

Reviews

Jonathan Brown *et al.*, *The Spanish Manner: Drawings from Ribera to Goya*

Exhibition catalogue by Jonathan Brown, Susan Grace Galassi, Lisa A. Banner, Reva Wolf, Andrew Schulz, Joanna Sheers, and Pablo Pérez D'Ors, New York: Frick Collection, 2010. ISBN: 978-18-575-9651-9, 205 pp., 107 color and 2 black-and-white illustrations, \$65 (hc), \$39.95 (pb)

This catalogue, edited with particular care under the auspices of the newly created Center for Spain in America, accompanies the exhibition on Spanish drawings currently on view at the Frick Collection, New York (5 October 2010–9 January 2011). The title of the main essay already poses a key question: Is there really a “Spanish manner”? Jonathan Brown’s text tries to throw some light on a problem with which the historiography of Spanish drawings has long been concerned. Is there a distinctive element that renders Spanish drawings unique and different from those ascribed to other schools? The significance of this question results precisely from the neglect with which drawings have been treated in Spain. Such an attitude has even been explained in terms of national identity, as exemplified by Gómez Sicre’s erroneous interpretation from 1950:

*Very few drawings by Spanish masters exist. This scarcity might be explained by a unanimous lack of recognition of the expressive possibilities that drawing offers on the part of Spanish painters. But perhaps a more satisfactory explanation may be found deep down in the Iberian soul, in the sensuous realism of its painting, mostly independent of the deeply rational execution that characterizes drawing.*¹

Brown refers to Spanish treatises, from Carducho to

Pacheco, as proof of the importance of drawing for Spanish artists. Fortunately, research by Francisco J. Sánchez Cantón, Antonio Rodríguez Moñino, Diego Angulo, Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, and Brown himself, not forgetting more recent contributions by new generations of art historians, has established the relevance and the richness of the production of Spanish draftsmen, as well as the obvious distinctiveness and the uniqueness that characterize Spanish drawings. As Brown notes, museums and other collections often keep their Spanish drawings in the same boxes and folders as the works that cannot find a place among the Italian or the Flemish drawings. This is a clear sign of the ignorance still pervasive in this field, from which only a few well-known names, such as Francisco de Goya, emerge. For this reason, the fact that this exhibition takes place in New York and under the patronage of the Frick Collection has a special significance.

The interest in Spanish drawing in the USA has been remarkable since the publication of Gridley McKim Smith’s catalogue of the exhibition *Spanish Baroque Drawings in North American Collections* at the University of Kansas in 1974. This interest, which has subsequently increased, is also exemplified by Priscilla E. Muller’s research and, more specifically, her catalogue of the exhibition *Dibujos españoles en la Hispanic Society of America: Del siglo de oro a Goya* shown in Barcelona and Madrid in 2006–7.² Some of the drawings included in Muller’s catalogue are part of the present exhibition as well. Another scholar collaborating in the project is Lisa A. Banner, who is currently studying American collections of