



The painting of Juan de Pareja by Velázquez is among the most important acquisitions in the Museum's history. Not a formal portrait but a rare, un-commissioned one, it is a work of genius, in its subtlety of brushwork and coloring, freshness of characterization, and depth of insight and sympathy.

The picture was paid for through the use of funds given to the Museum over fifty years ago and restricted ever since to the purchase of works of art, as well as through a few special gifts from friends of the Museum. It should be emphasized that none of this money was available for general purposes, such as paying guards' salaries, underwriting community projects, or funding the building program.

Over the past year our focus has changed from buying objects on a broad scale to the more difficult, but in the long run more rewarding, task of concentrating the Museum's purchase funds, and waiting patiently for the rare and momentous occasion when an exceptional work of art such as this becomes available. In the meantime we will, of course, continue to upgrade the quality of our collections through gifts, bequests, and exchanges. The Metropolitan Museum is grateful to Wildenstein & Company for its important assistance in the acquisition of this superb picture, and for its generosity in doing so at no cost to the Museum.

Since it came into the Museum's possession, there have been dramatic changes in the painting's size and appearance. It had been known that portions of the canvas— $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches of the top and $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches of the right side—had been folded under since early in the nineteenth century. What is particularly interesting is the confirmation by the Museum's chief conservator, Hubert von Sonnenburg, that this area (104 square inches) is covered with original paint. In his article, Mr. von Sonnenburg describes how the canvas was unfolded and restored to its original dimensions. Now we can see the composition as Velázquez intended, with the subject not formally centered but presented freely and spontaneously.

In addition, Mr. von Sonnenburg removed the discolored varnish that distorted the picture's overall effect. It can now be seen as a triumph of subtlety, the grays of the background setting off the uncannily realistic flesh tones. The portrait is indeed "the mirror of truth"—an extraordinary addition to the Metropolitan Museum's collection.

Douglas Dillon, *President*
Thomas Hoving, *Director*

Juan de Pareja by Diego Velázquez

An Appreciation of the Portrait

THEODORE ROUSSEAU

Vice-Director, Curator in Chief

The Metropolitan Museum paid an enormous sum to acquire the portrait of Juan de Pareja by Velázquez. The decision to buy the picture was made because it is one of the finest works of art to come on the market in our time. It is among the most beautiful, most living portraits ever painted. Velázquez, whose works are extremely rare, ranks with the greatest painters. This is precisely the kind of object which the Museum has a historic duty to acquire.

An unusual thing about this picture is that we know what people thought about it when it was painted. The information comes to us from a Flemish artist, Andreas Schmidt, who was in Rome in 1650 when Velázquez painted it. Schmidt later went to Madrid, where he told the story to Antonio Palomino y Velasco, the historian of Spanish art, who published it some sixty-five years later.

Palomino tells us that when Velázquez was in Rome, where he had been sent to buy pictures for his master, the king of Spain, he painted the portrait of the pope, Innocent X. In order to practice before beginning his sittings with this supremely important personage, he did a portrait from life of his assistant, the young mulatto painter Juan de Pareja. This was so startling a likeness that when he sent Pareja to show it to some of his friends, it had a sensational effect upon them. They were literally astounded by it, and reacted with a mixture of "admiration and amazement" (the Spanish word *asombro* implies fright, mixed with surprise and admiration) "not knowing as they looked at the portrait and its model whom to address or where the answer would come from." The portrait was then shown in an exhibition of outstanding pictures both old and new in the Pantheon, "where it was generally applauded by all the painters from different countries who said



Detail of the portrait of Juan de Pareja by Velázquez

that the other pictures in the show were art but this alone was 'truth.' As a result, Velázquez was elected to the Roman Academy."

What astounded these contemporaries of Velázquez still astounds us today. In spite of the 300 years that have passed, we are still struck by the picture's life, its "truth." We feel all the exhilaration of this young man, himself an aspiring painter, who had been chosen to accompany his famous master on the trip to Rome, the capital not only of Christendom but of all the arts, the Mecca of any artist who wanted to amount to something. To the ultrasophisticated Romans, this dark-skinned young foreigner (Palomino says he was of "mixed blood") with his bushy hair and his untidy artist's clothes—Velázquez has painted a hole at the elbow of his sleeve—and his direct, proud look, must have been both intriguing and appealing.

The picture is exceptionally well preserved and now that it has been restored to its original dimensions, all this comes through in simple, powerful terms and makes it one of the most living and timeless in the history of art. Juan de Pareja seems to be standing there before us—almost bursting out of the frame. He looks us right in the eye. We can imagine him holding the portrait, striking this same pose, and saying, "Here I am. My master has sent me to show you this picture." It is easy to understand how astonishingly

alike model and painting must have looked.

Velázquez succeeds in giving this feeling of a strong physical presence by a subtle and highly effective color scheme. Most of the picture is painted in neutral tones, the cool gray of the background creating air and space around the warmer brownish grays of the body, its bulk shaped by dark shadows. This low-keyed harmony of grays and blacks concentrates attention on the head, where the rich, full-blooded tones of Pareja's skin are set off by the deep black of the hair and beard and the broad white collar.

The handling of the paint is, as always in Velázquez's work, unhesitatingly bold and sure. At first glance, it appears rough and very free, something painted fast at one sitting, but the more it is studied the more one is convinced of the thought that lies behind it. If something was not quite right, Velázquez corrected it—as can be seen in the silhouette of the cloak and collar. Corrections occur in almost all Velázquez's work, proof of the infinite care he took about every detail, keeping all the while his extraordinary feeling of effortless ease and freedom. The white collar, for example, might invite comparison with the brilliant and facile brushwork of Frans Hals, but there is a fundamental difference: here there is no virtuosity for its own sake. The brushwork is an integral part of the picture as a whole. Velázquez made no attempt, for instance, to define the eyes in naturalistic detail: the iris and eyelashes are done almost in one stroke, painted with a refinement that required perfect control and accuracy. The earlobe, appearing through the hair, is just a spot of paint, but a miracle of precision as to intensity of color and value.

This trip to Italy was a high point in Velázquez's development as a painter. Italy must have seemed wonderfully lush and colorful after the severe landscape of Castile and the gloomy, etiquette-ridden court of Madrid, where most people dressed in black. In Venice he again filled his eyes with the works of Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese whom, Palomino tells us, he had been trying to "follow and imitate" ever since his first visit twenty years earlier. His color, inspired by his renewed contact with Titian and the Venetians, becomes richer and more luminous. More important, in Italy Velázquez took on a new confidence, a sensuous feeling for life that replaced the reserve so characteristic of his earlier portraits. This is evident in everything he painted in Rome—in the magnificent portrait of Pope Innocent X, but even more in the Juan de Pareja. Here Velázquez had only to please himself, and here was a subject for whom he clearly felt real sympathy and affection. No picture in all his oeuvre has this same impact. In the feeling it gives of an extraordinary human relationship between artist and sitter, it invites comparison with another masterpiece of portraiture, the Jan Six of Rembrandt.

Stimulated and enriched by his Italian experience, Velázquez returned to Spain to paint some of his greatest works during the last ten years of his life, such as the glittering Infanta Margarita and *Las Meninas* (The Maids of Honor). He never again, however, quite reaches the same warmth and intensity that came to him in this wonderful moment in Rome.

1. *The Supper at Emmaus*, by Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (1599–1660), Spanish. Oil on canvas, 48½ x 52¼ inches. Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 14.40.639

2. *The Forge of Vulcan*, by Velázquez. Painted in Rome in 1630. Oil on canvas, 88 x 114 inches. Museo del Prado, Madrid



A History of the Portrait and Its Painter

EVERETT FAHY

Curator in Charge, European Paintings

Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez was born at Seville in 1599 and died at Madrid in 1660. With the exception of his earliest paintings and a few he did in Italy, almost all his work was carried out for the king of Spain or his immediate circle. He was the contemporary of Van Dyck, Poussin, Rubens, and Rembrandt, and like them achieved a completely individual style that places him among the greatest painters in history.

He was trained in Seville, and his paintings at the beginning were based upon the baroque style developed by Caravaggio and his followers. A typical early work by Velázquez, executed by the time he was twenty, is *The Supper at Emmaus* (Figure 1) in the Museum's Altman Collection. It shows three figures painted in somber colors against a plain background. The brushstrokes are firm and even, the silhouettes hard and incisive, and the light sharply focused. The picture is unsentimental, understated, and controlled. The simplicity of the scene and sincerity of expressions convey an unembellished, basic statement of religious truth. Even later, when Velázquez's approach became more spontaneous, achieving almost impressionistic effects, he maintained this clarity of vision.

In 1623 he went to Madrid and painted a portrait of King Philip IV, and a year later was appointed court painter, a position he held for the rest of his life. During his first years at court, he gave the best of his talents to painting official portraits like the one of the Count-Duke Olivares dated 1625 (Figure 3). It exemplifies the simple format and subdued coloring Velázquez perfected in his first portraits: Olivares, dressed in dark green, is standing against an atmospheric gray background. The daring handling of paint in

3. *The Count-Duke Olivares, by Velázquez. Dated 1625. Oil on canvas, 85 x 51 inches. The Hispanic Society of America, New York*

this and the other early portraits reveals the influence of Titian's late works, which Velázquez saw in the royal collection at Madrid and the Escorial. What he learned from these breathtakingly delicate yet boldly painted canvases had a profound effect on him throughout his life.

At Madrid Velázquez came in contact with Rubens, the polished and highly successful Flemish court painter, who visited Madrid in 1628. While Rubens's opulent, brilliantly colored compositions did not affect the style of the reticent, unworldly young Spanish artist, the Fleming did inspire Velázquez to travel. It was through Rubens's intervention that the king granted him permission to make his first trip to Italy.

In 1629, at the age of 30, Velázquez left Madrid for Italy. He remained there until 1631, spending most of his time in Venice, Rome, and Naples, seeking out contemporary painters like Guercino and examining works by Italian High Renaissance masters. The trip was essentially for study, reinforcing what he had learned from the Italian paintings in the Spanish royal collection. It was in Italy that the young Velázquez first seriously examined the art of classical antiquity, and the result may be seen in the subject matter of a painting of this period, *The Forge of Vulcan* (Figure 2). This picture, however, still shows peasant types realistically portrayed as in his earlier work. Shortly before he returned to Madrid, Velázquez met Jusepe de Ribera, a fellow Spaniard who spent most of his life in Naples, painting religious subjects primarily for export to Spanish clients. Ribera's personal style, a blending of Italian and Spanish influences, probably appealed to Velázquez.

Upon his return to Spain Velázquez took up his life as a courtier again, devoting himself almost exclusively to painting single figures and portraits of members of the court. Even the one large historical composition dating from this period, *The Surrender of Breda* (Figure 4), belongs more to the category of the group portrait than to history painting. Executed shortly before 1635, it depicts an event from the Spanish campaign in the Low Countries, when the victorious Spanish general Ambrogio de Spinola received from Maurice of Nassau the key to the conquered city of Breda. The artist illustrates the scene, not in the customary baroque manner with allegorical figures of Victory or Fame, as Rubens might have done, but with a factual depiction of an actual event. The painting gives one the feeling of actually being there, and the portraits, deeply sympathetic and immediate, dominate the composition. The figures are rendered with thinly applied pigment, leaving the canvas visible in some places. This fluid technique, one that Velázquez was to exploit for brilliant effects in later works, enabled him to capture the appearance of reality through the seemingly effortless handling of sensuous paint.

In 1648, Velázquez returned to Italy for a second visit, sent by the king to acquire antique sculptures and oil paintings by Italian masters to decorate the recently renovated royal palace of the Alcazar in Madrid. The trip must have been a welcome change for the artist, who had worked continually at Madrid for almost two decades, dividing his time between painting





4. *The Surrender of Breda*, by Velázquez. About 1635. Oil on canvas, 121 x 144 inches. Museo del Prado, Madrid

and serving the king as the *ayuda de guardarropa*, or assistant of the wardrobe.

Velázquez left for Italy in January 1649, sailing slowly up the Spanish coast and arriving in Genoa three months later. From Genoa he proceeded directly to Venice, where he stayed with the Spanish ambassador, the Marquis de la Fuente, who reported to the king that “without losing time I have arranged for him to see all the pictures which his stay in my house will permit.” At Venice Velázquez purchased canvases by Tintoretto, Veronese, and Titian, which were sent back to the king and now hang in the Prado. He next went to Parma to see the frescoes by Correggio, an artist Philip IV particularly admired. In Modena he tried to buy Correggio’s famous altarpiece of the Nativity, called *La Notte*, now in the Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, but the duke of Modena could not be persuaded to part with it.

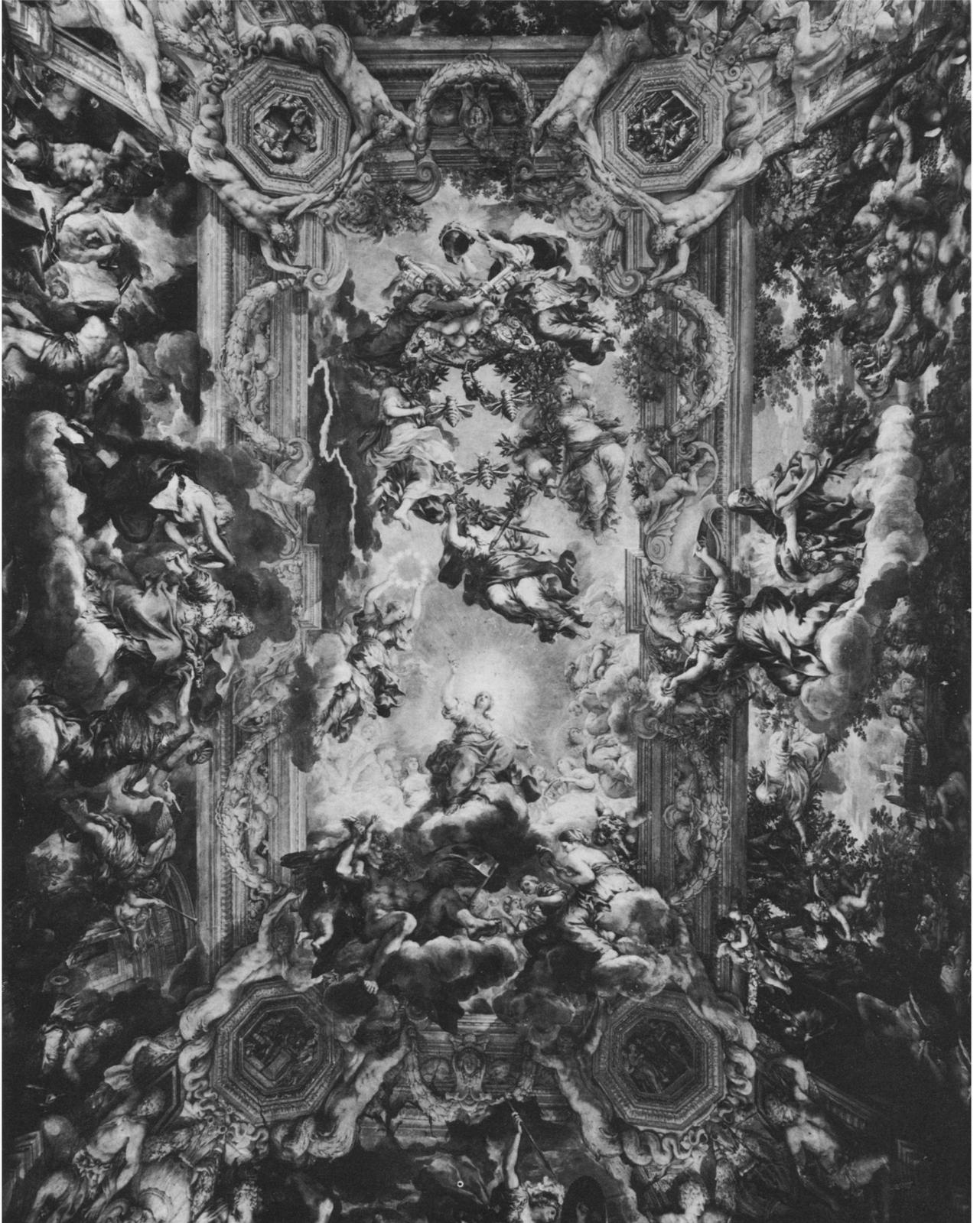
No sooner did Velázquez reach Rome in May than he had to go immediately to Naples to see the Spanish viceroy, the count of Oñate, to collect from him 8,000 reales on behalf of the king. While at Naples Velázquez renewed his friendship with Ribera, the Spanish painter whom he had met on his first visit to Italy twenty years before. Ribera’s *Holy Family with St. Catherine* (Figure 5), now in the Metropolitan Museum, is proudly signed “Jusepe de Ribera the Spaniard, Member of the Painters’ Academy in Rome, 1648,” that is, the year before Velázquez arrived at Naples. It is a splendid example of the tenderness and warmth of human feeling Velázquez’s compatriot imparted to his work.

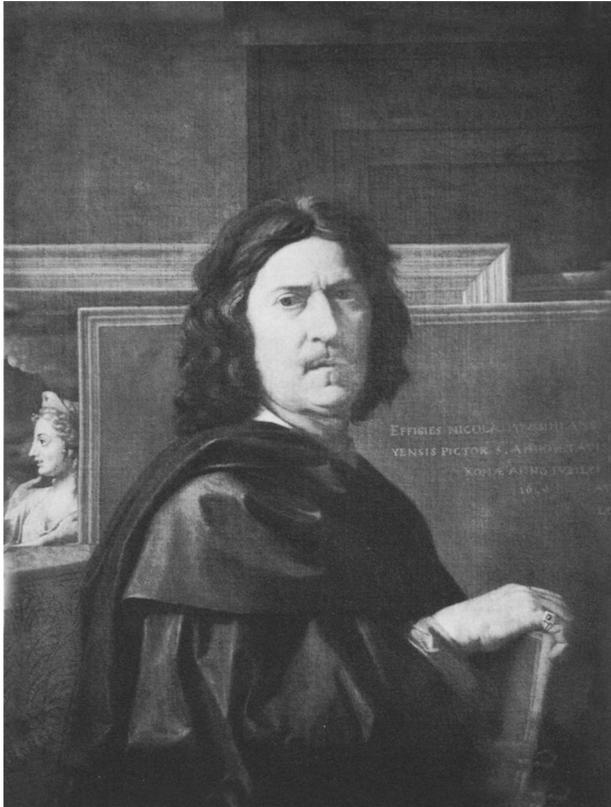
From the few surviving documents of this period, it appears that Velázquez spent all his time at Naples working as the king’s buying agent. His principal activity there seems to have been collecting copies of antique marbles and bronzes to be sent to Spain. He returned to Rome by July 10, 1649.

The king hoped that while Velázquez was in Italy he would entice some Italian painters to visit Spain to decorate the walls of the Alcazar with frescoes, since the king had no native artists to turn to (Velázquez, who painted only in oil on canvas, complained that fresco painting took too much energy because frescoes customarily were very large and they had to be executed rapidly). Philip IV coveted the services of Pietro da Cortona, the most highly regarded Italian painter of the day. His reputation rested on the vast ceiling frescoes executed in the grand manner, such as that in the Barberini Palace, Rome, representing an allegory of Divine Providence and Barberini power, painted between 1633 and 1639 (Figure 6). The king ordered Velázquez “to have Pietro da Cortona, fresco painter, come to this court.” It is not known how the distinguished Italian master responded to the royal command, but, in any event, he never went to Spain. Velázquez also negotiated with two Bolognese artists, Agostino Metelli and Angelo Michele Colonna. Although they eventually did go to Spain and produce many large, decorative *trompe l’oeil* frescoes, the king’s project to decorate the royal residences with frescoes of the grand allegorical type had to wait another century until Corrado Giaquinto and Giambattista Tiepolo finally traveled to Madrid.



5. *The Holy Family with St. Catherine*, by Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652), Spanish. Dated 1648. Oil on canvas, 82½ x 60¾ inches. Samuel D. Lee Fund, 34.73





OPPOSITE

6. *Allegory of Divine Providence and Barberini Power*, by Pietro da Cortona (1596–1669), Italian. Ceiling fresco of the Grand Salone. Palazzo Barberini, Rome. Photograph: Anderson—Art Reference Bureau

ABOVE LEFT

7. *Self-Portrait*, by Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), French. Dated 1650. Oil on canvas, 38½ x 29 inches. Louvre, Paris. Photograph: Alinari—Art Reference Bureau

ABOVE RIGHT

8. *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), Italian. Marble, life-size. S. Maria della Vittoria, Rome. Photograph: Alinari—Art Reference Bureau

For over a year Velázquez remained in Rome. As the Spanish court painter and royal agent, he came in touch with some of the leading artists working there. According to his Spanish biographers, Velázquez was befriended by three in particular: Caballero Mathias (Mattia Preti), Pedro de Cortona (Pietro da Cortona), and Monseñor Pusino (Nicolas Poussin). Like Velázquez, all of them were eminent painters in the service of distinguished patrons. Of the three, Preti was closest to Velázquez in style and temperament. Born and trained in Spanish-governed Naples, he produced dark, brooding canvases strangely reminiscent of the great Spaniard's work. In 1650 Preti was working in Rome on the frescoes in the tribune of S. Andrea della Valle. Pietro da Cortona, the painter King Philip hoped to lure to Spain, had just completed the frescoes in the Chiesa Nuova and, when Velázquez settled in Rome, was about to embark on the frescoes decorating the Doria Pamphili Palace.

In contrast to Preti and Cortona, the great French painter Nicolas Poussin occupied a solitary position in the Roman art scene, having developed a strict classical style, a unique contrast to the flamboyant character of Roman baroque art. Poussin never executed frescoes or large decorative works, and the only public commission he ever received, an altarpiece for St. Peter's, was criticized harshly by his contemporaries. Poussin's self-portrait (Figure 7), dating from the period Velázquez visited Rome, shows the stern-faced artist rigidly posed before a background of picture frames and a doorway, the superimposed lines forming a severe, cogitated design. The deliberately controlled style of the picture reflects Poussin's intellectual approach to painting, an approach quite unlike the natural ease with which Velázquez worked.

Velázquez's biographers do not mention any other painters he met in Rome, but it is likely that he knew Andrea Sacchi, a Roman who handled paint with a breadth and freedom the Spaniard would surely have admired. In addition Velázquez was probably acquainted with Claude Lorrain, as well as some of the minor genre artists working in Rome at the time.

Velázquez also knew the sculptors Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Alessandro Algardi. Bernini was perhaps the most influential artist then in Rome. At the Vatican, where Velázquez was received with favor, Bernini held a powerful position. In 1650 he was carving his famous marble group, the Ecstasy of St. Teresa (Figure 8). It is difficult to imagine how its mystic rapture and overwhelming emotion struck the reticent Spanish painter. Algardi, a sculptor who worked in a more restrained, classical style, did appeal to him. It was through Velázquez that the king commissioned Algardi to make a set of four fire dogs, which were eventually shipped to Madrid. Casts of two of these are in the Metropolitan Museum.

During the period he spent in Rome, Velázquez painted a few landscapes, such as the small sketchlike view in the Gardens of the Villa de' Medici (Figure 12). With casual simplicity this picture captures the blazing quality of the Mediterranean sun and the sultry heat of Rome on a summer afternoon. A record of what the artist saw, it has an intimate and totally







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This x-ray (a composite of four negatives) records the flowing movement of flickering brushstrokes that are almost evenly distributed over the entire canvas—an image of total unity of figure and background. The areas of greater density of lead-containing pigments indicate a softness of transition with an infinite variety of paint application.

The few pentimenti in this picture are minor, which is not surprising when one considers the almost classical simplicity of its composition and the fact that it was entirely painted from life. By comparison, the portrait of Pope Innocent X has a greater number of such changes, not only because it was a more official and ambitious task, but also probably because some work had to be done without the presence of the sitter.

COLOR PLATES

The portrait of Juan de Pareja before treatment, covered by a yellowish brown varnish and with the top and right edges folded under.

The painting during treatment. The top and right margins have been unfolded, and the missing piece of canvas at the upper right corner has been replaced. The paint losses are now filled with putty; red-brown paint covers some of the fillings and serves as a priming for the final touching up still to be done. The discolored varnish has been removed from the right side of the picture. Photographs: Wildenstein & Co.

The portrait after cleaning and restoration. Photograph: Taylor & Dull, Inc.





9. *Pope Julius II*, by Raphael (1483–1520), Italian. 1512. Tempera and oil on wood, 42½ x 31¾ inches. National Gallery, London

ABOVE RIGHT

10. *Pope Urban VIII*, by Pietro da Cortona. 1625–1626. Oil on canvas. Museo di Roma, Palazzo Braschi, Rome. Photograph: Alinari—Art Reference Bureau



OPPOSITE

11. *Pope Innocent X*, by Velázquez. Oil on canvas, 55 x 47½ inches. 1649–1650. Galleria Doria-Pamphili, Rome. Photograph: Alinari—Art Reference Bureau



unpretentious quality that looks ahead to nineteenth-century French impressionism.

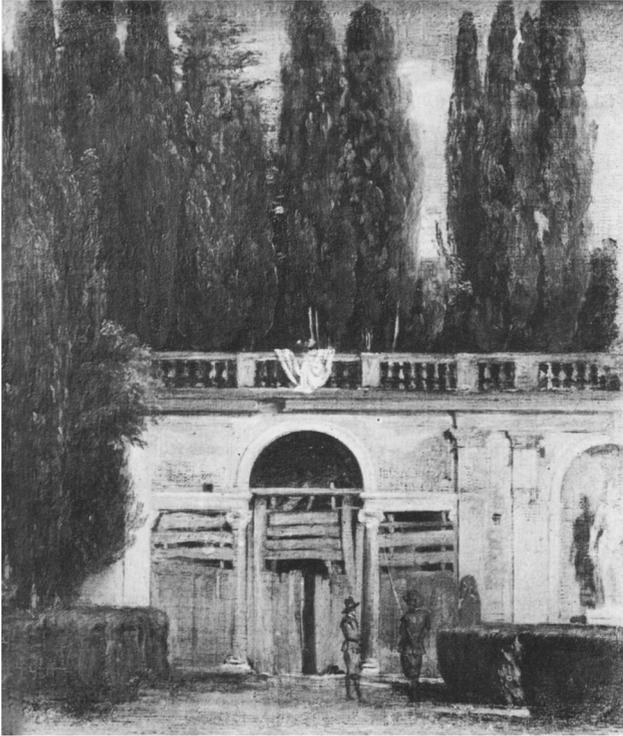
A series of celebrated portraits including those of Juan de Pareja and Pope Innocent X, however, are the artist's most impressive achievements of this period. They were done in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Rome, which, unlike Madrid, was an artistic center. Dozens of painters there were vying with one another for papal commissions. In this competitive milieu Velázquez's supreme talents were officially recognized: of all the painters in Rome he alone was granted permission to paint the pope—the highest honor he could receive.

Velázquez's portrayal of Innocent X (Figure 11) is unlike any painting the artist ever did. It shows the pope seated a little to the left of center and turned slightly at an angle to the picture plane. Velázquez customarily depicted his subject standing or in a much shorter, bust-length format. The three-quarter-length seated pope belongs, however, to a time-honored convention for papal portraits going back to Raphael's Julius II painted in 1512 (Figure 9). Following Raphael's example, Velázquez painted Innocent X in a stiff-backed armchair set against a heavy damask background. The pope rests his forearms on the chair, and in one hand he holds a piece of paper addressed to him and signed by Velázquez.

When Pietro da Cortona painted Innocent X's predecessor, Pope Urban VIII (Figure 10), he used a larger canvas and depicted him full length with impressive masonry and heavy curtains in the background. Despite his meticulous skill at rendering the pontiff's vestments, his painting lacks the sense of actuality with which Velázquez imbued his portrait. The difference between the two can be seen in the formalized gesture of Urban VIII, who raises his hand in benediction and gazes abstractly toward the viewer, whereas Innocent X sits in a natural, poised position, his eyes gazing penetratingly at us. As a portrait of an actual human being, Velázquez's painting is far more immediate and lifelike. Upon seeing it one writer reported that Velázquez came to Rome "not to learn but to teach, for his Innocent X was the amazement of Rome. Every artist copied it and looked upon it as a miracle."

Velázquez also painted at least nine dignitaries and members of the pope's household. Few of them can be identified today: one is of the pope's adopted nephew, Camillo Astalli Cardinal Pamphili (Figure 13). Its composition is far less enterprising than that of the Innocent X, but it is executed with the same free handling of paint: brushstrokes, sparing and unlabored, seem barely to touch the surface of the canvas. Compared to the pope, the sitter is psychologically less compelling—Astalli's eyes are withdrawn, without the power and conviction of the pope's forbidding expression. The portrait lacks a sense of involvement between Velázquez and his subject.

Of all the portraits Velázquez did in Rome that of Juan de Pareja, his assistant and traveling companion, is the most extraordinary. Usually Velázquez's portraits were commissioned, and the artist had to satisfy the official requirements of a royal or high ecclesiastical sitter. Velázquez painted Juan



de Pareja for his own satisfaction, and the outcome reflects the affection the two men felt for each other. It is a rare instance in Velázquez's portraiture in which the relationship between painter and sitter is personal. As in a few of his sympathetic portraits of court buffoons and dwarfs, Velázquez created an exceptional image showing his respect for the human dignity of an individual close to him.

Like Velázquez, Pareja came from Seville. He was born there about 1610 and died at Madrid in 1670. Because he was of black Moorish descent, some writers have assumed he was a slave, and in books on Spanish art he is occasionally referred to as "Esclavo de Velázquez." His early biographers relate that when Philip IV saw how well Pareja could paint he commanded Velázquez to give him his liberty. There is no truth to the anecdote, however, since as early as 1630—before he started to work for Velázquez—Pareja was registered at Seville as a painter, a profession then denied to slaves.

Pareja became Velázquez's assistant sometime after the master returned to Madrid from his first trip to Italy in January 1631. In this capacity, he helped to run Velázquez's atelier in the royal palace. His duties entailed grinding pigments, preparing canvases, and making varnishes. He also seems to have made copies of the master's work, and he spent more than two years with Velázquez on his second Italian journey.

Pareja's earliest surviving work is *The Flight into Egypt* (Figure 14), which is signed and dated 1657, six years after the two of them returned from Italy. Its style is surprisingly provincial, showing almost no understanding of

12. *View of the Gardens of the Villa de' Medici*, by Velázquez. 1649–1650. Oil on canvas, 19 x 16½ inches. Museo del Prado, Madrid

13. *Camillo Astalli Cardinal Pamphili*, by Velázquez. 1649–1650. Oil on canvas, 24 x 19 inches. *The Hispanic Society of America*, New York

14. *The Flight into Egypt*, by Juan de Pareja (about 1610–1670), Spanish. Dated 1657. Oil on canvas, 66½ x 49½ inches. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota

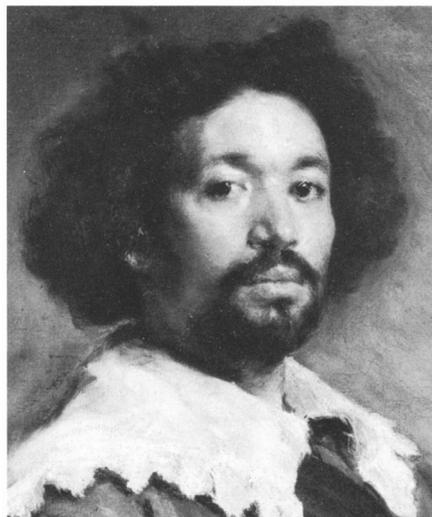




15. *The Calling of St. Matthew*, by Juan de Pareja. Dated 1661. Oil on canvas, 89 x 128 inches. Museo del Prado, Madrid

16. Detail of *The Calling of St. Matthew*, showing Juan de Pareja's self-portrait

17. Detail of Juan de Pareja, by Velázquez



18. *Las Meninas*, by Velázquez.
1656. Oil on canvas, 125 x 109
inches. Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Photograph: Anderson—Art
Reference Bureau

Velázquez's art. The flock of cherubs in the sky and the limp folds of drapery have nothing to do with the master. In 1661, the year after Velázquez's death, Pareja painted *The Calling of St. Matthew* (Figure 15), whose cluttered composition is even further removed from Velázquez's lucid designs. Pareja included his self-portrait in this picture: he is the man standing on the extreme left with a small piece of paper in his hand (Figure 16). It is curious that in painting himself Pareja de-emphasized his racial traits and eliminated any signs of age—he looks as young as he did when Velázquez portrayed him a decade earlier.

According to Antonio Palomino, who published a life of Velázquez in 1724, the portrait of Juan de Pareja created a sensation when it was exhibited to the Roman public in 1650. It was included in an annual show of paintings by contemporary and old masters held near the tomb of Raphael at the Pantheon on March 19, the feast day of St. Joseph, a favorite saint of Roman painters. The reaction was so favorable, Palomino wrote, that Velázquez was made a member of the art academy of Rome ("*Académico romano*"). But Palomino's story contains several errors of fact. It is known, for example, that Velázquez was admitted into the Academy of St. Luke, the painters' guild, three months before the exhibition at the Pantheon. These annual displays, moreover, were organized by a quite different organization, the *Congregazione dei Virtuosi al Pantheon*, a confraternity of artists that sponsored charities in Rome. Velázquez became a member of the *Virtuosi* on February 13, 1650. Thus the invitations to join both organizations came before, and not as a result of, the public reaction to his portrait.

Palomino also states that the exhibition took place in the cloister of the Pantheon ("*el Claustro de la Rotunda*"). In point of fact the Pantheon does not have a cloister. From contemporary sources it is known that the paintings were mounted outside the Pantheon on the portico at the front facing the piazza. On the day of the exhibition the columns of the portico were covered with Oriental carpets and the pictures were hung against them; artists and public then walked among the columns, viewing the pictures in daylight.

Palomino admits that he got his story about the portrait of Juan de Pareja from a certain Andreas Schmidt, a Flemish painter who was living in Rome while Velázquez was there. Having heard the account second-hand, and writing about it seventy-four years later, it is no wonder that some of his facts were mistaken. Yet the gist of the story is probably true: the portrait did win Velázquez great acclaim. While his other Roman works were privately commissioned and not available to many members of the Roman public, the Juan de Pareja was exhibited for all to see, hanging alongside works by the best artists in Rome. Its extraordinarily lifelike quality surpassed anything they had ever seen.

After the portrait was exhibited, Velázquez stayed on in Rome, but the king was anxious for him to return to Madrid. In February 1650, he had already written the Spanish ambassador in Rome, "I have seen your letter of November 6, 1649, in which you account for what Velázquez is doing,



and, since you know his phlegmatic temperament, it would be well for you to see that he does not exercise it by remaining at the Vatican but hastens the conclusion of his work and his departure so that by the end of May or the beginning of June he can return to this kingdom, as I am ordering him to do. . . . I am sending an order to Velázquez not to return by land for fear that he might linger on the way, the more so because of his nature." The king's command seems to have had little effect on Velázquez: he remained in Italy at least until the end of 1650, traveled by land up the Italian peninsula, stopping again at Modena in December 1650 and pausing briefly at Venice. Palomino writes that Velázquez even wanted to extend his journey to Paris, but he never got there because of the civil strife resulting from the Fronde rebellion. He finally arrived at Madrid in June 1651, having been away almost two and a half years.

The following year Velázquez was promoted to the rank of chamberlain of the palace (*apostador del palacio*). The new position brought with it a higher salary and many more official duties. As a result, Velázquez produced fewer pictures after his return to Spain: during the remaining eight years of his life he painted only about two pictures a year. One of them, however, is the greatest work he ever did. A large group portrait of the family of Philip IV known as *Las Meninas*, or *The Maids of Honor*, it is set in Velázquez's studio in the royal palace (Figure 18). The artist stands to the left before an enormous canvas on which he is painting the king and queen, who are reflected in the mirror in the background, but the real subject of the picture is the charming little five-year-old Infanta Margarita Teresa, who has come to watch Velázquez at work. She stands between two ladies-in-waiting, who coax her to behave, and to the left of two court dwarfs and a large dog. The bright light on the figures in the foreground falls from an unseen window on the right.

The painting has an extraordinary improvisational quality, each figure seemingly caught unaware; yet all together they form one of the most intricately unified groups Velázquez ever painted. In a departure from all his previous pictures in which figures dominate the scene, Velázquez placed the people in the lower third of the composition, leaving a vast expanse of walls hung high with large paintings in black frames and a bare ceiling.

In a century that produced the glorious canvases of Rubens and the deeply moving works of Rembrandt, Velázquez's *Las Meninas* is a masterpiece that holds its own. With objectivity and insight, Velázquez has captured the appearance of reality, at the same time infusing it with a wonderful sense of humanity.

Although Velázquez completed *Las Meninas* in 1656, he wears the red cross of the Order of Santiago (inside back cover), which he did not receive for another two years. According to an old tradition, the king himself added the cross when he knighted the artist on June 12, 1658. It was the last and highest honor that this superb painter and loyal servant of the court ever received—two years later he was dead.

PROVENANCE

The history of Velázquez's portrait of Juan de Pareja between its exhibition at the Pantheon in Rome in 1650 and the end of the eighteenth century is uncertain. What happened to it is a matter of conjecture. Velázquez could have presented it to Pareja or kept it for himself and taken it back to Madrid, but, as there is no record of the painting in Spain, it seems likely that it was sold to one of the many Italians who admired it.

The first mention of the portrait is in an essay written in 1765 by Francisco Preciado, Director of the Spanish Academy in Rome. He wrote that it had belonged to Cardinal Trajano d'Acquaviva (1694–1747), who lived in Rome when Preciado first settled there in 1740. Cardinal Acquaviva was born in Spanish-governed Naples, had represented both King Philip V and Charles III of Spain at the Vatican, and had served as an archbishop in Spain, first at Toledo and later at Montereale. These close ties with Spain certainly make it seem credible that he could have owned a painting by the great Spanish master, yet Preciado's essay is the only reference to the portrait's ever being in Acquaviva's collection. Perhaps what Preciado saw was a copy; at least five are known to exist today, one of them now belonging to The Hispanic Society of America in New York (Figure 19).

At some time during the eighteenth century, the portrait belonged to the Baranello Collection in Naples; an inventory number painted on the back of the canvas probably refers to this collection. The dukes of Baranello were descendants of Antonio Ruffo, the Sicilian nobleman who commissioned Rembrandt to paint the Aristotle with a Bust of Homer now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Although the Velázquez is not listed in any of the published inventories of Ruffo's collection, it could have been purchased by him or by one of his heirs at a later date. In 1734, one of his descendants, Cardinal Tommaso Ruffo, owned a picture purported to be a self-portrait that Velázquez painted in Rome.

The Juan de Pareja turned up next in the collection of Sir William Hamilton, the British envoy in Naples from 1764 to 1798. When he purchased the painting is not known, but in a carefully drawn up inventory of his entire holdings in the Palazzo Sessa, his residence, just before the French invasion of Naples in 1798, he lists "a portrait of a Moresco slave by Velázquez" as being in his gallery. Hamilton is best known today as the husband of Emma, Lady Hamilton, the beautiful mistress of Lord Nelson. When he left Naples, the Velázquez and many other works of art were sent to London for safekeeping

on board Lord Nelson's ship, the *Foudroyant*, while the colorful *ménage à trois* of the Hamiltons and Lord Nelson traveled together on the Continent. After their return to England, since Hamilton was heavily in debt, the portrait was put up for auction at Christie's in 1801. The sale catalogue describes it as Velázquez's "Portrait of a Moorish Slave, that was in his Service, and became a great Painter: This masterly portrait came from the celebrated Baranello Collection in Naples." At the sale it was bought by a man named Parkes for 39 guineas, and disappeared again. Thus another gap appears in its history.

The portrait reappeared in the collection of Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie, second Earl of Radnor (1750–1828), at Longford Castle, Salisbury (Wiltshire). According to Helen Matilda, the Countess of Radnor, who published a catalogue of the family possessions in 1909, the painting was believed to have been purchased on May 1, 1811, for £151 14s. 5d.; at any rate, she states categorically that it was part of the collection by 1814. It remained in the possession of the Radnor family for over 150 years until it was auctioned by the eighth earl at Christie's in London on November 27, 1970.



19. Copy of Velázquez's Juan de Pareja. Oil on canvas, 29 x 23½ inches. The Hispanic Society of America, New York

The Technique and Conservation of the Portrait

HUBERT VON SONNENBURG
Conservator

The portrait of Juan de Pareja is in an excellent state of preservation. The canvas appears to be undisturbed by later hands, which is quite unusual for a seventeenth-century painting, most of which have been lined—reinforced by having another piece of canvas attached to the back; in the process the original canvas is usually flattened. The fact that this picture has never been lined is important since Velázquez, more than any other painter, made full use of a particularly rough-textured canvas as part of his technique, especially in his later works. In addition, this canvas has remained remarkably strong, making it possible to unfold strips along the top and right side that had been turned under at an unknown date.

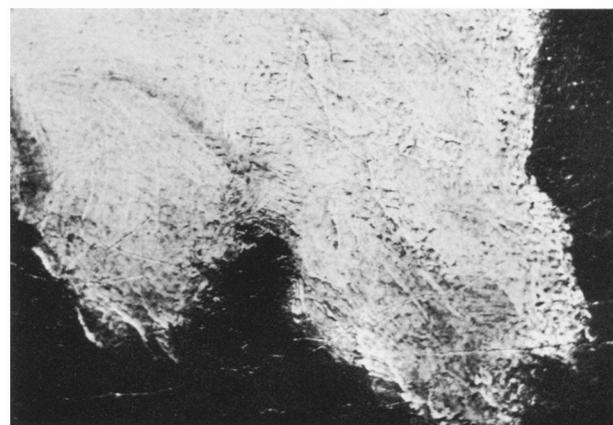
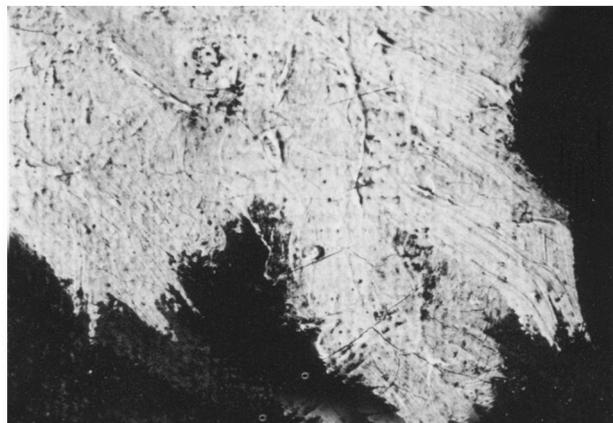
The painting was covered by a transparent, natural resin varnish that had discolored to a deep yellowish brown. This altered the original color scheme to a misleading degree, so that the painting appeared more colorful than it actually is. The drastic change in overall effect through the removal of this varnish is explained by the fact that of all color values, subtle variations of gray are most distorted by yellow or brown surface coatings. Cleaning emphasized not only the painting's economy of color scheme but also the economy of technique, both of which have been surprisingly little described. So before I discuss the conservation, I will summarize what this painting indicates of Velázquez's technique.

In the portrait of Juan de Pareja, an extraordinary realism of great subtlety is achieved by contrasting and offsetting fleshtones with variations of gray, black, and white. A daring presentation surely done for its own sake, this painting is, in fact, a study in representing flesh. It might be regarded as a technical exercise in preparation for the portrait of Innocent X that Velázquez was about to undertake: in painting Innocent, he had to cope with the problem of representing an unusually flushed complexion surrounded by a brilliant red vestment.

The portrait of Pareja is a good example of the advanced development of Velázquez's technique around 1650. First of all, a medium light brown ground with a reddish tinge is thinly applied over the rough canvas.

This warm ground, which Velázquez used in many of his works throughout his life, plays an important role as counterbalance for the predominantly gray color scheme. When cool grays are required—such as the light background surrounding the head—this priming is completely covered; in other areas—the right-hand background and Pareja's bodice, sash, and cloak—the gray is more thinly applied, so the priming makes itself felt, giving these passages a warmer, faintly greenish tinge.

In the warm, dark gray velvet of the sleeve, both the ground and the underpainting are exposed a great deal, enabling us to follow the painting process. Clearly visible over the colored ground is the first sketchy outlining with broadly applied black paint, which also serves for the deep shadows. As the next step, Velázquez indicated the dark gray middle tone of the folds with a few brush-



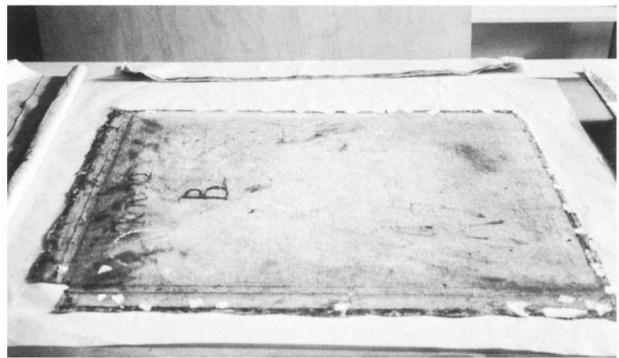
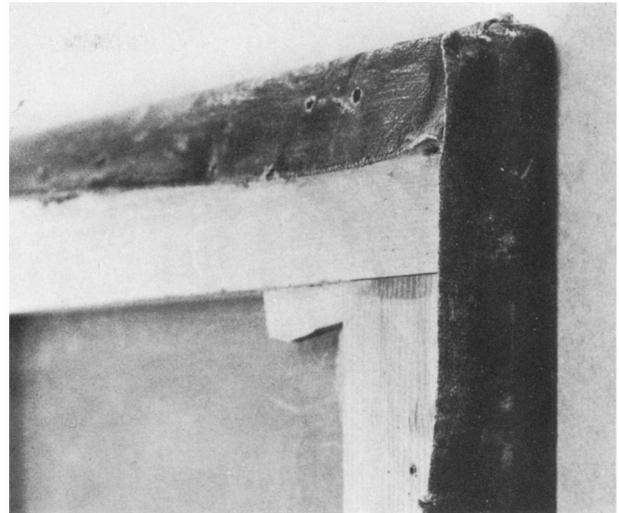
Details of the brushwork on the collar of the portrait of Pareja, from the Velázquez painting in the Metropolitan (above) and the later copy in the Hispanic Society (below). Compare Velázquez's economy and assurance of technique with the copyist's labored handling

strokes and then applied a light gray impasto here and there to define the ridges. An occasional admixture of pale pink to these grays acts as a subtle optical transition, relating the cool highlights more to the brown ground. Extreme economy and boldness of application are combined in this technique. From a distance the interplay of ground color and openly spaced paint layers distinctly characterize the texture of the velvet.

By applying the same colors closer together, Velázquez represented the different material of bodice and cloak, its surface more uniform, less light absorbent. Here, Velázquez uses scumbles—layers of paint containing opaque pigments—for the first, general layout of the local color. These scumbles are applied directly over the brown ground and black outlining, but are thin enough for some light to penetrate and to be reflected back from the colored ground beneath. Wherever modeling is required, the scumbles are covered by heavy impasto that serves as highlight. Velázquez often used such semiopaque layers, especially in blocking in large compositions.

Velázquez's technique is closely related to that of the Venetian painters of the preceding century, who were the first to exploit different canvas textures in combination with paint layers of varying thickness. It is unthinkable, indeed, without knowledge of the late technique of Titian, whom Velázquez admired, as had El Greco before him. Not only were Titian's works well represented in the Spanish royal collections, but Velázquez had carefully studied paintings by the Venetian masters during his first trip to Italy twenty years before. By absorbing and understanding their technique he was able to modify his own. One of the essential differences, however, is that neither El Greco nor Velázquez ever used transparent oil glazes to the extent the Venetians did. The Venetians modified and intensified underlying colors by covering them with one or more layers of transparent paint. The two Spaniards employed glazing on a more restricted scale, on small areas or as thick dabs of transparent colors for accents.

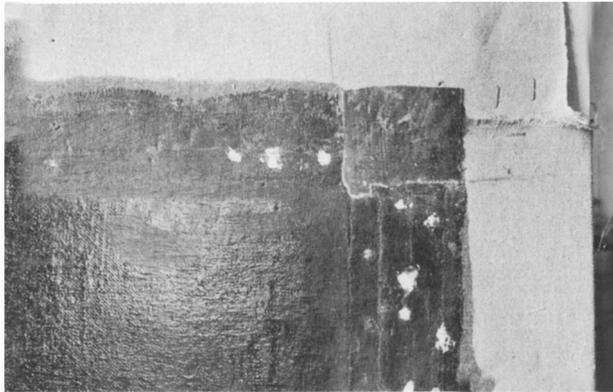
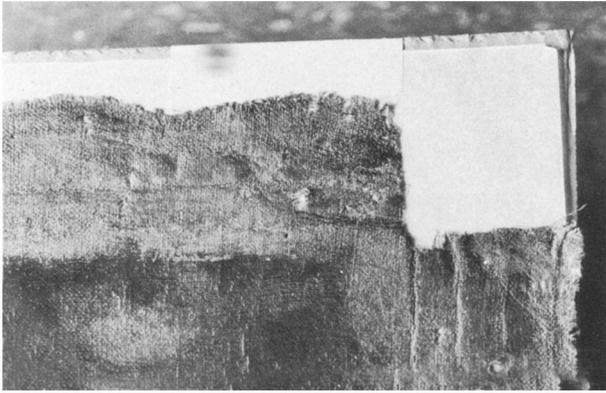
Shortly before Velázquez painted Pareja's portrait, he had again studied this school of painting in the Italian collections, and his technique shows the full impact of it, especially in his increasingly bold use of relatively few layers and thicknesses of paint. This sets him apart from the leading contemporary Italian painters, whose ideal was a smoother, more unified paint surface. In addition, at this period Velázquez further refined the technique of using highlights of subtle coloring and infinite variety of shape that he had developed during the 1640s. He must have applied them in a very calculated manner, judging



The portrait lying on its face. The tacks have been removed from the folded-over strips, but the unpainted canvas margins are still turned under and therefore not visible

The painting completely unfolded to its original dimensions with the missing corner piece noticeable. An inscription in fairly large letters was written on the top front of the canvas—possibly identifying it as Velázquez's property. The medium used has stained the fabric at the back, and, due to chemical changes over the years, has even become visible through the paint on the front

by the precision with which they are positioned on the high points of the canvas surface. Their effect at a distance is so extraordinarily telling that he probably stood relatively far from the canvas as he applied them, which brings to mind a passage in Palomino's life of Velázquez that mentions that Velázquez used brushes with long handles to paint the portraits during his stay in Rome—*"pintó con astas largas."* The rounded shape of Pareja's forehead, for instance, is defined only by a large spot of impasto—crisp in the center, bordered by dragged spurs—applied directly on the thin underpainting. When seen close up, the highlight seems to be floating over the



The top right corner seen from the front before and after the missing piece was replaced. This canvas is of the regular (tabby) weave; Velázquez used a more unusual, diagonal (twill) weave for the portrait of Pope Innocent X, perhaps for its even rougher texture and additional strength

paint in an almost measurable distance. From further away this clear separation of the painted layers, reinforced by the highlights and shadows of the texture of the canvas itself, gives the skin a particularly moist quality. Like no other artist, Velázquez explored the optical interplay of highlights, paint layers, and canvas texture. Sometimes this results in a slightly out-of-focus quality, corrected in the eye of the spectator; the suggestive power of this technique makes the subject seem about to move.

Attention should be drawn to the single dragged brushstroke of light skin color in the center of the background at the right, and to the streak of dark gray further to the right. Unquestionably, this randomly applied paint is original, and shows how Velázquez chose to try out his loaded brush on the background of his painting to get it ready for a very precise touch. Such spontaneity, combined with the greatest subtlety of color and technique, make the Juan de Pareja one of Velázquez's most painterly works.

As far as the actual conservation work was concerned, the most important fact was that the major portion of the original canvas is extremely well preserved and quite strong. A painting by Velázquez with an unlined canvas can be considered rare, and I recall few other examples, aside from the portrait of a young man in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich. For Velázquez's technique, with its emphasis on canvas texture, any flattening or change in the original surface could have a very damaging effect.

The painted canvas had been folded over the stretcher $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches at the top and $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches on the right side. As could be expected, the folding and tacking down of these strips resulted in some damage to the canvas and loss of paint. The only real loss, however, is a piece of canvas missing from the top right corner, measuring $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, which had been cut off in the past in order to facilitate the folding over. Aside from this patch, the canvas had not been cut down, and even the unpainted margins could be folded out. It is now possible to see clearly where the actual paint ends.

We decided that any treatment for regaining the original dimensions of the painting must involve neither the surface nor the back of the picture within the limits of its reduced dimensions. After the creases in the folded-out strips had been gently and gradually corrected by controlled application of moisture from the back and pulling by hand from the sides, the painted surface was found to run in a straight line. From this we conclude that the canvas's wavy threads (typical of most old canvas) are original, not later distortions. Strips of new canvas, extending about one inch under the original canvas in its present dimensions, were attached to the margins with wax resin adhesive so the canvas could be held in place by nails mostly driven through the original holes.

The paint layers show no signs of having ever been abused by solvent action during varnish removals in the past. One can, however, safely assume that the picture had been cleaned and revarnished at times, probably last in 1938 by the late Horace A. Buttery, before it was shown at the exhibition *Seventeenth-Century Art in Europe* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. In the catalogue for this exhibition the color of Pareja's coat is correctly referred to as dark gray, contrary to most other descriptions in the Velázquez literature before and after, which call it "a green doublet." At the same time the painting was put on a new stretcher and backed by an unattached grounded canvas. No attempt was then made to bring the picture back to its original dimensions.

OPPOSITE

Detail of Las Meninas showing the self-portrait of Velázquez

