



CATALOG DATA

Authorship	José Aixà Iñigo (1844-1920)
Place of production	Valencia Spain
Place of origin	Historical-Artistic Collection, University of Valencia
Object title	<i>Sculpture of Luis Vives</i>
Date	1880
Measurements	239 cm
Materials / technique	Bronze / Cast iron, chiseled
Inventory No.	UV000190
Location in the museum	Main cloister of the historic building of the University of Valencia, Center Cultural La Nau

DESCRIPTION

The statue of the philosopher and humanist Juan Luis Vives (Valencia, 1492 - Bruges, 1540) presides over the Main Cloister of the historic building of the University of Valencia, currently the La Nau Cultural Center. The sculpture of one of the first students of this university rests on a high molded pedestal located in the center of the cloister. The construction of the monument is due to the proposal and decision of José Monserrat y Riutort (1814-1881), who was rector between 1874 and 1880. After completing the reform works at the University, the rector wanted to "place the statue of some of his most distinguished sons in the beautiful cloistered courtyard of that building" and he submitted the proposal to public trial announcing it in the press.

The philosopher is represented in full length and in 16th century clothing, he holds a book with his left hand, while his right arm is extended in an exhorting attitude. The character extends his hand in a gesture of approach to the university community, representing in this way one of the values always defended by this University: civic and social commitment, and wisdom as a distinctive element of humanistic knowledge that acquires all its meaning when it is shared and offered to society as a show of service. Its author, José Aixà, was a notable sculptor in his time, among his most outstanding works are the restorations of the Lonja and the Serranos towers, the bas-reliefs of Surgery are also due to him, Medicine and Pharmacopoeia that adorned the facade of the old Faculty of Medicine. Vicente Ríos made the solid bronze casting, technically very complex in a single piece, of this sculptural image in 1880.

READING

Related Topic	Gender and History; Gender roles; Education and gender
Rereading	<p>The statue honors one of the most prominent thinkers in modern Western culture. Born in Valencia, of a Jewish-converting family persecuted by the Inquisition, Juan Luis Vives was trained first at the University of Valencia and continued his studies at the University of the Sorbonne in Paris. From 1517 he was a professor in Louvain and maintained a relationship with intellectuals of the time such as Thomas More and Erasmus of Rotterdam; correspondence with them shows admiration for their figure. In 1523, Vives moved to England where he acted as an advisor to Queen Catherine of Aragon and became tutor to the princess, Maria Tudor.</p> <p>To instruct Princess Maria, she wrote her <i>De Institutione Feminae Christianae</i> (The Instruction of the Christian Woman), published in 1524 in Antwerp. In it, he addresses the old debate, taken up by Humanism, of female education. Due to the success achieved by the work, it was soon translated into several languages, with some fifty editions being made in the 16th century. The first in Spanish was published in Valencia, translated from Latin in 1528 by Juan Justiniano; in this, each of the parts is preceded by engravings with allegorical scenes in which virginity, marriage and widowhood are represented.</p> <p>Precisely, the work is divided into those three states of women related to marriage (virgin, married and widowed). The text praises the importance of female education as a factor for progress, in the private sphere and in society. The education that Vives proposes is based on Christian religious principles, although it includes readings from the classics and from Erasmus himself. Faced with the prevailing misogyny in classical thought, Vives defends the equality of reason in women and reflects on the social burdens they bear. It affects various aspects and gives recommendations to young women where it condemns certain readings, rejects the use of ornaments and inappropriate behaviors, such as attending parties and dances. Regarding married women, it addresses the relationships they must maintain with their husbands and children.</p> <p>The great merit that Vives is recognized with respect to the issue of female education is having pronounced in favor with well-argued reasons. However, recent studies such as that of Sacramento Martí question the contribution of the philosopher to the recognition of women's rights since what his writings show is an exacerbated puritanism. An educated woman, but to preserve her virtue (2004: 378). In the words of Vives himself: "I want her to learn by knowing, not by showing others that she knows, because it is good for her to be silent, and then her virtue will speak for her" (1948: 26). The philosopher stresses virtue and virginity as a "wonderful jewel", the essence of feminine wisdom and the foundation of the other virtues, and goes so far as to affirm that "women, when they do not know how to keep their chastity, deserve so much evil".</p> <p>Despite his position in favor of education, the philosopher retains the traditional view of female submission to parents and husbands, and emphasizes the weakness of women, especially concerned about their activities in society. Even being an advanced text, the morality it proposes condemns women to silence regardless of their situation. It is precisely this attitude that protects one of the perpetual evils of humanity, the normalization of mistreatment of women. Immersed in the misogynistic morality of the patriarchy, he argues in one sentence his defense of silence "...That if by case her husband quarrels with her, no matter how much he tells him and mistreats her, she will never respond to him...", sheltering that terrible scourge of abuse towards women that our society still supports.</p> <p>The beliefs around the inferiority of women, and their inevitable submission to men, as stated by Elvira García Alarcón, "have tainted the history of humanity with the complicity of scientific axioms, religious dogmas, laws, popular sayings, Philosophical and Literary Writings" (2010: 113). In this sense, Celia Amorós points out in her essay, towards a critique of patriarchal reason, that "Philosophies [...] are always produced by men who have not questioned the patriarchal order. They are the bearers of logoss."</p>

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