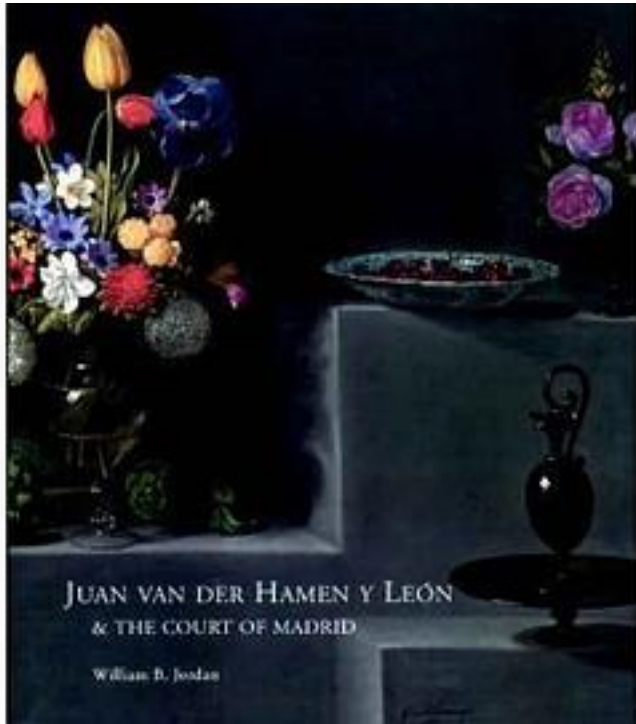


Juan Van Der Hamen Y Leon and the Court of Madrid



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出版者:Yale Univ Pr

出版时间:2006-2

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780300113181

The artistic life of the Spanish court in the 1620s, once depicted as a drab and featureless backdrop against which to depict the genius of Velazquez, was actually one of the most creative and dynamic periods of foment of the entire seventeenth century. This masterful examination of the life and work of Juan van der Hamen y Leon (1596 - 1631) serves as a powerful lens for viewing the 1620s from a novel perspective, one that opens new vistas and invites further investigation. Van der Hamen is well known to lovers of Golden Age painting in Spain as one of the most famous and prolific still-life

painters of the seventeenth century. He was much more than that. In this beautiful book William Jordan examines the artist's entire output of still lifes, but he also has a larger aim: to study for the first time the complete Van der Hamen, the painter esteemed by his peers above all for his versatility - for his portraits, allegories, landscapes, flower paintings and large-scale religious works executed for churches and convents in the environs of Madrid and Toledo. Although his fame today has been eclipsed by the long career of Velazquez, Van der Hamen's star was very bright when his Sevillian rival was just finding his way at the court of the young King Philip IV. When that fire was unexpectedly extinguished at the age of thirty-five, some of his contemporaries, such as the playwright Juan Perez de Montalvan, lamented the passing of 'the greatest Spaniard of his art who ever lived'. Long dismissed as literary hyperbole, this lofty assessment, even if biased by friendship and bereavement, is made understandable by newly discovered works in all these genres, many of them published here for the first time. The product of forty years of research, this study is underpinned by copious archival documentation and probing analysis of contemporary sources. Recent restoration has also transformed many paintings long familiar only in a compromised state, making a true assessment of their quality possible for the first time. The Van der Hamen who emerges is a surprising one, who finally takes his proper place among the masters of Spanish art.

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