

Carmen Tórtola Valencia, Character Building

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Graduate in General History and Geography from the UB and director of the Museu d'Arenys de Mar, she forms part of the Study of Textiles and Fashion Group. She organised the exhibition "Carmen Tórtola Valencia, Passion for Collecting" and has published several articles on the history of lace and textile collecting in the journal *Datatèxtil*. She presented the study "Carmen Tórtola Valencia, the Creation of an Image through Costume" at the 1st Conference of Investigators in Textiles and Fashion.

English translation, Neil CHARLTON

Abstract

Carmen Tórtola Valencia (1882-1955) was a famous performer of Oriental dances and freestyle. She was admired by artists and intellectuals and was very popular at the beginning of the 20th century (1908-1930). Tórtola Valencia was a highly-educated woman and collected all kinds of objects. She used costumes as artistic expression to create her choreographies and the image of a liberated and modern woman. During her career as a dancer, she worked with artists like Zuloaga, Ismael Smith, Beltrán Masses, Penagos, Néstor, José Zamora, some of whom collaborated with her in creating her dance costumes and choreographies. Her composition of *La Tirana* was used as the advertising image of the perfume *La Maja*, marketed by Myrurgia.

The lace collection owned by the Col·legi de l'Art Major de la Seda in Barcelona, now at the Museu d'Arenys de Mar, the textile samples collection at the Centre de Documentació del Museu Tèxtil and the dancer's costumes and graphic and photography documentation at the Centre de Documentació i Museu de les Arts Escèniques can help us study how Tórtola Valencia created her characters.

Keywords: Carmen Tórtola Valencia, dance, costume, Centre de Documentació i Museu de les Arts Escèniques, lace, Museu d'Arenys de Mar, *La Maja*

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The Character and the Real Woman

Carmen Tórtola Valencia was born in Seville in 1882 to a Catalan father and Andalusian mother. During her childhood, her family moved to London and her parents immigrated to Mexico, leaving her in the care of an English family. Prematurely orphaned, she grew up with this family, who gave her a home although their name is unknown. She began her career as a dancer in 1908 in the show *Havana* at the Gaiety Theatre in London and later toured all over Europe. In 1911 she performed for the first time in Spain at the Teatro Romea in Madrid. Her exotically-inspired dances received mixed reviews — some thought they were too liberal — but she was a figure highly regarded by artists and intellectuals of the time. Her career developed between 1908 and 1930 and she performed throughout Europe, the United States and South America with great success. She gave up dancing and withdrew to her home in Barcelona in the neighbourhood of Sarrià until her death in 1955, accompanied by her lover Àngels Vila-Magret and surrounded by her collections and memories of the era of the great dancer.

Haughty, distant and enigmatic, Carmen Tórtola Valencia was and still is a mystery, fascinating and impossible to define. Her retirement at the height of her success caused surprise, and her love life was no less mysterious. Although always a personality at the forefront, little is known about the real person and perhaps all that remains is the character she created. For her friend Álvaro Retana,¹ Tórtola Valencia was:

Intelligent, vain, talkative, with a broad culture developed on her travels through all the countries of the globe, Tórtola Valencia was a unique creature. She loved antique jewels, exquisite porcelain, sumptuous fabrics, delicate tapestries, extraordinary pieces of furniture, historical fans..., everything that helped make her home a museum, revealing the spectacular refinement of her

1. Álvaro Retana was part of the circle of dandies and decadent intellectuals, such as Antonio de Hoyos Vinent, the Marquise Glòria Laguna or Néstor Martín, who worked with and were friends of Carmen Tórtola Valencia.



Tórtola Valencia in London, 1910.
©MAE. Institut del Teatre, registration number 266208

spirit. Insatiably in need of attention, extravagant in her affections, incapable of praising anyone, she firmly believed that the planetary system revolved around her and even the sun deferred to her. She died in her house in Barcelona, on 13 February 1955, with the world impervious (Retana, 1964).

Surviving Collections

Carmen Tórtola Valencia was an outstanding woman with a broad culture, a polyglot and a collector of a wide range of objects such as fabrics, paintings, sculptures and fans that filled the rooms of her house, hotels and dressing rooms, a woman curiously interested in many things. Alongside these objects, her life experience was collected in books of signatures, documented photographs and albums full of press cuttings that recall her moment of splendour. Much of her legacy can be found in public institutions: MAE in Barcelona has her theatre costumes, works of art by Viladomat, Penagos, Anselmo Miquel Nieto, Vicenç Borrás and others, photographs, posters, books with press cuttings, books of signatures, paintings by the artist herself; a total of 108 pieces of clothing, 1,575 photographs, cards, postcards, oil paintings, press cutting albums, and so on. The collection of fabrics was acquired by CDMT



Tórtola Valencia at home, ca 1919.
 ©MAE. Institut del Teatre, registration number 256810

in 1971.² It includes a varied range of fabrics of over 1,717 pieces both in terms of techniques and provenance: fabrics from 16th century Europe and others from China, Turkey, Iran, India and Morocco, and a selection of pre-Columbian fabrics. The lace collection, which the Col·legi de l'Art Major de la Seda bought from Àngels Vila-Magret in 1960, has been held at the Museu d'Arenys de Mar since 1992. It consists of 200 pieces, some high quality, from the 16th to the late 19th century: they are pieces of clothing and domestic trousseau; there are also accessories, patterns and flounces that form part of the artist's dance wardrobe. Many of the objects have been dispersed among different private collectors, notably the collection of pre-Columbian sculptures at the Fundació Jordi Clos.³

2. All the fabrics can be seen at the IMATEX platform of CDMT, http://imatex.cdm.es/_cat/pubindex.aspx.

3. In 2009 there was an exhibition of the pre-Columbian art collection of the Fundació Jordi Clos, which also featured Carmen Tórtola Valencia's collection.

Her English family⁴ and her trips around the world were the basis for this varied collection of objects, which she used as tools and resources for her choreographic repertoire and to create her wardrobe. Most of the collection held at MAE allows us to study her through press cuttings selected by Tórtola Valencia herself and the information on the photographs.

Carmen Tórtola Valencia, Early 20th Century Dance Scene

In an interview by José María Carretero Novillo, *El Caballero Audaz*, with Valle Inclán, he affirmed that “La Imperio, La Tórtola and La Argentina cause me great aesthetic emotion...” (El Caballero Audaz. “Nuestras visitas. Don Ramon del Valle-Inclán”. *La Esfera*, Year II, No. 62, 6 March 1915). In first quarter of the 20th century in Spain, these dancers went beyond the field of popular dance and were supported by intellectuals and artists who worked with them and were often their main admirers. These writers and poets dedicated poems and stories to them featuring extraordinary beings, muses and femmes fatales.

These women went beyond divinisation and came to represent a new prototype of liberated, modern, empowered women with the capacity to manage their professional career. Isabel Clua considers that Tórtola Valencia falls within a group of female artists who with their international success could be classified as autonomous professionals, with the ability to work and manage their career without the protection of men (Clua, 2013: 23). These early 20th century artists can be characterised by three facets: their fame — the result of their artistic qualities —, their skilful management of their image and the use of their beauty as an object of desire for men.

Tórtola Valencia’s shows attracted the attention of theatre critics who considered her an emblem of modernity.⁵ Her classically-inspired dances matched the taste of Catalan intellectuals submerged in *noucentisme*, a Catalan cultural and artistic movement that focused on the ancient Greek and Roman world. The Madrid critics were more attracted to Oriental dances and Spanishness linked to the Art Deco movement. She was an internationally-recognised dancer who performed on stages throughout Europe and America. Her career almost never wavered and when she became aware of her loss of prominence she left the stage in 1930.

Tórtola Valencia embodied a renewal of so-called Spanish dance, which mixed elements of ballet with the regional folklore of Andalusian roots. Her performances were based on European music that had rediscovered flamenco. She performed *La Gitana* with music by Granados, *La Tirana* with music by Aroca and pieces by Albéniz. But in her case this approach to Spanishness was complemented by a second repertoire of dances with Orientalist and

4. The lace collection includes a wide range of pieces of English and Irish origin that were probably owned by the dancer before 1908 as is also confirmed by the promotional images published in English newspapers in 1908. Some of them can be consulted on the website http://museu.arenysdemar.cat/llistats/tota-la-col.leccio?field_coleccions=1.

5. According to Alexandre Plana, Tórtola Valencia was a *noucentista* dancer because of her interpretation of old dances inspired by the Greek and Egyptian world (“La Tórtola Valencia, ballarina noucentista”. *Picardol*, Year 1, No. 1, 10 January 1912). Victor Català did the same a few years later: “She is beauty and chaste like a work of pure art... A vast classical breath passes through her chaste beauty” (*El Teatre Català*, Year IV, No. 149, 2 January 1915).

exotic roots, focused on a return to spirituality and naturalism. Her aesthetic experience, far from being an anthropological study of these cultures, was the evocation of an exotic and sensual work, the counterpoint to a rational and industrialised European world that had lost contact with religiosity. Tórtola Valencia shifted between stylisation of folklore and a clear and refined aesthetic taste that, according to Rosario Mascato, embodied the avant-garde trend echoing Isadora Duncan (Mascato, 2006: 68).

The Promotional Image

In the early 20th century, dancers like Tórtola Valencia achieved great recognition because of a modern exhibition of the body and the use of new distribution media through promotional photographs and new forms of marketing. The reproduction of images in the press was a tool for a new process of divinisation of the female body and identification with the character performed. In the case of Tórtola Valencia, this promotional work left no room for improvisation, as each photographic session had its own costume and a studied pose. Aware that she was photogenic, Tórtola Valencia used this medium to communicate with her admirers and to transmit an image that she controlled.⁶

In many of the photographs, Tórtola Valencia appears with her dance costumes and in a forced pose that imitates the dance move. In all of them she transmits a sensual image, which dominates the scene, replete with drama and with a sculptural conception of the composition. The promotional photograph is another resource to understand the design of the costumes and the importance the artist attached to her personal appearance. In 1915, she put herself in the hands of one of the best professionals, Adolf Mas (1860-1936).⁷ These photographs were part of an exhibition at the Cercle Artístic de Barcelona in the same year. Mas portrayed her in *La Serp*, *La danza de Anitra*, *La Bayadera* and *La Tirana*, undoubtedly the photograph that made the biggest impact:

From Sunday, 13 June, an interesting collection of photographs of the artist Tórtola Valencia will be on show to the public in the rooms of the Círculo Artístico, originals by the prestigious photographer Adolfo Mas. This collection comprises a large number of unseen fascinating photographs that will attract the attention of the public (*La Vanguardia*, 11 June 1915, p. 5).

The comparison between the photographs held at MAE and the study of the pieces in the lace collection reveals that the dancer used accessories of her own, pieces of high quality and almost unique. Carmen Tórtola Valencia

6. The journalist Carmen de Burgos considers the photographs of the dancer a work of artistic creation. "In the photographs of her dances, Tórtola takes great care to choose, among their multiform variety, the most expressive movements, rhythm and gesture, which is the key to any personal style: the most representative central attitude, which deserves to be perennial" (*La Esfera*, Year V, No. 223, 6 April 1918).

7. Adolf Mas is considered the main Catalan photographer of the first half of the 20th century. Although he specialised in heritage and landscape photography, several photographs of the rural word and life in different Catalan towns survive. The collection is managed by the Institut Amatller de l'Art Hispànic.



Tórtola Valencia in *La Serp*, photographed by Adolf Mas, 1915.
 ©Institut del Teatre, registration number 257944

herself chose the image she wanted to transmit, and on the stage she controlled the message. Three photos have been found that reflect this relationship: in the *Album de premsa de Tórtola Valencia. 1908-1910*, with MAE registration number 407060, there is a photograph published in *Woman's Life* on 6 June 1908. It shows Tórtola holding a magnificent Chantilly fan preserved in the lace collection at the Museu d'Arenys de Mar with registration number 518.⁸ The same album provides a second example; in a cutting from *London Sketches* from February 1908 she appears in a Chantilly shawl held at the Museu d'Arenys de Mar with number 1730. Finally, in 1928 Tórtola Valencia was portrayed wearing a mantilla and a dance fan called *pericón*, an accessory held in the lace collection and property of the Col·legi de l'Art Major de la Seda in Barcelona, with registration number 517.

8. <<http://museu.arenysdemar.cat/ca/col.leccio/puntes-i-teixits/ventall-10>>.



Chantilly fan in the lace collection of the Col·legi de l'Art Major de la Seda in Barcelona. ©David Castanyeda. Museu d'Arenys de Mar, registration number 517

Tórtola Valencia in a photograph in Barcelona in 1928. ©MAE. Institut del Teatre, registration number 37396

The Design of Dance Costumes

Laura Ars and Carme Carreño have studied the importance of theatre costumes in the creation of characters and note two aspects: the importance of costumes to help the actor or actress become physically and emotionally involved in the character and their capacity to evoke (Ars and Carreño, 2017: 1). Carmen Tórtola Valencia's costumes held at MAE are the basic tools for understanding her creative process and cover her entire repertoire: the exotic Oriental dances, Spanish dances and dances inspired by classical antiquity.

Carmen Tórtola Valencia was self-taught; she created the appropriate costume for each character, far from the simplicity of other artists. In her case, the costume was a complex construction, without constraints, which was intended to move the audience and transmit the information necessary. In different interviews, Carmen Tórtola Valencia said she was inspired by visits to museums and her travels, and very probably her Anglo-Saxon culture enabled her to move comfortably between Oriental cultures and Spanishness. Although some journalists of the time talked about a reproduction of ancient dances, it was actually a recreation. In her body language, the dancer jumped between the past depicted in ancient ceramics and sculptures and today's world:

To create such a wonder, she studies in Kensington in London the attitudes of the figures she sees in the polychrome slabs of classical antiquity, in the papyri or in the reliefs ... She designs the costumes using the notes she has taken, and makes them herself (GENER, Pompeu. "Tórtola Valencia". *Mundial Magazine*, Year 1, No. 12, April 1912, p. 527).

Costume for *La Danza de Anitra*.

©MAE. Institut del Teatre, registration number 252948

The costumes held at the Institut del Teatre show how the dancer used and recycled different fabrics in eclectic compositions full of baroque touches and colour. For Victoria Cavia her aesthetic taste focuses on ornamentation, sometimes excessive and complex shapes (Cavia, 2001: 8). Each dance was a work of art in itself with its set design, lighting and costumes. Carmen Tórtola Valencia was aware of the importance of these elements to transmit to the audience all the emotion and information about the character she was playing on the stage. In the early 20th century theatre world, dancers like Tórtola Valencia innovated in this field and their work was praised by most critics.⁹

In 1912 at the Teatre Romea she performed *La Danza de Anitra*, based on the play *Peer Gynt* by Ibsen, which the composer Grieg had turned into a suite. MAE holds the costume with registration number 252948 and promotional shots from this show. Wearing this costume Tórtola Valencia is a sexualised recreation of the Orient, an image based on the odalisques found in the paintings by Delacroix, Ingres or Fortuny. The Orientalist stereotype, popularised in late 19th century culture and opposed to a European world that had inherited Victorian morality, was a space focused on the “wild” and

9. Ramón Pérez de Ayala considered Tórtola Valencia one of the innovators in this field (España, Year 1, No. 40, 28 October 1915).

passionate woman, and Tórtola Valencia knew how to recreate this exotic and fascinating Orient in her dances (García Vergara, 2004: 215). The costume held is an explosion of colours, cotton, silk and satin with rhinestones and sequins. It is formed by a bodice and baggy trousers, and the upper part is a highly ornamented brassiere.

Another of the Oriental style dances that made her famous was *La Bayadera*. MAE preserves some pieces: two rhinestone bodices, a skirt and two complete outfits, as well as a set of photographs, some by Adolf Mas. Once again the design of the costume is intended to attract the audience's attention with a pleasing, colourist and evocative outfit, in this case reminiscent of Hindu culture. Carmen Tórtola interpreted Hindu culture by becoming a priestess, a role that was in keeping with her concept of spirituality. Some scholars note that in the period 1909-1911 the dancer travelled to India where she discovered the culture of this country. The CDMT collection brings together diverse fabrics from India that probably inspired the dancer to make the costumes for *La Bayadera*.

From 1920 to 1925 she performed in South America where, as she had done in Spain, she mixed with intellectuals and artists interested in recovering pre-Columbian legacy. The relationship resulted in the show *La Danza Incaica*, which sought to revive a mythological past as had been done in Europe with classically-inspired dances. The costume for this dance is not in the stores of MAE, but it holds the promotional photographs of the show. *La Danza Incaica*, with music specifically composed by Andrés Izquierdo and Nicolás Escalante, is inspired by an Incan legend and opened in 1925. The government of Peru honoured the dancer and used the photographs of this show for the Peruvian pavilion at the Ibero-American Exposition held in Seville in 1929.¹⁰ Based on the photographs, some aspects of the costume can be reconstructed, a tunic structure of fringes with tassels and pieces that resemble tubes with golden elements probably linked to the South American myth of El Dorado and a sculptural hat. The spear that completes the outfit refers to a warrior image far removed from the femininity of other characters played by Tórtola Valencia. The MAE collection includes the costume from *La Danza Africana* with registration number 252398, which has similarities with that of *La Danza Incaica*.

In 1915, the collaboration between the musician Enric Granados, the painter Ignacio Zuloaga and the dancer resulted in the show *La Gitana*. Zuloaga and Tórtola Valencia had a friendship, as reflected in a portrait he made of her and the surviving correspondence¹¹ between the painter and his uncle Daniel Zuloaga, both great admirers of Tórtola (Murga, 2015: 10). Zuloaga designed the costume for the show, which is held by MAE with registration number 252764. There are also photographs of the dancer's visit to Segovia, and others showing her dancing with a gypsy and Zuloaga playing the guitar. The costume by the painter is a one-off design, a flamenco

10. Isabel and Montserrat Bargalló have studied the dancer's relationship with intellectuals of these countries and the genesis of *La Danza Incaica*.

11. The Museo Ignacio Zuloaga holds the correspondence between Daniel and Ignacio Zuloaga, which can be consulted online. <<http://goo.gl/tVPLB1>>.

long-tailed costume with pink and ochre flowers and red flounces recalling the costumes of gypsies and dancers that appear in the painter's works, colourful and full of detail. There is a second gypsy costume, *La gitaniella de los naipes*, with registration number 252753, which in contrast to Zuloaga's is more ornamental and colourful.

In the line of dances inspired by Spanish folklore we find the costume of *La Valenciana*, with registration number 252676. In contrast to that of *La Gitana*, it consists of different pieces and uses a large variety of fabrics and materials. It is formed by a bodice, inside skirt, outside skirt, cloak and apron, inspired by 18th century designs. The description of the costume according to the MAE record is: "A light blue bodice with V neckline at the front, as well of the two hems from the two sides. Fuchsia cotton inner skirt down to the ankles. Flesh colour transparent damask satin outer skirt with floral motifs and sequins of different colours with lace on the edge. It is complemented with a shawl and a beige net apron, with lace on the edges and vegetal decoration sequins." The lace collection of the Museu d'Arenys de Mar has two large pieces of beige net with embroidered metal pieces with floral decoration similar to those of this costume, which Tórtola Valencia very probably used to make this or another similar costume.

Another group of costumes corresponds to classically-inspired dances: simple line Greek tunics that gave the dancer the necessary freedom of movement. The pieces also include diverse accessories such as fans, shawls and hats.

Although José Zamora's participation in Carmen Tórtola Valencia's costume is not documented it is highly likely that this collaboration existed. José Zamora — better known as Pepito Zamora — was a costume designer, poster artist, set designer, journalist and a personality linked to the world of fashion. He trained in Paris with the couturier Paul Poiret and dressed women such as Concha Piquer, Chelito and Tórtola Valencia, about whom he wrote articles in different newspapers. The MAE collection includes some drawings of Tórtola Valencia by José Zamora.

Tórtola Valencia's work was an evocation of distant exotic worlds and cultures based on the image created and imagined by European painters and artists. Tórtola's costumes are complex structures, a mixture of fabrics — some original and others not — and asymmetrical compositions full of colour. They are created with diverse materials and adapted to a form of performing dance that seeks to connect the audience with this world that is more imagined than real.

The Character of the 'Maja'

In the first quarter of 20th century Spain, a symbolist movement linked to Art Deco developed: in Catalonia it was complemented by elements of Mediterranean classicism, while in the rest of Spain it was combined with regionalist elements and representations of *majas* and toreros. Diverse artists and writers participated in this movement: writers such as Valle-Inclán, Manuel Machado, Antonio de Hoyos Vinent — a great friend of Carmen Tórtola

Valencia —, painters such as Zuloaga, Julio Romero de Torres, Anglada Camarasa, Ismael Smith, Anselmo Nieto and Federico Beltrán, illustrators such as Penagos, José Francés, the Canary Islands-born Néstor, the Mexican Ricardo Montenegro, and musicians such as Enrique Granados and Manuel de Falla.¹² Many of them contributed to magazines such as *Blanco y Negro*, *España* and above all *La Esfera*. Tórtola Valencia had relations with this group of artists: exquisite, decadent, dandies, influenced by the English pre-Raphaelites and who practised an ornamental art depicting an image of tragic Spain, with Andalusian references. Tórtola embodied this iconography: the brown-skinned woman with dark hair, piercing gaze and wearing a mantilla or shawl, the figure of the femme fatale with the typical characteristics of Spanishness.¹³

This movement was internationalised in the early 20th century and one of its peaks was in the interwar period. Different dancers of Spanish origin or that claimed to be triumphed on the stage, such as Carmencita, La Bella Otero, Raquel Meller, Antonia Mercé, Sevillanita and Tórtola Valencia. The work *Goyescas* by Enrique Granados opened at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1916. *El sombrero de tres picos* opened on 22 July 1919 at the Alhambra Theatre in London. The piece was performed by Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, with choreography by Léonide Massine, music by Manuel de Falla and set and costume design by Pablo Picasso.

One of Tórtola Valencia's most popular characters was *La Tirana*, with music by Aroca. The performance of *La Tirana* — an actress from Madrid portrayed by Goya — became her most emblematic *maja*. The dancer performed this dance at the Ateneo de Madrid, in 1913. On the initiative of the journalist Federico García Sanchiz, Tórtola Valencia performed at this male and conservative cultural association, and her performance was one of the events most covered by the press of the time. Tórtola Valencia performed the *Danse Macabre* with music by Saint-Saëns, *Morning* by Grieg and *La Tirana* by Aroca. The photograph of Carmen Tórtola Valencia with a white mantilla and a big fan surrounded by members of the Ateneo became very famous. According to a cutting from *La Tribuna* in the *Album de prensa de Tórtola Valencia. 1908-1910*, with registration number 407060 held at MAE, *La Tirana* was inspired by John Singer Sargent's painting of the Spanish dancer Carmencita.

This painting was already a source of inspiration for the dancer. In 1908, one of the photos of the artist taken in London to promote one of her shows was a portrait inspired by the painting *La Carmencita* by John Singer Sargent in 1890 and is held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.¹⁴ Tórtola Valencia imitated the costume and the attitude of the dancer in Sargent's painting, asserting her Spanishness while linking her work with the

12. Rafel Sala links the dances of Tórtola Valencia with the idea of tragic Spain represented by artists such as Anglada Camarasa, Zuloaga and the musician Albéniz (*Themis*, Vilanova i la Geltrú, Year 1, No. 6, 20 September 1915).

13. For Francesc Fontbona, Tórtola Valencia is the representative of a *noucentisme* with a re-conception of tradition and stylisation of Spanish folklore. This movement is characterised by its decadent and affected style which was well received throughout Europe and North America.

14. Sargent portrayed Carmencita when he performed in New York in 1890. The artist had met her at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889. <<https://goo.gl/HCoazy>>.

artistic world. As Clayton notes, the dancer quickly made a major impact in the English press, which emphasised her beauty and Spanishness (Clayton, 2012: 31). In the performance at the Ateneo de Madrid, Carmen Tórtola Valencia repeated some of the elements of the promotional photo of 1908 in the costume, such as the skirt, but complemented with a mantilla and fan that became representative elements of her *majas*.

In the following performances of *La Tirana*, Carmen Tórtola Valencia stylised this image, enhancing the dramatic character with makeup and the use of black and red: mantilla, flounces on the costume and a big fan. Tórtola's character was a representation of the dominant woman, the femme fatale inspired by Merimée's *Carmen*, the icon of tragic Spain. For Miquel S. Oliver it was the representation of seduction and threat:

Her Tirana, the spectre of a dark and threatening Spain; high *peineta*, black mantilla, black eyes in deep black sockets, the gaze of thunder, ringlets up to the back, skirt of a violent red like the pomegranate fruit; feeling or embodiment of irreducible bravery and deadly decay... Bloody love. Goya, Merimée, Zuloaga... (*La Vanguardia*, 17 April 1915, p. 8).

The culmination of this character was a promotional photograph of the show *La Tirana* by Adolf Mas taken in 1915. In 1917 this portrait inspired Esteve Monegal, owner of the company Myrurgia, to create the promotional image for the perfume *La Maja*. The artist Eduard Jener did the famous promotional drawing for the cosmetics line. Jener had worked for the company Myrurgia for over 30 years and his artistic production was linked to the *noucentisme* inspired by Spanishness.

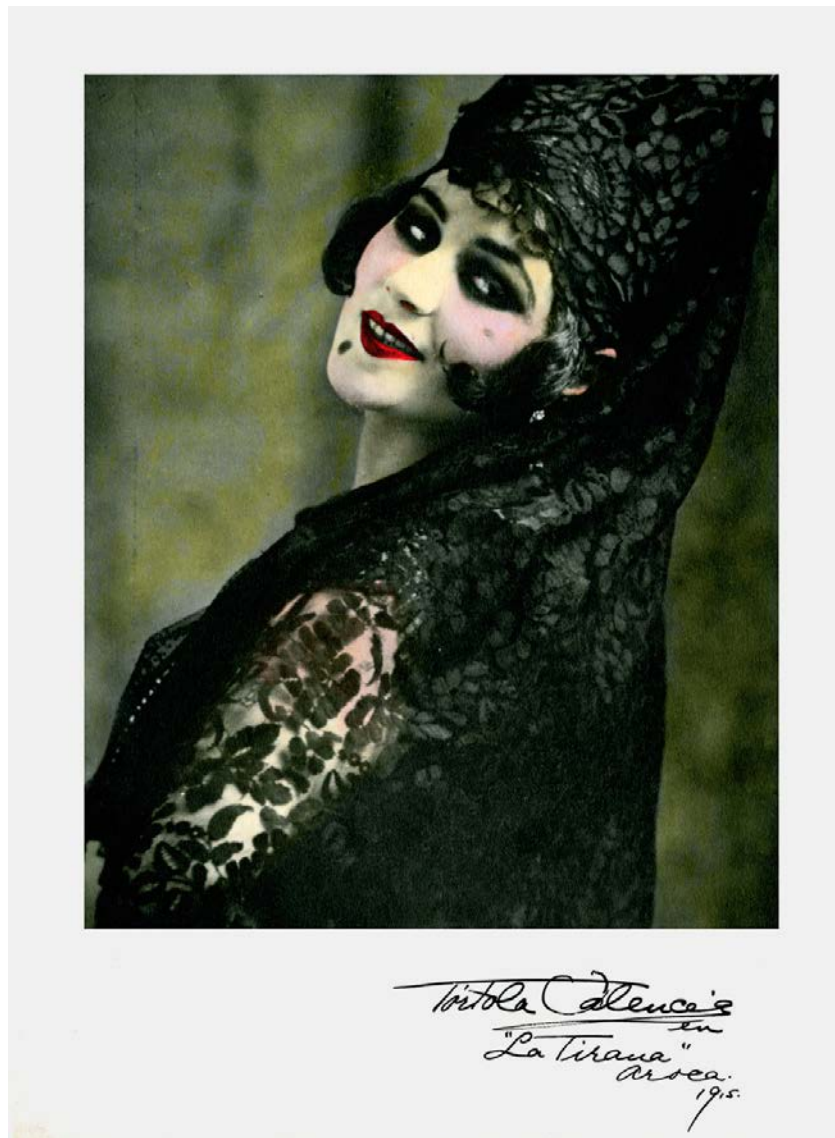
A series of portraits and illustrations of Carmen Tórtola Valencia playing *La Maja* followed this famous poster. Undoubtedly the purest and most closely linked image to Art Deco is *La Maja maldita* by Beltran Masses, painted in 1918.¹⁵ In this painting Carmen Tórtola Valencia posed for the painter with a sensual and provocative attitude: the dancer was wearing a black mantilla, similar to piece number 526 of Catalan lace in the Carmen Tórtola Valencia Collection at the Museu d'Arenys de Mar¹⁶ and was also wearing transparent bobbin lace. Bertran Masses recreated *La maja* by Goya and added different elements to the painting associated with Spanishness: blacks and reds, the guitar and the mantilla.

Several artists and illustrators created different representations of Tórtola Valencia as a *maja*: the Mexican artist Ricardo Montenegro portrayed Tórtola Valencia for the cover of the publication *Flirt* by the Majorca-born journalist Pedro Ferrer Gibert,¹⁷ Ismael Smith also did several drawings of

15. M. Antonia Salom de Tord describes the gestation process of this painting as an example of the Art Deco style featuring Carmen Tórtola Valencia as an icon of this period and prototype of the Spanish woman idealised by artists and intellectuals.

16. It is a large mantilla worn over the shoulders and lets the flounce fall over the back.
<http://museu.arenysdemar.cat/ca/llistats/tota-la-col.leccio?fulltext=526&field_colections=1>.

17. MAE holds a photograph of the dancer with the journalist Pedro Ferrer Gibert in Majorca in 1915 with registration number 267.062.



Photograph of Tórtola Valencia as La Tirana, 1915.
©MAE. Institut del Teatre, registration number 258406

the representation of the *maja* and MAE holds representations of the *maja* by Passarell, Vicenç Borràs and Penagos, among others.

The bodice of *La Tirana* survives. According to the MAE record with registration number 252620, it is a “*maja* bodice inspired by the 18th century, of black velvet and stone colour cotton lining. V neckline, collar, bodice and short sleeves with threads of rhinestone, embroideries, inlays and black trimmings”; it is probably part of the costume lacking the skirt. The accessories of mantillas, fans and skirt flounces in some cases have survived in the lace collection, owned by the Col·legi de l’Art Major de la Seda, deposited at the Museu d’Arenys de Mar.

We can trace Tórtola Valencia’s composition of the *maja* through the dancer’s clothing, photographs, both promotional and those that appeared in the press, and in an article by Federico García Sanchiz, a journalist and friend of the dancer, which appeared in July 1915 in the magazine *Nuevo Mundo* with drawings by Exoristo Salmerón, “Tito”. The article describes

how the dancer surprises her admirers by dressing as a *maja*, in performances between spontaneity and creativity:

Tórtola was wearing a *maja* costume like a bonfire. The mantilla seemed like a plume of black smoke and mist. The dancer stirred the fire with her own flesh with a peacock tail fan. That night she wore this dress for the first time, and premiered the dance called Tirana, now famous (GARCÍA SANCHIZ, Federico. “Intimidades de la farándula”. *Nuevo Mundo*, Year XXII, No. 1124, 24 July 1915).

Among the *maja* costumes held by MAE is the outfit of *La Maja Blanca*, with registration number 252861, which enables us to study the dancer’s work process. In this case, the costume is in store at MAE, but the mantilla, with registration number 1974, was included in the lace collection, probably because it was believed to be a *goyesca* mantilla. Study of the piece reveals it is formed by different types of mechanical lace flounces of low quality and different styles. The central element that falls down the shoulders is an embroidered fabric in coloured silk complemented by the fabric of the costume.



Costume for *La Maja Blanca*.
©MAE. Institut del Teatre, registration number 252861



Mantilla for the dance, *La Maja Blanca*. ©David Castanyeda.
Museu d'Arenys de Mar, registration number 1974

The characteristics do not suggest a quality mantilla, and a comparison with the outfit shows that it is an accessory. The dancer prioritised the colour and the mixture of materials to suit the *mise en scène*.

Conclusions

Carmen Tórtola Valencia was a dancer who intelligently managed her public and artistic image, controlling almost all the details. She did her own choreographies, designed her own theatre costumes and contributed props to her photographic sessions. Surrounded by intellectuals and artists, throughout her life she maintained an air of mystery that grew in her years away from the stage.

Beyond all the press documentation of the time and the diverse studies on her figure and the historical time she lived, the collections of fabrics at CDMT, the laces owned by the Col·legi de l'Art Major de la Seda deposited at the Museu d'Arenys de Mar and the collection held at MAE are essential tools for studying her multifaceted figure.



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Abbreviations

- MAE: Centre de Documentació i Museu de les Arts Escèniques, Institut del Teatre (Barcelona).
- CDMT: Centre de Documentació del Museu Tèxtil de Terrassa.