

Sept. OOM Object:

The Portrait of Juan de Pareja, the Assistant to Velázquez 1960, 84.5  
by Salvador Dali (1904-1989)

Current Museum Label: Unlike many of his fellow Surrealists who rejected the influence of the past, Dali maintained a deep admiration for the art of the Old Masters. This work was conceived by Dali as an homage to the 17th century Spanish artist Diego Velázquez, and it loosely quotes several elements from two of the great master's most famous works, *The Maids of Honor* and the *Portrait of Juan Pareja*. Those elements most easily discerned are: the palace official from *The Maids of Honor* who stands in the doorway at left; and, Juan Pareja's hand with extended thumb at bottom center. More elusive to the viewer, however, is the profile of Juan Pareja, the outline of which is defined by a figural grouping from the *The Maids of Honor*. Velázquez's easel defines the bridge of Pareja's nose, while the Spanish princess and her attendants form his mustache and beard.



To appreciate this painting, we need to learn a few things first. We need to know a little about the artist who created this painting, the artist that is alluded to in this painting (Diego Velázquez), the person the title refers to, and the original painting *The Maids of Honor*. After the background information, what one needs to do is just study the painting, looking at it really closely.

## The artist Salvador Dalí

Dalí, best known as a Surrealist painter, was also known as a draughtsman, an illustrator, a sculptor, writer and film maker. Born in 1904 in Catalonia, to a family of a respected notary. His father was a Republican and atheist, his mother a Roman Catholic. He was named Salvador in memory of a recently dead brother. This had a profound effect: his subsequent experimentation with identity and with the projection of his own persona may have developed out of an early understanding of himself as ‘a reply, a double, an absence’ (Dalí, 1970, p. 92). Catalonia remained important to Dalí, mostly for its landscape. He painted for much of his life in a house he bought in Port Lligat, near the family holiday home in Cadaqués, but the radical political beliefs that his father had taught him were to be replaced by a self-conscious monarchism and Catholicism. Dalí’s first contact with painting was through Ramon Pichot (1872–1925), a friend of his father, who was an Impressionist painter and associate of Picasso. Early landscapes show the influence of Pichot’s Impressionism, but by 1921, when he entered the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid, his work already exhibited a characteristically paradoxical interest in both formal innovation and aspects of the academic tradition. He was experimenting with such styles as divisionism and Futurism, but publishing (in the review *Stadium*) his admiration for Velázquez, Goya, El Greco, Dürer, Leonardo and Michelangelo.

At the Academia, Dalí met the poet Federico García Lorca and the film maker Luis Buñuel. These friendships nurtured Dalí’s natural arrogance and exhibitionism, until he was suspended and eventually expelled for inciting the students to rebel and for withdrawing from an examination because he felt the teachers were not qualified to judge his work. Expulsion, however, coincided with artistic recognition, and increasing success at student shows culminated in his first one-man exhibition at the Galería Dalmau in Barcelona in 1925. The pictures were evidence of Dalí’s continuing diversity: Cubist and Purist works from 1924; realism and a kind of Neo-classical Cubism from 1925; an Ingres-like purity of line in a drawing of his father and sister of 1925; mysterious still-lives in the manner of Carlo Carrà and Giorgio de Chirico; and a clarity drawn from Neue Sachlichkeit artists displayed in the views of his sister looking out of a window (e.g. *Girl Standing at the Window*, 1925; Madrid, Mus. A. Contemp.). It is a diversity paralleled in the expanding range of outlets for Dalí’s creative energy as he became involved in the Spanish avant-garde, which centred on Barcelona. From 1927 he submitted monthly contributions to the journal *L’Amic des arts*, designed scenery (1927) for Lorca’s first play, *Mariana Pineda*, illustrated friends’ books and, in 1928, collaborated with Lluís Montanyà and Sebastià Gasch on the Catalan anti-artistic *Manifest Groc*, which included Surrealist painters and writers in its final list of ‘great painters of today’.

By 1928 Dalí was moving towards Surrealism. The disconnected, ambiguous forms of such paintings as *Senicitas* (1926–7; Madrid, Cent. Reina Sofía) show the influence of Yves Tanguy and especially of Giorgio de Chirico, whose work Dalí knew through the periodical *Valori Plastici*, founded to promote the ideals of Pittura Metafisica. In 1929 he made the film *Un Chien andalou* with Buñuel, which aimed to disorientate the viewer by simulating the conditions of the dream. It also made use of montage to achieve a transformation of objects, which was to become characteristic of Dalí’s version of Surrealism, but which his paintings had not as yet achieved. The film was made and screened in Paris and brought Dalí to the attention of André Breton, the principal theorist of Surrealism. In summer 1929 the dealer Camille Goemans, René and

Georgette Magritte, and Paul and Gala Eluard visited Cadaqués to look at his paintings. They found him in a state of hysteria, working on *Dismal Sport* (310×410 mm; Claude Hersaint priv. col., see 1980 exh. cat., no. iv), a tiny yet frantically detailed painting, which established both the hallucinatory realism of his mature technique and the principal elements of his private cosmogony (see also [The Accommodations of Desire](#), 1929; New York, Met.). In the deep space of a dream world a dislocated, auto-erotic drama is played out. Dalí's characteristic symbols of grasshopper, lion and ants proliferate around the mouthless self-portrait mask that reappeared in the *Great Masturbator* (1929; priv. col., see 1980 exh. cat., no. 35) and among the soft watches of [The Persistence of Memory](#) (1931; New York, MOMA). This mask provides both a foretaste of the double images of the 1930s and a memory of the mutating objects of *Un Chien andalou*: its shape was inspired by a large rock on the coast at Cadaqués.

(Shortened, taken from Fiona Bradley's "Dalí, Salvador." *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. 2011 <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T021196>)

**Who is Diego Velázquez?** **Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez** (Spanish pronunciation: [ˈdjeɣo roˈðriɣeθ ðe ˈsilβa i βeˈlaθkeθ]; June 6, 1599 – August 6, 1660) was a Spanish painter who was the leading artist in the [court](#) of King [Philip IV](#). He was an individualistic artist of the contemporary [Baroque](#) period, important as a [portrait artist](#). In addition to numerous renditions of scenes of historical and cultural significance, he painted scores of portraits of the Spanish royal family, other notable European figures, and commoners, culminating in the production of his masterpiece [Las Meninas](#) (1656).

From the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Velázquez's artwork was a model for the [realist](#) and [impressionist](#) painters, in particular [Édouard Manet](#). Since that time, more modern artists, including Spain's [Pablo Picasso](#) and [Salvador Dalí](#), as well as the Anglo-Irish painter [Francis Bacon](#), have paid tribute to Velázquez by recreating several of his most famous works.

(From “Diego Velázquez” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diego\\_Vel%C3%A1zquez](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diego_Vel%C3%A1zquez))

**Juan de Pareja** (1606-1670), a native of Antequera, near Malaga, [Spain](#), is primarily known as a member of the household and workshop of painter [Diego Velázquez](#). He was also a painter in his own right; his 1661 work "The Calling of St. Matthew" (sometimes also referred to as "The Vocation of St. Matthew") is currently on display at the Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain. De Pareja became Velázquez's assistant sometime after the master returned to Madrid from his first trip to Italy in January 1631. After the death of Velázquez he entered the service of [Juan del Mazo](#).



He was a slave and afterwards a freedman, and was described as a "Morisco," "of mixed heritage and a strange color." <sup>[3]</sup> The usage of the word "morisco" at the time carried two possible meanings. It was used to refer to both descendants of Muslims who remained in Spain after the reconquest, and to refer to the offspring of a Spaniard and a mulatto.

In 1648, as court painter to [Philip IV of Spain](#), Diego Velázquez was sent to [Rome](#) to purchase works of art for the [Alcázar in Madrid](#), and he brought Juan de Pareja with him. During his stay in Rome, Velázquez executed an oil portrait of Juan de Pareja, which was displayed as part of a larger exhibition of paintings at the [Pantheon](#) on 19 March 1650. According to Antonio Palomino's biography of Velázquez, the painting "was generally applauded by all the painters from different countries, who said that the other pictures in the show were art but this one alone was 'truth'."

Velázquez painted the *Juan de Pareja* (1648) as an exercise in preparation for his official [portrait of Pope Innocent X](#). The Pope, a ruddy-faced man who would be depicted in the bright pink and crimson robes of his office, presented a tricky study in both color and composition. Additionally, since he would be executing a portrait from life, Velázquez would be forced to work quickly while still capturing the essence of Innocent X's character. The *Juan de Pareja* reflects Velázquez's exploration of the difficulties he would encounter in the Pope's portrait. To compensate for a restricted palette of colors, Velázquez adopted a loose, almost impressionistic style of brushwork to bring an intense vitality to his subject—a style which would make both the *Juan de Pareja* and the subsequent portrait of Innocent X two of the most renowned paintings of his career.

The *Juan de Pareja* is currently on display at the [Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City](#), which purchased it in [1971](#). At the time, the purchase price of over \$5.5 million set a new record for paintings at auction. This became a source of some controversy both for the museum and for its director, [Thomas Hoving](#), who spearheaded the effort to acquire the work and considered it one of the finest paintings in the museum's collection. However, art prices have skyrocketed since the mid-1970s, and the *Juan de Pareja* could be expected to fetch easily ten times its purchase price today.

*Las Meninas* ([Spanish](#) for *The Maids of Honour*) is a 1656 painting by [Diego Velázquez](#), the leading artist of the [Spanish Golden Age](#), in the [Museo del Prado](#) in [Madrid](#). The work's complex and enigmatic composition raises questions about reality and illusion, and creates an uncertain relationship between the viewer and the figures depicted. Because of these complexities, *Las Meninas* has been one of the most widely analysed works in [Western painting](#).



The painting shows a large room in the Madrid palace of King [Philip IV of Spain](#), and presents several figures, most identifiable from the Spanish court, captured, according to some commentators, in a particular moment as if in a [snapshot](#). Some look out of the canvas towards the viewer, while others interact among themselves. The young [Infanta Margarita](#) is surrounded by her entourage of [maids of honour](#), [chaperone](#), bodyguard, two dwarfs and a dog. Just behind them, Velázquez portrays himself working at a large canvas. Velázquez looks outwards, beyond the pictorial space to where a viewer of the painting would stand. In the background there is a mirror that reflects the upper bodies of the king and queen. They appear to be placed outside the picture space in a position similar to that of the viewer, although some scholars have speculated that their image is a reflection from the painting Velázquez is shown working on.

*Las Meninas* has long been recognised as one of the most important paintings in [Western art history](#). The [Baroque](#) painter [Luca Giordano](#) said that it represents the "theology of painting", while in the 19th century Sir [Thomas Lawrence](#) called the work "the philosophy of art". More recently, it has been described as "Velázquez's supreme achievement, a highly self-conscious, calculated demonstration of what painting could achieve, and perhaps the most searching comment ever made on the possibilities of the easel painting".

(From "Las Meninas" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las\\_Meninas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las_Meninas))



### Questions and Activities:

- Please look closely at this painting first and then describe what you see in this painting. You don't have to piece together something rational or meaningful because it was not intended to be rational or sensible. Keep in mind the major characteristics of surrealism—the world beyond everyday reality, the unconscious mind (let the unconscious mind surface without any inhibition), dreams, sleepwalking, and so on. For the Surrealists, explaining an image is just one more way for the thinking mind to control the unconscious.
- Can you find any elements from the two masterpieces by Velázquez? ( try to pick out the elements mentioned in the museum label: the palace official from *The Maids of Honor* who stands in the doorway at left; and, Juan Pareja's hand with extended thumb at bottom center, the profile of Juan Pareja, the outline of which is defined by a figural grouping from the *The Maids of Honor*. Velázquez's easel defines the bridge of Pareja's nose, while the Spanish princess and her attendants form his mustache and beard.)
- Dali is not the only one who was influenced by Velázquez. You can find his influence on other painters like Édouard Manet, Pablo Picasso, and Francis Bacon. You may want to take a look at Francis Bacon's *Study for Portrait VI*, 1953, which is in the same gallery.