



## CATALOGUE DETAILS

Author	--
Place of production	Manises
Place of origin	--
Title/object name	<i>Proposal plate</i>
Date	19 <sup>th</sup> century
Measurements	35cm diameter
Materials/technique	Polychrome ceramic
Inventory no.	CE1/01996
Location in the museum	Second floor / 19th Century Valencian pottery room

## DESCRIPTION

González Martí coined the term "idyllic crockery" to describe the set of plates and jugs that were produced in Manises, which factory workers' - prospective brides - painted for themselves with the approval of the factory bosses.

Accessories associated with traditional Valencian dress were portrayed in these pieces in an ingenuous and meticulous way: decorative combs, earrings, rosaries, fans, stockings, shoes, etc., alongside other objects related to a woman's domestic work, which formed part of a bride's trousseau. These treasures feature the colour yellow, mimicking the brilliance of the material from which they were made – silver gilt or brass. Figures of grooms or of couples holding hands also feature in many pieces of this series.

González Martí birthed an entire legend around this series of pieces, imagining that it was the work of a turner who had formed a romantic relationship with one of the painters in the factory where he worked. She had had the idea of decorating the plate or the jug with a design specifically for her, in which she depicted all the objects of the trousseau that she was gathering ahead of her wedding. This ornament would later take pride of place on the mantelpiece in her future home, and in displaying it in this way she could express her pride as a fiancée or future wife.

In fact, in Valencian pieces such as this are also given the name “platos de demanà”, or “proposal plates” for the bride’s hand.

## REREADING

### Related them

Gender and life cycle: marriage

### Rereading

The trousseau is the grouping of goods (furniture, belongings, everyday clothing worn around the house) that a woman brings to her marriage. Together with other goods and rights, the trousseau forms part of the dowry that the woman takes into the marriage to assist her with shared costs. The dowry was put together by the bride’s father or parents, or even by other relatives, such as a brother. Once married, the management of this property would fall to the husband, but the woman would always maintain ownership of it. In the event of dissolution of the marriage or widowhood, the dowry was returned to the woman. In this way, the dowry could also be seen as insurance for the woman in her dependent social situation.

The dowry takes on a special meaning in the context of the woman’s social situation, and of marriage as one of the only “decent” paths a woman could take in her life. Marriage signified legal protection for the woman, who passed from the guardianship of her father to that of her husband. Not having a dowry meant not getting married, which was one of the only dignified places for women to end up, besides a convent. For this reason, and because women were unable to perform skilled jobs, creating a dowry made the maintenance of the marriage less arduous. The role of the woman was reduced to reproduction and motherhood, and her material assets had to ensure the development of her future life.

Therefore, the dowry acquires a unique meaning at the heart of a marriage that was viewed as a contract which unites two families or groups based on economic interests.

Obviously, a bride’s dowry varied according to the social class to which she belonged, ranging from property, titles and rights for the nobility and most well-off classes to a few pieces of furniture, a gemstone, and everyday clothes for the poorer classes.

The 19th Century represented a setback for a woman’s situation compared to the previous century: the tendency was to favour a woman’s withdrawal into the private sphere, the home and the family. Above all else, a woman had to be a good mother and model wife – ideals that reflected the concept of the patriarchal conjugal family, and the basis for the social propagation of the new dominant middle-class.

In the 19th Century, there were two ways that the woman’s financial contribution to marriage was made: via a dowry and paraphernal property (i.e. the property owned by the woman which she brings to the marriage but is not part of the dowry, or that she acquires later). This is combined with the property brought by the husband (wedding coins, pins, money...). The dowry, which was obligatory for the parents and other relatives to produce, could include the woman’s own property or items obtained with her own savings, but not anything inherited or donated. The so-called “dowry letters” included the lists of assets and an estimation of their worth, as well as their origin.

Dowry letters also contained information about the social status of the family, indicating where applicable any noble titles or positions for the most influential classes, or the profession of the woman for the working classes. The dowry was an important strategy

when the time came for a woman to marry; it was a symbol of social status and it made the family's economic power public.

The dowry was made up of linens, the future bride's clothes, furniture and belongings, property (house, farms, land, work tools...) and jewellery (wrought silver objects, clothing or ornaments for the house). Property was sometimes inherited from an already deceased parent.

Text translated in the context of a Translation Work Experience module by students in the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies at the University of East Anglia, NR4 7TJ UK. <https://www.uea.ac.uk/ppl>; <http://www.uea.ac.uk>