



# Diego Velázquez's Early Paintings and the Culture of Seventeenth-Century Seville

*Tanya J. Tiffany*

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Diego Velázquez spent his formative years at the center of artistic life in seventeenth-century Seville, a gateway to the New World characterized by intellectual debate, religious fervor, and mounting ethnic tensions. Yet critics have often divorced the painter's novel style and subject matter from the city's unique pictorial and cultural traditions. In *Diego Velázquez's Early Paintings and the Culture of Seventeenth-Century Seville*, Tanya J. Tiffany demonstrates that Velázquez's works not only engaged Seville's social practices but also raised issues of vital importance to seventeenth-century Sevillians. As a young artist, Velázquez contended with such essential questions as women's place in society, the nature of artistic creativity, the role of religion in everyday life, and the incorporation of racial minorities into Christianity. This study offers close readings of individual paintings with regard to their historical framework, critical context, and early reception. Through this approach, Tiffany illuminates well-known masterpieces and also highlights the fluid boundaries between high art and popular forms of visual expression.

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