Velázquez: Painting from Life

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In the seventeenth century, Velázquez was said to paint from life, “del natural.” In 2005 we recognize “del natural” and its later correlate, “realism,” as complicated notions expressed in quotes. The reasons for this usage are made clear by recent examinations of two paintings—Kitchen Scene of ca. 1618 in the Art Institute of Chicago and Portrait of Góngora of 1622 in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston—which show how complex Velázquez’s representation of the world around him could be.

Both paintings were created early in Velázquez’s career, when his rendering of people and objects was starkly naturalistic. In Kitchen Scene (Figure 1), one finds pots and pans that were in daily use in Seville’s kitchens, and a head of garlic next to the mortar used for mashing it. One also sees a dark-skinned figure who is unusual for personnel in most European kitchen scenes but could have existed in Velázquez’s native Seville, where moriscos or former Muslims as well as African slaves worked as domestics. The temptation has always been to see this as a slice of unmediated reality.

Velázquez is famous for the magic of his brushwork even at this early date, and any attribution to him depends at least in part on the quality of the visible strokes. In the case of the Kitchen Scene, the damaged state of the painting and poor restoration for many years placed it in a state of limbo in which no one rejected it wholeheartedly but only a few accepted it unreservedly.1 Recent treatment has both clarified the painting’s condition and significantly improved its aesthetic appearance, allowing for a more confident assessment. Although the painting has suffered a general loss of subtlety, some key areas, such as the figure’s proper right hand, white shirt cuff, and jacket sleeve, are reasonably well preserved. The still-life objects, in particular the decorated pitcher, copper pot, double-handled jug, and mortar and pestle, also remain quite well preserved, their material character and surface quality rendered with a skill that gives them palpable solidity. Surfaces of objects are animated by painted highlights that faithfully capture the reflective qualities of metal and ceramic. In addition, in the painting of the face, the artist demonstrated an extraordinary ability to use light to define three-dimensional form. Pigment analysis shows that the ground in Kitchen Scene resembles that in securely attributed paintings executed by the youthful Velázquez, such as the Adoration of the Magi of ca. 1619 and Jerónima de la Fuente, signed and dated 1620 (see Appendix, Table 1, and Figure 8).2

As is usual in a painting by Velázquez, Kitchen Scene shows pentimenti as adjustments of outline made while painting, here in the brown and white pitchers, the ceramic bowls, and the white cloth and basket.

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The notes for this article begin on page 89.
Figure 1. Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (Spanish, 1599-1660). *Kitchen Scene*, ca. 1618. Oil on canvas, 55.7 x 104.5 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Robert Waller Memorial Fund, 1935.380 (photo: Art Institute of Chicago)

Figure 2. Velázquez. *Kitchen Scene with the Supper at Emmaus*, 1618. Oil on canvas, 55 x 118 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, 4538 (photo: National Gallery of Ireland)
hanging on the wall. The placement of the bowls on the table has been revised, and outlines have been subtly altered in order to produce a more refined composition (Figure 3). The original position of the upside-down pitcher was such that it would have covered the foot of the white pitcher. This would have been a visually ambiguous detail in that the contact point of the pitcher and table would have been blocked from view. By shortening the height of the upside-down pitcher, the artist revealed just enough of the foot of the white pitcher to clarify its position and connection to the tabletop.

In 1724 Antonio Palomino commented on a bodegón by Velázquez in which he detailed many of the items visible in the Kitchen Scene: a small copper pot, “a clay jug, some dishes and bowls, a glazed pitcher, a mortar and pestle, and a head of garlic next to it; on the wall can be seen a wicker basket with a cloth and other trifles.” Palomino tells us that there is also a human figure: “Watching over all this is a boy with a carafe in his hand and an escorieta on his head, which, together with his very bumpkin-like costume, makes him a very ridiculous and amusing figure.”

The Kitchen Scene cannot be the same as the bodegón described by Palomino because his painting contained a conspicuous pot of crabs boiling over a fire, a detail nowhere to be found in the present picture. The Chicago canvas has cusping on all four sides, so it has not been cut down by enough to have had a major scene on a missing piece of canvas, and no boiling crabs appear in the radiographs or the infrared examination. In addition, Palomino’s description does not fit the Kitchen Scene with the Supper at Emmaus of 1618 now in the National Gallery of Ireland (Figure 2). But the many other details of Palomino’s text, which do correspond with the Chicago painting, establish that we are dealing with a variant of the picture he saw.

What does the existence of variants of a scene suggest about how Velázquez made his bodegones? What is their relationship to the natural elements they claim to represent? Both the infrared examination and Palomino’s text indicate that the Chicago Kitchen Scene was assembled from a repertoire of preexisting motifs instead of created firsthand from objects before his eyes. The hanging basket, copper pot, and decorated pitcher in the Chicago image are also found in other bodegones, such as An Old Woman Cooking Eggs in the
National Gallery of Scotland, and the stack of upside-down plates is repeated in *Two Young Men at Table* in the Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London.

Also visible in infrared reflectograms as well as in X-radiographs are the very fine graphic contour lines first observed in Velázquez’s early works by Zahira Vélez.6 These thin, sometimes radiographically opaque lines applied with a stiff pointed brush often stand in relief on the canvas. Such lines are visible in the Chicago painting along the outlines of the face and costume. A fine black outline appears along the right contour of the yellow crock, and light contour lines are found along the upper edge of the copper pot and in the stacked plates (Figure 3). A line also establishes the edge of the face (Figure 4). We will discuss these fine lines again later, as they also appear in the *Portrait of Góngora*, which, unlike the *Kitchen Scene*, was painted directly from life.

Palomino regards the gender of the painting’s only figure as male.8 Yet until 1449, when Palomino’s comments were first linked to the painting, the servant was often described as female because of “her” derivation from images in a Netherlandish tradition of young women in a kitchen.9 It is difficult to come to a firm decision about gender if we look at this painting in isolation, and it is equally difficult if we place it in one of the two possible contexts, since the decision would depend on which context we choose. If we situate the painting in the pictorial tradition of the Netherlandish kitchen scene,10 the figure should be female, whereas if we consider written references to the staffing of kitchens in Spain at this time, the figure could be male. For example, a trial in 1578, in the aftermath of the courtier Antonio Pérez’s death, mentions a kitchen boy or *picaro de cocina*; a cookbook in 1611 argues for the reformation of kitchen staffs because of what seems to have been a plague of kitchen boys or *mozos de cocina*, which the author says dates back to the times of Philip II and Philip III.11 A *mozo de cocina* or *picaro de cocina* was a young male who frequented kitchens in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, when orphans and street children were plentiful.12 For the purposes of interpreting this painting, it is significant that kitchen boys became a category in novels and documents from the latter half of the sixteenth century onward. The relationship of the literary phenomenon of the *picaro* to the pictorial genre of the *bodegón* has been debated without resolution, but it is clear that kitchen boys were topical as subjects. At the same time, however, girls in Spain certainly also worked as domestics.13

If this is a female, Velázquez’s solemn treatment of her is emphatically different from Continental kitchen scenes where the woman is treated as eye-candy. The expectation that a maid surrounded by comestibles should be sexually appealing is spelled out explicitly in a contract made in Lombardy in 1588 in which the patron specifies a series of genre scenes, one with a “donna bella e gratiosa con el petto scoperto” surrounded by game, another with a “frutterola bella e gratiosa,” and yet another with “certe donne belle et gratiose che fanno cucina.”14

A review of the costume in Velázquez’s *Kitchen Scene* does not settle the question of gender,15 although the opening in the jacket just above the waist, which allows the white shirt to peek through, is usually seen in costumes of males. When we turn to the turban, Palomino’s *“escofieta*” is a fabric head-covering of almost any form and is worn by both men and women in Spanish images.16 The figure’s African ancestry complicates the reading of hairdressing conventions. Possibly the implication is that this servant is a *morisco*, or someone of Moorish descent, and the recent expulsion of Muslims from Spain in 1611 might have been part of the unspoken associations of the viewer of about 1618. Yet sub-Saharan slaves had also been imported into Andalucía, and so the meaning of the ethnic and racial reference is another question that is not easily resolved.17

Palomino described the painting he saw as depicting “a figure who is very *ridículo, y gracioso,*” and he also clues us to read the clothing as an indication of social rank, emphasizing the *villani simo trage*, or “very bumpkin-like clothing.” Unlike high-fashion dress worn by nobility, the garment here is not only loose but also made of common wool that is not embroidered. The modern viewer sees nothing ridiculous or comical in these simple clothes, or in the face of the unsmilng adolescent; to us the figure possesses a kind of dignity in poverty. But observers from Velázquez’s time to Palomino’s were familiar with a tradition of aesthetics that associated the lower classes with the burlesque.18

Velázquez’s painting combines standardized motifs adapted from well-known Netherlandish engravings with realistic details from daily life in Seville, and this combination of the familiar and the new helped popularize the genre of the *cocina* in Spain. Throughout his career Velázquez famously refused to quote ideas from other artists; that resistance to copying openly may have pushed him to disrupt the established rules of the kitchen genre. His figure’s stereotyped gender should be female, but Velázquez’s intervention may be to tweak her formulaic figure and the long tradition of pretty girls in kitchens. Velázquez cites just enough of the Netherlandish model for us to pick up the refer-
ence, but he then gives us a Spanish Moor instead of a Flemish maid. He goes further: By means of a veneer of underdrawn contours filled in with a thin layer of paint, he makes us forget that the entire image can also be seen as a reprise of a faraway engraving because he catches the mahogany flesh, cheap fabric, and glazed pottery of real life.

The *Portrait of Góngora* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Figure 5), is a painting that was created directly from the living sitter, at least according to Francisco Pacheco, Velázquez’s most reliable biographer. We therefore expect it to be an on-the-spot transcription of the features of Luis de Góngora, one of the most renowned men of letters of Spain’s *siglo de oro*. But is resemblance to the sitter typical of a portrait by Velázquez?—not of Velázquez’s royal portraits, which record men and women he knew intimately yet which were sometimes reworked over an earlier image or even painted over a studio pattern.\(^{19}\)

Written before 1638, Pacheco’s *Arte de la pintura* contains the earliest and most reliable descriptions of the paintings of Diego Velázquez. Not only was Pacheco a painter himself but he was also Velázquez’s teacher and father-in-law. Unlike the remarks of many early raconteurs of art, Pacheco’s comments are brief, emphasizing the dates and other facts, which are often supported by archival documents. Pacheco is thus a gold standard of reliable documentation, so

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**Figure 5.** Velázquez. *Portrait of Góngora*, 1622. Oil on canvas, 50.3 x 40.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 32.79 (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)
when he tells us that in 1622 the young Velázquez traveled from his native Seville to Madrid, we have every reason to believe him. And Pacheco added: “He made at my request a portrait of don Luis de Góngora, which was very much praised in Madrid.”20

The portrait must have been praised enthusiastically indeed, since there are early copies of it in oil.21 For decades it has been clear that the version in Boston should be the image described by Pacheco, because a radiograph revealed dramatic pentimenti that record Velázquez’s changing thoughts as he painted. A new radiograph enhanced with digitized image processing, and a infrared reflectogram, make the revisions even more legible (Figures 6, 7).

What is the relationship of the Portrait of Góngora to the man it represents? A portrait must capture the likeness of an individual, and Pacheco made it crystal clear that resemblance is the point: “se cumpla con lo parecido, porque éste es el fin del retrato” (so that resemblance may be achieved, because that is the purpose of the portrait).22 Yet Góngora was an illustrious individual, and the portrait was probably painted for Pacheco’s Libro de Retratos, a visual compendium of famous Spaniards.23 Did Velázquez adjust the image to communicate the agenda of distance and deference, an honorific status in which reality cannot pretend to be unmediated and whose format must harmonize with the other portraits in a series?24

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Figure 6. X-radiograph of the painting illustrated in Figure 5 (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)
Velázquez's purpose in traveling to Madrid in 1622 was presumably to show his talents to the young King Philip IV, who only recently had ascended the throne and needed a new court painter. Pacheco's text betrays this unspoken ambition when his description of the painting of Góngora is followed without a transition by the statement "and at that time there was no opportunity to portray the King and Queen, although this was attempted." So the Portrait of Góngora was the only chance Velázquez would have to show what he could do on this trip, and he made sure that it was seen: "fue muy celebrado en Madrid," which no doubt helped to get the desired royal audience when he returned to try again in 1623. But when he first touched brush to canvas in 1622, Velázquez may have been thinking of his native audience in Seville, and this young painter of bodegones was sufficiently confident of his talent at painting "from nature," to cover the poet's balding head with wildly overgrown leaves that are neither classicizing nor flattering (Figures 6, 7). Yet the painter quickly had second thoughts. He must have realized that framing the head with absurdly disorderly leaves, however natural, would not make a suitable portrait in the eyes of decorum-conscious court circles in Madrid, and he covered his mistake. He developed the wreath fairly fully before rejecting it, because the outer edges and veins of some leaves, like the one directly above the poet's head, are carefully described. Cross sections do not reveal any dirt or varnish trapped between paint layers (see Appendix and Figure 10), so a long period of time did not pass between inventing the wreath and deleting it, and the portrait was probably not circulated publicly with the leaves; furthermore, none of the surviving painted or engraved images of Góngora show the wreath on his head. Later in his career, Velázquez habitually revised as he painted, and his pentimenti tend to belong to the initial process of
creation; that seems to be true already here in 1622. The other painted versions of this portrait appear to have no significant pentimenti anywhere; the painting in the Prado, for example, has only a minor adjustment of outline on the shoulder.²⁶

If this is the record of the painter’s working directly from the live model in Madrid in 1622, why are there not more pentimenti in the body? It is probable that changes beyond the laurel wreath are few, since Velázquez was using a standardized pattern for the bust and was painting the head directly in Góngora’s presence. As Pacheco tells us, Velázquez made the portrait at his request, and very likely Pacheco wanted the picture so that he could produce an engraving for his Libro de Retratos. In Pacheco’s series, the features of these famous men were varied, but their bodies were standardized: a bust whose shoulders turned to the left or the right, and in the case of poets like Góngora, often a wreath of small, neat laurel leaves to crown the head. In the Boston version, there is only a slight revision apart from the huge laurel wreath. A shift of outline along Góngora’s proper left refines the contour of his shoulder (Figure 6).²⁷

Velázquez’s training in Pacheco’s workshop prepared him mentally to paint the bust of Góngora, and the local Sevillian materials he took with him to Madrid prepared him on a more practical level. Pigment analysis of the Portrait of Góngora reveals that its ground resembles that preparation layer in other Sevillian paintings by Velázquez, and it also resem-

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Figure 8. Photomicrograph of cross section from the Kitchen Scene (Figure 1) taken in a scanning electron microscope (back-scattered electron imaging). Width of field: 0.18 millimeters. The white area at top left is a thin paint layer (main pigment: lead white). The ground layer is below this. The oblong white grain near the middle is a cluster of iron sulfide crystals. Other larger grains in the ground are mostly calcium carbonate (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

Figure 9. Photomicrograph of cross section from the painting illustrated in Figure 5, taken in a scanning electron microscope (back-scattered electron imaging). Width of field: 0.18 millimeters. The ground layer is shown. The largest grains in the ground are mostly calcium carbonate (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

Figure 10. Photomicrograph of cross section from the painting illustrated in Figure 5, taken in a scanning electron microscope (back-scattered electron imaging). Width of field: 0.08 millimeters. The sample comes from the area of the painted-out wreath. At top is a single layer of brownish-colored paint. It sits on green that is made up of lead-tin yellow (larger white grains) and azurite (large gray grains, barely visible against the background of the paint layer) (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

bles the pigments in the ground of the Chicago Kitchen Scene (see Appendix, Table 1, and Figures 8–10). While Velázquez’s Sevillian grounds are not unique in the history of seventeenth-century materials, they are significantly and consistently different from the pigments used in many of his later paintings, after he moved to Madrid. Instead of the dark Sevillian grounds, he set a different tone for his
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Table 1. Chemical composition of grounds of Sevillian paintings by Velázquez

Madrid canvases by using a very bright red preparation in the mid-1620s; that changed to grounds of a lighter tonality in paintings after about 1630, setting the stage for the more luminous images that eventually occurred later in his career.²⁸²⁹

Possibly Velázquez’s preparation for his trip extended beyond taking his paints with him from Seville. There are signs of cusping or scalloping caused by the tension of pulling the canvas over its wooden stretcher on the bottom and right edges of the canvas, whereas there is no cusping on the other edges. The composition does not appear to be cropped, and the canvas could have been primed in either Seville or Madrid and then cut down to make this picture. In other words, perhaps Velázquez brought a piece of primed canvas with him.²⁹
One tends to assume that a painter’s working procedures—and here one thinks of the palpable but very fine underdrawings that establish the edges of the figure’s cheek in the Kitchen Scene (Figure 4)—may change to reflect more intimate access to a live model. In the case of Velázquez’s Portrait of Góngora, the assumption is true only in some procedures, like the rejection of the dramatic laurel leaves, but false in others, like the habit of situating the figure on the canvas by thin but bodied lines. These lines can be described as raised, dense, or opaque brushstrokes. In the Kitchen Scene (Figures 1, 4), all Velázquez had to do was transcribe a formula for an anonymous servant—a formula that can be seen in other versions of the same face (Figure 2). In the Portrait of Góngora, however, the challenge of creating a likeness rose to a higher level, for Velázquez was confronted with a famous individual whose unique presence had to be captured and conveyed. Whether in the Kitchen Scene or the Portrait of Góngora, the figure’s placement on the canvas was established by thin but assertive lines, drawn with a stiff brush and thick paint. When an adjustment was contemplated for the outline of Góngora’s shoulder and arm, the same bodied lines that set the boundaries of the servant’s cheek were again brought into play. This change of design in the shoulder of the Portrait of Góngora is hard to read in the radiograph because of parallel lines that run along the edge of the pentimento, but these are simply the mark of the residue of paint that accumulated along the edges of a single brushstroke (Figure 6). The underdrawing is different: an extremely thin but palpable line runs along the edge of the pentimento along Góngora’s arm and shoulder. It is visible, especially under magnification, because the black paint differs in color from the paint used to render the lay cleric’s clothing. A different type of fine line, in this case light colored and more bodied, describes the contours of some of the laurel leaves. The initial borders of some of the laurel leaves were also laid out in raised lines that still stand off the canvas even after lining.

Velázquez’s graphic technique remains largely the same regardless of whether he is working from a studio pattern, a mental model, or directly from life. The Kitchen Scene does not have dramatic changes of design like the laurel leaves eliminated from the Portrait of Góngora, but the occasional small alteration of a contour can be seen. This attention to contours, revealed by very thin underdrawings, is one of the most interesting characteristics of both the Kitchen Scene and the Portrait of Góngora. The young artist would eventually endear himself to the Impressionists by developing free, blurring brushwork as his signature touch, but here at the beginning of his career, he obeyed the studio training so common in Spain, in which students copied linear engravings rather than drawing from live models. This loyalty to the line was voiced by Pacheco, who advocated laying out the picture with clear outlines, “en que consiste la certez de lo parecido” (in which consists the accuracy of the resemblance), and advised making a linear drawing before beginning to paint, insisting that the “accuracy of the resemblance” depends on this tightly controlled foundation. As we see in these early Velázquez paintings, the pupil obeyed his master and followed his instructions, and he anchored people and paraphernalia by means of sharply defined underdrawings. These are fragments of lines rather than continuous contours, but they are enough to orient the artist as to where things should go.

Judging from the new details discovered in our examination of Velázquez’s two early paintings, Pacheco has given us both a conventional story and an accurate account of Velázquez’s training. Pacheco advised crisp lines, and we find vestiges of such precise markings in Velázquez’s fragmentary underdrawings. Pacheco finished his text on portraiture with the tale of his son-in-law’s learning to make portraits not by painting but by drawing, bribing a country boy to assume different poses, which he recorded in sketches, “con que granjeó la certez en el retratar” (and thereby he gained assurance in portraiture).

At this early point in his career, Velázquez’s working procedures are assertively personal when he flouts Pacheco’s rule against pentimenti or makes incomplete underdrawings and unexpectedly compliant in enacting the forceful philosophy of his master, who taught him the first principles of painting from life.

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NOTES


2. Inge Fiedler has identified the following pigments in the Kitchen Scene: lead white, lead-tin yellow type 1, iron-oxide yellow, vermilion, red lake, iron-oxide red, red lead, burnt sienna, azurite, smalt, possibly some organic brown, iron-oxide brown, and charcoal black. Chalk, quartz, and some silicates were also identified in many of the pigment mixtures. These pigments correspond to those identified in other works by Velázquez: Richard Newman’s discussion of pigments used in the grounds of Velázquez’s paintings in the Prado Museum can be found in Gridley McKim-Smith, Greta Andersen-Bergd?ll, and Richard Newman, Examining Velázquez (New Haven and London, 1988), and “Observaciones acerca de los materiales pictóricos de Velázquez,” sec. 4, “Preparaciones,” in Gridley McKim-Smith and Richard Newman, Velázquez en el Prado: Ciencia e historia del arte (Madrid, 1993), pp. 129–31. See also Carmen Garrido Pérez, Velázquez: Técnica y evolución (Madrid, 1992).

3. “Igual á esta es esta, donde se ve un tablero, que sirve de mesa, con un alhajas, y encima una olla herviendo, y tapada con una escudilla, que se ve la lumbre, las llamas, y centellas vivamente, un perolillo estañado, una alecrana, unos platos, y escudillas, un jarro vidriado, un almirez con su mano, y una cabeza de ajos junto á él; y en el muro se divisa colgada de una escarpiá una esportilla con un trapo, y otros baralajes, y por guarida de esto un muchacho con una jarra en la mano, y en la cabeza una escolãfica, con que representa con su villanismo trae un sugeto muy ridiculo, y gracioso.” Antonio Palomino de Castro y Velasco, El parnaso espa?ol pintoresco laudado, vol. 3 of El museo pictorico, y escala óptica (1742; 2nd ed., Madrid, 1756), p. 480.

4. Approximately one-quarter of an inch along the entire bottom edge is filled and inpainted. In the area of the pitcher, the fill is about half an inch wide. It is estimated that the canvas would have to have been at least one inch wider at the bottom edge for the entire pitcher to have been included. It is possible that one or two inches could have been lost, given the amount of cusping that remains.

5. Rosemarie Mulcahy notes that in the Dublin painting, “There is damage along the edges of the canvas, which has been cut down on the right and left side by at least 6 cms. combined.” Mulcahy, Spanish Paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland (Dublin, 1988), p. 79.


7. Another Spanish painting in which these features have been clearly observed is the Saint John in the Wilderness in the Art Institute of Chicago. This painting was attributed as an early Velázquez by August L. Mayer and has since been classified more broadly by the Art Institute and numerous scholars as a Sevillian school work. The presence of distinct, beautifully formed outlines and the artist’s general emphasis on contours raise the question of whether this should be interpreted as evidence that other artists of the Sevillian school practiced this technique. It remains to be fully understood to what extent this practice of outlining contours with fine lines was unique to Velázquez, whether it was practiced by a limited circle of intimately connected artists, or if it had wider application in Andalusian painting. See August L. Mayer, “Two Unknown Early Works by Velasquez,” Burlington Magazine 40 (January 1922), pp. 3–9.

8. In view of the clear assertion of maleness by Palomino, one can understand why José López-Rey suggested that it was likely that the figure in these paintings by Velázquez was a young man. López-Rey, Velázquez, vol. 2, Catalogue Raisonné/Ewerkverzeichnis, p. 42.

9. The connection with Palomino’s text was noted by Martin S. Soria, “An Unknown Early Painting by Velázquez,” Burlington Magazine 91 (May 1949), pp. 127–28, who says, “We can take Palomino’s word for it that a boy is represented” and correctly associates the images with the Supper at Emmaus iconography, in which case, “a boy would be more fitting than a girl.” Soria mistakenly believes the Chicago painting has been cut down substantially (see note 4 above).


12. For the general picture of social disruption in Velázquez’s hometown, see Mary Elizabeth Perry, Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville (Princeton, 1990).
13. It is difficult to judge exactly how references to women doing household tasks in archival documents relate to paintings listed in death inventories or to poetic mentions in songs. Records in archives indicate that young girls often worked as domestics. At the level of pictorial representation, Velázquez produced a lost kitchen scene with a woman grinding garlic, listed in a 1637 inventory in Seville (Jonathan Brown and Richard Kagan, “The Duke of Alcalá: His Collection and Its Evolution,” Art Bulletin 69 [June 1987], pp. 231–55). The existence of a balladic tradition, which comments, “Y la morisca tendera que solia fregar platos,” raises a similar question regarding whether the verse is accurate documentary reportage or a poetic commonplace; see Agustín Durán, ed., Romancero general; o, Colección de romances castellanos anteriores al siglo XVIII (Madrid, 1851), p. 191. Both boys and girls appear in surviving genre and kitchen scenes; in addition to the beodones of Velázquez, see Juan de Esteban, Kitchen Scene, Museo de Bellas Artes, Granada; Francisco López Caro, Picaro de cocina, private collection; Anonymous, Kitchen Scene, Galería del Fredal, Palacio Arzobispal, Seville.


15. The rather shapeless dark wool jacket, fastened at the neck, is worn by both men and women in paintings and sculptures.

16. See Ruth Matilda Anderson, Hispanic Costume, 1480–1530 (New York, 1979); Carmen Bernis Madrazo, El traje y los tipos sociales en El Quijote (Madrid, 2001). For escófora, see Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española (1611; Madrid, 1984), p. 537, b. 41, for escófora as a form of cofía and p. 333, a. 33, for cofía as a netted head-covering for women and escófora as its derivative.

17. For slaves in Seville, see Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, Desde Carlos V a la Paz de los Pirineos, 1517–1660 (Barcelona, 1974), pp. 101–5; Alfonso Franco Silva, La esclavitud en Sevilla y su tierra a fines de la Edad Media (Seville, 1979); José Luis Cortés López, La esclavitud negra en la España peninsular del siglo XVI (Salamanca, 1989); Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, “Sevilla en la época de Velázquez,” in Velázquez y Sevilla, pp. 18–31; Perry, Gender and Disorder, p. 4; Alfonso Franco Silva, La esclavitud en Andalucía, 1450–1550 (Granada, 1992).


19. See Brown, Velázquez, pp. 34–35.


21. For a summary of images of the poet Góngora, see Davies et al., Velázquez en Sevilla, pp. 180–83, nos. 45, 46.


23. For this book of images, see Francisco Pacheco, Libro de descripción de verdaderos retratos de ilustres y memorables varones, ed. Pedro M. Piñero Ramírez and Rogelio Reyes Cano (1599; Seville, 1985).


25. “y por entonces no hubo lugar de retratar a los Reyes, aunque se procuró.” Pacheco, Arte de la pintura, pp. 203–4.


27. The thick stroke of paint, visible in the radiograph, boldly “draws” the outline of the shoulder. The same appears to have happened on the other shoulder, but less boldly.


29. The thread count in the canvas is 13 threads per cm (vertical) by 13 (horizontal).

30. See Peter Cherry, “Artistic Training and the Painters’ Guild in Seville,” in Davies et al., Velázquez en Sevilla, pp. 68–75.


32. Ibid., p. 528. Pacheco’s well-known description of Velázquez’s training says: “He used to bribe a young country lad who served him as a model to adopt various attitudes and poses, sometimes weeping, sometimes laughing, regardless of all difficulties. And he made numerous drawings of the boy’s head and of many other local people in charcoal heightened with white on blue paper, and thereby he gained assurance in portraiture.” Pacheco, Arte de la pintura, pp. 527–28; translated in Harris, Velázquez, pp. 194–95. To understand the conventionality of drawing boys and girls laughing and crying, see Vasari’s description of a drawing by Sofonisba Anguissola of “una fanciullina che si ride di un putto che piange, perché avendogli ella messo innanzi un canestrello pieno di gamberi, uno d’essi gli mordi un dito” in Giorgio Vasari, Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architetti, ed. Gaetano Milanesi (1568; Florence, 1906), vol. 5, p. 81. We are grateful to David Cast for advice on Vasari’s text.
APPENDIX

The Ground Layers in *Kitchen Scene* and *Portrait of Góngora*

The brown-colored grounds of both the *Kitchen Scene* (Figure 1) and *Portrait of Góngora* (Figure 5) are made from a brown earth pigment, to which some lead white was added, applied in a single layer. Like most natural earth pigments, this brown earth contains different minerals, present in grains or crystals of various sizes. Figures 8 and 9 are photomicrographs of cross sections from the two paintings, showing the ground layers. The images were taken in a scanning electron microscope (SEM) using a back-scattered electron detector, which shows grains in different shades of gray according to their composition. Grains containing heavier elements (elements with higher atomic numbers) are lighter shades of gray in the images than those containing lighter elements (elements with lower atomic numbers). Using an energy-dispersive X-ray spectrometer (EDS) attached to the SEM, the types of different minerals in the grounds were identified. Larger angular grains are mainly calcite (calcium carbonate); occasional grains of dolomite (calcium magnesium carbonate) are also present. Some larger grains of quartz are also present. The finer-grained material contains iron oxides, mica, and probably clay. Both grounds contain scattered small rounded clusters of iron sulfide (pyrite). Although not identical in appearance in the two paintings, the brown earth in both could well be from the same geological source.

Table 1 on page 87 gives the overall chemical compositions of different areas of brown ground layers from the two paintings in Chicago and Boston, and two early Velázquez paintings from the Prado Museum. For this table, small randomly selected areas of grounds in cross sections from the paintings were analyzed. There are variations from place to place in a given cross section because the grounds are inhomogeneous in composition on a microscopic scale. The calcium detected in these analyses is mostly from the fairly large calcite grains, the lead from very small crystals of lead white pigment, while the sulfur is probably mainly from iron sulfide. The overall chemical composition, mineralogy, and texture of the brown earths indicate that they could all be from the same source. This brown earth typically makes up the ground in paintings Velázquez executed in Seville. After he moved to Madrid, he began to use a different type of ground.

Painted-out Wreath in *Portrait of Góngora*

Two very small chips of paint were taken from the area of the painted-out wreath and prepared as cross sections. Both cross sections included the upper paint layer(s) and at least part of the green layer of the underlying wreath but did not include any of the ground layer. Figure 10 is a photomicrograph of one sample taken in a scanning electron microscope using back-scattered electron imaging. At the top is a single thin brown-colored paint that contains lead white, (probably) charcoal black, and some earth pigment. This sits on top of the single green paint layer of the wreath. The green color was made by a mixture of lead-tin yellow and azurite, a common way that Velázquez and other artists of his period used to make intense greens. The overpaint layer is firmly bonded to the green paint below, and there is no indication of any dirt trapped between the layers, or residues of a varnish or coating. This suggests that the overpaint could have been applied very soon after the green layer.

Analytical Procedures

Samples were examined in a JEOL JSM-6460LV scanning electron microscope with an attached Oxford Instruments "INCAx-sight" energy-dispersive X-ray spectrometer (EDS) and INCA 200 wavelength-dispersive spectrometer (WDS). Analyses were carried out in low-vacuum mode with a specimen chamber pressure of 35 pascals at 20 kV. Compositional analyses were carried out by standardless quantitative analysis using Oxford INCA software. Samples from the Prado paintings were taken during an earlier project but were reanalyzed for this paper.