

# VELÁZQUEZ

Norbert Wolf



TASCHEN

Taschen  
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Norbert Wolf

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## Il volto della Spagna

### La vetta inarrivabile dell'età dell'oro della pittura spagnola

Acclamata per il realismo carico d'atmosfera e per la profondità di analisi dei soggetti ritratti, l'opera di **Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez** (1599–1660) rappresenta indiscutibilmente la vetta più alta dell'età dell'oro della pittura spagnola.

Nato a Siviglia, ma di origini portoghesi, divenne pittore ufficiale della corte di Filippo IV nel 1623. Grande lavoratore, faceva uso principalmente di colori scuri e austeri. Nel 1628 conobbe Rubens, e poco dopo fece il suo primo viaggio in Italia. I dipinti di quel periodo rivelano un crescente interesse sia per il colore sia per il nudo maschile.

Fu solo alla fine degli anni Quaranta del Seicento che Velázquez tornò in Italia, dove dipinse il famoso ritratto di papa Innocenzo X e il suo unico nudo femminile, *Venere allo specchio* (*Venere Rokeby*). Ma la sua grandezza risiede forse più nell'attenzione a certi personaggi minori, quali per esempio i nani che intrattenevano i figli della famiglia reale. La potenza, la capacità di analisi psicologica e l'abilità tecnica dei suoi dipinti ebbero una profonda influenza su artisti quali Manet, Delacroix, Picasso e Bacon.

### La collana:

Ciascun volume della collana Basic Art di TASCHEN comprende:

- Una sintesi dettagliata che ripercorre cronologicamente la vita e l'opera dell'artista, soffermandosi sulla sua importanza a livello storico e culturale
- Una biografia concisa
- Circa 100 illustrazioni a colori con didascalie esplicative

### L'autore:

**Norbert Wolf** si è laureato in storia dell'arte, linguistica e medievistica presso le università di Ratisbona e Monaco e ha conseguito un PhD nel 1983. È stato *visiting professor* a Marburgo, Francoforte, Lipsia, Düsseldorf, Erlangen-Norimberga e Innsbruck. Le sue numerose pubblicazioni sulla storia dell'arte comprendono svariati titoli TASCHEN, quali *Diego Velázquez*, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, *Caspar David Friedrich*, *Espressionismo*, *Romanico*, *Paesaggi* e *Simbolismo*.

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## In Search of Work in Rome and Spain

El Greco's presence in Rome in 1570 is evidenced by a letter by Giulio Clovio (1498–1578), a Croatian painter of miniatures, in which Clovio recommends to his patron, Alessandro Farnese, a "giovane Candioto discepolo di Tiziano" ("a young man from Candia, a disciple of Titian"). Adding a reference to a sadly lost self-portrait, which reputedly astonished all the painters in Rome, Clovio asks protection for his friend El Greco and the provision of lodging for him at the Palazzo Farnese.

Perhaps as thanks, El Greco painted a portrait of his friend Clovio, the earliest surviving portrait from the Cretan artist's hand (ill. p. 19). The sitter is depicted holding his most famous work, the Farnese Book of Hours which he illustrated for Alessandro Farnese in 1546.

The originality of El Greco's pictorial ideas at this early date is reflected in a subject of which various versions, including copies, exist: *A Boy Blowing on an Ember to Light a Candle* (*El soplo*). One of these works, surviving in the Farnese Collections, may have been directly commissioned by the Duke (ill. p. 18). The subject was very probably a paraphrase of a classical model, but also had several predecessors in Venetian painting. Yet there the depictions tended to be marginal episodes in a larger narrative context, as with Titian or Jacopo Bassano, whose work had a large audience at that period. El Greco's achievement, in other words, consisted in isolating an individual figure and bringing it into close proximity with the viewer by means of the lighting and the low vantage point, known as *sotto in su*.

Actually there was very little to do for El Greco in the Farnese household, which chiefly required fresco painters. Although the participation of a "pittore Greco" in the decoration of the Villa Farnese at Caprarola is recorded, no painted work can be associated with this written source. At any rate, the artist became acquainted with a further intellectual at the Palazzo Farnese, a man who now became his most significant patron in Rome: the humanist and librarian Fabio Orsini (1570–1600). The inventory of Orsini's collection would later include seven El Greco's, including his portrait of Clovio.

His lost self-portrait, the portrait of Clovio and the *Boy Blowing on an Ember to Light a Candle* indicate the direction in which El Greco hoped to find a market niche in Rome: that of portraiture. Perhaps the most outstanding example of his work in this genre is his portrait of Vincenzo Anastagi (ill. p. 21). It depicts



Giulio Clovio, c. 1570  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 86 cm (22.8 x 33.9 in.)  
Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte

The half-length portrait of the renowned miniaturist (whom Giorgio Vasari called "a minor and novel Michelangelo") employs an unusual landscape format. Visible through the window at the right edge is a view of a landscape under a stormy sky.

1808-18  
*A Boy Blowing on an Ember to Light a Candle*  
(*El soplo*), early 1570s  
Oil on canvas, 60.3 x 30.5 cm (23.8 x 12.0 in.)  
Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte

In his *Historia Naturalis*, Pliny the Elder named several artists who, in painting or sculpture, depicted boys blowing into a fire.

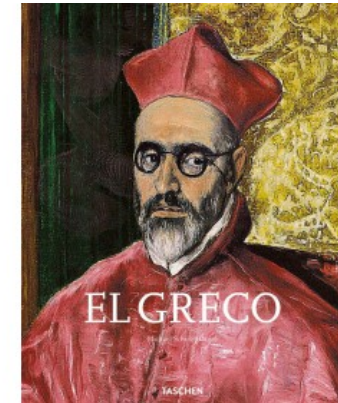
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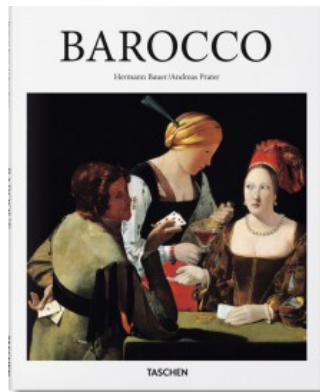
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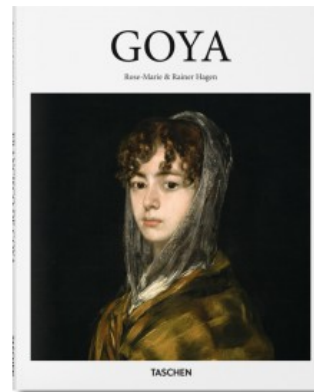
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