

examples in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). The catalogue encompasses a wide range of objects, from figurative groups to tankards and goblets, reliefs and delicate portrait medallions. Compared with other great European dynastic collections, it is rather intimate in nature, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, given that Denmark was governed as a rigid absolutist monarchy from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. If not the greatest work of art, the largest and most politically significant object in the catalogue must be the ruler's throne known as the Anointment chair of Absolutism, made in the workshop of Bendix I Grodtschilling c.1685–90 and covered throughout with a veneer of ivory (no.326; Fig.3). But the most poignant and moving objects are two tankards and a beaker made in the 1650s from narwhal and walrus ivory (nos.320–22), two of them with images of Greenlanders, referring to the group of four Inuit brought back to the court, along with large quantities of *enhorn*, from a 1654 expedition to Greenland.

Hein's catalogue is the latest in a series of scholarly catalogues of collections of Baroque and later ivories that have appeared in recent years, covering collections in Dresden, London, Paris, Schwerin and elsewhere. It is perhaps ironic that this growing interest in the study of later ivory sculptures should be taking place at the same time as we head in many countries towards draconian new laws on trading in ivory, which, however understandable from a modern conservation perspective, threaten to have a profound negative effect on the circulation of important historic works of art made from the material. It would be good to think that, along with other recent collection catalogues, this splendid book, which puts the Rosenborg ivories collection firmly on the map, could help to make the case to politicians for sensible and practical systems of exemption for historic ivories.

The Lost Library of the King of Portugal

By Angela Delaforce. 330 pp. incl. 200 col. ill. (Ad Illisvm, London, 2019), £45. ISBN 978-1-912168-15-6.

by MARK PURCELL

The topic of lost libraries – or of libraries in imminent danger of being lost – is one with a great deal of current resonance. But Angela Delaforce's splendid survey of the lost Royal Library of the kings of Portugal has a unexpected twist: it is a collection

and a magnificent and prominent complex of buildings that was lost not through war, looting, colonialism, confiscation, religious fanaticism or cultural genocide, but through the spectacular and catastrophic intervention of nature.

The Lisbon earthquake was one of the greatest natural disasters recorded in European history. Disaster struck at about 9:40 am on the morning of All Saints Day 1755, with a large-scale eruption 200 kilometres offshore, followed forty minutes later by the first of three devastating tsunamis. As well as providing the background for Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), the earthquake resulted in the deaths of anything up to one hundred thousand people. It was followed by a catastrophic firestorm and the destruction of cultural and architectural treasures on an enormous scale. Early eighteenth-century Lisbon was not just mainland Europe's westernmost capital, but also one of its most magnificent. Splendid since the so-called Age of Discovery, it had grown even richer in the centuries that followed, with the discovery in Brazil of gold (in the 1690s) and diamonds (in the 1720s), both harvested by the forced labours of subjugated indigenous peoples and by ever-increasing numbers of enslaved Africans. The results of this are visible to this day in such buildings as the great palace-monastery at Mafra, just outside the city, or the astonishingly lavish Biblioteca Joanina (1717–28) at the University of Coimbra. But most of Baroque Lisbon was destroyed as a result of the earthquake.

The principal Portuguese royal library was housed in this lost capital in a lavishly appointed four-storey stone tower built for Philip II of Spain, who was King of Portugal from 1581 to 1598. Designed by Juan de Herrera and Filippo Terzi, and known as the *Torreão* or *Forté*, it was an integral part of the main royal palace, the Paço de Ribeira, poised right on the edge of the Tagus, and one of the dominant features of the waterfront. It was devastated so completely that any attempt to reconstruct its history, contents and configuration is fraught with difficulty. No catalogue survives, and although pockets of the collections escaped, most of the contents burned in the firestorm. There are no extant plans or architectural drawings, and little to indicate much of the internal configuration of the spaces that formed the library suite, still less of the arrangement of the collection. What is clear is that Lisbon had one of Europe's finest court libraries, substantially created by and for the pious bibliophile João V (reg.1706–50), who was also the creator of both Mafra and

the library at Coimbra. As Delaforce explains, this lost library consisted of manuscripts – the highest status objects – rare printed books, maps and cabinets of prints and drawings, as well as collections of coins, medals, scientific instruments and clocks. Within it, as she deftly teases out, were books and manuscripts inherited from the medieval kings of Portugal as well as from the dukes of Braganza, who had seized the throne from the Habsburgs in 1640.

Delaforce's beautifully written text successfully casts light on multiple complex and engaging issues: Juan de Herrera's work for Philip II in Lisbon, the inspiration of papal Rome (which João V admired but never visited), negotiations in London over the purchase of the superb manuscript collection of Charles Spencer, 3rd Earl of Sunderland (1675–1722) – his printed books were moved to Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, in 1742 – and the use of international learned networks and Portuguese diplomatic agents to secure rare books in the main centres of the European book trade, Amsterdam and Paris.

This is an enticing and important book, which supplies missing pieces of the jigsaw for anyone interested in the royal and courtly libraries of eighteenth-century Europe. Beautifully organised and sumptuously designed, it casts new light on the contextual and circumstantial evidence for a great library overwhelmed by the forces of nature.

Velázquez: su mundo y el nuestro. Estudios dispersos

By Javier Portús. 472 pp. incl. 147 col. + b. & w. ill. (Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica (CEEH) and Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 2018), £59.50. ISBN 978-84-15245-79-7.

by XANTHE BROOKE

The book under review is part of the series *Colección Velazqueña*, published by the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica (CEEH), which is dedicated to Diego Velázquez's art and critical fortune. It includes collections of essays by leading art historians and Hispanic commentators as well as monographic studies of the artist and his work. This compilation comprises fourteen essays by Javier Portús, the Senior Curator of Spanish Painting up to 1700 at the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, which cover the artist's career and posthumous legacy. All the articles are in Spanish, but four studies come from exhibition catalogues that were originally published in English.¹ Like



4. The 'Las Meninas' room, by Ramón Masats. 1964. Photograph. (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid).

most CEEH publications, the book is well edited and illustrated, although it is regrettable that some formerly large photographs are reproduced as thumbnails.

The first two essays discuss attributional problems presented by two early religious paintings from Seville, *St John the Baptist in the desert* (c.1622; Art Institute of Chicago) and the *Education of the Virgin* (c.1620; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven). In the former essay, published in 2009, Portús identifies *St John in the wilderness* as the Velázquez painting owned by the British consul in Seville Julian Benjamin Williams (d.1866). More recently, however, the present reviewer has suggested that Williams's painting is more likely to be the *St John the Baptist in the desert* acquired from Williams before 1840 by the British collector Frank Hall Standish (1799–1840) and now attributed to Francisco de Zurbarán (c.1659; private collection).²

The second section is devoted to court portraiture in Madrid and papal Rome, linking politics and economics with aesthetic developments across four periods: 1623–29, when Velázquez painted portraits of sober 'men in grey', reflecting the sumptuary laws introduced in February 1623; 1630–40, when the abandonment of austerity led to chromatic splendour; the 1640s, when the death of Queen Isabella in 1644 and that of the only male heir in 1646 was followed by a dynastic and territorial crisis, resulting in a dearth of royal

portraits, apart from one showing Philip IV on military campaign (1644, Frick Collection, New York); and 1650–60, Velázquez's final decade, when Philip's marriage with Mariana of Austria in 1649 culminated in virtuoso female and child portraits, fashioned to encourage the children's marriage prospects and melt the heart of their Habsburg grandfather in Vienna, such as the full-length portrait (1659; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) of the fragile heir Felipe Próspero (b.1657), with a solemn, wistful expression, accompanied by a moist-eyed puppy.

Portús astutely uses royal correspondence, contemporary literature and court theatre – where the portrait was a recurring theme – as evidence for society's attitude to portraits and mythological themes, for example in his discussion of the *Toilet of Venus* (Rokeby Venus; 1647), whose provenance in the large and spectacular collection of Gaspar de Haro y Guzmán (1629–87), Marquis of Heliche, is the subject of another essay. The Marquis's gallery of Habsburg portraits also included the *Riding Lesson of Prince Baltasar Carlos* (c.1636; Grosvenor Estate) and a copy of *Las Meninas* (1656–67; National Trust, Kingston Lacey, Dorset), attributed to his son-in-law Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo.

Las Meninas (1656; Museo Nacional del Prado), known until the mid-nineteenth century as *La familia de Felipe IV*, and rightly described by Portús as a portrait with the vocation of a history painting, weaves a thread through many of the essays. The Infanta Margarita Teresa is depicted with such

technical virtuosity, visual subtlety and spatial complexity that linear and aerial perspective combine to construct a setting that is perfect in its illusionism. Yet it remains a royal group and self-portrait, with the Infanta surrounded by figures each of whom, from king to artist and dog, have a clearly defined function relating to their status at court. By portraying Velázquez as both painter and courtier, *Las Meninas* played a significant role in his attaining a knighthood in 1659, despite his manual profession and probable Jewish ancestry.

Portús concludes his anthology with a fascinating account of the painting's display history. Up to 1800, *Las Meninas* was hidden away in private palace apartments and knowledge of it barely extended beyond Spain. After it was hung in the Prado, the new national museum of painting and sculpture, in 1819, the picture's fame made it an inspiration for European and American painters. Its influence grew when in 1899, spurred by the three hundredth anniversary of Velázquez's birth, the Prado chose to devote a specially built room to its display, which remained almost unchanged until 1978. Screened off by curtains, the space was naturally side lit to mimic the light in the picture and appeared to duplicate the room in the painted canvas. A mirror was placed opposite to reinforce the canvas's illusionary effect. The British artist Charles Ricketts (1866–1931), who described the painting as the 'Infanta's first visit to the photographer', claimed that he knew of no other painting that was so enchantingly lit and installed.³ Portús tracks its critical fortune via visitors such as Jorge Luis Borges, whose 1930s 'reading' of it moved from the illusionistic to a more complex modern understanding of its conceptual artifice. The essay includes a photograph of the display in 1964, which shows a visiting group so intent on viewing the painting via the mirror that they stand with their backs to the canvas, seemingly oblivious to the masterpiece behind (Fig.4). Clearly, the use of immersive display to aid interpretation of single paintings, supposedly symptomatic of the present-day 'selfie' and virtual reality generation, has a long history.

1 J. Portús Pérez: 'Nudes and knights: a context for Venus', in D.W. Carr, ed.: exh. cat. *Velázquez*, London (National Gallery) 2006–07, pp.56–67; J. Portús Pérez: 'Velázquez as history painter: rivalry, eminence and artistic consciousness', in *idem*, ed.: exh. cat. *Velázquez's Fables: Mythology and Sacred History in the Golden Age*, Madrid (Museo Nacional del Prado) 2007–08, pp.14–71; J. Portús Pérez: 'Diego Velázquez, 1650–60: portraiture and court culture', in *idem*, ed.: exh. cat. *Velázquez: Las Meninas and the Late Royal Portraits*, Madrid (Museo Nacional del Prado) 2013–14, pp.17–59; and J. Portús Pérez: 'Velázquez in gray: decorum and representation', in *idem*, ed.: exh. cat. *Diego Velázquez: The Early Court Portraits*, Dallas (Meadows Museum) 2012–13, pp.7–35.

- 2** See O. Delenda: *Francisco de Zurbarán: Catálogo Razonado y Crítico*, Paris 2009, I, pp.730–31, note 270; and X. Brooke: 'From English gentleman to Spanish *hidalgo*: Frank Hall Standish (1799–1840) and his Spanish art collection', *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 34 (2016), p.53, note 8 referencing F.H. Standish: *Seville and its Vicinity*, London 1840, p.186.
- 3** C. Ricketts: 'The Prado and its masterpieces', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 1 (1903), p.94.
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