

OLAVIDE MUSEUM

The Olavide Museum (II): sculptor-painters. Enrique Zofío Dávila, José Barta Bernardotta and Rafael López Álvarez

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Sculptor-painters of the Olavide Museum

Wax models first appeared in medicine in the 17th and 18th centuries, when a great interest in anatomy emerged. Moldings were created to simplify the study and teaching of the various parts of the human body. In many cases, these were near life-sized models of the entire body, sometimes showing a nude pregnant woman whose abdomen could be opened to reveal the internal organs and even the fetus. These were the so-called “anatomical Venuses,” and a noteworthy example from this period is the famous collection of the Della Specola Museum in Florence. Among the most outstanding sculptors we should mention Gaetano Zumbo (1656-1701), Gérard Desnoues (1650-1735), Franz H Martens (1778-1805), Clemente Susini (1754-1814), and Joseph Towne (1806-1879), some of whom later went on to create wax models of skin diseases.¹

The best known and most renowned of them all, however, was Jules Baretta (1833-1923) (Figure 1), a skillful sculptor of wax fruit and flowers discovered by Charles Lailler, a physician at the Hôpital Saint-Louis who offered him work at the hospital. This was where he created most of his sculptures, whose artistic quality and color were impressive. He created his first sculpture in 1867, a representation of erythematous lupus. Over the course of his lifetime he created more than 2000 models, and retired in 1913. Like many other wax sculptors, he never revealed his working methods, or had students or assistants to whom he passed on his knowledge and techniques.

In Spain, a review of existing works in the Olavide Museum's collection of models yields little data on their creators: only their first and last names, and in some cases only the last name, with no information concerning their real profession, the kind of work they did, or the nature of their connection to the museum.

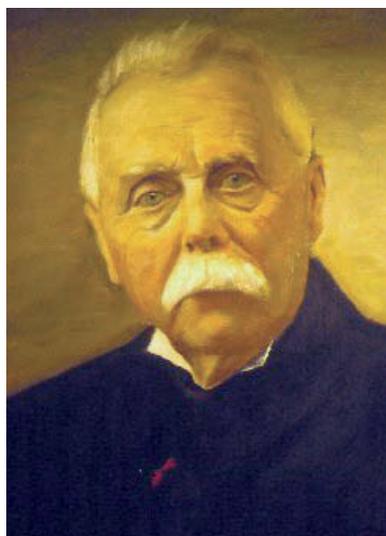


Figure 1. Jules Baretta (1833-1923), sculptor of the Musée des Moulages of the Hôpital Saint-Louis in Paris.

This state of affairs creates special difficulties for researchers. The data are sometimes hard to evaluate since the sources are second- and third-generation family members. Nevertheless, we have been able to reconstruct parts of the lives and work of the three sculptors of the Olavide Museum models: Enrique Zofío Dávila, José Barta Bernardotta, and Rafael López Álvarez.²

At present, research continues on the lives and work of these sculptors, and we believe that among the recovered crates there may be information that will enhance our knowledge of the “artists” who made the Olavide Museum a reality.

Enrique Zofío Dávila

The most important sculptor of all, and the one for whom the most reliable information is available is Enrique Zofío Dávila. Although we still do not have his birth and death certificates, we know that he was born in Madrid between 1840 and 1843, and died, also in Madrid, around 1915. He lived in the district of Carabanchel, and later on Calle Huertas, very close to the Hospital de San Juan de Dios. He was known as a painter-sculptor, although there is evidence that he belonged to the Army Medical Corps (in the photograph provided by his family he is wearing a

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Figure 2. Enrique Zofio Dávila, principal sculptor-painter of the Olavide Museum. He is wearing a military uniform, since he worked in the Museum of the Hospital Militar de Carabanchel.

military uniform with three medals pinned to his tunic (Figure 2).

According to information provided by the family, at the end of the 19th century he obtained a scholarship to go to Paris, but it is not known whether he came into contact with J Baretta at the Hôpital Saint-Louis.

In Madrid, in 1857, the military physician José Díaz Benito was named to oversee the creation of a "Gabinete Anatómico" (an "anatomical laboratory") of ceramic models in the Hospital Militar in Madrid, located in the Seminario de Nobles. He had as his assistant another military physician, Cesáreo Fernández Losada, who specialized in ceramic models. Díaz Benito, who frequented Madrid's scientific circles, was a close friend of the well-known Dr Velasco, founder of what is today the Museum of Anthropology, with whom he initiated the reproduction of three-dimensional anatomical models in stucco, papier mâché, and wax.³ In 1860 Díaz Benito left the army, and Cesáreo Fernández Losada took charge of the museum. It is around this time that we believe Zofio began working, and the Museo Anatómico Patológico of the Hospital Militar de Madrid was created.⁴ There, Zofio made anatomical models from cadavers prepared by Dr. Losada. These models were painted, mounted on a wooden frame measuring 39x25 cm and distributed to various universities for use by the students. At present there are models at the universities of Santiago, Salamanca, and Granada. All of them were identified with a label reading: "Surgical clinic of Don C.F. de Losada. Progreso, 5. Madrid. Enrique Zofio Dávila, anatomical sculptor. Progreso, 5. Madrid."

We have a good deal of information on Zofio's relation with the military but little is known of his connection with the Hospital San Juan de Dios. We do know that following his earlier collaboration in the 1860s and 70s with Juan Cesáreo Fernández Losada during a temporary appointment

in the Hospital Militar de Madrid, in 1901 he was hired as a permanent staff member of the Hospital Militar in Madrid, and charged with the reconstruction of the models destroyed in the fire at the Museo Anatómico-Patológico on the night of February 8, 1889. The surviving and damaged models were stored for a brief period in the Instituto de Higiene Militar, and thanks to the tenacity of Juan Cesáreo Fernández Losada they were moved permanently on July 9, 1901 to the Hospital Militar de Carabanchel, with Enrique Zofio as the curator in charge of restoring the Museum's collection. At the end of that year there are memoranda requesting materials to continue the work of sculpture. The list includes turpentine, sandpaper, paintbrushes of various types and sizes, varnish, virgin beeswax, carbon black, etc. On September 30, 1901, another memorandum indicates that 2 new pieces had been created for the museum: one of a "plantar mal perforant" and another of a head with "leontiasis ossea cranii," which represented 2 diseased soldiers.³⁻⁵

In the 1909 annual report of the Hospital Militar de Carabanchel, in the section devoted to the Iconographic Museum, we find the following subsections: 1, Dermatology; 2, Syphilology; 3, Normal anatomy; 4, Miscellaneous; and 5, Pathological anatomy. It is noted that, in that year, the sculptor Don Enrique Zofio made 13 models depicting syphilitic ulcers, syphilitic lupus, tuberculous testicles following surgery, and cicatricial ectopia resulting from a carbuncle. Subsequently, in 1910, he made 10 models, which depicted lupus of the hand, lupus of the anus and buttocks, white tumor of the knee, pulmonary tuberculosis, and chickenpox on the hand. In 1911, 11 more models were made, principally depicting venereal diseases, tuberculosis, and epidemic diseases. In 1912 and 1915 the creation of 12 and 10 new models, respectively, is recorded. The total number of new models created was 56.

What has happened to these models? According to our data, the decline of the Museo Militar began in 1915, with several changes and moves, and by 1917 only the pathological anatomy section remained in the museum, the rest having been transferred to the Academia Médico-Militar the same year Don Enrique Zofio retired. From that point, the models of skin diseases are no longer mentioned in the various military catalogues. Given that Zofio worked for the Olavide Museum, we believe that the models could have been moved there, since we have found models by Zofio showing these disorders (syphilitic ulcers, white tumor of the knee, etc) that may have belonged to the collection of the Museo del Hospital Militar de Madrid-Carabanchel.

Zofio was placed in charge of the Museo del Hospital Militar in 1907, and we suppose that he continued in this position until his retirement in 1917.⁴

We have been able to confirm this information using reports and publications of the Army Medical Corps, and have come to the conclusion that Enrique Zofio was not a



Figure 3. Antonio Zofio Urosa, son of Enrique Zofio, physician, dermatologist, medical director of San Juan de Dios and founding member of the Spanish Academy of Dermatology.

military man, since in none of these sources is he referred to by a military title, but always as a sculptor, painter, etc. The existence of a portrait of him wearing a military uniform and three medals may be a consequence of his participation in an overseas military campaign (perhaps in Cuba or the Philippines).²

Another question that arises concerns Zofio's relationship with Olavide, and consequently with the Hospital de San Juan de Dios, since we have not been able to locate any relevant official documents. He appears cited as the sculptor of the models in some works and in the 1903 catalogue, but there is no indication of the nature of his employment. We also do not know whether he may have worked for both institutions for a certain period of time; whether his models could be found in both museums; or whether at a later time, when the Hospital Militar museum began to decline, the models were moved to the Olavide Museum.⁴

We do not know how Zofio came into contact with Olavide or the date of completion of his first models for the Museum, nor have we found any indication that prior to his arrival there had been another sculptor or that models of skin diseases had been created for the Museum. The catalogue published by the Imprenta Provincial (1903) records 367 models,⁶ all created by him, and it is only by reference to the clinical histories, which indicate the patient's admission and discharge, that we can arrive at an approximate date for the execution of each model. Thus, we know that the first models with clinical histories date from 1880.

It appears that he taught his techniques to his students, among them José Barta, although there is no record that they collaborated on a model. Curiously, all of Zofio's models were numbered and a clinical history affixed to the back of each, a practice that was not continued with the models made later by Barta and López Álvarez, and so it is difficult to catalogue them.

By contrast with other European artists who were his predecessors or contemporaries, Zofio, at the request of the museum's director, Don Fernando Castelo, gladly offered to instruct others in his modeling techniques, the composition of the modeling medium, coloring, etc, in order to preserve them and prevent their falling out of use, and to keep the museum alive.

The family owned land to the northwest of Madrid, in the Carabanchel Alto area, close to the land owned by the Usera family. They sold this land, and a neighborhood named after Dr Zofio was created which later came to be called Colonia del Zofio (as it is known today). Two streets bear the family name: Calle Dr Zofio and Calle Juan Zofio.

Enrique Zofio married Felipa Urosa, and they had three children: Enrique, who died prematurely; Juan, a dentist whose practice was located in Madrid's Calle Barquillo; and Antonio Zofio Urosa (1868-1923) (Figure 3), a dermatologist who appears in a painting by Fernández Gómez and Cubero of the medical staff of the Hospital de San Juan de Dios at the time of Azúa's arrival there. In this painting he appears as the hospital's medical director, although it is believed that he was also the director of the Olavide Museum. In the 1910 *Actas Dermo-Sifiliográficas*, Antonio Zofio appears as a founding member of the Spanish Academy of Dermatology, along with José Olavide y Malo, the son of José Eugenio Olavide.⁷ One of Antonio's sons and Enrique Zofio's grandsons was Juan Zofio López-Mezquía (1911-1986), an internist and qualified specialist in leprology-venereology. He first practiced as a railway physician in Madrid, and later competed successfully for a civil-service position in the public health care system in the province of Jaén, where he worked in the home health care (Asistencia Pública Domiciliaria) and compulsory health insurance (Seguro Obligatorio de Enfermedad) services.

Just as Jules Baretta was the "soul" of the museum of the Hôpital Saint-Louis in Paris, we may also say that Zofio was the "soul" of the Olavide Museum because of the quantity and quality of his models.

José Barta Bernardotta

According to information provided by his descendants, José Barta Bernardotta (Figure 4) was born in Barcelona around 1875, into a family with several artistic predecessors, especially actors and musicians. He died in Madrid on March 23, 1955, and was buried in the Almudena cemetery. On his tomb there is no inscription that might help to confirm his date of birth.

His father, Don José Barta, was a comic actor, stage director, and impresario who worked with Antonio Vico, Julián Romea, and Loreto Prado, among others. He died September 27, 1922. He was the founder and president of



Figure 4. José Barta Bernardotta in his study; a painter-sculptor and bohemian character, he continued the work of Enrique Zofío.

the Society of Spanish Actors. We have not found among his descendants any family members connected with medicine, although there are numerous artists: musicians, film and theatre actors, singers...

The painter and sculptor José Barta lived at number 6 in the Calle De los Tres Peces, close to Calle Atocha. He was a renowned painter who was awarded the Gold Medal of the Círculo de Bellas Artes.²

The beginnings of his work in the Olavide Museum are not known, but in a 1927 film (*La terrible lección* [*The Terrible Lesson*]) he appears showing the museum to a group of important visitors to the Hospital de San Juan de Dios, then located on Calle Doctor Esquerdo. Drs Bejarano, Sánchez-Covisa, and Castelo make appearances in this same film.⁸

Barta created a number of works, the last in collaboration with Rafael López Álvarez, but there is no evidence of collaboration with Zofío on any models. This is surprising since Zofío must have been his teacher and they coincided at the museum for a few years. Barta's models, like those of Rafael López Álvarez, lack numbers and clinical histories (which Zofío's models possess), or at least this is what we have found to be the case up to the present.

According to family accounts, Barta continued to work in the Museum until the end of the 1940s. He was a much-loved bohemian character, and his relatives recount the story of how his funeral cortège paused in front of the Hospital de San Juan de Dios to offer a prayer.

Rafael López Álvarez

The third of our artist-sculptors of wax models of the Olavide Museum is Rafael López Álvarez. Little is known about either his private life or his professional work in the Hospital San Juan de Dios. Holder of a diploma in fine arts and a teacher of draftsmanship, during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship he created a poster for syphilis prevention that was considered immoral. According to references in the press, it appears that he began to work in the Hospital between 1910 and 1920, creating some models in collaboration with Barta and subsequently working alone.⁹

During the Spanish Civil War he was responsible for guided tours of the museum for militiamen, in order to impress upon them the devastating effects of venereal diseases.

A self-proclaimed rationalist, republican, and admirer of Ferrer Guardia, he was the person who packed up the existing models in the Hospital San Juan de Dios (perhaps some 200 crates in all) for storage in an unknown place.^{9,10}

In 1972 he went blind following surgery for glaucoma, although he appears in a 1978 report on venereal diseases published in the magazine *QUÉ*, which mentions his work in the Olavide Museum.¹⁰

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