

Municipal Museum of Bobbin Lace and Blonda

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Municipal Museum of Bobbin Lace and Blonda



The Municipal Museum of Bobbin Lace and *Blonda* arises as a public acknowledgment of a craftwork deeply rooted in Almagro and some nearby municipalities of the Campo de Calatrava district over hundreds of years. The establishment of this museum became a reality in June 2004, thanks to the efforts and determination of the City Council.

**History.** The bobbin lace has always been present in Western culture. However, its origin, dissemination and marketing are not clear. As a summary, although some people believes that laces came to Almagro in the 16th Century along with the Flemish people coming with Charles I from Habsburg Netherlands, the truth is that the dissemination of this craftwork is intensified by the traditional wool linkage of Castile with that region of Europe.

The craftwork of lacemaking existed as paid work since the late 16th and early 17th centuries in the region of La Mancha, since Cervantes in *Don Quixote* provides some quotes to bear this out.

The use of bobbin lace in clothing had its peak in the 17th century, as seen in some works by Velázquez. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the use of marvellous clothing called *mantilla de blonda*, which consists of lace made of silk thread, will be particularly developed.

Nowadays, lace and *blonda* are a recognized craftwork of Almagro, and a distinguishing mark of the city, considered as the cradle of lacemaking. However, other nearby towns of the Campo de Calatrava district continue to make this handmade work.

**The Museum.** The municipal initiative arises to meet emerging needs resulted from the richness of ethnographic heritage in Almagro and its projection over the Campo de Calatrava area.

Bobbin lace and *blonda* represent incredible evidences of the survival of traditional and popular arts and occupations, exemplifying a tradition evoking their original contexts. Thus, the City Council aims to recover its historical memory, preserve it and spread it. Current socioeconomic trends force us to design municipal development strategies, where resources, and particularly those connected with our cultural and natural heritage, are driving forces in development policies.

The Municipal Museum of Bobbin Lace and *Blonda* has its own works, including a donation of a collection of *picaos*, paper patterns marked out by pins, from the heirs of Toribio Martínez, a famous lace maker of the city. This collection consists of a series of pieces of different forms and periods.

In addition, it is shown a variety of manufactured bobbin lace pieces with different styles and patterns: linen stitch, half stitch, Guipure, honeycomb stitch, roseground, and so on. They use geometrical, floral, or animal motifs or decorations, among others.

The collection also comprises a diversity of lace works made of natural silk, called *blonda*. This Spanish technique is used to make scarfs, veils, fans, and the well-known mantilla of Almagro. Another section of this museum is dedicated to supplies and equipment used in lacemaking, such as lace pillows, *picaos* or paper patterns, bobbins, and so on.

You can also visit some paintings dedicated to lace maker women by Gregorio Prieto, from the nearby town of Valdepeñas.

