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*Mengs and Velázquez
The Princess of Naples*

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Preface

This year's *Point of View* exhibition focuses on a little girl – Maria Teresa of Bourbon-Two Sicilies – and the artist who painted her in Naples in 1773 – Anton Raphael Mengs. Long hidden away in storage, Mengs's portrait of a princess who had not yet reached her first birthday can now, after recent restoration, be admired with all its extraordinary painterly qualities. This restoration work and the art historical analysis that was undertaken in parallel have revealed Mengs in a new light: to a greater extent than had been known until now, he drew inspiration from Velázquez, who like him had been court painter at Madrid. Equally fresh is the living naturalness that pervades this portrait and reflects an altered perception of childhood in the late eighteenth century. The girl's likeness may also have been intended to serve dynastic interests, since it was shipped to Vienna by the queen of

Naples as a present for her mother, Empress Maria Theresa. It is quite possible that Mengs was consciously tapping into Velázquez's infanta portraits, which were held in high regard at the Habsburg court and were associated with certain reminiscences and expectations. And indeed, like one particular Spanish infanta depicted by Velázquez in a bygone age, the pint-sized princess of Naples was one day to become empress consort in Vienna.

We also wish to hereby express our sincere thanks to Steffi Roettgen, unrivalled as an authority on Mengs, for having always been willing to attend to our questions.

Guido Messling & Gudrun Swoboda

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Anton Raphael Mengs, *Maria Teresa of Bourbon-Two Sicilies, Princess of Naples*, 1773. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery, inv. 1640

Mengs and Velázquez

The Princess of Naples

The portrait's historical context

In early 1770, Anton Raphael Mengs, who then held the post of painter to the Spanish court, set off from Madrid to Italy. His employer, King Charles III of Spain, had granted the 41-year-old artist a holiday for rest, but at the same time tasked him with making portraits of relatives who were living in Italy. Following sojourns in Florence and Rome, Mengs stayed in Naples from November 1772 to March 1773, where he was to paint portraits of the ruling prince, Charles III's son King Ferdinand IV of Naples, and his family.¹ Among the works created then was a likeness of Princess Maria Teresa of Bourbon-Two Sicilies, the firstborn daughter of Ferdinand and his consort, Archduchess Maria Carolina of Austria.

Queen Maria Carolina arranged for Mengs's portrait of her daughter (who like all the firstborn granddaughters of Maria Theresa was named after her grandmother) to be sent to the court in Vienna, where it was favourably received.² By 1783 it was already hanging in the imperial picture gallery in the Upper Belvedere, which indicates that it was evidently appreciated for its artistic merits as well.³ Having thus made her pictorial debut in Vienna, so to speak, Maria Theresa's granddaughter was later to enter into a much closer relationship with the imperial court. For the Princess of Naples married the future Emperor Franz II/I (1768–1835), who was her first cousin twice over (a 'double first cousin'), and thereby became empress first of the Holy Roman Empire and subsequently of Austria. Very musically inclined, Maria Teresa was fond of the waltz, which had then come into vogue, and of festivities at court, but she died at the age of just 34 soon after giving birth to her twelfth child. Her eldest child Marie Louise would become Empress of the French through marriage to Napoleon, while her son Ferdinand was later, as the successor of Franz I, to become Emperor

of Austria, gaining the sobriquet 'the Benign' though he was sometimes also gently mocked as 'Nanderl Trotterl' ('Nandy the Ninny').⁴

No less remarkable than the biography of Maria Teresa of Bourbon-Two Sicilies is the artistic quality of her portrait. In painting the likeness, Mengs pulled off a tour de force by combining the representative functions of an official portrait with new notions of naturalness and spontaneity.

Genesis of the portrait

Shown in an elevated position – that is, at eye level with an adult – this girl of around nine months stands, almost life-sized, in the centre of the picture and fixes the viewer with the direct and vivid gaze of her big blue eyes. In terms of colour, the bright illumination and the pink and white hues of the gown set the child off from the darker tones of the variegated long-pile carpet and from the heavy arras of red velvet behind her, which is trimmed with gold braiding – both types of furnishing being standard props in royal portraiture.

Before embarking on the painting, Mengs had made a highly detailed sketch in black and red chalk (*fig. 1*), in which a somewhat younger Maria Teresa is shown in three-quarter view and, in contrast to the executed painting, leaning on a tabouret or a small table in front of her.⁵ Preliminary studies of this kind were part of Mengs's usual working method as a portraitist, especially during his stay in Italy.⁶ Earlier still, Mengs had painted a portrait showing the princess as a baby on a cushion (*fig. 2*).⁷ This first portrait of Maria Teresa is known to have been sent from Naples to Madrid on 1 March 1773 'inside a small box covered with waxcloth' ('en una Cajita cubierta de tela cerada'), that is, packed in the manner that was customary at the time for the transport of paintings,



Fig. 1
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Maria Teresa of Bourbon-Two Sicilies, Princess of Naples*, 1773. Spain, private collection

especially for transport by sea. Just three weeks later, King Charles wrote back to his daughter-in-law: 'It has given me the greatest pleasure; she is delightful; one does not grow tired of looking at her; the painting is also very beautiful and could not possibly be painted better; Mengs has surpassed himself.'⁸

Mengs opted for a different conception in the portrait preserved in Vienna. From the preliminary sketch he took, in particular, the child's face and left hand (the right hand was clearly not done after nature), but changed the body posture: she is now propping herself up sideways in order to stay on her feet and maintain her balance. He thus depicted Maria Teresa in a rather courtly pose, as is typical of official portraits, down to such details as a visible shoe and the regal gesture of an outstretched hand. Despite these elements derived from long-standing tradition, the painter succeeded in making her look really alive. Shown at a slight angle, the little girl seems to be tearing herself away from the object providing her with a firm support and to be advancing towards the viewer. This effect is reinforced by the way she holds her left hand, which seems to be acting as a

counterbalance to the step forward she is taking. In addition to the intent look on her face, our attention is drawn to her silver and pink silk gown with its exquisite diamond-studded bows. Mengs's virtuosic brushwork manifests itself pre-eminently in the intricate embroidery and lace frills, with the rendering of the richly ornamented gown actually being based upon seemingly loosely applied dabs of colour.

To a greater extent than is the case in other portraits of his, Mengs here references a painter from the previous century whose oeuvre he is known to have admired, namely Diego Velázquez (Seville 1599–1660 Madrid), the renowned court painter of King Philip IV of Spain.

Borrowing from Velázquez

Mengs's portrait of little Maria Teresa bears a particular resemblance to *The Infanta Margarita in a Pink Dress* (fig. 3), painted by Velázquez some 120 years earlier. If one compares the ostensibly spontaneous pose of the two princesses in both works, it becomes clear that the strict ceremonial of the court lingers on – a formality that had been leaving its mark on the iconography of the Spanish infantas ever since the sixteenth century and would continue to be obligatory all the way up to Goya. Even



Fig. 2
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Maria Teresa of Bourbon-Two Sicilies, Princess of Naples*, 1773. Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional, Palacio Real, inv. 10024089



Fig. 3
Diego Velázquez, *The Infanta Margarita in a Pink Dress*, 1654. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery, inv. 321

toddlers had to be represented with a stately demeanour corresponding to a pictorial tradition that traced its origins to the Burgundian court. Velázquez positions the infanta in such a way that she looks the viewer straight in the eye; her right hand rests on a table, while the left holds a fan and hangs down, touching her dress. The verdigris-coloured curtain is used as a representative backdrop for the picture. These conventions of the court portrait were rigid; the pictorial formula and iconographic trappings remained unaltered. It was thus that the political idea of unbroken dynastic continuity could also be preserved in the ‘iconosphere’ (in the sense applied by Victor Stoichiță).

When juxtaposing the two works, one is amazed not merely by the strikingly similar pose, but also by the way in which the various textiles (gown, carpet, arras) dominate

Mengs’s composition. What undoubtedly impresses the most is his Velázquez-like, virtuosic brushwork, manifest above all in the princess’s gown, where the loosely applied dabs of colour give both shape and animation to the embroidery and the lace frills. Mengs, who is generally reckoned among the founding figures of Neoclassicism, had never before ventured on anything comparable.

Although the two painters have in the past been described as being arguably the most diametrically opposed artists in the history of painting,⁹ Mengs’s referring back to Velázquez does not come as a complete surprise, since as ‘first chamber painter’ (‘primer pintor de cámara’) at the Madrid court he also acted as conservator of the royal collection. When selecting the paintings that were to be hung, he gave pride of place to Velázquez’s works.¹⁰ Mengs expressed his admiration for Velázquez on a number of



Fig. 4
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Maria Teresa of Bourbon–Two Sicilies, Princess of Naples*, 1773. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery, inv. 1640



Fig. 5
Diego Velázquez and Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, *The Infanta Margarita*, 1653. Madrid, Palacio de Liria, Casa de Alba, inv. P.91

occasions, and various other thematic borrowings from the latter have been identified in his own works.¹¹ Furthermore, Mengs encouraged younger Spanish painters, including Goya, to study Velázquez intensively, thereby giving a key impetus to the subsequent development of painting in Spain.

The intriguing similarity between Mengs's princess (fig. 4) and Velázquez's *Infanta Margarita in a Pink Dress* (fig. 3) begs the question as to how and where the German painter might have seen that portrait. Since the Spanish original had for family reasons been in Vienna since 1654 and would not be publicly displayed in the Picture Gallery until 1837, it must be assumed that Mengs was familiar with a copy of the portrait. From his correspondence we know that, while in Madrid, he saw – on one occasion in the King's audience room, and on another in the dining room of the Prince and Princess of Asturias – a painting by Velázquez of the Infanta Margarita that he found to be 'excellent'.¹² However, it remains unclear which work is meant, nor do we know the type of that portrait of Margarita.

Mengs is very likely to have seen one version (fig. 5) of Velázquez's *Infanta Margarita in a Pink Dress* when he painted the portraits of the twelfth Duke of Alba, Don

Fernando de Silva y Álvarez de Toledo (1714–1776), Director of the Royal Spanish Academy, and his daughter-in-law, the Duchess of Huéscar, Doña Mariana de Silva Meneses y Sarmiento (1739–1784), an 'honorary director of painting' at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando (fig. 6).¹³ The duke's collection of art included a copy of the painting now housed in Vienna (fig. 5).¹⁴ It was probably a version by Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, who worked in Velázquez's studio and later became his son-in-law, as his tasks, especially in the 1650s, included the copying of numerous works by his master.

As an interesting digression into the realm of cultural history, we may note how the little infanta in the paintings by Velázquez and Mazo is standing on a slightly raised platform that is subtly hinted at a few centimetres above the painting's lower edge.¹⁵ In accordance with Moorish tradition, this low carpeted platform (*estrado*) made of wood or cork was in use at the Spanish court to provide seating space for queens and infantas. Mazo recognized and reproduced this characteristic feature in his copy, whereas Mengs, who was not familiar with the tradition, omitted to incorporate the detail.



Fig. 6
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Doña Mariana de Silva Meneses y Sarmiento, Duchess of Huéscar*, 1773/75. Madrid, Palacio de Liria, Casa de Alba, inv. P.88

A new sense of childhood

That Velázquez's work served as a prototype for Mengs's depiction of Maria Teresa becomes even clearer if one compares the latter with the splendid, yet conventional portraits of the two double cousins of the Princess of Naples that Mengs had painted in Florence shortly before. Both children of Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo of Tuscany and his consort Maria Luisa of Spain are portrayed in the manner of fine painting (*Feinmalerei*) as 'little adults'. Maria Teresa (1767–1827) is pointing at a grey parrot, a rather costly playmate (*fig. 7*),¹⁶ while her two-and-a-half-year-old brother Francis (1768–1835) is depicted by Mengs wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece and adopting the unmistakable pose of a future ruler (*fig. 8*):¹⁷ in 1790 he would marry his cousin from Naples, and in 1792 he ascended the imperial throne. When painting the likeness of Maria Teresa destined for Vienna, Mengs took a different approach from that underlying the Florentine portraits: he reconfigured the trappings of the courtly portrait and created something quite novel. The princess's hand rests on what is presumably a chair, which, by being shown only in part, makes her seem even smaller. The one foot extended forward, which is considered a classic motif of a ruler's portrait, is combined here with the hardly visible tip of her other shoe to produce a motif of apparently spontaneous movement. The princess comes across as a being who has yet to learn how to walk and is still shakily finding its way around the world.

This sense of forward movement attests to Mengs's interest in a novel perception of what it meant to be a child that differs markedly from the until then usual representation of children as 'little adults'. He shows us a child's body in all its clumsiness, possibly doing so by request of the girl's mother. For Maria Carolina set great store by a child-oriented education, such as she herself had – up to a point – enjoyed during her own relatively unconstrained childhood at the Viennese court.¹⁸ She thus wrote, for example, to her brother Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo in Florence: 'I detest puppets and parrots and masterpieces, and want children to be children who mould themselves gradually, for it is usually out of nothing but vanity that those directing children end up spoiling them, making them false or muddling them up.'¹⁹ In her library Maria Carolina had several works of contemporary pedagogical literature, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau's famous treatise calling for a reform of the system of education, *Émile ou De l'éducation* (1762).²⁰ The perception of childhood had undergone a transformation in the second half of the eighteenth century, with Rousseau promoting the notion of the child as pure by nature, innocent, and uncorrupted by civilization. Rousseau had advocated a 'natural' education appropriate to such a child and provided the corresponding theoretical framework.²¹

However, Maria Teresa's mother was not the only one the portrait was intended to please. We may assume that one not insignificant function of the family portraits painted by Mengs in Naples was to secure the favour of the royal and imperial grandparents or parents of the subjects. At any rate, this may be surmised from the portraits of Maria Teresa's parents intended for the Madrid court that Mengs also painted during his stay in Naples, which with regard to the king and queen's posture and dress, 'were most deliberately tailored to the expectations of Charles III'.²² This is particularly evident in the portrait of Queen Maria Carolina.²³ That this was a case of 'diplomatic dressing' geared towards the traditions of the Madrid court is made clear by a comparison with, say, portraits executed just a few years later by Angelica Kauffmann,²⁴ which were intended for Naples or the royal palace at Caserta. In them the queen and her family are shown in fashionable clothes in front of a broad landscape, thereby signalling their sympathy for Enlightenment ideals. In the portraits of the king and queen that were shipped to Madrid, by contrast, Mengs adhered to the traditional royal iconography.

Similarly, the portrait of the little princess may have been geared towards the Viennese court, where Maria Carolina herself is likely to have got to know Velázquez's

infanta portraits in her formative years. Though exceptional works of art, these portraits were at the time not part of the art collection on display in the Stallburg, but hung in the imperial apartments, where they helped to underpin Habsburg notions of representation and dynastic continuity. By sending the portrait of her firstborn daughter to Vienna, Queen Maria Carolina may have been seeking to awaken reminiscences of Velázquez's portrait of the Infanta Margarita, an earlier princess who was later to become an empress. Admittedly, this must for now be consigned to the realm of hypothesis. What we do know for certain is that, as already mentioned at the start, by marrying her cousin Francis seventeen years later, in 1790, Maria Teresa would herself go on to become empress consort of the Holy Roman Empire. No less indisputable is the fact that as an artist, Mengs, quite apart from any potential considerations of diplomacy, was particularly interested in the oeuvre of his great predecessor at the Spanish court – and that this interest found by far its strongest expression in the likeness of the little princess taking, as it were, her first steps into an as yet uncertain future.

- 1 Corinna Rösner, 'Mengs, Anton Raphael', in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, xvii (Berlin, 1994), 77–9 <<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118783270.html#ndbcontent>> accessed 10 Dec. 2024.
- 2 Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, *Epilogo della vita del fu Cavalier Antonio Raffaello Mengs ...* (Genoa, 1779), X: 'that of the little Archduchess Maria Teresa, a full-figure one, which was sent by Queen Maria Carolina to her mother in Vienna, who was so pleased by it' ('quello della piccola Arci-Duchessa Maria Teresa, figura intera, che dalla Reina Maria Carolina fu trasmesso a Vienna alla Madre, che tanto il gradì').
- 3 Christian von Mechel, *Verzeichniß der Gemälde der Kaiserlich Königl. Bilder Gallerie in Wien ...* (Vienna, 1783), 32, no. 4: in 1781 it was removed from the imperial portrait collection (which was on the ground floor of the Lower Belvedere, where the private theatre was previously housed; see *ibid.*, 'Vorbericht', XI) and taken to the gallery. Johann Sebastian von Rittershausen, *Betrachtungen über die kaiserliche königliche Bildergallerie zu Wien* (Bregenz, 1785/86), 352–4; Albrecht Krafft, *Verzeichniss der kais. kön. Gemälde-Gallerie im Belvedere zu Wien* (Vienna, 1837), 7; Eduard Ritter von Engerth, *Kunsthistorische Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses, Gemälde. Beschreibendes Verzeichnis*, iii: *Deutsche Schulen* (Vienna, 1886), 1618; Galerie-Nr. 1601; Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Wolfgang Prohaska, and Karl Schütz, *Die Gemäldegalerie des KHM in Wien. Verzeichnis der Gemälde* (Vienna, 1991), 83, plate 654. A partial copy from the estate of Archduchess Maria Anna of Austria is housed in the convent of the Sisters of St Elisabeth in Klagenfurt (inv. 13); see Eva Kernbauer and Aneta Zahradnik (eds.), *Höfische Porträtkultur: die Bildnissammlung der österreichischen Erzherzogin Maria Anna (1738–1789)* (Berlin, 2016), 118, cat. 60, and Daria Lovrek, 'Barockes Kinderportrait – Inv. Nr. 13 "Maria Theresia von Neapel-Sizilien". Konservierung und Restaurierung eines Gemäldes aus der Sammlung des Elisabethinenkonvents Klagenfurt' (unpublished thesis, University of Applied Arts Vienna, 2016).

Bibliography: Giuseppe Niccola d'Azara, *Opere di Antonio Raffaello Mengs: primo pittore del re cattolico Carlo III*, expanded by Carlo Fea (Rome, 1787), XLI; Hermann Voss, *Geschichte der italienischen Barockmalerei. Die Malerei des Barock in Rom*



Fig. 7
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Archduchess Maria Theresia von Habsburg-Lothringen* (Queen of Saxony from 1827), 1771. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, inv. P002193



Fig. 8
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Archduke Franz Joseph Karl von Habsburg-Lothringen* (Holy Roman Emperor from 1792), 1770. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, inv. P002191

- (Berlin, 1925), 660; Dieter Honisch, *Anton Raphael Mengs und die Bildform des Frühklassizismus* (Recklinghausen, 1965), 91, no. 91; Steffi Roettgen, 'I soggiorni di Antonio Raffaello Mengs a Napoli e a Madrid', in Cesare de Seta (ed.), *Arte e civiltà del Settecento a Napoli* (Bari, 1982), 154–79, fig. 7, 172–3; Karl Schütz, 'Bildnisse der Enkelkinder Kaiserin Maria Theresias', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 40 (1987), 321–9, 328; Steffi Roettgen, *Anton Raphael Mengs: 1728–1779. Das malerische und zeichnerische Werk* (Munich, 1999), i, cats. 185, 255–6 <https://sempub.uni-heidelberg.de/wv_mengs/wisski/navigate/4847/view> accessed 10 Dec. 2024; Carmen García Frías Checa and Javier Jordán de Urrés y de la Colina (eds.), *El Retrato en las Colecciones Reales de Patrimonio Nacional: de Juan de Flandes a Antonio López*, exh. cat. Madrid (Palacio Real) 2014/15, 364, fig. 72.1; Kernbauer and Zahradnik 2016 (see note 3), 117, fig. 17; Steffi Roettgen and Matteo Ceriana (eds.), *Nipoti del re di Spagna. Anton Raphael Mengs a Palazzo Pitti*, exh. cat. Florence (Palazzo Pitti) 2017/18, 20, fig. 2.
- 4 Karl Vocelka, *Die Familien Habsburg und Habsburg-Lothringen: Politik – Kultur – Mentalität* (Cologne, 2010), 48. 'Nanderl' is an affectionate Austrian diminutive of 'Ferdinand'.
 - 5 A.R. Mengs, *The Infanta Maria Teresa, 1773*, Spain, private collection; see Roettgen 1999 (see note 3), i, cat. 185, preliminary sketch no. 1 <https://sempub.uni-heidelberg.de/wv_mengs/wisski/navigate/4845/view> accessed 10 Dec. 2024.
 - 6 Made using the same technique, sketches by Mengs both of Maria Teresa's mother and of her cousins in Florence, whose portrait he had completed shortly before, have survived; see Roettgen 1999 (see note 3), i, preliminary sketch for cat. 166, preliminary sketches nos. 1 and 2 for cat. 144.
 - 7 A.R. Mengs, *The Infanta Maria Teresa, 1773*, Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional, Palacio Real, inv. 10024089; see exh. cat. Madrid 2014/15 (see note 3), 364–6, no. 72; Roettgen 1999 (see note 3), i, 255, no. 184 <https://sempub.uni-heidelberg.de/wv_mengs/wisski/navigate/4851/view> accessed 10 Dec. 2024.
 - 8 '[i]l m'a causé le plus grand plaisir; elle est charmante; on ne se lasse pas de la regarder; le Tableau est aussi tres beau, et on ne peut pas mieux peindre; Mengs s'est surpassé.' A.R. Mengs: 'I am sending, through the present courier, the aforementioned portrait of Her Royal Highness, the daughter of the King and Queen here. The true reason why I am doing this is so that His Majesty the King, my master, may see it while it is still as close as possible to this lady's actual state, for people at that age change significantly from one month to the next. Indeed, this lady has already grown since I painted her.' ('Con il presente corriere spedisco il consaputo ritratto della real principessa figlia di questi sovrani. Il vero motivo, per cui faccio questo, è perchè S. M. il re padrone lo veda più prossimo al vero stato di questa signora; perchè in quella età mutano le persone notabilmente di mese in mese: ed in fatti di già questa signora è cresciuta d'allora, che la dipinsi'). Quoted from exh. cat. Madrid 2014/15 (see note 3), 366.
 - 9 J.C. Marqués de Lozoya, 'Mengs y Velázquez', *Archivo Español de Arte*, 36 (1963), 133–4, 133. An earlier assessment to the same effect was made by Carl Justi, *Diego Velazquez und sein Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1888), i, 3: 'When examining the royal treasure trove of paintings in 1761, Raphael Mengs – who in his writings praised and analysed the Classical masters and dreamed of a rebirth of art through the fusion of these and the study of antiquity while remaining one of the last and most lacklustre of eclectics in his own oeuvre – could not avoid feeling excited (for he had a painter's eye) when he came face to face with one who was the most unlike himself of all those he had hitherto encountered.' ('Raphael Mengs, der in seinen Schriften die klassischen Meister pries und zergliederte und eine Neugeburt der Kunst durch deren Verschmelzung und durch das Studium der Antike träumte, während er in seinen Werken einer der letzten und mattesten Eklektiker blieb, als er im Jahre 1761 den königlichen Gemäldeschatz musterte, sah sich nicht ohne Aufregung (denn er hatte das Auge des Malers) Einem gegenüber, der von allen die ihm bisher vorgekommen, ihm selbst am unähnlichsten war.')
 - 10 José Luis Sancho and Javier Jordán de Urrés y de la Colina, 'Mengs und Spanien', in Steffi Roettgen (ed.), *Mengs – die Erfindung des Klassizismus*, exh. cat. Padua (Palazzo Zabarella) and Dresden (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen) 2001, 77–8.
 - 11 His letters testify to his admiration for Velázquez, see A.R. Mengs, *Herrn Anton Raphael Mengs Schreiben an Herrn Anton Pons*, transl. from the Italian (Vienna, 1778), 51: 'How much truth and knowledge of chiaroscuro one finds in the works of Velázquez! How splendidly he knew how to use the effect of the air between objects to indicate their relative distance from one another! How much there is for any artist to learn if in the present works of that painter, executed in three different periods, he studies the manner [of execution] and thereby discovers the path taken by Velázquez in order to progress towards a perfect imitation of Nature.' ('Wie viel Wahrheit und Kenntniss des Helldunklen liegt in den Stücken des Velasquez! Wie fürtrefflich verstand er die Wirkung der Luft, welche sich zwischen den Gegenständen befindet, um die Entfernung des einen von dem anderen anzuzeigen! Welche ein Studium für jeden Künstler, wenn er in den gegenwärtigen Stücken dieses Malers, wie er sie in drey verschiedenen Zeitläufen verfertigt hat, die Manier untersucht, und aus der selben die Bahne entdeckt, auf welcher Velasquez bis zur vollkommenen Nachahmung der Natur fortgeschritten ist.') Mengs added (ibid., 52–3): '... it is as if the hand had not been involved in the execution of that work [*The Spinners (Las Hilanderas)*] at all, but, rather, the brush had been steered by the will alone ...' ('[...] als hätte an der ganzen Ausführung dieses Werkes [der Hilanderas] die Hand keinen Antheil gehabt, sondern nur der Wille den Pinsel geführet [...]'); De Lozoya 1963 (see note 9), 133–4, points out how Mengs, in his *Christ on the Cross* (Aranjuez, Palacio Real), borrowed the pictorial formula of four nails employed by Velázquez. Discussing Mengs's portrait of Pope Clement XIII, Roettgen refers to Velázquez's portrait of Innocent X as a prototype; he also mentions borrowings from other works by Velázquez, namely *Vulcan's Forge* and *Joseph's Tunic*; see Roettgen 1999 (see note 3), 228 and 91, 93; and Steffi Roettgen, *Anton Raphael Mengs 1728–1779: Leben und Wirken* (Munich, 2003), 356.
 - 12 Mengs 1778 (see note 11), 54–6: 'In the royal *Konversationszimmer* (discussion room) there is an excellent work by D. Diego Velázquez, the portrait of the Infanta Margarita of Austria. Since this work is famous far and wide on account of its excellence, I shall merely observe that the effect produced by the imitation of the natural is universally acclaimed, especially given that beauty is not the principal merit of the painting. ... in the dining room of the Prince and Princess of Asturias ... In this very room are also the portraits of Doña Margarita of Austria and of the Infante on horseback, both by Velázquez in that perfect style of his, alongside a few other works by that artist.' ('Im königlichen Konversationszimmer ist ein fürtreffliches Werk von D. Diego Velasquez, das Bildniß der Infantinn Margaretha von Oesterreich. Da dieses Werk seiner Fürtrefflichkeit wegen allenthalben berühmt ist, so werde ich nur anmerken, dass die Wirkung, welche durch die Nachahmung des Natürlichen hervorgebracht wird, allgemeinen Beifall erhält, besonders, wenn die Schönheit nicht das Hauptverdienst des Gemäldes ist. [...] in dem Speisezimmer der Prinzen von Asturien [...]. In eben diesem Zimmer sind auch die Bildnisse der Donna Margaretha von Oesterreich, und des Infanten zu Pferde, beyde von Velasquez in seinem vollkommenen Stil, nebst einigen andern Stücken von der Hand dieses Künstlers.') Similarly, to this date it has not proved possible to match the description of a portrait of 'Doña Margarita de Austria' by Velázquez mentioned in the 'Inventario de la Furreria/Pinturas. Año 1747' (Archivo General de Palacio, Registro núm. 247) with any existing painting. Moreover, the portrait cited there is larger; cf. Angel Aterido, Juan Martínez Cuesta, and José Juan Pérez Perciado, *Colecciones de pinturas de Felipe V e Isabel Farnesio* (Madrid, 2004), ii, 99ff., specifically 111, no. 159: 'Another portrait of Doña Margarita of Austria, two and a half *varas* high [1 *vara* = 83.5 cm] and seven *quartas* wide [1 *quarta* = 20.8 cm], original by Velázquez' ('Otro Retratto de la s^{ta} Doña Margaritta de Austria de dos varas y media de alto y sette quarttas de ancho original de Belazquez').
 - 13 Sancho and Jordán de Urrés y de la Colina 2001 (see note 10), 83. The authors date the portrait of the Duke of Alba to the years before or around 1770 on the basis of his uniform.

- 14 Diego Velázquez and Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, *The Infanta Margarita*, 1653, Madrid, Palacio de Liria, Casa de Alba, inv. P. 91; see Fernando Checa Cremades (ed.), *Treasures from the House of Alba: 500 Years of Art and Collecting*, exh. cat. Dallas (Meadows Museum) and Nashville (Frist Center for the Visual Arts) 2015/16, 91, cat. 29.
- 15 Gudrun Swoboda, 'Zu den Wiener Portraits der Infantin Margarita von Velázquez und J.B. Martínez del Mazo/On the Vienna Portraits of the Infanta Margarita by Velázquez and J.B. Martínez del Mazo', in Sabine Haag (ed.), *Velázquez*, exh. cat. Vienna (Kunsthistorisches Museum) 2014/15, cats. 37–41, 221–32, 222–4 (in German); 319–23, 321 (in English).
- 16 Madrid, Museo del Prado, inv. P002195; exh. cat. Florence 2017/18 (see note 3), 86–7, cat. 6.
- 17 Madrid, Museo del Prado, inv. P002191; exh. cat. Florence 2017/18 (see note 3), 88–9, cat. 7.
- 18 Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia: die Kaiserin in ihrer Zeit: eine Biographie* (Munich, 2017), 483.
- 19 '[J]e hais les poupees et peroquet et Chef d'oeuvre et veux les enfans enfans qui se forment a peu a peu car ordinairement ce n'est que la vaine gloire de ceux qui les dirigent qui les gatent par la les rendant faux ou etourdissant et confus.' Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, SB, 10, Maria Carolina to Leopold II, 26 Nov. 1778, quoted from Cigdem Özel, 'Die Kunstpatronage von Königin Maria Carolina (1752–1814): Repräsentation, Kulturtransfer und Gabentausch zwischen Neapel und Wien' (as yet unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Vienna, 2024), 46, n. 167.
- 20 Özel 2024 (see note 19), 46. Maria Carolina's notebook (Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Archivio Borbone 76), entry for 'Emile' fol. 160r. I am grateful to Cigdem Özel for this information.
- 21 Stollberg-Rilinger 2017 (see note 18), 484.
- 22 Roettgen 2003 (see note 3), ii, 326 and Roettgen 1999 (see note 11), 198: Mengs was consciously looking back to the Spanish tradition, as Charles III, in particular, cherished and fostered the Spanish school of portraiture.
- 23 A.R. Mengs, *Maria Carolina, Queen of Naples, 1772–73*, Patrimonio Nacional, inv. 10007929; see exh. cat. Madrid 2014/15 (see note 3), 359–64, cat. 71.
- 24 Angelica Kauffmann, *Portrait of the Family of Maria Carolina and Ferdinand IV*, 1782–84, Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, inv. OA 6557, and Angelica Kauffmann, modelletto for the portrait of the family of Maria Carolina and Ferdinand IV, 1782/83, Liechtenstein, The Princely Collections, Vaduz–Vienna, inv. GE 2070.

Mengs, a second Raphael ...

‘All roads lead to Rome’ – this maxim was most certainly applicable to the eighteenth century, when those yearning to broaden their horizons as well as artists from all over Europe flocked to that city, attracted by its art treasures spanning every period from antiquity to the Baroque. It is also applicable to Anton Raphael Mengs, who was born in the city of Aussig on the banks of the Elbe (now Ústí nad Labem in present-day Czechia) on 12 March 1728 as the illegitimate son of the painter and miniaturist Ismael Mengs (1688–1764) and Christiana Charlotta Bornmannin (d. 1730/31).¹ Given such origins, one would scarcely have expected him to develop into one of the most notable painters of the interim phase between the Late Baroque and Neoclassicism, or that he was to be famous in his own lifetime. That the Eternal City would be the lodestar of his artistic career was, however, in a sense foretold at his birth, for Ismael named his son after Antonio Allegri, better known as Correggio, and after Raphael, who had been active principally in Rome. The elder Mengs had been able to admire works by both painters during a trip to Italy in 1718. This stern and ambitious man, who had been working for the Dresden court since 1714, accordingly directed his son’s attention southwards from an early age. In the autumn of 1740, Ismael set off for Rome together with Anton Raphael, who was barely twelve years old, and his two sisters, Theresa Concordia (1725–1806) and Julia Charlotte (c.1730/31–after 1806?). Among other educational goals, the three children, whom their father wanted to train as painters, were to be exposed there to the works of antiquity and the Renaissance. This stay in Rome, which lasted until December 1744, proved to be worth their while, for already in the following year all three of Ismael Mengs’s offspring were appointed *Kabinettmaler* (painters of cabinet pictures) at the Dresden court, which in those years was enjoying a notable cultural heyday. Even



Fig. 1
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Self-Portrait in a Red Mantle*,
1744/45. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden,
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, inv. P 167

though Theresa Concordia would later settle permanently in Rome and even be admitted into the Accademia di San Luca, only her brother was to be granted a meteoric career that was bound up with the city and all that it had to offer. As early as 1746, Elector Friedrich August II of Saxony (who at the same time ruled over Poland as King August III) granted Ismael Mengs and his family the opportunity to undertake another trip to Rome, almost certainly because his son had already given proof of his exceptional talent as the author of some remarkable pastel portraits (*fig. 1*). This second stay in Rome was intended,



Fig. 2
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Electoral Crown Prince Friedrich Christian*, 1751. Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. 2023.100



Fig. 3
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Maria Antonia of Bavaria*, 1751. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, inv. 2163

among other things, to help the highly promising young court painter to extend and deepen his academic studies, which subsequently enabled him to excel in the field of history painting. Shortly before his return to Dresden in 1749, Anton Raphael Mengs converted to Catholicism and married Margareta Guazzi (1729–1778), a native of Rome. In 1751, he was appointed first painter to the Saxon-Polish court, but by 1752 he was already in Rome again in order to be able to work amid the creations of his artistic role models. Indeed, as a result of the catastrophic repercussions that the Seven Years War (1756–1763) had for Saxony, the city on the Tiber was henceforth to be his main place of residence. Mengs would never again return to Dresden, even though he continued to be officially employed by the court there. Apart from some sojourns in various other parts of Italy and two stays in Spain lasting several years each, during which he worked as court painter to King Charles III, Mengs remained closely associated with Rome, whose artistic marvels and intellectual circles offered an ideal environment for his development as an artist. In that regard, an

important influence was his friendship of many years with the eminent archaeologist and writer on art Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), a compatriot with whom Mengs shared a faith in the ideal beauty of the works of the ancient Greeks – a beauty they also saw as a reflection of moral purity – and in the exemplary status of those works for contemporary artists. When Winckelmann published his *History of the Art of Antiquity* in 1764, the book, now acknowledged to be a trailblazer in the fields of archaeology and art history, not only carried a dedication to Mengs but also contained a passage in which the author waxed lyrical about how the ideal beauty of ancient Greece had been reincarnated in his paintings:

‘The very embodiment of all of the beauties in the antique figures here described is to be found in the immortal works of Anton Raphael Mengs, first court painter to the kings of Spain and Poland, the greatest artist of his time, and perhaps of all time following. He is risen like a phoenix from the ashes of the first Raphael to teach the world the path to beauty in the arts.’²



Fig. 4
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Electeur Friedrich August III as a Child*, 1751.
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister,
inv. P 176

... and his first portraits

Winckelmann was far from alone in hailing Mengs as a renewer of art, as a ‘second Raphael’. The painter, who had been admitted into the Accademia di San Luca as early as 1752, was himself also the author of several influential treatises, in which he advanced his aesthetic principles. However, soon after Mengs’s death in Rome in 1779, his historical and allegorical paintings, which from a modern vantage point make him one of the founding fathers of Neoclassicism, began to be decried as soulless and slick canvases in the academic mould. Most of Mengs’s portraits, though, were spared such condemnation. Alongside the numerous self-portraits, which he continued to paint until relatively late years (see *figs. 1, 8*), it is above all his early pastel portraits, which he created in the mid-1740s and in which he depicted relatives and friends of his as well as members of Saxony’s ruling house, that have continually won praise for their spirited and natural treatment of the subjects and for the artist’s virtuosic use of pastel crayons.³ These portraits, almost all of which are compact half-length pictures, made Mengs famous before he had even reached the age of twenty and were very soon accorded a place of honour in the Dresden collections by Friedrich August II. The young Anton Raphael and his two sisters clearly opted for pastel because the elector was very fond of the medium – he was, for example, to acquire dozens of works by Rosalba Carriera as well. In contrast, there are virtually no large-scale oil portraits by Mengs from that period,

which probably also has to do with the fact that his father Ismael, who worked mainly as an enamel painter and a miniaturist, had not been able to teach him much in the field of oil painting.⁴ Still, it is recorded that Ismael, who was himself a talented portraitist, had his son and pupil copy portraits by van Dyck for training purposes from an early age. That first stay in Rome, which immediately precedes the period during which Mengs painted his Dresden pastels, must have further enhanced the young artist’s powers of observation. Moreover, the famous *Self-Portrait in a Red Mantle* (see *fig. 1*), which belongs to that group, has a programmatic link to Rome: it is modelled on Paolo Naldini’s portrait bust of Raphael in the Pantheon and thus serves as an early illustration of the young painter’s veneration for his great Italian namesake.⁵

However, it was ultimately the second stay in Rome that equipped Mengs with what he needed to fully perform the tasks expected of a principal court painter, which, in addition to history painting – then considered the supreme genre – also included the execution of official



Fig. 5
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Pope Clement XIII*, 1758. Venice,
Ca’Rezzonico



Fig. 6
Anton Raphael Mengs, *King Ferdinand IV of Naples*, 1759/60. Naples, Museo di Capodimonte, inv. 83814



Fig. 7
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Isabel Parreño y Arce, Marchioness of Llano* (replica), 1771/72. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-A-3277

portraits of ruling princes and their families. With his full-length portrait of Friedrich August II (known only from a bozzetto) and the pendant portraits of Crown Prince Friedrich Christian and his wife Maria Antonia of Bavaria (figs. 2, 3), the young artist proved that he was more than capable of filling the void occasioned by the departure, in 1748, of Louis de Silvestre (1675–1760) from the employ of the Saxon court. Created around 1750, these works on the one hand belong to the tradition of the French High Baroque state portrait, to which de Silvestre had likewise been committed in his own day. On the other hand, by virtue of their sophisticated painterly effects and the realistic physiognomy, they go beyond the formulaic style of such *portraits d'apparat*. Similar qualities are also displayed by the pastel portrait of the future Elector Friedrich August III as a child (fig. 4), which Mengs painted in 1751, that is, the year of his appointment to the post of principal court painter.⁶ Just as remarkable as the naturalness of the gestures and facial expression of the infant shown resting on a cushion

is the ease with which the painter dealt with the task – a task inherent in such works – of including allusions to the subject's princely rank. In its masterly rendering of the various materials, too, this innovative portrait of a child anticipates the impressive series of likenesses of the Habsburg and Bourbon princes and princesses that Mengs was to produce in Italy many years later.

In Italy and Spain

Soon after his arrival in Rome in 1752, where he had initially hoped to complete his painting for the high altar of the Court Church in Dresden, Mengs gained a new customer base consisting of Grand Tour travellers, both nobles and commoners. He swiftly established himself, alongside Pompeo Girolamo Batoni (1708–1787), as one of the most sought-after portraitists for these visitors to Rome, who were mainly from England. The likenesses of his English clients are often informed by van Dyck's approach to portraiture, which was still the prevailing

one in the sitters' home country. However, in contrast to the works of his Italian rival, they are less representative and mostly therefore lacking in allusions to Rome as the place of their creation. Mengs's portrait of Cardinal Alberico Archinto in 1756 was the first time that a Roman Catholic prelate had sat for him; this was followed just two years later by a pair of remarkable portraits of the newly elected Pope Clement XIII (*fig. 5*).⁷ These two three-quarter-length portraits of the pontiff seated on his throne, which continue the tradition of Raphael's likeness of Pope Julius II, attest to the formidable reputation that Mengs had managed to earn in just a few years of working as a portraitist in Rome, which derived mainly from his gift for perceptive characterization and painterly brilliance.

A further important milestone in his career came in 1761, when Mengs took up the post of painter to the Spanish court in Madrid.⁸ It was but reluctantly that he accepted this prestigious appointment by King Charles III, for it meant above all having to leave Rome, where he had just completed what was an epoch-making work of Neoclassicism, his *Parnassus* fresco at the Villa Albani. The Bourbon monarch had chosen Mengs because, on the one hand, he wanted to bring a capable artist to Madrid for the decoration of the newly erected Royal Palace – a project that Mengs would undertake together with Corrado Giaquinto (1703–1766) and Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770) – and, on the other, he was keen to secure an outstanding portraitist for his court in Madrid. Already in 1755, Charles's wife, Maria Amalia of Saxony, who as a daughter of Elector Friedrich August II would have already heard of Mengs, had sought to commission him to paint portraits of the royal family. One of the first such works that he executed for Charles and Maria Amalia was a full-length portrait of their third son, King Ferdinand IV (*fig. 6*).⁹ It was painted by Mengs in 1759/60 during a stay in Naples, the occasion being the ascension of the prince, who was not yet of age, to the thrones of Naples and Sicily, which had been abdicated by his father in Ferdinand's favour upon becoming the king of Spain. This state portrait marked the start of a long series of likenesses of members of the Bourbon dynasty, most of which were painted in Madrid. In these works, of which numerous replicas were also produced in the painter's studio, Mengs often had to abide by the conventions of Spanish court portraiture, but he managed to bring a new freshness to the task at hand through the realistic rendering of his sitters' individual characteristics. He had greater leeway when working on commissions for clients outside the Madrid court, such as José Augustin de Llano, the Spanish ambassador at the court of Parma, who in 1770 arranged for Mengs to paint a portrait of his wife



Fig. 8
Anton Raphael Mengs, *Self-Portrait*, 1773. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1927 (inventory from 1890)

(*fig. 7*), which with its full-length female figure standing in an unmannered pose before a landscape clearly anticipates Goya.¹⁰ Mengs also made portraits in Italy, where he had been allowed to return in early 1770 for some much-needed rest. These were mainly likenesses of relatives of Charles III, starting with the grand-ducal family in Florence and then moving on, in 1772, to the royal family in Naples.¹¹ Particularly notable amongst this large group of works are the portraits of the children of the two ruling families, which were shipped to the Madrid and Viennese courts. In placing these orders, Charles III was seeking to give expression to the dynastic pride that he took in his descendants and, at the same time, to put on record the ties between the houses of Bourbon and Habsburg: his daughter Maria Luisa had married a son of Empress Maria Theresa, Peter Leopold, who became Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo I of Tuscany in 1765, while King Ferdinand IV of Naples (who was simultaneously King Ferdinand III of Sicily) had married Archduchess Maria Carolina in 1768. In these portraits of the still very young grandchildren of Charles III and Maria Theresa, Mengs was able to combine their identity as children with the aura of majesty. Amongst them is the work that is the subject of the present *Point of View* exhibition, the 1773 likeness of Princess Maria Teresa, the firstborn daughter of the King and Queen of Naples. With their spontaneity and painterly airiness, the portraits of this group stand in stark contrast to, say, the ceiling frescoes

in the Stanza dei Papiri in the Vatican, which Mengs also executed in those years. Following his return to Spain in 1774, Mengs, in addition to completing his frescoes in the Royal Palace, devoted himself above all to trying to improve local conditions for the training of artists. It was to that end that Mengs, who had been supportive of the young Goya, among others, donated his collection of plaster casts to King Charles in 1776. Plagued by chronic health problems, Mengs again received permission from his royal employer to return to Italy in the following year. However, the celebrated painter had only a few years left to live in his long-standing adoptive city of Rome. In these last years of his earthly span he continued to work on portrait commissions for the Spanish court while also painting some sober, psychologically penetrating likenesses of friends.

- 1 Two of the more recent seminal works on Mengs are: Steffi Roettgen, *Anton Raphael Mengs 1728 – 1779. Das malerische und zeichnerische Werk*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1999) and Steffi Roettgen (ed.), *Mengs – die Erfindung des Klassizismus*, exh. cat. Padua (Palazzo Zabarella) and Dresden (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen) 2001. The present essay is based on these two publications, unless otherwise noted.
- 2 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (Dresden, 1764), 184. Translation adapted from Thomas Pelzel, ‘Anton Raphael Mengs and His British Critics’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 15/3 (summer 1976), 405–21, see 410. See also Steffi Roettgen, ‘Winckelmann, Mengs und die deutsche Kunst’, in Thomas W. Gaehtgens (ed.), *Johann Joachim Winckelmann* (Hamburg, 1986), 161–78.
- 3 On Mengs’s self-portraits, see Roettgen 1999 (see note 1), ii, 398–403; Sibylle Ebert-Schifferer, ‘Mit dem Alter schreitet die Aufklärung fort. Chardin, Mengs und Graff im Selbstporträt’, in Hildegard Wiegel (ed.), *Italiensehnsucht: Kunsthistorische Aspekte eines Topos* (Munich 2004), 81–94, esp. 84–7.
- 4 An exception is a portrait of Friedrich August II dated to 1745 (Bayreuth, Neues Schloss), which echoes one by the Saxon court painter Louis de Silvestre. It is possible that Mengs, who was appointed *Kabinettmaler* in that same year, had been asked to demonstrate his technical proficiency in oil painting by making that copy. See Roettgen 1999 (see note 1), i, cat. 148; exh. cat. Padua and Dresden 2001 (see note 1), cat. 19.
- 5 See Roettgen 1999 (see note 1), i, cat. 271; exh. cat. Padua and Dresden 2001 (see note 1), cat. 2.
- 6 Roettgen 1999 (see note 1), i, cat. 152.
- 7 Roettgen 1999 (see note 1), i, cats. 192, 156, 158; exh. cat. Padua and Dresden 2001 (see note 1), cats. 83, 85, 86.
- 8 On Mengs’s spells in Spain, see also José Luis Sancho and Javier Jordán de Urrés y de la Colina, ‘Mengs und Spanien’, in exh. cat. Padua and Dresden 2001 (see note 1), 71–85; Pia Hollweg, *Anton Raphael Mengs’ Wirken in Spanien* (Frankfurt am Main et al., 2008).
- 9 Roettgen 1999 (see note 1), i, cat. 134; exh. cat. Padua and Dresden 2001 (see note 1), cat. 90.
- 10 Roettgen 1999 (see note 1), i, cat. 260; see also exh. cat. Padua and Dresden 2001 (see note 1), cat. 108 (replica in Amsterdam).
- 11 On the work that Mengs did in Florence, see also Matteo Ceriana and Steffi Roettgen (eds.), *I Nipoti del Re di Spagna. Anton Raphael Mengs a Palazzo Pitti*, exh. cat. Florence (Palazzo Pitti) 2017.

The Conservator's Point of View

Condition of the panel and toolmarks

The relatively large and heavy walnut panel consists of four horizontal boards of different widths, which are glued together butt-jointed. All four side edges were provided with a milled 0.7 to 1 cm deep step. On this panel the step at the bottom was probably levelled with a narrow strip stepped in opposite directions before painting – presumably to create a better support surface for the heavy wooden panel (*fig. 1*).¹ Close to this step on the reverse side, three holes have been drilled on both sides, possibly for either the application of a groove bar during the painting process, for a temporary frame or for assembling the panel within wall panelling. Visible drops of the priming and of the paint layer on the side edges show that the format of the panel and its milled edges are original features (*figs. 2a, b, c*). A light brown matt and coarse-grained protective coating has been applied to the reverse of the panel. This coating is original. In raking light marks of planning and tool marks become apparent (*fig. 3*). In general, the panel is in good and stable condition, the joints are slightly open in some places. Between the second and third board, the joint which was re-glued in an earlier intervention has been connected with four dovetails. The glued joint at the bottom edge was also reinforced with eight nails at a later date (cf. *fig. 1*).

A bright chalk primer forms the basis of the oil-bound paint layer. A few fine underdrawing lines are only visible on the face and hands (*figs. 4a, b, c*). The application of the paint layer varies according to the forms and is relatively impasto in light areas worked with lead white, for example the dress, the embroidery or the brooch (*figs. 5a, b*). Some individual areas are painted wet in wet. In addition to the impasto areas, especially the background shows a smooth flatly applied paint layer with a

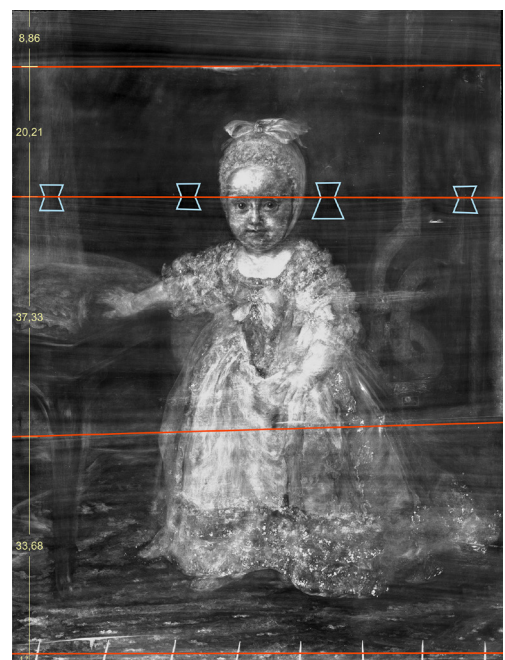
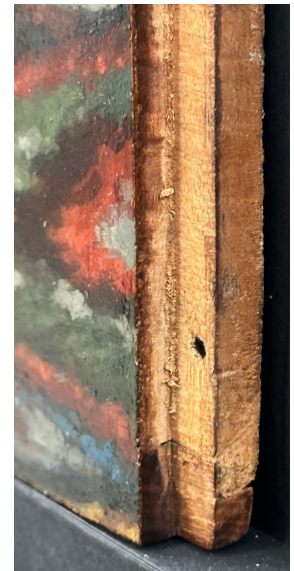
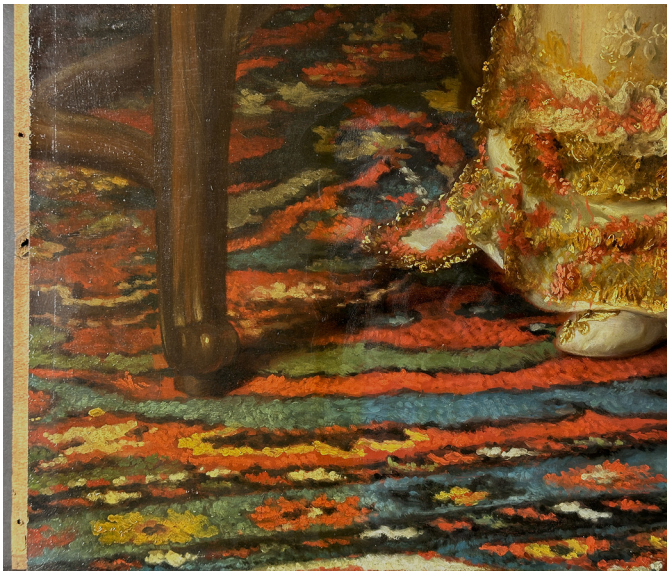


Fig. 1
X-radiograph; mapping of joints with tool marks, alterations and damages. The x-radiograph shows the distribution of paint layers containing lead white. It conveys information about the construction and the quality of the panel as well as the condition of the original paint layer.

fine-grained surface. By contrast to the meticulous rendering of face and white lace, the dress is painted in a free manner with less detail. Especially impressive is the rendering of the colourful carpet which shows variegated brush work with highly nuanced colouring (cf. *fig. 2a*).



Figs. 2a, b, c

Details during restoration; the original step is visible on the left edge. The yellowed varnish causes the green appearance of the blue colour of the carpet (left image). Left edge with drops of original priming and right edge showing original stepping (image in the middle). The step at the base was equalised with an additional bar before the priming was applied (right image).

The Need for Conservation and Restoration Intervention

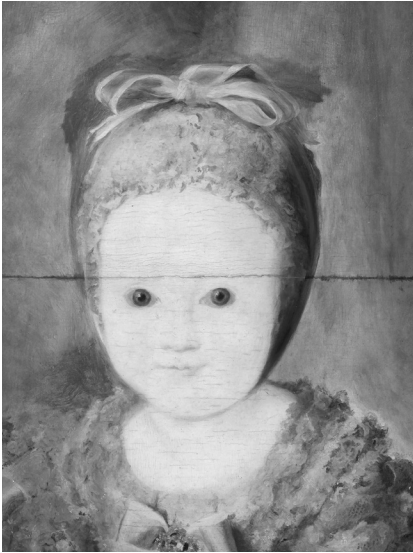
The painting showed dirty, yellowed and blanching varnish coatings as well as darkened retouching (cf. *figs. 5a, b*). The original paint layer is noticeably well preserved, which is rare for paintings of this date. In the past rigid framing and worse climate conditions caused stress to the sensitive panel. This, together with mechanical damages and small paint losses, lead to a restoration process in 2023.

The measures included thinning the layers of yellowed varnish, removing old retouching, gluing recent cracks and integrating paint losses. This not only brought out the full intensity of the painting's brilliant colours, but also generally stabilised the wooden panel and achieved a cohesive appearance. In addition, the painting was enclosed in a climate-controlled display case integrated into the frame to protect it from climate fluctuations.

- 1 On the front the step is approx. 1.7 cm, on the reverse only 0.8 cm, the wood thickness is 1.8 cm. This could mean that the fourth board originally also had a milled step and that the painted surface would therefore have been 1.7 cm shorter at the bottom. All the boards could have been cut from one trunk and are curved differently depending on the board cut.



Fig. 3
Reverse with original coating in raking light.



Figs. 4a, b, c
Detail of the head in infrared-reflectography, during restoration, and in visible light after restoration.



Figs. 5a, b
Details during restoration; the paint layer of the dress is noticeably textured. The open brushstroke conveys the vivid fluffy quality of the dress and glossed highlights create a three-dimensional impression of the laces of the dress and of the brooch.

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