Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (Diego Velazquez 1599–1660)

* a Spanish Baroque master, began his artistic journey in Seville under Francisco Pacheco before establishing his own studio in 1617. Influenced by Renaissance greats like Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Titian, as well as the realism of Caravaggio, Velázquez became court painter to King Philip IV, producing dynamic portraits of the royal family, nobility, and dwarves. His works, known for their vibrant colors, movement, and innovative techniques, include masterpieces like Las Meninas and Pope Innocent X. Knighted in 1658, Velázquez also contributed to royal events, such as the wedding of Louis XIV and Maria Teresa. His artistry, blending realism with psychological depth, solidified his legacy as a pivotal figure in Western art history.

**PAINTINGS**

**The Rokeby Venus (1644-1648)**

* The Rokeby Venus illustrates the Roman goddess of love, beauty, and fertility lounging on her bed, turned away from the viewer. This rear view of Venus was a popular visual and literary erotic theme in ancient times, with her knees drawn in. Unlike typical representations of this scene, she lacks the usual symbolic items such as jewelry, roses, and myrtle. The figure can be recognized as Venus due to the presence of her son, Cupid.

**The Surrender of Brenda / La Lanzas | Original Title: La rendición de Breda (1634- 1635)**

* The capture of Breda in 1625 marked a significant victory for Spanish forces during the later phases of the Eighty Years' War. General Ambrogio Spinola, a Genoese noble, took Breda despite receiving contrary orders from his superiors. Prior to this event, the Spanish government had concluded that engaging in siege warfare against well-fortified towns in the Low Countries was overly costly and decided to focus on economically blockading the Dutch Republic instead. Most of the Spanish military resources were redirected to the ongoing Thirty Years' War.

**Adoration of the Kings (1619)**

* The scene depicts three kings offering gifts to the Christ child: Melchoir, who is kneeling in the front; Balthazar, standing behind him in a red cape and a lace collar; and Caspar, positioned between the two. Behind Balthazar, an unnamed young man watches the event. Near the Virgin's left shoulder, Saint Joseph is kneeling.

**The Waterseller of Seville (1623)**

* He seems to express a sense of despair, bordering on the absurd. The vibrant colors are the most striking among the three works. The jars and food items evoke the style of bodegón paintings. The seller is attended by two customers: a young boy, likely modeled after the figures seen in The Lunch and Old Woman Cooking Eggs, and a young man who lingers in the shadowy background.

**Portrait of Infante Don Carlos (1626-1627)**

* In a calm and sophisticated stance, the figure is dressed in a black outfit featuring grey braids and adorned with a substantial gold shoulder chain depicting the Order of the Golden Fleece. He holds a hat in his left hand and a glove in his right. Positioned in the darkest area of the space, the artist included a 4 cm strip on each side to enhance its impression of authority.

**Don Baltasar Carlos with a Dwarf (1632)**

* The prince is depicted wearing a captain-general's uniform, tailored to his young age but still featuring a commander's baton in his right hand, a shoulder sash, and a sword hilt in his left. In contrast, the dwarf is holding an apple and a rattle, highlighting the difference between the infant heir to one of Europe's most formidable monarchies and a typical child with customary toys. The prince's rigid posture stands in stark contrast to the dynamic pose of the dwarf, who is turned to look at the prince. This has led some art historians to speculate that the painting originally focused solely on the prince, with the dwarf added at a later time.

**Coronation of the Virgin (1641-1644)**

* On the viewer's right is God the Father, depicted as a venerable old man, while on the left stands the long-haired figure of Jesus Christ. They are depicted holding Mary's crown above her head together. In the center, the Holy Spirit is shown as a white dove. The heads of these two figures and the dove are aligned on the same horizontal level at the base of the triangle, symbolizing their equality within the Holy Trinity. Additionally, the cherubs surrounding the Virgin at the bottom of the painting possess a pictorial quality that rivals that of Murillo, who is well-known for his cherub-themed artworks.

**Don Sebastian de Morra (1645)**

* The artwork depicts his entire body seated on the ground, clad in an elaborate cloak, with his short legs extended forward in an awkward way that brings to mind a marionette. He gazes directly at the viewer, remaining completely still and making no gestures, which has prompted one critic to propose that the painting serves as a critique of the court's treatment of de Morra and other dwarfs.

**Portrait of Pope Innocent X (1650)**

* He proposed to create a portrait of the Pope, but Innocent X was skeptical and questioned Velázquez's reputation. In response, he requested that Velázquez provide some evidence of his painting abilities. It was at this point that Velázquez is believed to have painted a portrait of his servant, Juan de Pareja. However, experts are uncertain about the accuracy of this account, suggesting that the Pope allowed Velázquez to portray him because the artist had previously achieved considerable success painting other members of the papal court, including the Pope's own barber.

**The Needlewoman (1635-1643)**

* The Needlewoman is an incomplete portrait, with the head, rendered in light and shadow, being the most developed area. The arms and hands are only lightly sketched. This piece showcases Velázquez's skill in capturing gesture, his technique of quickly defining the figure, and his talent for conveying how the subject blends into the surrounding environment.

**The Temptation of St. Thomas Aquinas (1631-1632)**

* The scene illustrates a significant episode from the life of Saint Thomas Aquinas. As a novice, he encounters temptation represented by a prostitute, who appears in the background by a door. One angel supports him, while another prepares to fasten a white ribbon around him, symbolizing his dedication to chastity.

**Portrait of Queen Margaret of Austria (1634-1635)**

* The image of the queen is depicted in an elaborate gown, embellished with two pieces of jewelry associated with Austria: the pearl referred to as "La Peregrina" and the square-cut diamond known as "El Estanque." The horse is shown in the 'passage' gait, facing left to reflect the horse in Margarita's husband's portrait, which faces to the right.