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Diego Velázquez and King Philip IV of Spain: A Shared Love for the Arts

Kristina Gray

College of Arts and Sciences, Boise State University



Velázquez, Diego Rodríguez de Silva y, Felipe IV, 1635-1628, Painting, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, Spain. <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/online-gallery/obra/felipe-iv-1/>



Velázquez, Diego Rodríguez de Silva y, Self-Portrait, 1645, Painting, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy. <http://www.uffiziart.org/en/diego-velazquez/self-portrait-2>

Abstract

This research looks to understand both the professional and personal relationships between Spanish Baroque painter Diego Velázquez and King Philip IV of Spain. In the Baroque era, the post of a court painter was a high-ranking, sought after position within aristocratic society, but the relationship between both king and painter was expected to be strictly professional. However, the friendship that Philip extended towards Velázquez through court appointments, further training, and high esteem within daily life at court seems to be the exception to the rule. This analysis looks to prove that the relationship between Baroque artist Diego Velázquez and King Philip IV of Spain challenges what we already know about sovereign-subject relations in the Baroque era. By way of looking at two to five pieces, within the royal inventory during that period, that illustrate Velázquez' and Philip's shared love of the arts and the artist's influence on political decisions that the Philip made during 17th century Spain.

Background

Following his entrance as principal painter at court Velazquez was appointed to other posts which would have required more involvement within diplomatic affairs, such as Assistant of the Wardrobe (1636), Assistant of the Privy Chamber (1643), and Chamberlain of the Palace (1652).

With the approval and strong support of the king, Velázquez went on three different trips to Italy. It was on these trips where his status as diplomat versus artist could be questioned.

Methods

Through traditional art historical methods, specifically by way of formal analysis of primary sources and the art he acquired for the royal collection (2-5 paintings that best illustrate Velazquez' role in political affairs past that of just solely a court painter), I plan to evaluate Velazquez' role as both artist and diplomat within the bounds of his employment by the throne.

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Kristina Gray
Dr. Janice Neri
Department of Art History and Visual Culture



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RONALD E. MCNAIR
POST-BACCALAUREATE
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