

Imagining Inês de Castro: Mini review

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Introduction

This present work presents the soul of Inês de Castro through the way she was dressed representation. Enlightening to a particular character that combines the historical basis and the mystical persistence maintained over the centuries, traversing in a non-linear and chronological way aspects of the character's mythical and visual construction and build a dialectical relationship between theoretical research and the practice of artistic and design creations. The article focuses on constructing the documentary *corpus* of the artistic object Inês development, undress from the Imaginar session, part of the Mirar-Imaginar-Vestir Exhibition, at the *Museu Nacional do Traje* (MNT), in Lisbon. It refers to the creative resource elaborated through these iconographic research, both in the visual content and in the symbolic one associated with the data. It intends to demonstrate the conductive threads of the artistic investigation, starting with the historical memories of the royal couple love, the extension of these facts, the tragedy and the consolidation of love carved in the stone, in the tomb art of the couple in the Monastery of Alcobaça. Then entering the narratives imagined by literature, the formation of this character's image through time, having as a guiding principle the representations of costumes and descriptions of their features.

With a procedural look through multiple developments, chosen according to the creative intentions and based on the interests of the project. From the choices of references for the costumes to the selection of the focus of attention to detail. Because it is a non-linear method, the investigation respects the needs of the design creation. Based on medieval XIIIth century fashion and varied interpretations. Another guideline was the work of costume designer José Barbosa (1940) for the Inês de Castro Ballet, to *Companhia de Bailados Verde Gaio*, and the collection of the *Museu Nacional do Teatro e da Dança* (MNTD), Portugal.

These references demonstrate the process of creating the imaginative act of the version of Inês and Pedro's wedding dress, a fact that did not happen publicly, remaining in the imagination over time. The proposal is to elucidate this possibility of materializing the character's form and essence in view of its context, the visual designs and the messages associated from the costume and drawings. To display the connection points and the formation of creative thinking elaborated throughout the investigation still under construction.

The referential imaginary

Inês de Castro belonged to the Portuguese royal house in the medieval period (between 1340 and 1355),¹ being the second wife of King D. Pedro I. The couple's romance, according to some chroniclers, began years before the death of D. Constância in 1349. D. Pedro and D. Inês fell in love while she was still the lady-in-waiting of his first wife. The lovers began a clandestine affair, shrouded in a cloak of mysteries, which would later trigger the tragic end of this romance. D. Inês de Castro died on January 7, 1355, beheaded, as befitted a person of her condition" (Inês de Castro/Fundação Inês de Castro, n.d.).²

Her death took place at the hands of Pero Coelho, Álvaro Gonçalves, and Diogo Lopes Pacheco in Santa Clara in the gardens of Quinta das Lágrimas in Coimbra, where the couple held their secret meetings. According to legend, the tears shed in the Mondego river for the death of Inês would have created the Fonte das Lágrimas, in Quinta das Lágrimas and some reddish algae that grow there would be her spilt blood, even "according to legend, the blood of D. Inês still stains the stone bottom of the Fountain, and her weeping can still be heard in the gardens of Quinta das Lágrimas, eternally looking for Pedro, she lost love" (Inês de Castro/Fundação Inês de Castro, n.d.).^{1,2}

The character of inspiration is described as a Galician, "the noblest lady, who shared in the blood of the Houses of greatest grandeur in Portugal",³ endowed with "rare beauty and such extreme grace", owns a narrative full of mysticism, intrigue and drama, starting with the secret marriage, his assassination ordered by King D. Afonso IV, the subsequent justice carried out by D. Pedro and the ceremonial transfer from the Monastery of Santa Clara to Alcobaça, the magical narrative of the posthumous coronation as queen, reported in different ways throughout the chronicles, D. Pedro: Had that body of beloved beauty unearthed, and dressed, and with a golden crown on her head so that she would reign dead in the nostalgia of the Portuguese just as she had reigned alive in his soul [...].³

We seek to bring some aspects of how Inês' image was registered in the popular imagination, some of the scenic visions of Inês and Pedro as a formative element in the process of developing sketches and new ways to represent her through costume. Among the various representations of the novel, we highlight the Inês de Castro ballet, a version of 1940 (from *Companhia de Bailados Verde Gaio*), the costume designs by José Barbosa (for the characters of Inês, Pedro and the Handmaids).

Inês and the fashion of her time

The immaculate Queen, who had suffered from the inclement weather of the politics of the royal houses and was therefore murdered, an important piece in the royal chess game, and represent her constant dynamics of strategies during the first period as D. Constância Manuel's aide and later as wife of the future king D. Pedro I (albeit illegitimate in the eyes of society). Still associated with the game, we can transport fragments of the complex tomb of the lovers, located in the Monastery of Alcobaça, in which the sculpture of the Wheel

of Fortune also features a game board, which according to some authors⁴⁻⁶ would be chess in one of the scenes. The representation of chess in the Portuguese artistic context of medieval and modern times, according to Dagoberto Markl (1994-95), the game is related to the allegory of love and desire, a *topos* of medieval literature and chivalric romances, as it is a frequent practice among the nobility, chess was part of the rituals of courtly love.

The sepulchral chest of Inês presents her in a costume richly represented through the “beautiful figure with insignnia, and crown like a Queen’s”.⁶ It represents the lady with the “heron’s neck”, rising to the heavens in a button-down dress, a silhouette fitted to the body with cut-outs and ample skirt, tight sleeves, necklace, gloved hand, mantle over the shoulders and ample length and crown. Fashion and the way adornments were used intervened in the symbolic structure to be transmitted, generating a “public staging/representation of power” (Figure 1).⁷



Figure 1 Tomb of D. Inês de Castro, from the collection of: Monastery of Alcobaça (Google Arts & Culture).

Oliveira Marques⁸ points out the influences of the French, English, Italian, Burgundy, Moorish and Leonese, Castilian and Aragonese styles brought by the queens entourages in the Medieval Portuguese court, within the scope of women’s fashion, in short, it was composed by a dress called a *cotta* (fr. *cotte*) which, according to Marques,⁸ the “gallicism that came to replace the traditional skirt”, in general more adjusted to the body, with cutouts and buttoning for adjustments from bust to below the waist increasing in volume below the hips “To achieve this result, the back of the garment was bifurcated from the neckline to the waist, in such a way that the ends of this cut could be adjusted by strings”.⁹ They became more low-cut, with narrow, long sleeves, so tight at the cuffs had to be buttoned. There is another dress, with the opening variety on the front or sides, the corset. In addition, we can find the *opa*, an overcoat with frontal opening, high collars, adornments in the edges, among other aspects. To complete the set, the mantles, commonly used in acts of ceremony, protective structures. On the head, the embroidered veils and the hood or wrap. And adornments such as necklaces, brooches, buttons, bags, belts and small objects, such as reliquaries hanging around the neck, decorated with stones, enamels, gold and silver (Figure 2).

The representation samples of Inês de Castro emerged from the first third of the 16th century onwards, through the “hypothetical representation of Castro in the Genealogy that Infante D. Fernando had commissioned, in 1530, from António de Holanda and Simão Bening”,¹⁰ this costumed representation would have been the first image of the Castro after the funerary monuments of Alcobaça. Some versions of the character’s image appear in different productions (Figure 3), such as the scenic version, written between 1553 and 1556 by António Ferreira, the first historical staging of the love affairs of Pedro and Inês.



Figure 2 D. Inez de Castro, Illustration by: Alfredo Roque Gameiro (1864-1935) (Chagas, 1899_1905, p. 273).



Figure 3 Castro - third act, woodcut, author unknown, (A. Ferreira, 1587, s.p., in Bule, 2019).

In the performing arts, during the 19th and 20th centuries, we can observe an extensive exploration of Inesian themes. Within the domains of artistic creation, especially in the scope of the 40s and 70s of the 20th century-part of this investigation, we observe the historicist trend, in which Portugal sought to resurrect a national literature and forms, and that we can look the characters of Inês and Pedro as representatives of the “Portuguese soul, animated by nostalgia, simultaneously desire and memory of a people of poets”.¹⁰ Inserted in the main characters of the foundational myths of the homeland culture. From this sense we can analyse the plastic production of ballets, operas and theatrical pieces, fed by the Inesian imaginary, and aesthetically influenced by the *Ballets Russes*, the extent to which their traits were assimilated by the creators through costumes and scenery designs, through the collection of the *Museu Nacional do Teatro e da Dança* of Portugal.

José Barbosa inserted the aesthetics of Diaghilev’s company into his creation process, one of the responsible for the vanguard of portuguese scene design, having designed sets and costumes for all

kinds of theatrical spectacles and one of the essential figures for the visual modernization of theater Portuguese, “for all genres he knew how to find the atmosphere, the shape, the color, plus that creativity and elegance that makes him different from everyone else”,¹¹ with touches of stylization in the drawings of folklore and historical themes. minimalist in the plastic dimension of the costume designs, can be observed in the figures drawn for the *Companhia de Bailados Verde Gaio*, ballet by Inês de Castro (Figure 4) (Figure 5), in which we identify aspects of garments from the 14th and 15th centuries, however with a creative bias inspired by the times, not proposing a faithful representation of the period. In Figure 4, the Handmaid presents a silhouette with contemporary traits to the artist, both in the costume and in the lines and composition of the line, illuminated colors and simplified shapes, with memories of medieval adornments, in the gorget, in the bags and belts, in monochromatic tones that create synthetic atmospheres with demarcated signs.



Figure 4 Ballet Inês de Castro, MNT 141566 - “D.Pedro e D.Inês”, C°. from *Bailados Verde Gaio*, 1940, costumes by José Barbosa (MNTD collection).



Figure 5 Ballet Inês de Castro, MNT 37700 - “Aia”, C°. from *Bailados Verde Gaio*, 1940, costumes by José Barbosa (MNTD collection).

The non-dress of Inês

Faced with this imagery and symbolic investigation, we created a project called “non-dress of Inês”, it belong to the *Mirar-Imaginar-Vestir* art exposition displayed at the *Museu Nacional do Traje de Portugal* (Nov 2022 – Mar 2023) that composed the *Imaginar* section. The project started with the graphic elaboration of forms that dialogued with different past times, aspects of the present time and timeless signs (Figure 5). First, resorting to images from the medieval universe of the 1300s, in terms of clothing and the relationship of the couple’s unofficial marriage, based on the act of imagining the dress of the event that officially did not take place (Figure 6).



Figure 6 non-dress sketches, fashion investigation. (Own collection).

It was based on the act of creating mentality images and transporting them to the physical plane and used the reserves¹² of the linguistic corpus of narratives, the repertoire of 13th century fashion, chronicles and novels, symbolic and visual references of iconographic sources and creations of costume designs, converted into images that reflect the sensitive nature of the historical drama. We sought to capture peculiar aspects of the scenic narratives that relate the romance of D. Pedro e D. Inês, highlighting the version by José Barbosa for *Verde Gaio* (collection of the MNTD) due to the stylized character of the modernist aesthetic form with more refined and elongated bodies that make up an aesthetic aligned with contemporary fashion design, a guiding factor during the creative process.

The creative act of this work focuses on the relation of the royal narrative itself, the imagery representation signed in stone, in the tomb, the description of the attire, the representations contained in the wheel of fortune/life present in the tomb ark, the relation of the royal game that involved the drama, the bonding of lovers beyond life and the sanctification of the female figure sacrificed in favour of the interests of the court. The shapes condense on the chest, under the structure of the knots that generate a heart, the character’s vital and sensory energy point and the private memory of the lover’s story, with all the lines of the costumes developed converge towards this point and from it radiates the force of its plastic form, the translucent material represents the non-materiality of the proposal to imagine the ceremonial costume. The translucent and illuminated body in the center reflects the presence of invisibility – the soul (Figure 6) marks the presence of the absence left by the departure of Inês, the essence of the mythical figure that made artists of letters and images imagine so much.

The non-dress (Figure 7) intended to represent the imaginative perspective of a scene of this possible secret marriage described in the chronicles, and how we can convey this mental image. The installation costume represents the soul of the character. The knots

that form the heart mark the strength of Inês's soul that overflows from the translucent figure, both in volume and in luminance, through the material artifice of the internal light in the coronal position of the body.



Figure 7 The soul of Inês - Drawing on transparent plastic and the final costume made of tulle, adhesive tape and LED light (own collection).

The creative movement of the artistic object of non-dress of Inês consisted of the maturation process of the stimuli and interconnected hypotheses through the search for information that would feed the transformation of matter, in which each element about the character are conductive threads that become new imaginative hypotheses, which makes the creator test new possibilities, these guiding threads are “records of the inevitable immersion of the artist with the world that surrounds him”,¹³ and which in this project were used as creative resources, unordered narrative fragments, selected by searching for form and content.^{14–16}

Conclusion

Therefore, this article intended to elucidate the guiding aspects of the artistic imagination and clothing design, whether for the stage or for fashion, both cases the procedural look is present, capturing other references and making different connections to reach the intended design. We approach the course developed throughout the research for the creation of the soul of Inês of the presented project, from a brief immersion in the historical/mythical universe of the character with the approach of the novel and the iconographic characteristics of her tomb, to entering in her time understanding the behavioural relations of the court and fashion of the first half of the fourteenth century, by going through the imaginary of the narratives and scenic in a punctual way according to the desired narrative threads to then display the destination of these collected data that were condense in the experiments, sketches and the costumes made from them, in order to demonstrate that, “this path, perhaps, can follow multiple directions in future developments in other research, as well as new aspects can be added”,¹³ but that they are part of the creative process and that

the thought form depends on them, the connections developed in that moment of inspiration.

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Conflicts of interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest exists.

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