

Fundación Banco Santander rescues the only writer queen of the Spanish monarchy from oblivion

- Fundación Banco Santander presents its new collection *Biografías de Historia Fundamental*, starting with the volume '*María Josefa Amalia de Sajonia, reina de España: política, poeta y mística*', an essay written by the historian María José Rubio and the result of extensive research.
- We will delve into the life of María Josefa Amalia, which in the words of the author is 'a reflection of the complex history of 19th century Spain', through the unpublished political, religious and personal texts written by the monarch herself.
- The book is accompanied by 7 scripted podcasts and an exclusive interview with María José Rubio, available free of charge on the Fundación Banco Santander website.
- The book will be presented at the National Historical Archive on **Thursday 7 November at 7pm** with the participation of María José Rubio, the former Minister and Minister of State, José María Michavila, and Rodrigo Echenique, President of Fundación Banco Santander. Admission is open to the public until full capacity is reached.

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Fundación Banco Santander inaugurates its new collection *Biografías de Historia Fundamental* with this essay on the life and work of Queen María Josefa Amalia of Saxony, by historian María José Rubio, which combines rigorous research and brilliant narrative in its more than 300 pages.

'This is the first biography of one of Spain's most unknown queens, which dispels many myths about her life and her relationship with her husband, King Ferdinand VII, one of the most reviled in our history, about whom new information is also revealed', explains Francisco Javier Expósito, head of History and Literature at the Banco Santander Foundation.

María Josefa Amalia of Saxony, the third wife of Ferdinand VII, was the first constitutional queen and the only writer. But was she really the frustrated, monkish and infertile royal consort traditionally portrayed in historiography, or rather a political queen, poet and mystic? This book reveals, among other unpublished aspects of her personality, her reflections on the convulsive political events that marked the exciting Spanish history of the 19th century.

María José Rubio is a historian, writer and specialist in the Hispanic monarchy, as well as a member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and Historical Sciences of Toledo. Author of essays such as '*La Chata. La Infanta Isabel de Borbón y la Corona de España*' (2003), '*Reinas de España. Siglos XVIII al XXI*' (2009) and '*Reinas de España. Las Austrias*' (2010). Her historical novel '*El cerrajero del rey*' was awarded the Premio Ciudad de Cartagena in 2012.

Comunicación Fundación Banco Santander

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Her interest in María Josefa Amalia began when, while researching for her book on the queens of Spain, she came across her writings. 'I started to research and saw that there was very little written about her, which surprised me, as the literary corpus on this queen is vast,' explains Rubio, 'what little there was, was to ridicule or belittle her, and I thought there was something that didn't fit. There was something unexplored or poorly studied'.

María Josefa Amalia arrived in Spain at the age of 16 to marry Ferdinand VII, 20 years her senior. To begin with, she found a court in mourning," says the author, "she was a well-educated girl who came from a very refined court, and she arrived in a Spain in full conflict, because Ferdinand VII had returned to absolutism, the liberals were trying to overthrow the regime, and the crown was without an heir". She also lived through the period of the Liberal Triennium, which the book explores in depth, because it is necessary to know the context in which Maria Amalia reigned in order to understand her writing.

The volume also refutes many rumours that accompanied (and still accompany) the figure of the Queen and the King, and which are the reason why she has been ignored until now. 'We have to consider that all the historiography of Ferdinand VII was done by the liberals well into the 19th century, so he is a very punished character, and by extension, María Amalia is also punished', explains the author. 'This book allows the reader to put themselves in her shoes.

María Josefa Amalia was the constitutional queen of Spain, the first to set foot in the Cortes, and in fact she attended all the sessions. In this book we discover many unpublished writings in which she expressed her political opinion, revealing that she was an educated young woman who read the newspapers (we find answers to many of them in these documents) and participated in what was happening in Spain at the time in a leading role. During the ominous decade following the Liberal Triennium, she blossomed as a queen and wrote mystical, religious poetry, with great theological depth. 'Because of the period in which she lived, she was described as 'monkish', when in fact she was a mystic', explains Rubio, "It was a very strong anti-clerical time, and María Amalia did a lot of charity work on a personal level that went unnoticed, because as a good Christian she took the saying "don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" to heart'.

This volume also allows us to discover unknown aspects of the marriage to Ferdinand VII, who copied by hand all his wife's poetic writings and preserved them under the title 'My wife's unimportant writings', so that her work would go unnoticed and not be destroyed, as Spain was in a very turbulent period.

To date, she is the only Spanish queen to have been a writer," says Rubio.

The book will be presented at the National Historical Archive on Thursday 7 November at 19:00h with the participation of María José Rubio, the former Minister and Minister of State, José María Michavila, and Rodrigo Echenique, President of Fundación Banco Santander. Admission is open to the public until full capacity is reached.

About Fundación Banco Santander

Fundación Banco Santander strives to contribute to the construction of a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable society. With this objective, we develop initiatives grouped into three lines of action: the promotion of culture as a tool to understand the world around us, social action to facilitate the progress of vulnerable groups and education and entrepreneurship as the driving force of society.

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