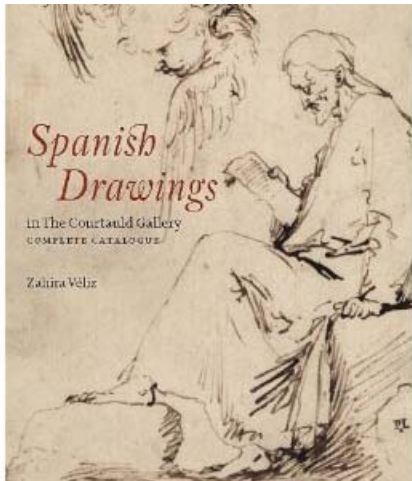


Around the galleries

Rare and little known – drawings by Spanish artists

– March 2012



Spanish Drawings in the Courtauld Gallery. Complete Catalogue By Zahira Véliz

The largest bequest of Spanish drawings in The Courtauld was made by Sir John Witt, who purchased them from the estate of Sir William Stirling Maxwell. Maxwell collected Spanish art from 1842–83 and also wrote the first major work on Spanish art in English, *Annals of Artists of Spain* (1848). Some of this ground is re-covered by Zahira Véliz, who explains the background to the production, use and collecting of drawings, and their subjects.

The social status of the artist in Spain and the restricted patronage that dictated subject matter are vital points to bear in mind. Without an Academy, preparatory drawings were workshop tools rather than items to retain, except on occasion for reference, nor did they have potential value in the eyes of the artist. No drawings by Velázquez or Zurbarán have been satisfactorily attributed, although the former is recorded as having made them. The collecting of Spanish paintings was established in Britain, especially after the Peninsular War; but as there are thought to be only about three to four thousand Spanish drawings in the world they were presumably less easy to come by.

Philip V, the French Bourbon king, who arrived in Spain in 1700, brought with him new artists and styles and, eventually, the Academia de Bellas Artes in Madrid was founded in 1752, followed by academies in Seville and Valencia. Outstanding among pupils in Madrid was Francisco de Goya, whose independent mind is represented here by only one drawing (cat. 103).

The catalogue is divided chronologically and geographically, emphasizing how few artistic centres there were in Spain in relation to the size of the country. The sections begin with the time of Phillip II (r. 1556–98) in Madrid, and on to Seville, Córdoba and Granada, and Valencia in the 17th century (which occupy the first 86 entries). Véliz has divided the remainder into 'Spanish regions unknown and Portuguese'; the 18th and 19th centuries, and ends with 'a handlist' of 11 drawings of the 20th century (including three by Picasso).

An exploration of watermarks, a useful biographical section, and various indexes conclude the book, which is generously and elegantly produced with good full-page colour illustrations and reference material for each drawing. The reference to fig. 107 for Francisco Meneses Osorio should, however,

be to fig. 110; but this error should be evident to the attentive reader!

The British Museum has recently announced the purchase of a drawing by Juan Antonio Conchillos y Falco (who tried to start an academy in Valencia several decades before the event) so it seems that Spanish drawings will become a more familiar subject in this country, thanks to the opening up of the subject in general, this publication in particular and further research, which will surely follow. So, a book for the scholar's or institution's library – but one which be invaluable to the student and connoisseur alike wherever they read it. Perhaps now Véliz will return to her research into the identity of the Lady with a Fan by Velazquez, a subject on which she first published some six years ago.

There are few sources available on Spanish drawings, whether ancient or modern, in comparison those for contemporary Italian drawings. For the present catalogue, Véliz has used four standard historic sources, Vicente Carducho's *Diálogos de la pintura...*(1633), Francisco Pacheco's *Arte del la Pintura* (1649), Juseppe Martinez's *Discursos practicables del noblissimo arte de la pintura* (c.1670) and Antonio Palomino's *El pictório y Escala Optica con el Parnaso Español pintoresco Laureado* (1715–24). Pacheco may be the most familiar name to many people, because he was the teacher of Velázquez and was much mentioned in the catalogue to 'The Sacred Made Real' at the National Gallery (2009/2010).

This undoubtedly handsome volume is an important addition to the diverse but relatively small English-language bibliography on Spanish drawings. As Véliz concedes, only 'a small community' have researched and shown interest in the subject. Indeed, Anthony Blunt omitted to mention any Spanish drawings in the Courtauld's Handlist of 1956 – a wrong which has been righted by this catalogue of some 116 drawings with their proper cataloguing and details. Even now, the author offers it as a work in progress.

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