

Reconstructing *la Pieza del Despacho de Verano* at the Alcázar in Madrid. The room of *Las Meninas*: Problems and Possibilities¹

Reconstruyendo la “pieza del despacho de verano”, la estancia de *Las Meninas* en el Alcázar: problemas y sugerencias

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To Steven N. Orso

Abstract: The King’s summer study, *la Pieza del Despacho de Verano* – the first display location of one of the master works of Spanish art from the Siglo de Oro: Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* painted in 1656 –, is a perfect point of departure for discussing the possibilities and limits of reconstructing a room in the *Alcázar*, the royal palace of Madrid. Although the inventories from 1666 and 1686 just tell us the subject and size of 33 pictures together with seven mirrors and six *bufetes*, the paper argues that it is possible to reconstruct the scale and decoration of the *Pieza del Despacho de Verano*. In a more general sense this gives us at hand a ‘layout’ for reconstructing other rooms in the king’s palace(s).

Key Words: *Las Meninas*; Velázquez; Philip the fourth; Alcázar of Madrid; 17th century

Resumen: La reconstrucción de la decoración pictórica del despacho de verano del Alcázar de Madrid, lugar donde se localizaba una de las obras más importantes del Siglo de Oro español: el *Retrato de la Familia de Felipe IV* pintado por Diego Velázquez en 1656 y conocido como *Las Meninas*, es el punto de partida para las reflexiones sobre las posibilidades organizativas de este espacio para el autor de este

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ensayo. Toma como referencia para su propuesta de reconstrucción, los inventarios del palacio inmediatamente posteriores a la ejecución de la obra, los de 1666 y 1686. En ellos se describen treinta y tres pinturas con sus temas y medidas aproximadas, junto con siete espejos y seis bufetes. Para el autor, la documentación preservada, permite realizar una reconstrucción a escala de su decoración, al mismo tiempo que da una idea general de cómo serían también otras habitaciones en el palacio del rey.

Palabras clave: Las Meninas; Velázquez; Felipe IV; Alcázar de Madrid, siglo XVII



At the end of the 1650s the annalist and “cantor de la Real Capilla”³ Lázaro Díaz del Valle praised the royal palace of Madrid: “[...] the Palace is so ennobled and aggrandized that it augments the number of wonders of the world. No one doubts that there is no prince in all the earth who has his Alcázar adorned with such precious and admirable paintings and statues of bronze and of marble, nor such rare [curiosas], showy, and lavishing furnishings that can compete with those of this one [...]”⁴ In the margins, he described the “rare, showy, and lavish furnishings”: “Such as porphyry tables on bronze, fire-gilded lions, and opulent mirrors adorned with bronze imperial eagles likewise gilded”.⁵

Even though with these words Díaz del Valle depicts the Hall of Mirrors, a room above all intended for receiving formal state visits,⁶ his description gives us a good sense of how a highly official location in the royal palace would have appeared. The quotation above comes from Steven N. Orso’s brilliant 1986 book, *Philip IV and the Decoration of the Alcázar of Madrid*, to which I owe not only the impetus for my essay, but also its scholarly basis. Orso was one of the first to try reconstructing how the paintings in the most distinguished rooms of the royal palace were arranged. Following in Orso’s footsteps, I would like to propose a similar kind of reconstruction for the room that harbored one of the master works of Spanish art from the *siglo de oro*: Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* painted in 1656 (Fig. 1). My remarks, thereby, make recourse to the results of an article of mine published in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* from 2015.⁷

³ Francisco Calvo Serraller, *Teoría de la Pintura del Siglo de Oro*, 2nd ed., (Madrid: Cátedra, 1991), p. 461; Concerning Lázaro Díaz del Valle cf. David García López, *Lázaro Díaz del Valle y las vidas de pintores de España*, (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2008). – This paper was delivered in an abbreviated version at the international congress “*Despliegue, acceso y contemplación de colecciones en la Corte de los Austrias, 1516–1700*”, Museo del Prado, Madrid, June 27–28, 2016, organized by Director Miguel Falomir, Museo Nacional del Prado; I thank Dir. Falomir and the other organizers for their invitation and warm welcome. – I thank Mena Marqués and Krystyna Greub-Fraçz (as always) for their advice and support.

⁴ Steven N. Orso, *Philip IV and the Decoration of the Alcázar of Madrid*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 67.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 32–33.

⁷ Thierry Greub, “Der Platz des Bildes und der ‘Platz des Königs’: Diego Velázquez’ *Las Meninas* im Sommer-Arbeitszimmer Philips IV”, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 78, no. 3–4, (2015), pp. 441–487; The hitherto unknown definitive location of the room and its pictorial decoration are now confirmed by Gloria Martínez Leiva and Ángel Rodríguez Rebollo, *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid en 1666, Felipe IV y su colección artística*, (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2015), pp. 122–126 with the diagram on p. 120, above. See my review: Thierry Greub, “Das achte Weltwunder’: Die Kunstsammlung Philipps IV. im Alcázar von



Fig. 1. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado© (inv. n° P001174)

In this article I inquired into the significance, the function, and the layout of what was the most probably original display-location of *Las Meninas*. This led me, moreover, to consider the potential meaning of this painting within a royal and sovereign context. My point of emphasis departed from earlier interpretations of a philosophical, literary or art-historical vein, which tended to view the painting, in the words of Andreas Prater, as a “permanent

Madrid”, *Kunstchronik* 70, 4, (2017), pp. 197–203. See also on *Las Meninas*: Thierry Greub, ed., *Las Meninas im Spiegel der Deutungen. Eine Einführung in die Methoden der Kunstgeschichte*. (Berlin: Reimer, 2001).

touchstone in the science of art",⁸ understanding it, thus, in a rather ahistoric and purely monadic fashion. In contrast, I called for including the original context of the image, together with the other paintings surrounding it, in the picture's interpretation.⁹ Furthermore I argued that the dynastic-political anxieties and hopes of King Philip IV of Spain should be taken into account as well. Under this reading, *Las Meninas* thematizes the pivotal issue of female succession at the court of the Spanish Habsburgs. Indeed, as a painted answer to this question, it depicts the provisional assurance of the Spanish Habsburgs' dynastic continuity in the form of the Infanta Margarita. Here, I follow the political-dynastic way of reading the painting advanced by Manuela B. Mena Marqués – however, I understand not the reconstituted, original version of the image (uncovered by radiography)¹⁰, but the current painting as the portrayal of the precarious dynastic-political limbo that arrests the Spanish royal court until the birth of the long-awaited male heir to the throne. The painting, like my interpretation, follows a double-structure at every level: The appearance and the actions of the depicted persons imbue the image's message with a dynastic energy via a 'double-strategy', whereby each gesture makes recourse both to a practice in court ritual and to a sovereign-dynastic implication.

In this paper, rather than focusing on the doubling iconography of the *Las Meninas*, my essay concerns the 'Making of' of the reconstruction-schemata for two rooms in the Alcázar which are sophisticatedly woven together in the *Las Meninas* and which play a crucial role in the interpretation of the image. On the one hand, there is the room which is visible in the painting – the *Pieza Principal*, the main room, in the *Quarto Bajo del Príncipe*, the lower accommodations of the Prince, – and on the other hand there is the *Pieza del Despacho de Verano*, the summer office room, in the *Cuarto Bajo de Verano*, the lower summer accommodations, the room in which the painting originally hung.

Consequentially, my paper begins by examining the parameters for reconstructing the picture galleries in the Alcázar (wherein I rely above all on Orso's groundbreaking work). This first step provides the foundation for me to introduce and justify my attempt to reconstruct the room in which the painting hung, the king's summer office. Finally, I give my thoughts on the relationship between the two rooms of the *Las Meninas*.

⁸ Andreas Prater, "Bilder ohne Ikonographie? Velázquez und die venezianische Malerei", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 77, no. 3, (2014), pp. 333–360.

⁹ A "classical" text on this subject: Hans Belting, "Das Werk im Kontext", in *Kunstgeschichte. Eine Einführung*, ed. *idem* et al. (Berlin: Reimer, 2008 [1985]), pp. 229–246.

¹⁰ Manuela B. Mena Marqués, "El encaje de la manga de la enana Mari-Bárbola en *Las Meninas* de Velázquez", in *El Museo del Prado – fragmentos y detalles*, (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 1997), pp. 135–161, especially p. 148, and the radiography: p. 147.



Fig. 2. Juan Carreño de Miranda, *Mariana de Austria*, c. 1671. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado© (inv. n° P00644)

1. Parameters for a Reconstruction

In his book about the art décor in the Alcázar, Steven N. Orso with great ingenuity reconstructs the most probable way the paintings were hung in six total rooms.¹¹ For us, two rooms in particular provide essential information for reconstructing the arrangement of furnishings, although in most cases the author, due to deficient data, does not dare to propose diagrams estimating how objects in the rooms were positioned. Orso draws upon building plans and inventories that list each room's furniture (and paintings) and, furthermore, upon portraits that themselves depict the space of a room, as well as the reports of visitors.¹² (Fig. 2) Orso's chief interest here concerns the *Salón de los Espejos*, the Hall of Mirrors, which the words of Lázaro Díaz del Valle described at the outset of this paper.¹³ The room lay on the south side of the palace in the middle axis between the king's apartments in the west and the queen's apartments in the east. The hall, measuring 19.32 x 10.64 meters and equipped with a central balcony offered the royal couple together with their retinue a stage for the festivities which took place at the Plaza de Palacio as well as a space for extraordinary receptions. This room welcomed Francesco I. d'Este in 1638 and Hamete Aga Mustafa, the ambassador of the Grand Turk, in 1649 and on this balcony Charles the second was proclaimed king in 1665. Important visitors received in the *Salón de los Espejos* first had to walk a precisely determined ceremonial path through the Alcázar.¹⁴ The entire palace, which according to the inventory from 1686 was equipped with a total of 1.547 pictures¹⁵ (in addition to sculptures), was decorated to this end with grandiose furnishings of the highest splendor.¹⁶

The paintings presented in the *Salón de los Espejos* were arranged anew in many stages between 1622 and 1659. Orso reconstructs a first phase (1622–1636), during which an ensemble of images was collected: "What had begun as an improvised grouping of pictures drawn from the royal holdings and dominated by the work of Titian had grown into an impressive showroom where the Venetian master was joined by leading Flemish (Rubens, Van Dyck, and Snyders), Italian (Domenichino, and Artemisia and Orazio Gentileschi), and Spanish (Velázquez, Ribera, Cajés, and Carducho) painters of the day".¹⁷

¹¹ The Hall of Mirrors, the Gilded Hall, the South Gallery, the Octogonal Room, the Room of the *Furias*, and the Main Room in the Prince's Quarter. Concerning the architecture of the palace: José Manuel Barbeito, *Alcázar de Madrid*, (Madrid: Comisión de Cultura, Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid, 1992), and Fernando Checa, *El Real Alcázar de Madrid. Dos siglos de arquitectura y coleccionismo en la corte de los Reyes de España*, (Madrid: Editorial Nerea, 1994).

¹² Orso, *Philip IV*, pp. 24–31.; Greub, "Der Platz des Bildes...", fig. 4, 7, and 8. Concerning the inventories of 1666 and 1668, which exist in different transcriptions, see Greub, "Der Platz des Bildes...", p. 418, note 22; the earlier inventory is now convincingly and entirely transcribed in Martínez Leiva et al, *El Inventario del Alcázar*, with cross-references to the 1686 inventory next to each entry.

¹³ Orso, *Philip IV*, pp. 32–117;(with modifications) Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, pp. 58–70 and the diagrams on p. 67, figs. 28–29, and p. 69, figs. 30–31; and José Manuel Barbeito, "De arte y arquitectura. El Salón de los Espejos en el Alcázar de Madrid", *Boletín del Museo del Prado*, 33, 51, (2015), pp. 24–43.

¹⁴ Orso, *Philip IV*, pp. 36, 41–42.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 28, (see the inventory of 1686); the inventory of 1700 counts 1.575 pictures (*ibidem*, p. 24).

¹⁶ About the arrival of the ambassador of the Grand Turk in 1649, *ibidem*, p. 36.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 59–60.

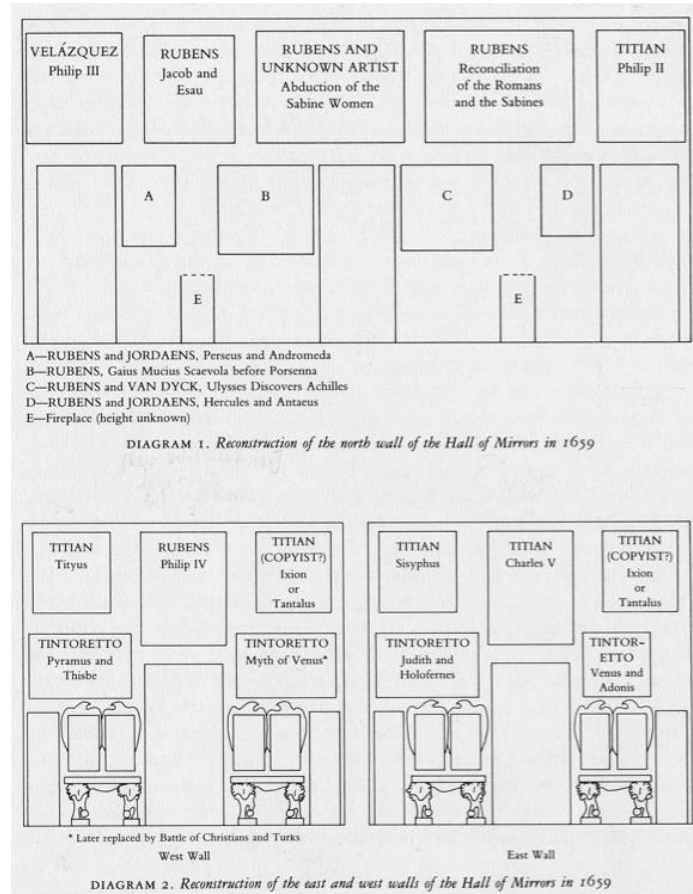


Fig. 3. The Hall of Mirrors in 1659 (north, east and west walls). Reconstruction by Steven N. Orso (taken from Orso, *Philip IV*, diagram 1 and 2, p. 75)

According to Orso, from 1637 until 1659 this ensemble was refined and afterwards up until 1700 saw hardly any changes – a practice which held true for the whole palace and is reflected in the inventories from 1636, 1666, 1668, and 1700.

In this official room of state were found six ornate tables and two mirrors.¹⁸ Later, accompanying the change of name from the New Room to the Hall of Mirrors, the room featured additionally six tables of porphyry each with two gold lions as table legs and now a set of eight golden eagle-frame mirrors (plus six urns as table decorations). All of these furnishings may be recognized in the contemporaneous state portraits of Juan Carreño de Miranda (Fig. 2). According to the inventory of 1686, the room contained 31 paintings.¹⁹ The ceiling was adorned with a fresco created by the Bolognese

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 59, (C33–38).

¹⁹ Barbeito, "De arte y arquitectura...", p. 35.

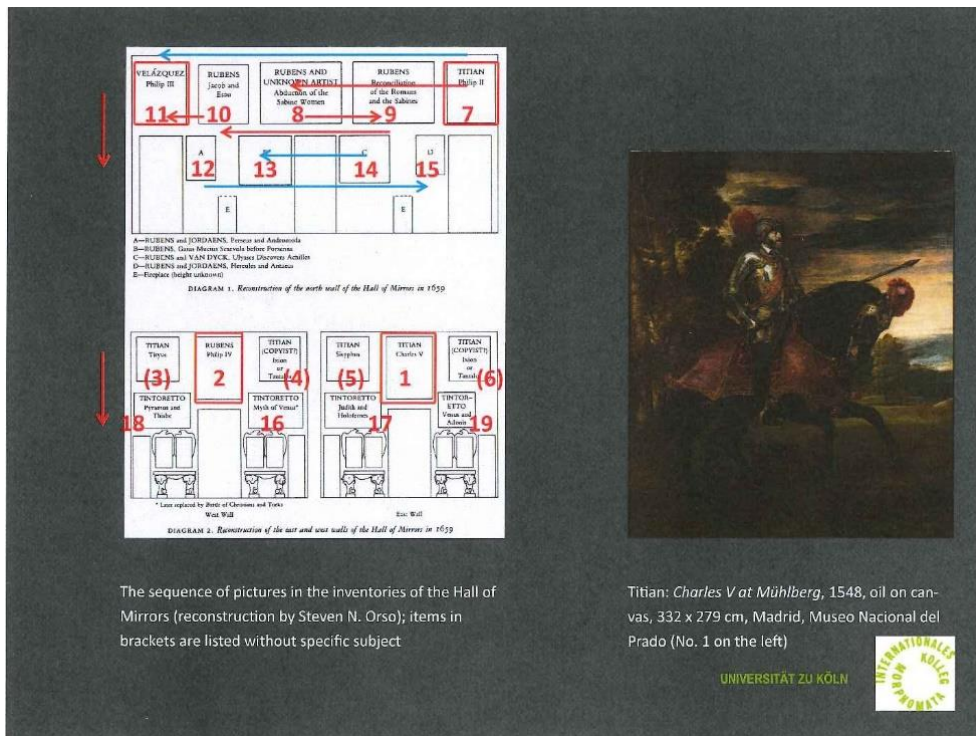


Fig. 4. The sequence of pictures in the inventories of the Hall of Mirrors (diagram by Steven N. Orso); items in brackets are listed without specific subject (by Thierry Greub)

Quadraturists Angelo Michele Colonna and Agostino Mitelli to illustrate the story of Pandora.²⁰

In his diagrams of the reconstruction, Orso only reproduces the north wall, as well as the opposite-facing west and east walls, (Fig. 3) although the evidentiary basis for his reconstruction could be described as nearly optimal; he has recourse to images which depict sections of the room, the testimony of visitors, and the list of objects in the inventory of 1686.²¹ In that inventory, moreover, we find information that appears relatively seldom: decisive hints not only about the frames of the paintings (which in this room were all black),²² but also most notably about their hanging position within the room. It is roughly reported that “Quatro quadros iguales sobre los espejos” [Four equal-sized pictures [hung] over the mirrors],²³ “Otros dos quadros yguales sobre las Bentanas [Another two equal-sized pictures [hung] above the win-

²⁰ Orso, *Philip IV*, pp. 68–69; on Mitelli and Colonna in Spain: David García Cueto, *La estancia española de los pintores boloñeses Agostino Mitelli y Angelo Michele Colona, 1658–1662*, (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2005).

²¹ Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, pp. 68–70, and the diagram on p. 69, figs. 31, and (with modifications) Barbeito, “De arte y arquitectura.”, p. 33, fig. 8, (situation of 1636), p. 35, fig. 9, (1686) and p. 41, fig. 13, (1734).

²² Orso, *Philip IV*, p. 192.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 193, [nos. 16–19]; Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 711.

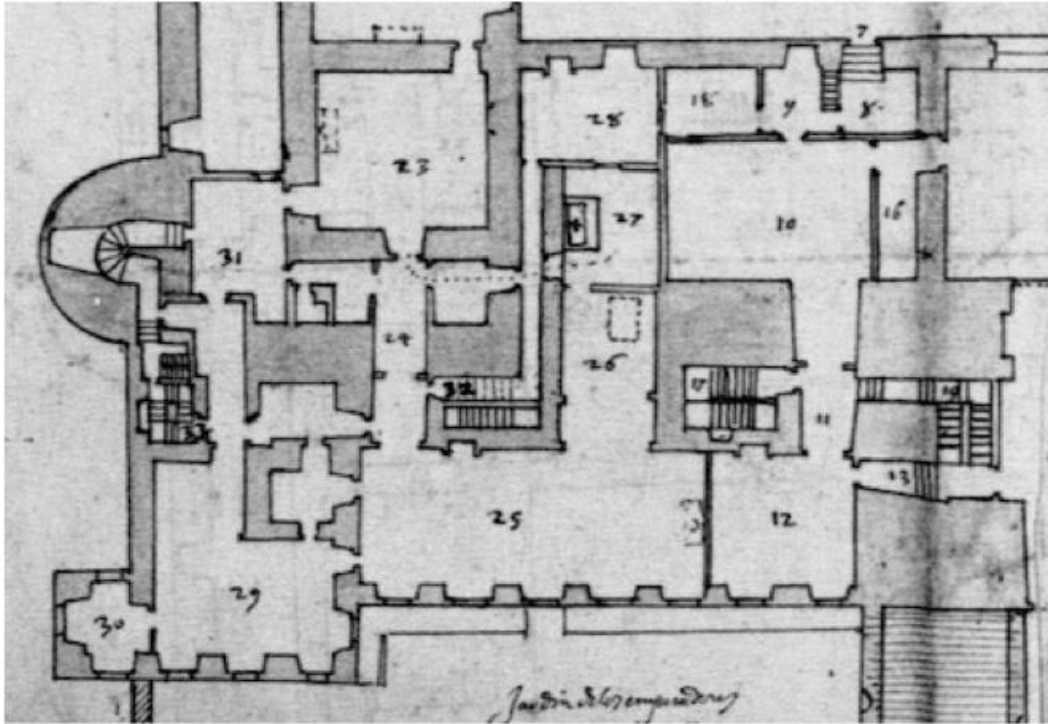


Fig. 5. Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of the Second Story of the Alcázar of Madrid (“Planta Baja”) (detail). 1626, Vatican Library, “Galería del Príncipe”: nos. 25 and 12.

dows]”²⁴ and likewise “entreventanas” [between the windows].²⁵ These last images, according to this account, were mounted over the mirrors on the east and west walls and over and between the windows on the south wall.

The sequence of images listed in the inventory from 1686 exhibits two peculiarities: On the one hand, the paintings in the upper row are listed first, followed by those in the lower row, some of which hung over the mirrors. On the other hand, the list of names begins with the most important painting: Titian’s *Charles V at Mühlberg*, succeeded afterwards (in chronological order) by Rubens’ *Equestrian Portrait of Philip IV*. Following the contemporary description of the later second Duke of Gramont from 1659,²⁶ Orso places both paintings in the middle of the room over the doors that occupy the centers of the east and west walls. Moreover, it is no mere coincidence that the painting of Charles V – along with the throne of the king beneath it, as it was placed during official visits of state – is situated in the east, since Philip IV understood himself as *rey planeta* and the Sun-King. For the eighteen

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 193, [nos. 26–27]; Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 717.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 193, [nos. 28–29]; Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 718.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 39: “He [the king; author] was at the end [of the room] on a dais covered with gold embroidery and huge pearls, seated in an armchair; and the space above the canopy [*queue du dais*] was covered by the portrait of Charles V on horseback done by Titian, so natural that one believed that the man and the horse were living”

positions where images were hung on the walls, the inventory lists the names of further paintings, often in pairs or (as just seen) in groups of four. After Orso located the place of the eight mirrors over the ornate tables and the doors, it was relatively simple for him to sort these names into the remaining open spaces on the walls. As I have mentioned, he only omitted reconstructing a diagram for the south wall, although even in this case the inventory offers hints about the distribution of the paintings above and between the windows.

Orso sums up: “the upper tier consists of large pictures with a common base line”,²⁷ a rule which also holds true for the other palace rooms. The writer of the inventory first lists the official portraits displayed opposite one another on the sight lines (1 and 2); afterwards comes the “filling” of the two upper rows of the east and west walls (Fig. 4). Orso determines the order of these images, which are listed in the inventory as the *Las Furias* of Titian (3 through 6), using the points of view found in the royal portraits and compositional stipulations.²⁸ Then, for the north wall, the inventory-maker lists the images in the upper row from right to left – but partly in jumps (7 → 9 → 8 → 10 → 11) – whereby once again the distinguished official portraits (7 and 11) are located over the doors (which now are positioned on the sides). The last images in the row, however, are not listed one after the other this time (cf. the arrows). Afterwards follow the four paintings in the lower row (12 through 15), before the inventory-maker again changes walls and describes the Tintoretto above the mirrors (16 through 19). Subsequently, the list turns to the images on the (window-covered) south wall and finally to the furnishings like tables, vases, and mirrors.²⁹

We can check the reconstruction parameters which Orso revealed in the above example against the arrangement of another space: the room portrayed as the scene of action in the *Las Meninas* (Fig. 1). The rectangular hall, positioned horizontally in the southwestern part of the palace complex, measures 20.4 by 5.35 by 4.4 meters³⁰ (Fig. 5) (nos. 25 and 12 without the dividing wall that was demolished in 1643). In symmetric correspondence, the hall’s shorter eastern and western walls each featured two doors. In the painting, the south door of the east wall is held open by the quartermaster of

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 80; *Las Furias. Alegoría política y desafío artístico*, ed. Miguel Falomir, (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2014).

²⁹ These results (with some minor changes in the placement of the paintings) are now confirmed by Martínez Leiva and Rodríguez Rebollo. Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, pp. 58–70, pp. 700–724, (listing per items), pp. 927–928 and p. 985 (inventory of 1686), and the diagrams on p. 67, figs. 28–29, and p. 69, figs. 30–31. The authors also reconstruct in a diagram the south wall (p. 69, fig. 31), on the upper row of the north wall they put Rubens’ *Jacobus and Esau* (8) convincingly over the middle door (which gives the listing 7 → 8 → 10 → 9 → 11 in my numbering); See also Barbeito, “De arte y arquitectura”, p. 35, fig. 9, (1686).

³⁰ Orso, *Philip IV*, p. 53; De la Plaza Santiago calculated in team work with the architect Julio Grijalba 1995 the measurements of c. 18 meters length, 5½ meters width and 4½ meters high. Francisco Javier de la Plaza Santiago, “El muro invisible de ‘Las Meninas’”, in *Homenaje al profesor Martín González*, (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1995), pp. 631–641, especially p. 632. For the dividing wall: Orso, *Philip IV*, p. 166, note 6.

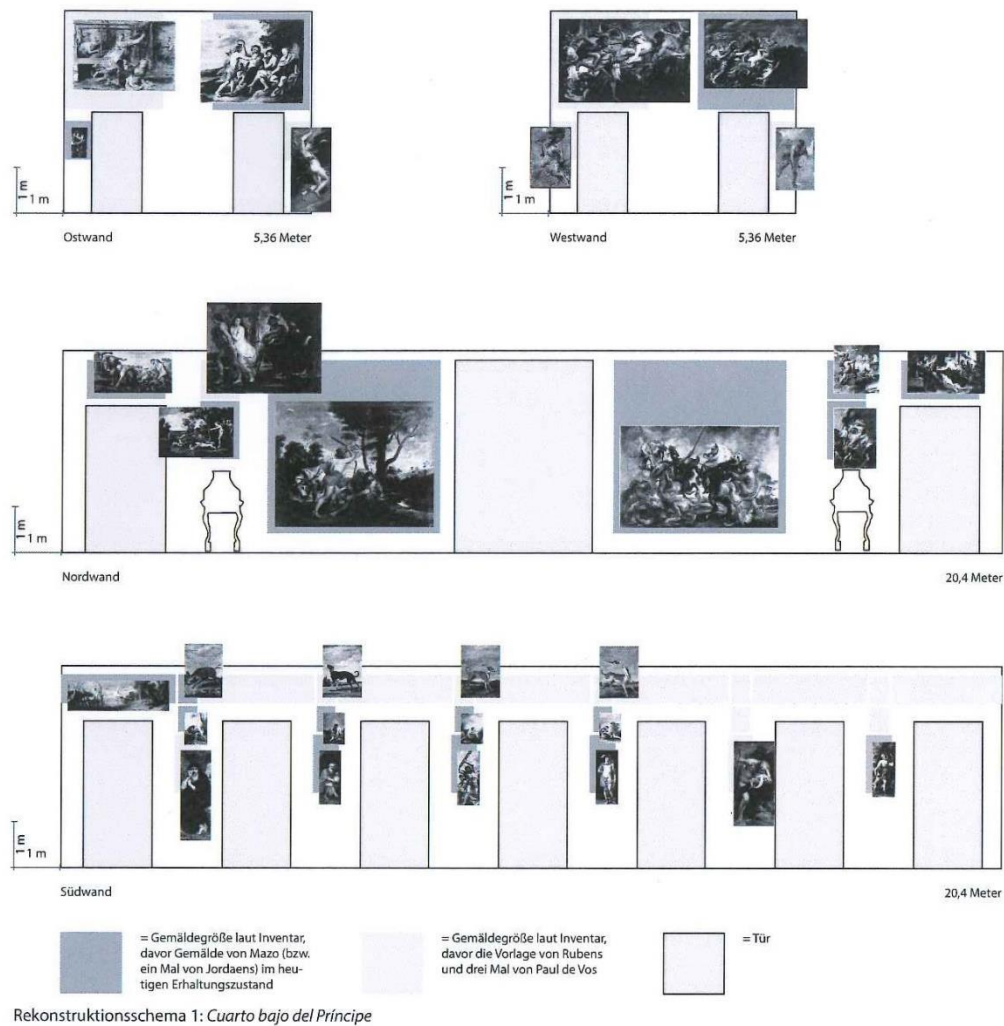


Fig. 6. Reconstruction of the Pieza Principal (diagram by Thierry Greub, 2015)

the queen, José Nieto. The north wall, which in the painting is covered prominently by the towering canvas in the image's foreground, includes three doors and two fireplaces. The south wall is perforated by seven windows, which look out on the *Jardín de los Emperadores* and the main square in front of the Alcázar. Antonio Palomino, in his 1724 work *El museo pictórico y escala óptica*, specifies the depicted place unmistakably when he writes: "[e]n esta galería, que es la del cuarto del Príncipe, donde se finge, y donde se pintó [...]".³¹ The inventories from 1666, 1686, and 1700 confirm this location.

In the *Pieza Principal*³² were a total of 41 paintings (Fig. 6). With the help of the *Las Meninas* and the inventories, it is possible to completely and convincingly situate them within the room. Moreover, with relatively few

³¹ Antonio Palomino, *Vidas*, ed. by Nina Ayala Mallory, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1986), p. 182.

³² Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 101.

exceptions, the paintings attested at that time are consistent with the images surviving to this day. Along with Steven N. Orso, John F. Moffitt 1983³³ laid the groundwork for the east and west walls, Plaza Santiago 1995 did the preparatory work for the north wall,³⁴ and Moffitt once again contributed to the south wall.³⁵

Furthermore, for the *Pieza Principal*, the inventory-maker first listed the large-size paintings hanging on east wall, which can be recognized as the far wall in the *Las Meninas*, and here in the upper row: *Minerva and Arachne* and the *Contest of Pan and Apollo* (Fig. 6, East-wall). After this the list proceeds to the images “enfrente” [on the opposite wall], identifying the two *Raptus*-paintings, the *Abduction of the Sabine Women* and the *Abduction of Proserpina*. (Fig. 6, West-wall) Here, however, in contrast to Orso,³⁶ I take the sequence enumerated by the writer as the basis for their hanging positions.³⁷ Next the inventory-maker turns to the north wall.³⁸ (Fig. 6, Nord-wall) There he begins with the two giant paintings to the immediate left and right of the wall’s middle door (1 and 2; Fig. 7): *Mercury and Argus* and *Alexander the Great on a Lion Hunt*. Then the writer comes back to the upper row and lists first the two overdoor paintings, *Deucalion and Pyrrha* and *The Banquet of Tereus* (3 and 4), and then the two pairs of stacked images which abut the large-sized paintings already listed – first the higher of each pair, *Orpheus Leads Eurydice from Hades* and *The Apotheosis of Hercules*³⁹ (5 and 6); then each pair’s the lower image, which hangs directly above the respective fireplaces, *Diana and Nymphs Hunting* and *Dido and Aeneas* (7 and 8).

Finally, the list comes to the south wall (Fig. 6, South-wall). Across the top hang seven paintings portraying “diferentes Aves y Animales y Paisajes” [different birds, animals, and landscapes], which in turn are interspersed with six images showing “vn Javali y vnos Perrillos” [a wild boar and some dogs]. Stacked immediately underneath these six are pictures of “de las fuerzas de Hercules” [the Labors of Hercules], under which appears a row of philosophers and gods.⁴⁰ All of these are relatively simple to orient because the inventories, for paintings positioned near the windows, repeatedly provide the word “sobreventanas” [above windows] and twice “entreventanas” [between win-

³³ John F. Moffitt, “Velázquez im Alcázar-Palast von 1656. Die Bedeutung der mise-en-scène von *Las Meninas*”, in *Las Meninas im Spiegel der Deutungen. Eine Einführung in die Methoden der Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Thierry Greub, (Berlin: Reimer, 2001), pp. 42–72, especially p. 51 (published first in English in: *Art History* 6, 3, (1983), pp. 271–300).

³⁴ Plaza Santiago, “El muro invisible...”, p. 632.

³⁵ Now confirmed by Martínez Leiva and Rodríguez Rebollo. Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, pp. 101–103, pp. 725–745, (listing per items) and pp. 958–959, (inventory of 1666) and the diagrams pp. 101–103, figs. 52–55.

³⁶ Orso, *Philip IV*, pp. 170–171.

³⁷ The wording in the inventories of 1666 and 1686 was sometimes ambiguous. Moffitt, “Velázquez im Alcázar-Palast von 1656...”, p. 45; Orso correctly translates “[...] *en las frentes de los remates de esta Pieza*” [“in the facing spaces on the end walls”], Orso, *Philip IV*, p. 169.

³⁸ Orso does not reconstruct the diagram and writes: “Too little is known about the wall to reconstruct their arrangement [...]” *Ibidem*, p. 169.

³⁹ In the inventories of 1666 and 1686 listed as a picture depicting Phaeton. Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, pp. 730–731, no. 927.

⁴⁰ For all three quotes Yves Bottineau, “L’Alcázar de Madrid et l’inventaire de 1686. Aspects de la cour d’Espagne au XVII^e siècle”, *Bulletin Hispanique* 60, 4, (1958), pp. 450–483, especially p. 452.

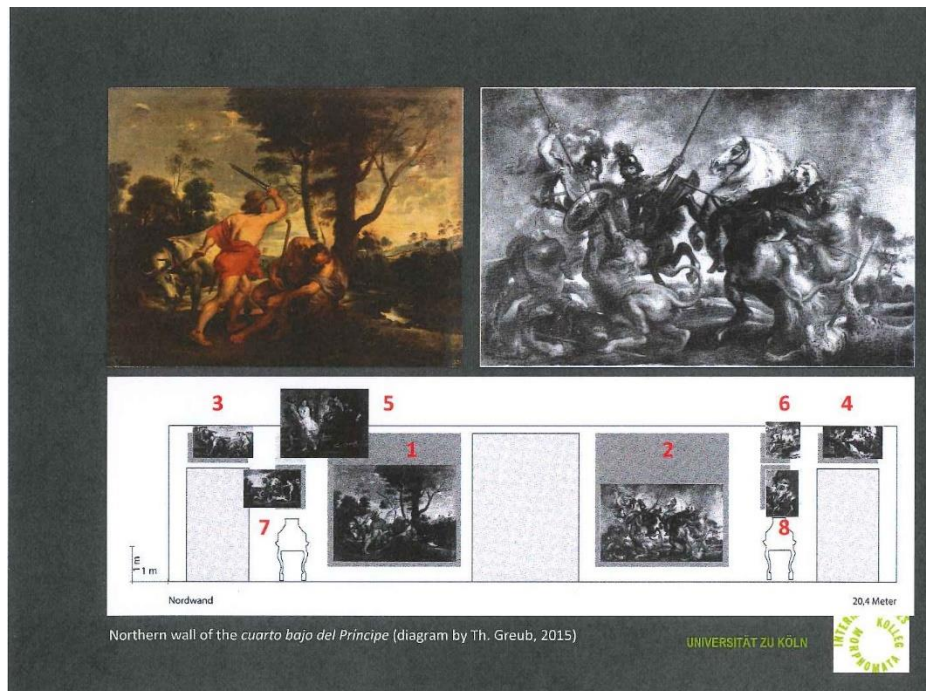


Fig. 7. Northern wall of the Pieza Principal (diagram by Thierry Greub, 2015)

dows] as hints. Most of the room's paintings, copies of Rubens (and once of Jacob Jordaens) completed by Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, the student, colleague, and in 1666 the successor to Velázquez as court painter, are preserved as maquettes or sketches. On the basis of these, consequently, it is possible to reconstruct the entire room (Fig. 6).⁴¹

2. The Images in the *Despacho de Verano*

In contrast to the two rooms we have just discussed, the arrangement of paintings in the king's summer office is considerably more difficult, since clear indices for the placement of paintings are absent from the inventories of 1666 and 1686. We only have a string of paintings enumerated in front of us, which likewise are partly listed in pairs, suggesting a symmetric correspondence.⁴²

⁴¹ This reconstruction scheme is based (with modifications) on John F. Moffitt (Moffitt, "Velázquez im Alcázar-Palast von 1656...", pp. 43–46), Orso (Orso, *Philip IV*, pp. 167–172), Plaza Santiago (Plaza Santiago, "El muro invisible...", *passim*) und Matías Díaz Padrón (Matías Díaz Padrón, *El lienzo de Vertumno y Pomona de Rubens y los cuartos bajos de verano del Alcázar de Madrid*, (Madrid: El Viso, 2009), pp. 97–99); the most compelling ideas for the reconstructions of the south wall come from Moffitt, for the east and west wall from Orso and for the north wall from Plaza Santiago.

⁴² The objects in the *Despacho de Verano* (the king's "summer-office", following the inventory from 1686) are: 1. A small festoon with flowers (330 reales); 2. A Venetian Lady by Tintoretto (550); 3. Six "flemish bodegones [Still lifes]" (2'640 reales, c. 440 per painting); 4. "a ninfa con flores by Rubens (550)"; 5. A "still life by Snyders" (3'300); 6. A painting with children by "Julio Valerio" (550); 7. A "cupido by Guido" Reni (1'100); 8. Another [a cupido] by Guercino (1'100); 9. A jar with flowers by Mario Nuzzi (330); 10. Another jar with flowers (330); 11. Two pair of flowers in jars by the same (each 1'760); 12. Two portraits showing philosophers by Ribera (je 550); 13. *Las Meninas* (16'500 reales); 14. A cupido by Correggio

Moreover, although the *Despacho de Verano* is an official room, it fulfills this capacity to a far lesser degree than, for example, the Hall of Mirrors. Consequently, no portrayals of the king's study exist in other paintings or in the accounts of visitors. The only mention of the room known to me comes from Edward Montagu, the First Duke of Sandwich, who visited the *Despacho de Verano* on August 28, 1666 in order to copy paintings: "In y^e morninge I went to y^e Pallace to chuse Pictures to have coppied. [...] In y^e roome where y^e late Kings writinge table stands; one of Corregio's hand A Cupid. / in y^e same roome 2 of Van Dykes hand, of love storyes".⁴³ According to Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt, the private state office was "[...] decorated with an eye toward the exalted, although restricted, persons who were able to visit the king there: members of the royal family and family servants, cardinals and papal nuncios, viceroys, presidents of the Council of State, and the king's minister [...]."⁴⁴ There is additionally evidence that the king showed special interest in the arrangement of this room: On February 5, 1658, the sovereign, as Cardinal Camillo Massimi wrote, caught a feverish cold "per essersi trattenuto lungamente il giorno antecedente nell'appartamento d'estate a veder collocare alcune pitture."⁴⁵

Efforts to locate the summer office of Philip IV in the royal Palace of Madrid, which later in 1734 was destroyed in a fire, seem today to have reached consensus. John F. Moffitt at first situated the chamber in immediate proximity to the room depicted in *Las Meninas*, albeit a story higher, within the southwest corner of the palace.⁴⁶ However, Moffitt's proposed room, located in the so-called *Torre dorada*, was the "official" bureau of the king, which he did not use during the summer months.⁴⁷ Following older investigations, Fernando Marías 1995 identifies a suite of rooms on the ground floor of the Alcázar's north side as apartments used by the king in the

(3'300); 15. An Italian landscape (1'650); 16. A Ganymed by Correggio (2'750); 17. Two "heads" by Ribera (1'100); 18. A Pomona and Vertumno by Rubens (1'650); 19. A Bacchanal by Van Dyck (2'750); 20. A "fábula" of the same Flemish master (2'750); 21. A "head" by Guido Reni (550); 22. A painting with "Venetian Ladies" by Veronese (1'750); 23. A "trunk" with birds (330); 24. "seven big mirrors" (52'800 reales); 25. "six 'bufetes'" (32'500 reales). Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, pp. 269–295 (listing per items), pp. 777–778 (inventory of 1666), pp. 943–944 and p. 989 (inventory of 1686).

⁴³ Alistair Malcolm, "Arte, diplomacia y política de la corte durante las embajadas del Conde de Sandwich a Madrid y Lisboa (1666–1668)" in *Arte y Diplomacia de la Monarquía Hispánica en el siglo XVII*, ed. José Luis Colomer, (Madrid: Fernando Villaverde Ediciones, 2003), pp. 161–175, here p. 171. Díaz Padrón's theory is confirmed by the Duke of Sandwich: "[...] one of Corregio's hand A Cupid [obviously position 13; author]. / in y^e same roome 2 of Van Dykes hand, [...]. One about 4 foote broad & 3 long. y^e other 5 longe", which is c. 1,21 x 0,91 and 1,5 meter respectively, presumably positions 20 and 19.

⁴⁴ Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt, ed. *Velázquez's Las Meninas. Masterpieces of Western Painting*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 4–5.

⁴⁵ Enriqueta Harris, "A Letter from Velázquez to Camillo Massimi...", *The Burlington Magazine* 102, 685, (1960), pp. 162–166, especially p. 166, note 12. However, in October of the same year the king participated personally in the installation of the ceiling decoration by Colonna and Mitelli with quadratura-painting which in Spain to this time was almost unknown, "on a staircase that was made so that His Majesty could ascend to see the painting of it". Orso, *Philip IV*, p. 70.

⁴⁶ Moffitt, "Velázquez im Alcázar-Palast von 1656...", p. 50 (no. 15 in de Mora's plan from 1626). Moffitt gives further details in a later publication. He calculates for the room "20 x 35 pies castellanos", proposes the east wall as place of installation of *Las Meninas* (which fits perfectly with the lightfall within the painting) and suggests a point of view of not more than three meters. John F. Moffitt, "Las Meninas en el despacho de verano...", in *Velázquez, practica e idea: estudios dispersos*, (Málaga: Universidad de Málaga y Colegio de Arquitectos de Málaga, 1991), pp. 221–222, especially pp. 221–222.

⁴⁷ Orso, *Philip IV*, pl. 13, no. 15 ("the king's office").

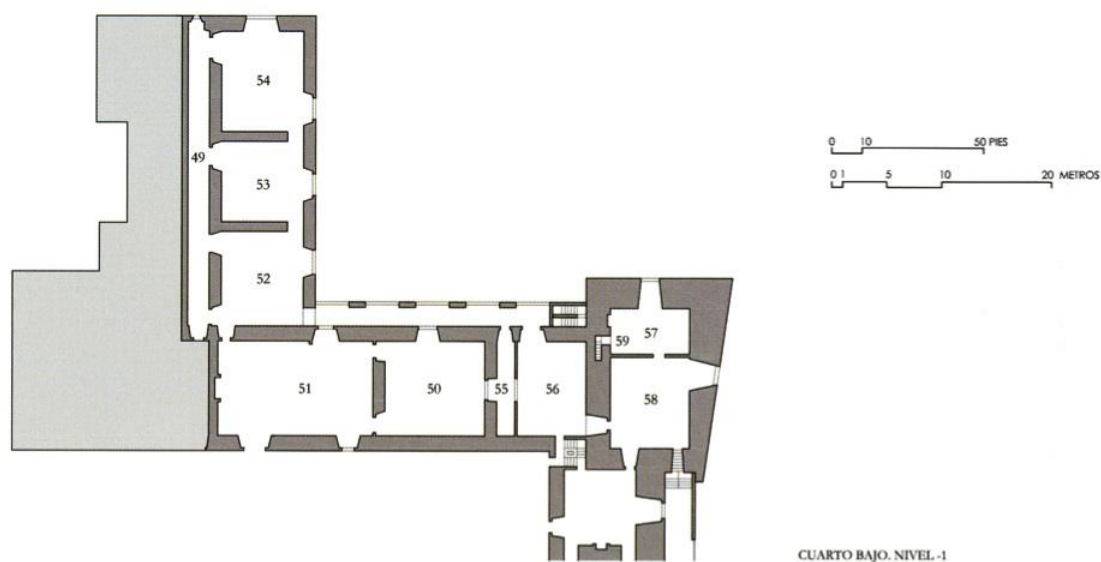


Fig. 8. Reconstruction of the Cuarto Bajo, level 1, room 54 (diagram by Daniel Martínez Díaz, 2015)

summer.⁴⁸ Under the administrative wing, in the “aposeno bajo de verano”, Marías consequently strings together an enfilade of three rooms, within which the king’s office, coming after the dining room and bedroom, would have been the palace’s most northern and most remote chamber,⁴⁹ a view that is now scientifically confirmed by Gloria Martínez Leiva’s and Ángel Rodríguez Rebollo’s landmark publication *El Inventario del Alcázar de Madrid en 1666, Felipe IV y su colección artística*.⁵⁰ (Fig. 8)

Marías moreover proposed an arrangement of the paintings found in this room, as well as suggestions for their identities.⁵¹ In his detailed 2009 study of Rubens’ *Vertumno and Pomona* (a painting that also hung in the king’s summer office), Matías Díaz Padrón contributed additional supplementary information to the visual layout of this room. From this foundation I attempted in my previously mentioned article from 2015 first to work out a complete reconstruction of the room where according to Palomino the *Las*

⁴⁸ Fernando Marías, “El género de *Las Meninas*: los servicios de la familia”, in *Otras Meninas*, (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 2007 [1995]), pp. 247–278, especially pp. 249–250. Similarly Díaz Padrón, who writes about the difficulty of a correct location: “No es fácil localizar y acoplarlos en estas estancias”. Díaz Padrón, *El lienzo de Vertumno y Pomona*, p. 43.

⁴⁹ Marías, “El género de *Las Meninas*...”, p. 250. Marías speaks of a “tono íntimo, privadísimo”. The inventory of 1686 describes the rooms, which were lead by a room of audience (“Pieza primera donde daba Su Maj^d audiencia”), in this order: “Pieza inmediata donde Su Maj^d cenaba”, “Pieza inmediata de la Aurora” and “Pieza del Despacho de verano en cuyo techo está pintado Apolo”. Yves Bottineau, “L’Alcázar de Madrid et l’inventaire de 1686. Aspects de la cour d’Espagne au XVII^e siècle”, *Bulletin Hispanique*, 60, 3, (1958), pp. 289–326, especially p. 290, p. 292, p. 294, and p. 296.

⁵⁰ Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*.

⁵¹ Marías, “El género de *Las Meninas* ...”, pp. 249–252; *ibidem*, pp. 317–318, note 13, the positions of the king’s office in the inventories from 1666 and 1686 are listed in Spanish. For the paintings in this room from 1623 until 1629: Mary Crawford Volk, “Rubens in Madrid and the Decoration of the King’s Summer Apartments”, *The Burlington Magazine*, 123, 942, (1981), pp. 513–527, 529; for the changes in the paintings’ hanging after this period pp. 519–520.

Meninas hung. The 'spanish Vasari' transmits unmistakably: "[c]olocóse en el cuarto bajo de Su Majestad, en la pieza del despacho, entre otras excelentes".⁵²

3. The Reconstruction of the Summer Office of Philip IV

According to the inventory from 1666, the *Quarto Bajo del Despacho de Verano* featured 33 paintings, seven "great mirrors" (by 1686 there were only six) and six ornate tables (Fig. 9a-d). The majority of the listed images were of Italian or Flemish origin. They came chiefly from the second quarter of the seventeenth century, with an emphasis on the time period around 1630. These include (according to their mention in the inventories) the paintings of excellent artists such as Tintoretto, Correggio, Guido Reni, Guercino, as well as Peter Paul Rubens, Anthonis van Dyck and Frans Snyders. All of the images were adorned with gilded, ebony wood frames, which underscores the outstanding importance both of the painting collection and of the room itself.⁵³ With two exceptions, which contrast with the information from the inventories, the paintings were original.⁵⁴ Located on the ceiling of the *Pieza del Despacho* was a fresco with a depiction of Apollo by Angelo Michele Colonna and Agostino Mitelli.⁵⁵

Conspicuous on the inventory-maker's list is the detail that Velázquez' work occupies position 13 and thus falls exactly in the middle of the 25 listed positions. A total of 21 images are mentioned before *Las Meninas* is named, after which 11 more images follow; those works listed afterwards, however, show consistently higher valuation prices and predominantly are also larger in size than those listed before.⁵⁶ This seems to suggest that the *Las Meninas* must have been mounted on the second or third wall discussed in the inventory. The reconstruction-schema – which must remain hypothetical due to the previously mentioned uncertainties – assumes that the inventory-maker would have followed the sequence of the suite and entered through the southern of the two doors. Then, he would have begun his list with the east wall, just as in the Hall of Mirrors and in the *Pieza Principal*, and proceeded counterclockwise to describe the north wall (again, following the example of the *Hall of Mirrors*). Just as in the rooms discussed above,

⁵² [it was placed in the lower chamber of his majesty, in the office, together with the other excellent [works]]. Palomino, *Vidas*, p. 183.

⁵³ In the inventory of 1686 the first of the enlisted paintings is described as "con marco de talla dorado como lo son los demás marcos de esta Pieza". Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 269 (1686/ 517).

⁵⁴ The work attributed to Tintoretto (position 2) is today identified with a work by his son Domenico Tintoretto. Marías, "El género de *Las Meninas* ...", p. 317, no. 2. The two "viejas" by Ribera (pos. 17) are paintings by Esteban March, a painter from Valencia famous for his battle paintings (c. 1610–1668). Díaz Padrón, *El lienzo de Vertumno y Pomona de Rubens*, p. 82 and p. 83, fig. 59.

⁵⁵ The inventory of 1686 gives the following identification: "*Pieza del Despacho de Verano en cuyo techo está Pintado Apolo*", cf. Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 269 (1686/ 517). According to Orso the ceiling's subject was not Apollo, the god of arts (and thus one of the allegoric identification-figures of Philip IV) but 'The Fall of Phaeton' as is also reported by Colonna and Palomino, cf. Orso, *Philip IV*, p. 70, note 145. As Apollo was most probably depicted as charioteer, a later iconographic confusion seems likely.

⁵⁶ Greub, "Der Platz des Bildes ...", p. 451.

according to De Mazo's plan from 1626, we think that here (the south wall) was a kind of dais. Consequently, this wall, in front of which likely stood the king's desk (mentioned in the Duke of Sandwich's account), lacked paintings for decoration. The ordering sequence of the paintings on the remaining three walls follows as closely as possible the parameters we have seen worked out above: Since no other sources avail themselves, the most important principle is the sequence in the inventory. Because the inventory-maker begins with one of the least expensive images, an unknown "festoncico de flores" [picture with small flower garlands]⁵⁷ which cannot have possessed the same significance as Titian's portrait of Charles V in the Hall of Mirrors, we may assume consequently that this is the first painting on the east wall. For the second parameter, we follow the distribution of paintings into thematic unities which correspond to each of the three walls: According to the reconstruction proposed here, predominantly still-lives and depictions of children hang on the east wall (Fig. 9a); the north wall (rather problematic due to deterioration from climate concerns) was decorated with flower still-lives (Fig. 9b); while the west wall features *Las Meninas* as the optical midpoint surrounded by mostly mythological and allegorical depictions, which are arranged for the most part in mirror-symmetric pairs (Fig. 9c). (Especially helpful are the horizontally-oriented overdoor paintings which are relatively easily to place above the two doors and two windows.)⁵⁸ Thirdly, the sequence in the list moves from the top down, which in the case of the west wall corresponds to the order provided by the image and person 'register' in *Las Meninas*: In the upper row (with the exception of "unas damas benenzianas" [Venetian Ladies])⁵⁹ we find mythological scenes; underneath, Philosophers and 'Ladies' (consistent with Velázquez and the court entourage) as well as both Cupid depictions,⁶⁰ whereas *the Ganymede* painting to the right is 'reflected' in the thematically similar images painted into the *Las Meninas*. This painting, with its enormous appraised value of 16.500 *reales*, by far the most expensive painting in the summer office,⁶¹ stands out as the dominant principal work of a palace room, which, as mentioned, is decorated with a total of 33 (predominantly) original paintings all in gilded frames, seven mirrors (whose estimated total value alone surpasses all the paintings in the room) and six wall tables (whose summed value approximates that of all the images together minus the *Las Meninas*). Thus, it can be no coincidence that the individual paintings in this room, with respect to both theme and placement, bear a relation to the very picture which, as the Portuguese art theorist Félix

⁵⁷ Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 269, no. 161.

⁵⁸ Thus the window on the east wall would have been positioned lower, but maybe the painting (as often) was not as high as suggested in the inventory; both the subject and especially the format fit perfectly well for hanging over a window or door.

⁵⁹ Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 292, no. 192.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 286–288, nos. 183 and 185.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 285, no. 182.

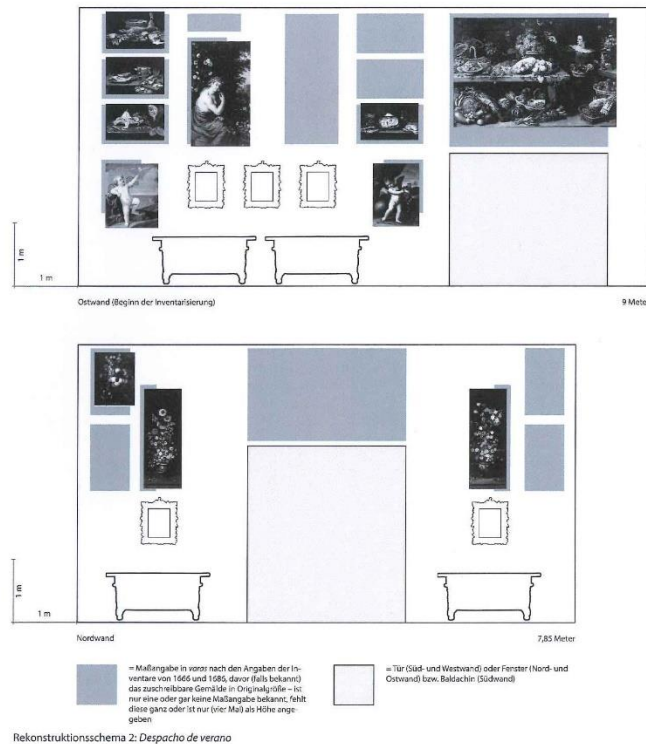


Fig. 9a-9b. Reconstruction of the items in the *Despacho de Verano*. East wall and North wall (diagram by Thierry Greub, 2015)

da Costa penned in 1696, “creates the adornment of a room in the Madrid royal palace”.⁶²

Demonstrating this idea most openly is the recently mentioned depiction of Ganymede; for an image with a similar theme is mounted to the right of the open door on the east wall of the room represented in the *Las Meninas* (Fig. 6). Its companion image on the left side portrays Vulcan⁶³ and hangs in the *Las Meninas* directly near Velázquez and designating the painter as a “second Vulcan”.⁶⁴ In the philosopher portraits of Ribera situated both here and on the west wall and in the prominent and to this day not yet identified *Italian Landscape*, additional visual themes from the south wall of *Pieza Principal* in the *Las Meninas* are adopted. With respect to optics and content, the mythological paintings marked as “Pomona y Bertulo” [Pomona and Vertum-

⁶² Stratton-Pruitt, *Velázquez's Las Meninas*, p. 1; Díaz Padrón writes in similar words, *Las Meninas* was hanging at the “pared más amplia del despacho” or “dominando la pared principal”, Díaz Padrón, *El lienzo de Vertumno y Pomona de Rubens*, p. 38 resp. p. 71.

⁶³ Orso places the two little paintings – out of compositional reasons – in reversed order (Orso, *Philip IV*, pp. 171–172 and p. 171, diagram 3, “East Wall”); the background of *Las Meninas* shows convincingly that Vulcan is situated on the left side.

⁶⁴ Greub, “Der Platz des Bildes ...”, p. 450.



Fig. 9c-9d. Reconstruction of the items in the Despacho de Verano, west wall and south wall (diagram by Thierry Greub, 2015)

nus],⁶⁵ “un Bacanario” [A Bacchanal]⁶⁶ and “una Fábula” [A Story],⁶⁷ ultimately bear a relation to the two episodes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* represented in the *Las Meninas*.

It is not uninteresting, moreover, that one of the two “Caezas” [heads]⁶⁸ painted by Ribera, both of which may be located on the west wall, is described as “una con una taza en la mano” [one with a cup in her hand]⁶⁹ and another by Guido Reni as “una caeza, de mano de Guydo Bolones, con una rosa en la mano” [a head from Guido Reni with a rose in her hand]⁷⁰ and thus possibly alludes to the fact that the *Menina* on the left, Doña María Agustina Sarmiento, passes the Infanta a *búcaro*⁷¹ with cool water. Not in the least, in the convex mirror, the “Fábula” of Van Dyck, which indeed may be identified

⁶⁵ Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 289, no. 188.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 290, no. 189.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 291, no. 190.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 288, no. 186–187.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 288, no. 186.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 292, no. 191. – There may be added *The Flora* by Brueghel. *Ibidem*, p. 276, no. 169, “una Ninfa con flores en la mano”.

⁷¹ Mercedes Llorente, *Las Meninas and Mariana in Mourning: The Three Prudences*, Madrid, 2011 pp. 30–31 with note 68–70. Available at:

http://www.academia.edu/1868421/Las_Meninas_and_Mariana_in_Mourning_The_Three_Prudences (accessed 30 October 2016).

as *Rinaldo and Armida*,⁷² and the seven mirrors distributed throughout the room recall the prominent mirror-motif of the *Las Meninas*. Finally, if we follow this proposed reconstruction schema, the natural light in the room entering from the north and the east would have referenced the lighting situation in the *Las Meninas*.

The paintings located on the west wall of the king's summer office, thus, stand in programmatic relation to the *Las Meninas*-painting also positioned on this wall. The painting's illustration of a distinguished court scene where a drink is offered to the Infanta occurs at the intersection of two rooms that are highly charged with dynasty politics: The *Pieza Principal* as the former room of the Spanish heir apparent, Baltasar Carlos, and the *Quarto bajo de varano*, the summer office of the sitting king.

Thus, a precise visual arrangement forges an optical and content-based relation between these two rooms. In both spaces, Philip IV, the ruling monarch is always present, whether actually standing in the room or lending his appearance to the mirror image in the *Las Meninas*. This relation makes *Las Meninas* a mirror of the current instability in the succession crisis at the court of Philip IV and at the same time a reflection of the subtly negotiated, timeless importance of the dynastic-sovereign theme for the Casa de Austria.

That within the Alcázar similarly functioning rooms could mirror one another meaningfully is demonstrated by the fact that in the king's office in the *Torre Dorada*, the exact place⁷³ where the *Las Meninas* has been painted, according to the inventory from 1686, hung a portrait of the older half-sister of Margarita Maria, Maria Theresa: "vn Retrato de la Señora Reyna de franzia D^aMaria Theresa", and the French dauphin: "otro del Delfín de Francia",⁷⁴ one may here suggest a further, complementary connection to the contents of the *Las Meninas* regarding the question of succession and sovereignty.

⁷² Díaz Padrón, *El lienzo de Vertumno y Pomona de Rubens*, pp. 86–88; Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, p. 290, note 1, argue against the attribution.

⁷³ Moffitt, "Velázquez im Alcázar-Palast von 1656 ...", fig. 18.

⁷⁴ The paintings in the *Pieza del Despacho en la Torre* are first listed at Yves Bottineau, "L'Alcázar de Madrid et l'inventaire de 1686. Aspects de la cour d'Espagne au XVII^e siècle", *Bulletin Hispanique*, 60, 2, (1958), pp. 145–179, especially pp. 163–164. Frescoed by Gaspar Becerra (1520–1570, from 1563 Spanish court painter) and according to the inventory of 1686 furnished with "en tiempo del Rey nro señor D. Phelipe 4^o (que esta en gloria) que eran vn Retrato del Papa Paulo tercero, otro del Marques de Pescara, vn niño medio cuerpo, otro del Delfín de Francia, otro de dos niños con vn cordero, vna Pintura de la Asumpcion de Nuestra Señora, otra de vn Retrato de la Señora Reyna de franzia D^aMaria Theresa, todas estas estan al presente, las vnas en las Bobedas de la priora, y otras en la Camara de Su Mag^d. donde van Imbentoriadas y no se ponen aqui." The painting of the elder Infanta, María Teresa, thus seems to have created the counterpart to Margarita María in the *Las Meninas*; Louis of France, the first son of king Louis XIII, was dauphin of France from 1638–1643, afterwards king Ludwig XIV from 1643 until 1715. Martínez Leiva et al., *El Inventario del Alcázar*, pp. 481–489 (listing per items), pp. 791–792 (inventory of 1666), p. 935 and 987 (inventory of 1686), according to the authors the dauphin's portrait (*Luis de Borbón, Delfín de Francia*) was painted by Charles and Henri Beaubrun in 1663 (Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, inv. no. P-2232). *Íbidem*, pp. 483–484, no. 687; and the the one of María Teresa by Pierre Mignard circa 1661, (Madrid, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, inv. no. 687). *íbidem*, pp. 486–487, no. 690.

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