

the clockwork universe while leaving God with room to act led him to believe that some divine purposes can be known and that science was the right way to achieve that knowledge. The addition of a small collection of “Strange Reports” to his *Experimenta & Observationes Physicae* (1691) reflects this interest in extraordinary phenomena. They were natural anomalies that could not be explained through the basic tenets of mechanical worldview. Moreover, one must recall Boyle’s distinction between “supernatural” and “preternatural,” the last indicating perfect natural phenomena transgressing the ordinary course of nature.

This collection of essays is the last of a series of collections by Michael Hunter, Emeritus Professor of History at Birkbeck, University of London. As it deals with some specific aspects of Boyle’s thought and personal events, it is suitable to readers who have already acquired a basic knowledge of the topics belonging to the Scientific Revolution, the discussion on science in modern Britain, and the impact of the Irish scientist on the achievement of the scientific account of nature.

*The Spanish Golden Age: Painting and Sculpture in the Time of Velázquez*, exhibition catalogue, München: Hirmer, 2016. 334 pp. + 122 colored plates. €29. REVIEW BY LIVIA STOENESCU, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

The catalogue associated with the exhibitions *El Siglo de Oro: The Age of Velázquez* (Gemäldegalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2016) and *The Spanish Golden Age: Painting and Sculpture in the Time of Velázquez* (Kunsthalle der Hypo – Kulturstiftung 2016/2017) is a scholarly undertaking. While the exhibitions’ purview was to present the German public with an unprecedentedly comprehensive access to leading seventeenth-century Spanish artists, the catalogue provided the theoretical undergirding for such enterprise. The focus on the significant, albeit understudied, painter Alonso Cano and sculptor Gregorio Fernández; on the cultural differences and similarities between Spanish and Italian Baroque; on technical difficulty (*dificultad*) as a feature central to the iconographical multiplicity of Spanish Baroque; on naturalistic tendencies and highly individualized styles for depicting the Spanish mystical lore thus distinguish the catalogue *El Siglo de*

*Oro: The Age of Velázquez* from its predecessors.

In recent years, the London exhibition *The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture 1600–1700* (2009; catalogue edited by Xavier Bray et al.) concentrated on the idiosyncrasies of Spanish mystical approach to depicting religious visions by painters, sculptors, and designers of the *Siglo de Oro*. Organized in 2009 as well, the Indianapolis Museum of Art exhibition *Sacred Spain: Art and Belief in the Spanish World* (catalogue edited by Ronda Kasl) addressed the multifarious character of Spanish Baroque's intersections with emerging Counter-Reformation orientations in Spanish America. Expanding on these topics, *El Siglo de Oro: The Age of Velázquez* defends that the seventeenth-century political decline acted as a foil for "the stability of the world power Spain as a foundation for culture" (18). Spain's collapse as the universal power coincided with the advent of Calderon's *La vida es sueño* (*Life is a Dream*) and *El gran teatro del mundo* (*The Great Theater of the World*); Gracián's *El Criticón*; and the most compelling creations by Velázquez, Francisco de Zurbarán, Alonso Cano, and the young Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. The eroding Spanish monarchy orchestrated the aesthetic principles of *stillo desornamentado* (unadorned style) that originated El Escorial and developed with Juan Gomez de Mora's initiatives for the Royal Monastery Church of the Incarnation (*De La Encarnación*) in Madrid (23). A new Spanish tradition of sculptural Baroque décor, distinct from the Italian Baroque, hence spread across Andalusia and Mexico.

Karin Hellwig's chapter "Theory and Practice: The Fine Arts in Seventeenth-Century Spain" reflects on critical artistic criteria for Spanish painting and sculpture. The Spanish theorists Vicente Carducho and Francisco Pacheco effected new belief in the *paragone* (the debate over the competing claims of painting and sculpture) not only to dispute opinions on the superiority of sculpture but also to affirm that painting is the prevailing form of art and the cumulative Spanish reaction to the first forum for *paragone* that Benedetto Varchi held in Florence in 1547. Hellwig argues that Pacheco, the authority of seventeenth-century Spanish art theory, defended the superiority of painting over the sister arts with recourse to ideas he derived from the practice of painters who employed polychromies, pigments, and media (34, 35). Pacheco claimed *perfección* (perfection) for painting based

on the observation that only painting relies on pigment as medium intrinsic to color, unlike sculpture that only inadvertently reaches to perfection with the use of pigment—the quintessential element of painting—and therefore subordinates itself to painting (35). Works by Pacheco, Juan Sánchez Cotán, and Francisco de Zurbarán evince the competition between their polychrome painted compositions and the vividly colored sculptures of Montañés, Gregorio Fernández, and Juan de Mesa. Painting confirmed a higher complexity or *dificultad* in the creation of three-dimensionality, which has been recognized as one of the defining features of the illusionistic character of Spanish Baroque art (37).

By expanding on issues of technicality and medium, Roberto Contini highlights the seventeenth-century Spanish accomplishments in “polyphony and polycentrism” (41). Bartolomé Carducho’s *Death of St. Francis* (1593) exhibited naturalistic effects that anticipated and influenced Caravaggio, whose style manifested the radicalization of all objectivism and independence from idealizing tendencies borrowed from classicist aesthetics (41). Contini notices that naturalism appeared on the Spanish art scene shortly after 1590 (42).

Like Hellwig’s and Contini’s, Manuel Arias Martínez’s commentary on materials and techniques are important contributions to a line of research that yet awaits theoretical attention. In the assessment of Martínez, both materiality and medium were essential factors in creating a unique blend of supernatural and mundane Spanish artistic ethos. While the catalogue insists on the preeminent role of painting, it concurrently emphasizes the significance of three-dimensional artifacts that Spanish painters referenced. The devotional, carved images of the *Virgin of Atocha*, *Virgin of Fuensanta*, and the famous *Soledad* at the convent of Victoria in Madrid were transmitted through copies that appear in numerous oil-on-canvas seventeenth-century paintings (69).

*The Spanish Golden Age: Painting and Sculpture in the Time of Velázquez* offers theoretical positions on pressing issues in contemporary art historical discourse and fulfills new orientations towards art history in relation to materials, techniques, and media. The catalogue is, for this reason alone, a valuable enterprise that concurrently directs our attention to incomplete discussions of what naturalism entails in early modern art. Is naturalism an encouragement to follow nature with

the refinements of painting? Did the painter's specificity in rendering the coloristic ornaments of the cloths of angles and saints stem from a naturalistic attentiveness to the seventeenth-century surround? Was the Spanish interest in capturing the varying qualities of materials different from the kind of naturalism that guided Italian painters to ground their practice in the laws of optics? The relationship between Spanish and Italian early modern art is strikingly close and a shared interest in their forceful plasticity awaits future examination.

