

Portrait of King Carlos I of Portugal



Retrato do Rei D. Carlos

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Figure 1- Oil on canvas, 265 x 175 cm. Museum of the Portuguese Parliament, Room of the House of Peers. Lisbon. Portugal.

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José Malhoa was one of the pioneers of Naturalism in Portugal and one of the Portuguese painters that came closest to the impressionists.

He was born in Caldas da Rainha on the 28th April 1855 and died at the age of 78 in Figueiró dos Vinhos on the 26th October 1933. He was the first President of the National Fine-Arts Society and was honoured with the Cross of the Order of Santiago. In the year of his death, the José Malhoa Museum was created in Caldas da Rainha, where some of his paintings and drawings are on display.

Two of his most well known works show a longstanding problem in Portuguese society, that of excessive alcohol consumption: "The drunken, or celebrating São Martinho (Saint Martin)" and "The Fado", two large-format paintings (150 x 200 cm and 150 x 183 cm), painted in 1907 and 1910, respectively.^{1,2}

The "Portrait of King Charles" is a whole-body image of the monarch in a formal pose, wearing a full-dress uniform, rows of medals, breast sash, an ermine cape, a helmet with feathers and a sword. The crown, some books and a golden velvet throne are also in the painting. It was painted in 1891, when the King was 28, two years after ascending to the throne.

King Charles I (b. 28/09/1863, d. 1/02/1908, Lisbon) was a multifaceted king, dedicated beyond diplomacy to several activities such as oceanography, ornithology, sports and even painting.

He would be murdered in 1908,³ at the age of 44, shot in the back and suffering a spinal cord injury from a C7 vertebral fracture, the other bullet becoming lodged in the right lung. 19 years had gone away since he had inherited the Royal Crown.

At that time, the "New England Journal of Medicine" (NEJM 1908. www.nejm.org/medical-archives/1908) central themes included diseases such as syphilis, vaccination, advances in surgery, anaesthesia, epilepsy, oesophagoscopy and the use of X-rays, mental disorder, medical practice, relationships with the community, typhoid fever and diabetes - these last two having affected King

Charles I. Tuberculosis was one of the most frequently recurring themes and was almost always present in this publication at that time.⁴

In the year the King was murdered, 1908, the Nobel Prize in Medicine was awarded to Ilya Ilyich Mechnikov – the Russian who, in 1903, was one the first to conceptualize Gerontology – and to Paul Ehrlich, for his research in phagocytosis. The Physics prize was awarded to Ernest Rutherford, father of nuclear physics; the Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded to Jonas Gabriel Lippmann for the first steps in color photography.

One hundred and five years have passed since the murder of King Charles I and still today non-natural deaths and mainly violent firearm related deaths reach epidemic proportions in some countries, such as in the United States, where they are responsible for 1.2% of the mortality rate.⁵

Health improvements for mankind have been tremendous in this time interval: average life expectancy rose from 36 to 79 years, child mortality decreased from 213 to 3.4 per 1,000, the average number of childbirths decreased from 3.9 to 1.3 per woman. The Portuguese population was estimated at that time of about 4.1 million⁶ and has now reached, according to the "2011 Census", the record of 10.5 million people.

This evolution is largely due to the fact that Portugal has today one of the lowest child mortality rates in the world and one of the longest life expectancies. Therefore, it is not surprising that in 2000, according to the World Health Organization, Portugal was considered to have the 12th most efficient health system in the world.⁷

Between King Charles I and the beginning of the 21st Century, we lived in fact one hundred years that changed the World, Portugal and Mankind.

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