

Encarnación Molina, the first woman getting a Gold medal

Introduction

In 1964, the Organizer Committee agreed to include the women participation in the competition rules.

“Feminine participation: “After Mr. Ditlman, who had proposed feminine participation in our competitions, had declared the desirability of allowing women to take part in the competitions, and had carefully studied the matter, with the intervention of the majority of counsellors, the Council agrees that an article should appear in the Rules in which the possibility of women taking part is made clear, competing with young men in those trades deemed desirable by the Council and published in the announcement of the competitions”¹

The 15th International Competition, in Utrecht 1966, was the first in which women took part with the participation, out of competition, of 7 young women (2 from Belgium, 4 from “Holland” and 2 from Germany) in a demonstration of hairdressing.

It was in the 1967 International Competition, which took place in Madrid’s Centro de Formación Profesional Acelerada nº 1, when, for the first time ever, women competed in the specialities of Technical drawing, Sheet Metal Work, Tailoring and Lady’s hairdressing, thanks to the presence of young German, Belgian, Portugal, Dutch, Swiss, and Spanish women.

At that moment, Encarnación Molina, from Spain, became in the first woman winning a gold medal, sharing the podium with Antonia Van Haltem, from The Netherlands, (Silver) and Gabrielle Van Neuss, from Belgium, (Bronze). Also, Ingridt Vogt, from Germany, got the Bronze in Technical drawing.

We have been speaking with Encarnación, currently retired, and this document is collecting the notes of the conversation.

Please, note that these notes are for WS Museum team internal use only, they can’t be shared or published without Encarnación express confirmation.

Background and access to hairdressing

As a child, Encarnación Molina (February 4th, 1949, Madrid) loved going to the hairdresser with her mother. She liked spending time there, she loved the friendly working environment, how kind the clients were to the stylists, and the work itself.

Encarnación lived in Madrid, with her family, and her access to vocational training was happenstance. Her parents, learning that a women’s *Escuela de Maestría Industrial* (currently *IES Santa Engracia*) was about to open and that it offered training in hairdressing, backed her decision to sign up. This laid the groundwork for her career.

This women’s *Escuela de Maestría Industrial* was the first of its kind in Madrid, and Encarnación remembers it was beautifully equipped². It not only housed a high-end salon, but it also benefitted from the backing of renowned stylists who were tremendously inspired by the project.

¹ Meeting held by the organizing council. Minutes 16th October 1964 (NL Archives: WSI_archives_19641016_Madrid_organizing_council).

² The women’s *“Escuela de Maestría Industrial”* was launched in 1962, created by the VET General Directorate of the Ministry of National Education. It was located in the Count of Vilana’s mansion and was later extended to include the adjoining building of the Almudena Institute. The Hall of Columns, decorated with 18th century frescoes and stuccoes, was a regular classroom. Hairdressing and Cosmetics courses started in 1964, with a big launch event.

The teachers were excellent working professionals; they were close to reality and to the needs of their trade. Until that time, the only way to become a hairdresser was to train at a salon, as an apprentice, or to sign up at a private academy.

The *Escuela* was open access and enrolment was possible either in the morning or evening shift. Encarnación chose night school.

She liked studying, she liked mathematics, physics, chemistry, ... and she was aware that the 3 years' worth of *oficialia*³ and 2 of *maestría*⁴ were a great Ministry of Education-certified educational opportunity. As she explains, it was a great stroke of luck that her parents heard of the *Escuela*'s opening and she could enroll in ladies' hairstyling. Furthermore, years later, her younger sister was to follow her steps.

Encarnación has fond memories of her classmates – there were women of all ages – and of her teachers – whose excellence she underscores and who coached her in the outstanding hairdressing techniques (hairdos were much more elaborate back then) that have served her well throughout her career.

Taking part in the competition

When she enrolled, the *Escuela* held shows and exhibitions, but it did not take part in competitions. In her fourth year at the *Escuela* – the first year of her *maestría* – her family opened a salon, allowing her to put into practice the skills and techniques she learned at the *Escuela*: she worked during the day and studied in the afternoon. And one day it was suggested that she take part in a championship. She doesn't remember exactly how it happened, but she does remember that, when she was told, she thought of it as another studies-related activity.

She was groomed for the more technical aspects of the competition at the *Escuela*, and confirms she had a good grip on those skills because that was what was taught in class. She had to run more frequently through the exhibition hairdos, the ones she was to style before the audience, because these hairstyles were exceptional and were not often seen in "real life," as it were. Her classmates helped her: they were her models both during training and in the competition proper. During that first contest, participants had to bring their own models along for some of the tests. The organization provided the products, but the participants brought their equipment: scissors, combs and brushes, and other professional gear.

She recalls that, during the competition, life went on, with minor changes... Instead of going to the *Escuela* every morning, she would go to Barajas, which was close by, and remain there all day until the afternoon, when she returned home. She doesn't remember having ever done anything with the other participants, Spanish or foreign, apart from competing with them.

The tests took place in two different spaces: a very nice assembly hall for the demonstration with models, and another area, with vanities, for the technical run-throughs, where participants worked with mannequin heads.

She recalls that the other competitors were all very blonde. When the competition began, they were introduced to each other, but after they got started, they barely talked to each other again.

Encarnación remembers a large audience and many visitors: authorities, professionals, relatives, participants from other specialties... hairstyling was novel, attractive, and interesting to watch, but she focused on the task at hand.

Encarnación tells us that "in the exhibition portion, the Dutch contestant, who took home the silver, did really striking things, her model seemed a professional model, and you can really tell when you work with a professional styling model. For the haircut test, the organization provided the models and assigned them by draw. During the technical part, my colleagues watched me closely; they'd come over to see what I was doing."

³ *Oficialia industrial* was a former vocational educational title, equivalent to Spain's current Formación Profesional de Grado Medio, being the second-highest level of vocational education attainable in Spain.

⁴ *Maestría industrial* was a former vocational educational title, equivalent to Spain's current Formación Profesional de Grado Superior, being the highest level of vocational education attainable in Spain.

One of the exercises she completed was curling locks⁵ her technique was excellent, and another was wet waving hair⁶. Since styling waves requires a great deal of dexterity and precision, she later used this technique to train her students. This second exercise caught the eye of many and earned her the congratulations of Issac Blanco⁷, then one of Madrid's leading stylists.

A teacher accompanied her and the colleagues who served as her models throughout the competition. Her family, naturally, was very proud of her work, and they visited her throughout the tests.

The Awards Ceremony

She doesn't quite recall when she was informed that she had won first place; but the awards ceremony, which took place in Madrid's *Casa Sindical*, has remained etched in her mind.

Stepping on the podium, being awarded her medal and diploma, and, finally, turning to the audience as the national anthem was performed was very moving. She remembers it as a very special moment. Everyone was beaming, smiling... they were all very proud, as was she.

Overall, Encarnación has very fond memories of the competition and, especially, is deeply satisfied that her work was acknowledged.

Afterwards...

Once she finished her second year of *maestría*, she earned her title and the *Escuela's* management offered her a teaching position as a styling *Maestro de Taller*. She thought she was very lucky and appreciated the recognition; additionally, she loved teaching itself. The student was now a colleague of her former teachers!

Encarnación, who was very young when she began teaching, taught people of all ages, since there were many older students enrolled. Everyone was very keen to learn back then, so she did what she knew how to do best and shared her skills with her students.

They had to begin from scratch: there were very few programmed lessons and little learning material. Encarnación took on a very active role in the design of plans, content, and matter. She tells us that she tackled the job "just like you tackle everything in life: you work hard and solve whatever needs to be solved."

Although initially she kept her salon open, at a given point she was asked to devote herself exclusively to teaching. She decided to close the salon. By then, she was completely focused on teaching. However, she insists that teachers must have practical working experience in their field, because, she explains, they must be able to teach and style both; without practical expertise, they will not be able to truly teach.

Encarnación also says that hairstyling has changed tremendously since she began to work. Back then, you had to "really tame" hair; eye-catching hairdos that were time-consuming to style were the norm, and ladies had time to linger in the salon. But now, women focus more on looking after their hair with the help of hair-care products and appliances and device.

She has also witnessed the evolution of the teaching of hairdressing. Encarnación adapted to changing needs and fashions, in her final teaching years, before retiring. She explains that her first students were very different

⁵ "Curly locks" are small rings of hair that are formed with the tips of the fingers and held in place with a clip or pin. This technique was created by Rambeaud, the French hairdresser. Encarnación Molina y Maricarmen Molina, "*Diccionario Universal de Peluquería*", page 315.

⁶ "Wet weaving hair" is a hairstyle done with wet hair, using fingers and a comb, forming waves all over the head. It requires great precision of movements. Encarnación Molina y Maricarmen Molina, "*Diccionario Universal de Peluquería*", page 240.



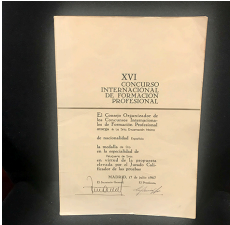
⁷ Isaac Blanco was a prestigious lady's hairdresser in Madrid and very well recognized abroad. In 1959, in New York, he won the World Cup and was proclaimed Best Hairdresser of the Year. Vogue and Harper's considered him to be one of the five best in the world for years. He used to say: "I have combed almost all the queens in the world", "Isaac Blanco: «He peinado a casi todas las reinas del mundo»", *La Razón*, 20th April 2013.

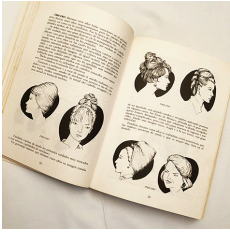
from later ones. Young people today are different from young people back then, she says; nowadays, they don't always know what they want, and often have no way of achieving their objective.

Others merits

Encarnación is coauthor of *"Diccionario Universal de peluquería"* (Encarnación Molina and María del Carmen Molina. Editorial Videocinco. Legal Deposit: M 7642-1986, ISBN 398-6171-0)

Assets related

Image	Code and Title	Notes
	WSI_2311 , Awarding ceremony	Digital images of the awarding ceremony, scanned from the loaned hard copies
	WSI_2310 , 1967 Gold medal	Digital image of the Gold Medal 1976
	WSI_2314 , 1967 Winner certificate	Scanned file and images of the Winer Certificate 1967

	<p>WSI_2312, 1967 Spanish National Competition informative brochure</p>	<p>Scanned file from the original 1967 Spanish National Competition informative brochure</p>
	<p>WSI_2325, Universal Hairdressing Dictionary</p>	<p>Encarnacion Molina and her sister, Maricarmen Molina, are the authors of this textbook</p>