

# Ferdinand II of Aragon (1479–1516)

Subjects: Art

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Ferdinand II king of Aragon (1479–1516). He was the fourth king of the Trastámara dynasty, which had first come to power after the Compromise of Caspe, reached after Martin I died with no living descendants in 1410. Although in terms of artistic patronage Ferdinand II was not as active as his wife Elisabeth I, he was still aware that the wise use of artistic commissions in reinforcing ideas and concepts favourable to the institution of the monarchy. He is a highly important figure in the history of Spain because, along with Elisabeth, he was one of the Catholic Monarchs and thus represents a new conception of power based on their joint governance, a fact that is reflected in the iconography found in his artistic commissions across all genres. All of the images are evidence of how King Ferdinand, at the end of the Middle Ages, wanted to be recognised by his subjects, who also used his image for legitimising and propagandistic purposes. Nobody else in the history of the Hispanic kingdoms had their image represented so many times and on such diverse occasions as did the Catholic Monarchs.

Keywords: royal images ; royal iconography ; kings of Aragon ; Crown of Aragon ; Fernando II of Aragon.

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Ferdinand II was not destined to be king, he was born after the second marriage of Johan II of Aragon (1458–1479) to Juana Enriquez, and was the king's second son. The crown should have gone to Charles, Prince of Viana and son of Blanche of Navarra. However, the clashes and hostilities convulsing the kingdom meant that the Aragonese Cortes of 1461 decided that the second son should succeed to the throne. The climate remained convulsive until the death of Johan II, when Ferdinand was unanimously accepted. All of his subjects, including the Catalans, pinned their hopes on him.

On 5 March 1469 Elisabeth, who had been proclaimed heir to the crown of Castile in the Treaty of Toros de Guisando, signed the Capitulations of Cervera, which meant she entered into a marriage agreement with the heir of Aragon, Ferdinand. Together and as equals their reign was to be one of the most important in the history of Spain and would mark the future of the peninsular kingdoms. Ferdinand's concern for the defence of Christianity was internationally recognised; he was commemorated as "Ferdinand, the Catholic King, propagator of the Christian empire", in the inscription accompanying his wreathed portrayal in the Vatican stanzas painted by the famous Rafael.

Under the Catholic Monarchs Spanish national unity was still de facto rather than de jure; nevertheless, their reign was central to the history of Spain and the creation of the modern nation (on just the subject of his kingdom, see <sup>[1][2][3][4][5][6]</sup>). The death of Ferdinand II ushered in a new era in the history of the kingdom of Aragon with the accession of Charles I of Spain and V of Germany, a member of the Habsburg dynasty who assumed the government of Castile, Navarre and Aragon and came to personify one of the most powerful kingdoms in modern times.

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