Austria's Portraits and Portrait Collection in the Descalzas Reales Convent. In: *The Making of Juana of Austria. Gender, Art and Patronage in Early Modern Iberia.* Ed.: GARCÍA PÉREZ, N. Baton Rouge 2021, pp. 252 – 288.

The influence of Mary's gallery extended beyond Brussels. Her sister, Queen Catherine of Austria, established a comparable dynastic portrait gallery in Lisbon's Paço da Ribeira Palace. The parallels between them indicate that both women played significant roles in disseminating the dynastic style of display across disparate territories. Their galleries fostered a sense of unity within the large Habsburg territories, and by employing recurring portraits and formal ceremonies, they connected their diverse domains.

Ríša v portréte „Grande Galerie" Márie Uhorskej a transimperiálne formovanie habsburskej identity

Resumé

Medzi rokmi 1531 a 1555, počas svojho regentstva v Nizozemsku, Mária Uhorská ustanovila Brusel ako významné centrum habsburskej dynastickej autority. Jej ústredným prvkom bol Coudenberský palác, kde veľká slávnostná sieň – neskôr známa ako Galéria cisárov – spájala vládu, rituály a reprezentáciu. Sieň slúžila ako trónna sála, zasadacia miestnosť, priestor pre diplomatické recepcie a portrétna galéria. Ako regentka svojho brata, cisára Karola V., bola Mária zapojená do neustálych rokovaní a v cisárovej neprítomnosti galéria rodinných portrétov upevňovala jej štatút habsburskej regentky. Keď pod týmito portrétmi predsedala stretnutiam alebo prijímala veľvyslancov, jej rozhodnutia sa javili ako zakotvené skôr v dedičnom odkaze ako v dočasnom delegovaní moci. Vizuálny dojem galérie dopĺňali luxusné tapisérie z burgundských a cisárskych zbierok, vyhotovené a vybrané na slávnostné príležitosti. Tieto tapisérie zobrazovali posvätné príbehy, hrdinské činy, dobytia a cisárske triumfy. Ich veľkolepý rozmer a drahé materiály vytvárali atmosféru, ktorá vyjadrovala božskú priazeň a moc. Počas diplomatických rokovaní tapisérie zdôrazňovali témy vyslobodenia a morálnej statočnosti, zatiaľ čo pri oslavách alebo vojenských udalostiach oslavovali víťazstvá a ambície Habsburgovcov.

Slávnostná sieň však bola viac než len výstavným priestorom; slúžila aj ako aktívna politická aréna. Radní sa stretávali na politických rokovaniach a zahraniční vyslanci sa počas formálnych návštev riadili predpísanými trasami. Dizajn miestností tieto interakcie riadil. Priestorové usporiadanie, umiestnenie Máriinho trónu a organizácia portrétov vyjadrovali prevládajúcu politickú hierarchiu, pričom regent zastával ústredné postavenie. Mária preukázala značné danosti nielen ako patrónka, ale aj ako kurátorka. Archívne záznamy potvrdzujú, že sa osobne podieľala na výbere a usporiadaní umeleckých diel. Vďaka tomu Mária premenila dynastickú symboliku na účinný nástroj riadenia. Vplyv Máriinej galérie siahal aj za hranice Bruselu. Jej sestra, kráľovná Katarína Rakúska, založila porovnateľnú dynastickú portrétnu galériu v lisabonskom paláci Paço da Ribeira. Paralely medzi nimi naznačujú, že obe ženy zohrali významnú úlohu pri šírení dynastického štýlu zobrazovania naprieč rôznymi územiami. Ich galérie podporovali pocit jednoty v rámci rozsiahlych habsburských území a používaním opakujúcich sa portrétov a formálnych rituálov spájali ich vzdialené domény.

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