VELÁZQUEZ’S LAS MENINAS

Velázquez’s Las Meninas was sequestered in the Spanish royal collections from 1656, when it was painted, until the opening of the Museo del Prado in 1819. From that moment, it has been one of the most famous masterpieces of Western painting, inspiring many published studies of its remarkable perspectival construction and of its iconography, as well as challenging later generations of artists, from the nineteenth century, to Pablo Picasso, to the present. The essays in this volume do not propose new interpretations of Las Meninas; rather, they provide an introduction to the reception history and the critical fortunes of a painting that has received an avalanche of attention from art critics and art historians, geometricians, philosophers, photographers, and semioticians. Together, the six essays trace the discussion of Las Meninas through two centuries, providing the reader with a sense of the history of taste and the ever-fluctuating parameters of art appreciation, history, criticism, and theory.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt is a scholar of Spanish painting. She has curated many exhibitions of Spanish art, most recently Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1617–1682: Paintings in American Collections. Editor of The Cambridge Companion to Velázquez, Dr. Stratton-Pruitt is also the author of The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art, which received an award for the best book on Spanish art from the American Society for Hispanic Art Historical Studies in 1994.
MASTERPIECES OF WESTERN PAINTING

This series serves as a forum for reassessment of several of the most important paintings created from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. Each volume focuses on a single work and includes an introduction outlining its general history, and a selection of essays that examine the work from a variety of methodological perspectives. Demonstrating how and why these paintings have had such enduring value, the volumes also offer new insights into their meaning for contemporaries and their subsequent reception.
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