

A short biographical note on Henriette Nigrin, creator of Delphos

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Abstract

Henriette Nigrin has been widely described as the companion and muse of Mariano Fortuny. However she was also a relevant inventor and textile designer in her own right.

The aim of this article is to provide biographical information about Henriette Nigrin and describe some of the events in her life that cast her in a new light.

1 Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Mariutti Fortuny Collection, Register M 1.10.32. See also FRANZINI, C. “Henriette e Mariano, le impronte degli iconauti” in *Henriette Fortuny, Ritratto di una musa*. Museo Fortuny Venecia Palazzo Orfei, page 91.

2 Patent, Office National de la Propriété Industrielle, no. 414.119, undulating pleating system, Paris 10/6/1909. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Fondo Mariutti Fortuny, Register M 8.1.5. This document, which is carefully conserved by the Biblioteca Marciana de Venecia, was exhibited along with the document cited in note 1 in a wonderful exhibition held between December 2015 and March 2016 in the Fortuny Museum, Venice.

However, it is still not known why this patent could not be registered in the name

Henriette Nigrin has been widely described as the muse and collaborator of the great artist Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo.

However, in recent years, new information has emerged that reveals her role was not limited to that of the companion of a twentieth-century icon: she was also an important inventor and creator in the textile field.

This was confirmed by Henriette herself in a hand-written letter to Elsie McNeill after the death of Fortuny, in which she stated that: “... *Per quanto concerne al Delphos, dopo maturo esame, e ciò mi ha fatto ritardare a risponderti, sono venuta nella determinazione irrevocabile di cessare la produzione a carattere commerciale. Considerato poi che tali vesti, ancor più di tante altre, sono de la mia propria creazione, desidero che non siano riprese da altri, e pertanto al commercio della Delphos si deve porre la parola ‘fine’*”¹.

Beyond Henriette’s own words, Mariano Fortuny also acknowledged her work when he claimed the following in a copy of a patent application for his undulating pleating system: “*ce brevet est de la propriété de Madame Henriette Brassart qui est l’inventeur. J’ai pris ce brevet en mon nom pour l’urgence du dépôt... Le 10 Juin 1909 à Paris. Fortuny*”².

of Henriette, or why she was called “Henriette Brassart” why she was called “Henriette Brassart” by

Fortuny, that is, using her mother’s name.

See also FRANZINI, C. “Henriette e Mariano, le

impronte degli iconauti” in *Henriette Fortuny, Ritratto di una musa*. Fortuny Museum, Venice, Palazzo Orfei, page 89.

Delphos gown, silk. Workshop
of Mariano Fortuny, Venice.
CDMT 15200. [See more.](#)





3 FERRETI, D. “Ritratto di una musa” in *Henriette Fortuny, Ritratto di una musa*. Fortuny Museum, Venice, Palazzo Orfei, page 14.

4 Register of Births, Fontainebleau, 1877.

5 It appears that Henriette’s grandfather or perhaps her great-grandfather (the two men had the same name) opted for French nationality after certain territories of Alsace-Lorraine were annexed by Germany.

6 Paris 23/11/1848 - Fontainebleau 2/11/1901, according to the Register of Deaths, Fontainebleau, 1901.

Mariano Fortuny also mentioned this in his biography, in which he stated that: “*ma Femme et moi, nous avons fondé, au Palazzo Orfei un atelier d’impression suivant une méthode entièrement nouvelle... Cette industrie a commencée par des châles en soie et s’est développée avec des robes*”³.

Nevertheless, the personal life of this artist, who was French by nationality, Spanish by marriage and perhaps Venetian at heart, continues to be a great mystery.

Research into the potential causes of her late marriage led us to extensive information held in public and private archives, mainly French, and it was through this information that we were able to reconstruct a biography of Henriette Nigrin.

Henriette Nigrin was born in Fontainebleau on 4 October 1877. Her parents, Frédéric Albert Nigrin and Marie Juliette Brassart, chose the name Adèle Henriette Elisabeth, as recorded on her birth certificate⁴. Although Adèle was her first name, she always used Henriette.

Her father’s family were from Alsace⁵, although Frédéric Nigrin had been born in Paris (in the old eighth arrondissement) in 1848 and died in Fontainebleau in 1901⁶. When his daughter was born he was 28 years old.

7 Soultz sous Foret (Bais Rhin) 12/2/1817 - Fontainebleau 11/10/1899, according to the Register of Deaths, Fontainebleau, 1899.

8 As stated in his son's marriage certificate, cited in note 22.

9 *Annuaire général du commerce, de l'industrie, de la magistrature et de l'administration: ou almanach des 500.000 adresses de Paris, des départements et des pays étrangers*, 1845.

10 Paris 26/8/1925 - Fontainebleau 6/3/1895, according to the Register of Deaths, Fontainebleau, 1895.

11 Specifically, on 23/2/1847, according to the *Fichiers alphabétiques de l'état civil reconstitué* (sixteenth century - 1859), Paris. The marriage certificate could not be obtained, as archives previous to 1860 were destroyed in a fire at Paris City Council in May 1871 and have only been partially reconstructed.

12 List of Names, Fontainebleau, 1881.

13 According to the entries in the Register of Deaths for Frédéric Nigrin and Elisabeth Julie Albrecht, referred to in notes 6 and 10.

14 Register of Births, Valenciennes, 1850. The place and date of Juliette Brassart's death are unknown, although she was alive in 1924 (according to the marriage certificate of Henriette Nigrin and Mariano Fortuny).

15 Valenciennes 19/05/1806 - Valenciennes 5/5/1875, according to the Register of Deaths, Valenciennes 1875.

Henriette's father was the son of Joseph Frédéric Nigrin⁷ (a "rentier"⁸ by profession in the last years of his life, and prior to that a "tourneur en bois"⁹) and Elisabeth Julie Albrecht¹⁰, who married in Paris in 1847¹¹. They moved with their son to the city of Fontainebleau, where in 1881 they were registered as residents of Rue des Pins 13¹², an address that they kept until the time of their death¹³.

It can be assumed that Henriette saw her paternal grandparents frequently, as they lived close to one another in the same city.

Henriette's mother, Marie Juliette Brassart, for whom no profession is recorded, was born in Valenciennes on 12 August 1850¹⁴ and was 27 years old when she had her daughter.

Marie Juliette Brassart was the daughter of Nicolas Théodore Brassart¹⁵ (a "sellier" by profession¹⁶) and Albertine Eleanore Clerfayt¹⁷ (a "lingère"¹⁸ in the year of her marriage and "propriétaire"¹⁹ in the 1870s). Both of her parents were from the city of Valenciennes and married there in 1841, after obtaining the necessary dispensation, as they were brother- and sister-in-law²⁰. They remained in the city, living at Rue des Lilles 50²¹.

Henriette's parents married in Paris on 21 October 1876. The choice of city may be due to the fact that Marie Juliette Brassart lived in Paris with her brother (Henriette's uncle), at Rue Louis le Grand 18²².

However, the married couple soon moved to Fontainebleau, where Frédéric Nigrin lived²³. In 1877, the family resided at Boulevard Magenta 19, where Henriette was born²⁴, and where they remained until 1881²⁵, although some time between 1882 and 1886 they moved to Rue Grande 112 in Fontainebleau²⁶, which would be their home until 1901.

16 According to his marriage certificate, cited in note 20.

17 Valenciennes 22/05/1812, according to the Register of Births, Valenciennes, 1812. The maternal grandmother's place and date of death is unknown.

18 According to the marriage certificate cited in note 20.

19 According to her daughter's birth certificate, cited in note 22.

20 Specifically, on 21 January 1841, as stated in the Register of Marriages, Valenciennes, 1841.

21 According to the marriage certificate of Henriette Nigrin's parents, cited in note 22.

22 Register of Marriages, Paris (second arrondissement), 1876.

23 According to the marriage certificate of Henriette Nigrin's parents cited in note 22, her father already lived in this city.

24 According to Henriette's birth certificate, cited in note 4.

This is also stated in FERRETTI D. "Ritratto di una musa" in *Henriette Fortuny*,

Ritratto di una musa. Fortuny Museum, Venice, Palazzo Orfei, page 11.

25 See also lists of names of the population of Fontainebleau, 1881.

26 According to the certificate of Henriette's first marriage, cited in note 35. See also lists of names of the population of Fontainebleau from 1896 and from 1901.

Sleeveless gown, printed silk. Once owned by Marcel Proust and Reynaldo Hahn.
Workshop of Mariano Fortuny, Venice, 1910-1919. CDMT 19561. [See detail.](#)



27 Marriage certificate, cited in note 22.

28 As stated in the death certificates of Frédéric Nigrin and Elisabeth Julie Albrecht, cited in notes 6 and 10.

29 According to Henriette's birth certificate, cited in note 4.

See also FERRETTI D. "Ritratto di una musa" in *Henriette Fortuny, Ritratto di una musa*. Museo Fortuny Venecia Palazzo Orfei, page 11.

30 See note 32.

31 Her extraordinary abilities as a seamstress have been highlighted by DE OSMA, G.: "Mariano Fortuny, arte, ciencia y diseño" Ed. Ollero y Ramos, page 153.

32 Register of Births of Fontainebleau, 1879.

33 According to the lists of names of the population, Fontainebleau, 1891.

34 In the lists of names of the population of Fontainebleau for 1881 and 1886, various employees are always registered at the address.

35 Register of Marriages, Fontainebleau, 1897.

36 Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Fromonville (Arrondissement de Fontainebleau), 1866. Jean Bellorgeot's parents stated on his birth certificate that their profession was "domestiques" and that they lived in Rue l'Odéon 13, Paris (which was probably their place of work). However, Jean Bellorgeot's mother moved to the paternal home (in Fromonville) to give birth.

37 See the marriage certificate cited in note 35.



In most public documents, Henriette's father gave the profession of "restaurateur". This is the profession he declared at important moments in his life, such as his marriage to Marie Juliette²⁷ and the deaths of his parents²⁸.

However, it is also known that he worked for a period as "gérant de mess" for the *Ecole d'application de l'artillerie et du génie* in Fontainebleau. This is the profession he stated in some official documents, for example, when Henriette²⁹ and her sister³⁰ were born, and is also recorded in the Fontainebleau census of 1881.

Henriette's mother is always documented as "sans profession". However, from her mother's side (her family was from Valenciennes and some relatives, including her grandmother, had worked with lingerie), Henriette may have inherited a feel for fabrics and laces³¹. Likewise, from her father's side she may have acquired some knowledge of wood carving, given that her paternal grandfather was a "tourneur en bois".

In the documents that were consulted, there is very little information about Henriette's earliest years and her childhood. We know only that she had one sister (Marie Leonie Elisabeth Nigrin³²), who was born two years after Henriette in 1879, and that Henriette lived with her parents in the family home (first in Rue Magenta and then in Rue Grande) in Fontainebleau until she was 19 years old. However, Henriette must also have spent some time living with her paternal grandparents, as she is listed at their address on Rue des Pins in the 1891 census³³.

Given Henriette's father's trade and the number of household staff they employed³⁴, it would seem that the family was comfortably off, though not extravagantly wealthy.

Henriette again appears in public records on the occasion of her first marriage: she married Jean Eusèbe León Bellorgeot on 12 January 1897, when she was very young. The ceremony took place at the Registry Office of Fontainebleau³⁵.

Jean Bellorgeot was born on 31 August 1870 (in Fromonville, Seine-et-Marne)³⁶, making him seven years older than Henriette. At the time of their marriage, Jean Bellorgeot declared that he lived in Marlotte³⁷ (Commune de Bourron).

The witnesses were Louis Bellorgeot and Armand Ressay (the groom's cousin and brother-in-law, respectively) and Henri Albrecht and Adolphe Nigrin (Henriette's great-uncle and uncle, respectively).

38 “Contrat de mariage” between Henriette Nigrin and Jean Eusèbe Léon Bellorgeot, 12/1/1897, Fontainebleau.

39 Around 2000 francs of the time for Jean Bellorgeot and 1800 francs for Henriette.

40 According to the certificate contained in the Register of Marriages, Fontainebleau, 1899.

41 According to the certificate contained in the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Bourron (Arrondissement de Fontainebleau), 1900.

42 We did not find women registered as witnesses of civil registrations and events in any of the documents that we consulted. However, it is reasonable to consider that Jean Bellorgeot witnessed these events because it was a role that was traditionally fulfilled by men, so Henriette Nigrin would have delegated this task to her husband.

43 List of names of the population, Commune de Bourron-Marlotte, 1901.

44 List of names of the population, Bourron and Marlotte, 1901. The populations were annexed in 1919, after which their names were changed to Bourron-Marlotte.

<https://goo.gl/SyTMDh>

45 List of names of the population, Commune de Bourron, 1901. The record shows that in 1901, Marie Nigrin, her husband Léon Nicault, her daughter Lucette Nicault and a “domestique” who was 15 years old (Georgette Arrault) were registered as living in the same house.

Surprisingly, they signed a marriage contract (“contrat de mariage”)³⁸, a document usually signed in specific circumstances or when there is a certain imbalance of assets between the future spouses.

However, the decision to do so does not appear to have come from Henriette’s family, as neither her parents nor her sister (who married only two years later) signed contracts of this type.

The contract signed with Henriette (in her family home, hours before the civil wedding took place, in the presence of a notary from Fontainebleau), seems to reveal a certain degree of concern about Bellorgeot’s business activity.

In fact, beyond the usual stipulations of such contracts (including dowries³⁹ and the establishment of joint ownership of assets), the document poignantly states that no debts derived from the business managed at the time by her future husband could be levied against Henriette or her dowry.

The couple appears in public records again on the occasion of Henriette’s sister’s (Marie Nigrin) wedding to Léon Nicault, on 6 June 1899⁴⁰, and when Henriette’s niece was born (Lucette Nicault) on 27 April 1900⁴¹. Jean Bellorgeot was a witness on both occasions and it is reasonable to assume that he acted in representation of his wife.

In these civil registrations⁴², Jean Bellorgeot stated that his profession⁴² was “entrepreneur de peintures”, although in some population lists he is registered simply as “peintre”⁴³.

The couple are again identified together in 1901, in the population census of Marlotte⁴⁴, a town just a few kilometres south of Fontainebleau.

Marlotte was home to Henriette’s only sister (Marie Nigrin)⁴⁵. The proximity of the sisters’ houses (Grande Rue and Rue Montigny) suggests that they are likely to have seen one another often. During this period, Henriette’s niece was born (Lucette Nicault).

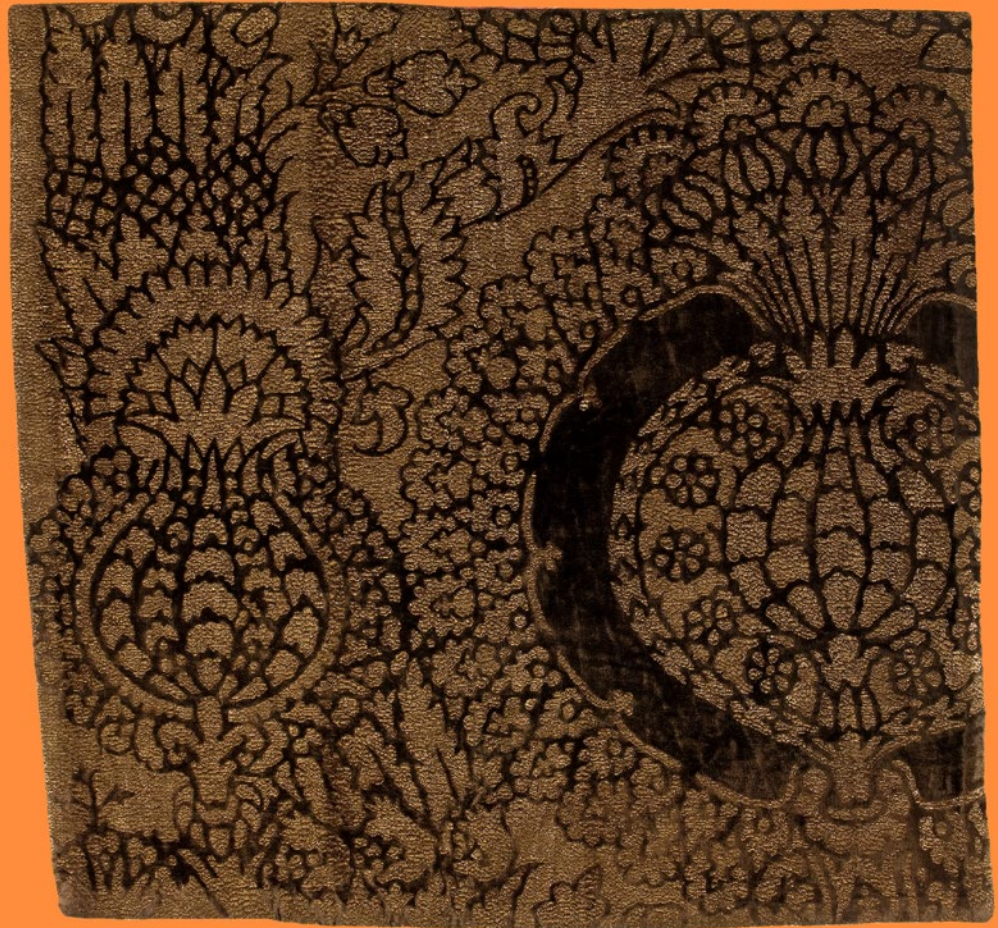
Henriette’s brother-in-law (Léon Nicault) was born in Piffonds (Yonne)⁴⁶ on 11 April 1872 and his profession was “charcutier”⁴⁷.

The towns of Bourron, Marlotte and Montigny were known from the nineteenth century as places where artists went to seek inspiration and to commune with nature. Although they were small towns, their idyllic location south of the Forest of Fontainebleau and close to the River Loing offered an

46 According to the Register of Births, Piffonds (Yonne), 1872.

47 According to the marriage certificate cited in note 40.

Fragment of printed velvet.
Workshop of Mariano Fortuny,
1910-1925. CDMT 20477.



48 In DE OSMA, G.: “Mariano Fortuny, arte, ciencia y diseño” Ed. Ollero y Ramos, page 56 and SMITH, W.L. A “Reviving Fortuny’s phantasmagorias” PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2015, page 34.

49 List of names of the population, Commune de Bourron, 1901, cited in note 44.

50 As stated by Henriette on her marriage to Mariano Fortuny.

51 Court case 8475 de 1902.

52 Register of births, marriages and deaths of Bourron (arrondissement de Fontainebleau), 1903.

53 Archives Commerciales de la France, 14/10/1903.

54 According to the certificate for a marriage held on 5/11/1904 in Nandon.

attractive setting, and saw them become the spiritual home of nineteenth-century landscape painting and French Impressionism.

It has been stated that Henriette was an artist’s model in Paris⁴⁸. Perhaps it was her husband of the time (Jean Bellorgeot) who introduced her to the art world, with which he had contact through his profession.

However, it is also possible that in a town as small as Marlotte (which had a population of some 600 people⁴⁹), Henriette’s beauty and youth made her particularly noticeable, attracting artists who had travelled to the area in search of inspiration.

Henriette’s first marriage, which was childless⁵⁰, was terminated on 31 July 1902, after receiving a decree of divorce from the Civil Court of La Seine⁵¹. Given that Henriette and Jean Bellorgeot were registered together at their home in Bourron in 1901, we can deduce that the proceedings were completed rapidly, with no particular complications.

After this date, Jean Bellorgeot seems to have disassociated himself from the Nigrin family. When Marie Nigrin’s second child, Marcel Léon Nicault, was born in 1903⁵², he did not appear as a witness.

In the same year, Jean Bellorgeot appears as manager of a “peintures et vitrerie” business in new premises in Sèvres, close to Paris⁵³.

Soon afterwards, in November 1904, Jean remarried⁵⁴, and he died in Mureaux in 1959.

55 We are grateful to Guillermo de Osma for his thoughts and help on this point.

56 In 1901, Henriette was still registered as living in Marlotte.

57 In DE OSMA, G.: “Mariano Fortuny, arte, ciencia y diseño” Ed. Ollero y Ramos, page 68.

58 L'intransigeant, Journal de Paris, 28/2/1909.

59 As an example, the magazine “La Renaissance de l'art français et des industries de luxe” published in January 1924 stated that “la maison Mariano Fortuny est un pont vénitien, coloré et chamarré entre Venise et Paris”.

60 Le Figaro, 20/12/1932 “Mariano Fortuny, 67 Rue Pierre Charron. Cadeaux de Noël: Jolis sacs, plafonniers. Services à thé, chemins de table, tapis de bridge, coussins, etc.... à partir de 50 francs”.

61 Le Figaro 18/4/1932.

62 According to the ten-year lists for the city of Paris corresponding to 1924.

See also NICOLÁS MARTÍNEZ, M^o de M.: “Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo. Entre la modernidad y la tradición”, doctoral thesis, Universidad de Granada, Departamento de Historia del Arte, May 1993.

63 According to a marginal note added in 1902 to the certificate of the marriage between Jean Bellorgeot and Henriette, filed in the Register of Marriages of Fontainebleau, 1897. This fact was published by NICOLÁS

It is not known how Henriette and Mariano met. Mariano may have visited Marlotte between 1897 and 1902, or perhaps Henriette’s husband at that time, as an “entrepreneur de peintures”, took her to an art event in Paris. Another reasonable hypothesis is that they were introduced by a relative or mutual friend⁵⁵.

The exact date of their first meeting is not known, but it must have been at the turn of the century⁵⁶ and definitely before 1902, as Henriette moved to Venice on 14 July of that year⁵⁷, shortly before obtaining the final decree of divorce.

The meeting, whenever it took place, was the beginning of a romantic and working relationship that endured until Mariano Fortuny’s death in Venice on 2 May 1949.

Henriette’s designs were enthusiastically received upon their launch. Nevertheless, the press of the time attributed them without exception to Fortuny⁵⁸. The success was repeated over the years, and the objects displayed in the shop on Rue Charron (“de lignes sobres, larges courbures y nettement moderne”⁵⁹) received praise from specialised magazines. In addition to dresses and lamps, the shop sold fabrics and cushions made in Giudecca, as well as tea services and even table runners⁶⁰.

From the prices fetched by her designs – the pleated dresses were sold in 1932 for at least 500 francs and the shawls from 200 francs of the time⁶¹ – we can confidently state that Henriette’s work contributed greatly to the upkeep of the Palazzo Orfei.

Mariano Fortuny and Henriette Nigrin waited almost 22 years to get married. Their wedding was eventually celebrated in Paris in 1924⁶², in the eighth arrondissement, when they were 52 and 46 years old, respectively.

The reasons for such a long wait are not legal in origin, as Henriette had divorced her first husband in 1902⁶³. Indeed, France had recognised the legal concept of divorce since 1884⁶⁴, and in 1904, articles of French civil law that prevented remarriage within three years of recorded adultery were repealed⁶⁵.

MARTÍNEZ, M^o de M.: “Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo. Entre la modernidad y la tradición”, doctoral thesis, Universidad de Granada, Departamento de Historia del Arte, May 1993; and by DE OSMA, G.: “Mariano Fortuny, arte, ciencia y diseño”, Ed. Ollero y Ramos, page 68.

64 Act of 27 July 1884 (known as the “loi Naquet”). Although French Civil Law of the period only recognised divorce for “faits culpeux” or “divorce pour faute” (that is, for legal reasons and therefore excluding divorce by mutual agreement), couples tended to come up with legal strategies

that in practice converted the divorce into an agreed process.

65 Act of 15 December 1904, repealing Article 298 of the Civil Law that prevented the marriage of an adulterous spouse and his/her accomplice after the declaration of divorce.

66 Act of 18 February 1938 that repealed the “puissance maritale”.

67 According to the marriage contract signed between Mariano Fortuny and Henriette Nigrin on 24/2/1924, cited in note 73.

68 See NICOLÁS MARTÍNEZ, M^o de M.: “Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo. Entre la modernidad y la tradición”, doctoral thesis, Universidad de Granada, Departamento de Historia del Arte, May 1993.

69 It seems that the fact that this relation had not been formalised caused considerable tension between Mariano Fortuny and his mother and sister. See DE OSMA, G.: “Mariano Fortuny, arte, ciencia y diseño” Ed. Ollero y Ramos, Page 68.

70 We are grateful for the opinions provided by Guillermo de Osma on this point.

71 See DE OSMA, G. “Mariano Fortuny, arte ciencia y diseño” page 48.

72 See DE OSMA, G. “Mariano Fortuny, arte ciencia y diseño” page 23.



France did not give women the right to administer their assets until 1938⁶⁶. However, this restriction does not seem to have affected Henriette, as it was still in force when she married Mariano Fortuny.

Therefore, it could be stated that from 1902, and particularly from 1904, there was no legal impediment to Henriette’s union with Mariano Fortuny.

If we consider that the monarchical Spain of Alfonso XIII did not recognise divorce and that the situation in Italy was similar, it seems logical that the couple chose France for their nuptials. In 1924, there does not seem to have been any particular event in the life of Mariano Fortuny that required the couple to travel to Paris; a journey that they could have taken advantage of to get married.

Nevertheless, it was at the end of this year, on 13 December, that Mariano Fortuny, who had maintained his Spanish nationality⁶⁷, and after having served as vice-consul, was finally named Spanish consul in Venice. He held the position 12 October 1934⁶⁸.

Perhaps the couple finally gave in to family⁶⁹ and social pressures – in the conservative Spain of 1924 a man was unlikely to become consul if he was involved in an extramarital relationship – and decided to get married with a view to facilitating this appointment. It is also feasible that Mariano Fortuny decided to formalise their relationship in order to give Henriette a certain degree of legal security and to ensure the continuity of the work in Giudecca and in the Palazzo Orfei⁷⁰.

What is clear is that the wedding was an extremely private affair, without any immediate relatives in attendance (neither Mariano’s mother or sister nor Henriette’s mother or sister were invited). The only people present apart from the spouses were the civil servant from Paris City Council and two witnesses: Rafael de Ochoa and Federico de Madrazo. The first was a relative of the Madrazo family⁷¹ and the second (known as “Cocó”) was a cousin of Mariano Fortuny⁷².

It is surprising that Mariano Fortuny stated his profession as “trader”, and that his wife signed the marriage certificate as “Henriette Nigrin”, when for her first marriage she had immediately adopted her husband’s surname (and signed her name as “Henriette Nigrin f. Bellorgeot”).

It is also surprising that both Henriette and Mariano registered their address as Paris (63 de la Avenue des Champs Elysées, a house that was few metres

73 According to the marriage contract signed by Mariano Fortuny and Henriette Nigrin on 24/2/1924 before a notary of Paris.

74 “Communauté de biens réduite aux acquits.”

75 According to the marriage certificate of 1919, in the Register of Marriages, Paris.

76 See note 1.

77 Worth 2 million lira in 1949, according to his testament.

from the shop in Rue Charron and was itself also a shop). Intriguingly, the date they chose for the ceremony was Friday 29 February, perhaps a coincidence, or perhaps a humorous nod to the circumstances that were pushing them into a marriage that neither felt was necessary for them as a couple. The real reasons are not known, and there do not seem to be any documentary sources of contemporaries to shed light on the matter.

Shortly before the wedding, on 25 February, the couple signed a “marriage contract”⁷³ before a notary from Paris, which regulated the disposition of the matrimonial property. The contract, which had to be adapted to Spanish Civil Law as Mariano Fortuny had kept his Spanish nationality, specified joint ownership of assets⁷⁴, although some specific provisions were added a breakdown of each of the couple’s assets at the time of the marriage was given.

Mariano’s contribution was considerable (in total, 423,000 francs of the time) and included, in addition to the business undertaken at Palazzo Orfei and shares in the Giudecca factory (in undivided shares held with Stucky), two shops in Paris (Champs Elysées 63 and Pierre Charron 67) and a shop in London (Bond Street 42). In fact, he brought almost all of his assets he own at that time to the marriage.

Henriette brought to the marriage assets worth 55,000 francs, including the undivided part of a house in Fontainebleau that she had inherited from her father and 15,000 francs in cash. The contribution she made reveals that in the years of cohabitation prior to the marriage, she did not accrue assets in her own name.

Neither Henriette nor Mariano included in the contract the patents they had obtained, so we do not know which patents should be attributed to each of the spouses.

Mariano and Henriette did not have children. Henriette’s only direct descendants were the children of her sister Marie: Lucette Genevieve Marie Nicault (who married Robert Achille Mimin⁷⁵) and Marcel León Nicault.

As Henriette’s nephew and niece died many years ago, only their descendants may know something about the private life of Henriette.

After the death of her husband, Henriette ceased all creative activity: she withdrew from the Giudecca factory after its sale to Elsie McNeill and halted production of the dresses that she had worked on up to that time in the Palazzo Orfei. With initial authorisation granted, Henriette decided to halt production of the Delphos (her most prized creation) in Giudecca under the control of Condesa Gozzi⁷⁶.

Freed from the restraints of her artistic activity, Henriette devoted the final period of her life, some 16 years, to cataloguing and reorganising her husband’s assets⁷⁷.

78 In DE OSMA, G.: “Mariano Fortuny, arte, ciencia y diseño” Ed. Ollero y Ramos, pages 271 and following.

79 According to the handwritten testament of Mariano Fortuny signed on 23 September 1948, and registered with number 34606 in the notary’s office of D. Luigi Candiani on 10 July 1949, by request of the lawyer Bruno Marelli.

Copies of these testaments are included in the work by NICOLÁS MARTÍNEZ, M^a de M.: “Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo. Entre la modernidad y la tradición”, doctoral thesis, Universidad de Granada, Departamento de Historia del Arte. Both testaments both testaments can also be found in the Mariutti Fortuny collection at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice.

Today, we know that Henriette made numerous donations to institutions as diverse as the *Museo del Prado*, the *Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya*, the *Museu de Reus*, the *Calcografía Nacional* in Madrid and *Le Stanze del Vetro* in Venice. Finally, after it was rejected by the Spanish authorities, she donated what had been her marital home (today the Palazzo Pessaro Fortuny) to the city of Venice⁷⁸.

Nobody knew the wishes of Mariano Fortuny as well as Henriette, and she had full power to act on them, having been named his sole heir without restriction⁷⁹.

Many of Henriette’s actions reveal how carefully she was intent on carrying out her late husband’s wishes. For example, she gifted to the Portrait Gallery of the Uffizi in Florence a self-portrait by her father-in-law in his youth, and another portrait by her husband painted for the same purpose. This was the express wish of Mariano Fortuny, expressed in a testament drawn up in 1946, although Henriette was not obliged to execute its contents as it was subsequently revoked. However, knowing what her husband’s wishes had been, she saw that they were carried out, and the two portraits now hang in the Florentine gallery.

The institutions that benefitted from these legacies owe a debt of gratitude to a woman who was generous with both her assets and her time, and later generations owe her the recognition due to an artist and inventor of her stature.

Despite this, Henriette Nigrin is still known solely for her role as companion and muse to Mariano Fortuny. Perhaps the time has come for history to acknowledge the true merits of this influential inventor and textile creator; for Henriette to finally emerge from her husband’s shadow. ●