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Fictions of Abundance in Early Modern Madrid: Hospitality, Consumption, and Artistic Identity in the Work of Juan van der Hamen y León

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This article examines how still-life painting contributed to the creation of a distinct urban aristocratic culture in seventeenth-century Madrid. Focusing on a group of paintings by Juan van der Hamen, the article situates these images within the context of the picture gallery and the practice of aristocratic hospitality. By giving visual form to this new urban mode of magnificence, Van der Hamen's still lifes created a fiction of abundance that glossed over Madrid's economic realities. At the same time, Van der Hamen concealed signs of manual craftsmanship and commercial interest in order to advance and ennoble his own artistic identity.

INTRODUCTION

WITH CELEBRATORY WORDS, the seventeenth-century playwright Juan Pérez de Montalbán exalted the merits of the painter Juan van der Hamen y León (1596–1631) in *Para todos* (1632), a literary compendium of Madrid's most prominent personalities: “Juan de Vanderhamen y León is among the most celebrated painters of our century, because in drawing, painting, and narrative works he surpassed Nature herself. And aside from being unique in his art, he composed extraordinary verses with which he proved the interrelationship of Painting and Poetry. He died very young, and from what he left us in fruits, as well as in portraits and large canvases, one deduces that if he were living, he would have been the greatest Spaniard of his art.”¹ By the time this work was published, Van der Hamen had already died, but, as Montalbán's entry suggests, his short career had a great impact in the Spanish capital.² Born in Madrid to a Flemish family of the lower

I am most grateful to Lisa Rosenthal for her enduring support of my work on this essay. I also thank *Renaissance Quarterly's* anonymous reviewers for their very helpful recommendations, as well as William Jordan, Laura Bass, Valery Taylor Brown, the participants of the panels at RSA 2011 and ASPHS 2012, where I presented aspects of this work, and Jesse Locker for his insights in the final drafts. All translations are mine except where otherwise noted.

¹Quoted in Jordan, 1985, 104.

²The career of Juan van der Hamen has been studied most especially by Jordan, 1967 and 2006. See also Cherry, 1999, 145–97.

nobility, Van der Hamen was an accomplished portraitist and proficient religious painter, but, above all, he excelled at depicting illusionistically rendered fruits, candies, and flowers.

By focusing on the relatively new genre of still-life painting, Van der Hamen was taking an unusual path. Other Spanish painters had practiced still life before (most notably Juan Sánchez Cotán [1560–1627]), but none had made this genre a commercial specialty. Between 1619 and 1631, however, Van der Hamen devised a new kind of still life that provided him with economic success and the recognition of aristocratic and literary figures of Madrid, including the celebrated poet and playwright Lope de Vega (1562–1635). In several sonnets, Lope praises Van der Hamen's ability to surpass nature with his painted fruits and flowers, referencing the ancient Greek painter Zeuxis and calling him "Castellano Apeles" ("the Castilian Apelles").³ Works such as Van der Hamen's *Still Life with Sweets and Glassware* (1622) (fig. 1) demonstrate the imitative powers that Lope and other writers praised. In this still life, Van der Hamen delights in precisely rendering the textures of different materials, from the hardness and opaque surface of the ceramic dish, to the fragile transparency of the glassware, to the crispness of the wafers. Set against a stark dark background reminiscent of Sánchez Cotán's deep-window format, these objects illusionistically invade the viewer's space, inviting reflections upon the nature of reality and the artificiality of painting. The effect is reinforced by the inclusion of the two flies crawling on the glass flask, an obvious reference to the legendary power of Zeuxis's paintings to trick the eye.⁴

Such learned allusions help explain the appeal of Van der Hamen's paintings among aristocratic patrons. In fact, this painting belonged to Don Gaspar de Haro y Guzmán before he became Marqués del Carpio.⁵ By the first decades of the seventeenth century, the court of Madrid included important art collectors who, despite the genre's low standing in the current art theory, appreciated the novelty, artistry, and intellectual character of

³In addition to Lope de Vega, these included José de Valdivieso, Gabriel Bocángel, and Montalbán. Van der Hamen was familiar with this courtly intellectual circle through his brother Lorenzo, one of the most respected literati in Madrid during the 1620s. See García Valverde and Véliz. For the most recent discussion on the relationship between Van der Hamen and Lope de Vega, see Sánchez Jiménez, 2008. Lope's references to Van der Hamen as Zeuxis and Apelles appear in *La Circe* (1624) and *Laurel de Apolo* (1630), and have been noted in Navarrete Prieto.

⁴References to anecdotes related to painters of antiquity were common among still-life painters. See Ebert-Schiffeler, 19.

⁵At the time he was the Marquis of Eliche. See Jordan, 2006, 77.



Figure 1. Juan van der Hamen y León. *Still Life with Sweets and Glassware*, 1622. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Album / Art Resource, NY.

still-life painting.⁶ At the same time, as William Jordan notes in his monograph on the artist, Madrid's social elites must have also valued these paintings' depictions of objects associated with a distinctive aristocratic lifestyle.⁷ In contrast to the still lifes of Sánchez Cotán (fig. 2), which usually represent fresh fruits, vegetables, and game from the Castilian countryside, Van der Hamen's still lifes evoke a world of artificiality that reflects their courtly context. In the *Still Life with Sweets and Glassware*, the ceramic dish, the Venetian-style glasses, the wafers, and the *aloja* (an aromatic wine made of honeyed water and spices that enjoyed great popularity during this period) invoke this urban, courtly environment.⁸

These works also defy the traditional assumption, based mostly on analyses of Sánchez Cotán's works, that seventeenth-century Spanish still lifes embodied the "qualities of asceticism, intense religiosity and

⁶About the development of collections and collectors in the Spanish court, see especially Burke and Cherry; Morán Turina and Checa Cremades. More specifically about collectors of still-life painting, see Schroth, 1985.

⁷See Jordan, 2006, 73; Cherry, 1999, 173.

⁸For a recent discussion of the importance of food as social designator in early modern Spain, see Alvar Ezquerro. The popularity of *aloja* is discussed in Deleito y Piñuela, 1942, 159–62; more recently, in García Santo Tomás, 2004, esp. 187–240. The courtly taste for other substances has been discussed recently in Norton (chocolate and tobacco); and Hamann (*búcaros*).



Figure 2. Juan Sánchez Cotán. *Still Life with Quince, Melon and Cabbage*, 1602. San Diego Museum of Art, USAGift of Anne R. and Amy Putnam / Bridgeman Images.

spirituality” attributed to Spanish Baroque painting in general and, by extension, to a particular notion of Spanishness.⁹ On the contrary, despite their “uncanny exactitude” and formal restraint, works such as Van der Hamen’s *Still Life with Sweets and Glassware* present objects and foodstuffs that are anything but frugal, and *vanitas* references to mortality and the passing of time are conspicuously absent from his oeuvre.¹⁰ In fact, it is by means of their contrived artificiality that Van der Hamen’s still lifes glorify — rather than condemn — display, which itself becomes one of the paintings’ subjects. This emphasis on display of (especially) urban commodities posits these still lifes as celebrations of their owners’ high social position in the new urban and imperial context of Madrid in the 1620s. Coinciding with the beginning of Philip IV’s rule (1621), the decade of the 1620s was

⁹Cherry, 1996, 77. Bryson, 63, for instance, characterizes Cotán’s still lifes as “exercises in the renunciation of normal human priorities.”

¹⁰Honig, 1998a, 174. The absence of moralizing meanings in Van der Hamen’s still lifes has been noted in Jordan, 2006, 117. For an interesting discussion of the technical aspects of Van der Hamen’s still lifes, see Romero Asenjo, 84–98.

crucial for the consolidation of Madrid's identity as site of the court and capital of the Spanish empire and for the fashioning of the new king's official image. As Julián Gállego and others have noted, the beginning of Philip IV's reign was characterized, as Antonio Feros describes it, by a paradoxical "coexistence of austerity and courtly ostentation," which also seems to operate in Van der Hamen's restrained depictions of luxury goods.¹¹

The popularity of these still lifes during this specific decade thus suggests that, in addition to their stylistic development, iconography, and patronage, Van der Hamen's paintings may also be approached from the perspective of their social function within the court. Recent scholarship has brought attention to the cultural, social, and artistic contexts of Spanish still lifes in general — to the meanings and associations of the objects they depict and of the styles in which they depict them. The focus on material culture, in particular, has disclosed the urban and aristocratic character of Van der Hamen's still lifes while, at the same time, raising new questions regarding how they functioned.¹² Such questions require treating these works not as passive reflections of but rather as agents contributing to the formation of aristocratic urban culture in seventeenth-century Madrid. Building upon this interpretive agenda, this essay proposes that Madrid's role as imperial capital, the struggles to define its identity, and the realities of its complex economy informed the creation of at least one group of Van der Hamen's paintings (including two still lifes and two allegories) for Jean de Croÿ, second Count of Solre (1588–1638), the most influential member of the Flemish court in Madrid and one of Van der Hamen's most enthusiastic patrons.¹³ It considers Van der Hamen's artistic and intellectual background, the social status of his patron, the urban context in which Van der Hamen produced these works, the significance of the objects they depict, and what is known about their original display. More precisely, it situates this group of paintings within the context of aristocratic hospitality, a "hallmark of noble virtue" and a "token of princely power and status" that was instrumental in defining Madrid as a court city as well as Solre's own political mission within it.¹⁴

¹¹Feros, 63. For this paradox, see also Gállego; Elliott, 1977, 142–61.

¹²For some recent accounts of still-life painting in Spain, with special attention to material culture, see Scheffler; Oppermann; Portús, 2009. Although not translated into English, the most comprehensive account is still Cherry, 1999. In English, see especially Jordan and Cherry; and Jordan, 1985.

¹³On Solre's political career in Spain, see Esteban Estríngana. His activities as art collector are discussed in Pérez Preciado, 2005.

¹⁴Swann, 16. Most scholars have mentioned the connection between Van der Hamen's still lifes and aristocratic hospitality but haven't examined it further. See, for example, Cherry, 1999, 173–74; Jordan, 2006, 72. For a more recent and nuanced discussion, see Portús, 2009.

While this discussion focuses mainly on one collector and set of paintings, it provides a model for understanding some of the social uses and political functions of painting (especially still life) in Madrid more broadly. In particular, it considers how the paintings Van der Hamen produced for Solre highlight the tensions between the realities of a developing consumer society and the functions of noble hospitality as they relate to the needs of the court of Madrid, while revealing the strains between artistic creation and commercial profit in Spain during this period. In so doing, this study builds on a growing body of scholarship on consumption and material culture in early modern Spain, which has been particularly fruitful in regard to the literary and visual arts that were produced within the court.¹⁵ Further, an examination of Van der Hamen's paintings for Solre sheds light on the artist's celebrated engagement with the topos of *ut pictura poesis*, praised by his contemporaries but rarely considered in current scholarship, as well as elucidating how he elevated the lowly genre of still-life painting and established his own artistic identity.¹⁶

SOLRE, ART COLLECTIONS, AND THE FUNCTIONS OF HOSPITALITY AT COURT

When Jean de Croÿ arrived in the spring of 1624, Madrid was no longer the idyllic village that sixteenth-century Spanish historians had praised.¹⁷ Since Philip II established it as the capital of his worldwide empire in 1561, Madrid had become one of the largest and most populated cities in Southern Europe — in the language of contemporary chroniclers, a “polluted monster” filled with carriages, multistoried buildings, and all kinds of commercial establishments.¹⁸ As historians of the city have long recognized, this dramatic transformation was owed to the court's presence. As the aristocracy moved en masse to Madrid, they transformed the city's economic, social, and urban fabric.¹⁹

Solre perfectly exemplified Madrid's new body of distinguished citizens: ambitious aristocrats who, once installed in the city, engaged in the kind of lavish lifestyle that was expected of their class. Like other recent elite transplants to

¹⁵See especially García Santo Tomás, 2004, 2008; *Materia crítica*; Fuchs; López Alvarez; Norton; Hamann; Barnard and de Armas; Cernigliaro and Beusterien; and, for painting specifically, Bass; Falomir, 2002 and 2006.

¹⁶About the relationship between painting and poetry in Spain during this period, see Portús, 1999, esp. 55–122; Armas.

¹⁷Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century praises of Madrid are discussed in Sieber, 14–15. Solre's arrival in Madrid is discussed in Esteban Estringana, 207.

¹⁸Sieber, 8.

¹⁹See López García and Madrazo Madrazo, 121; Amelang, 55. For an analysis of Madrid's urban and architectural transformations, see also Escobar.

Madrid, Solre moved to a fashionable part of the city and occupied a house that he enhanced with a Flemish-inspired garden and, more significantly, an impressive picture gallery where Van der Hamen's pictures were displayed.²⁰ Following significant precedents, such as the by-then-exiled Duke of Lerma, former *valido* of Philip III, the phenomenon of private collecting was beginning to take hold among Madrid's nobility.²¹ As the painter and critic Vicente Carducho implies in his *Diálogos de la Pintura* (1633), possessing, exhibiting, and admiring a collection of paintings constituted a "virtuous entertainment" that enabled multiple means of demonstrating courtly status.²²

Although the development of the picture gallery in Italy and the Netherlands has been the focus of considerable scholarly attention, little is known about the uses, functions, and broader meanings of such galleries in seventeenth-century Spain, since most studies have been limited to identifying these collections' holdings.²³ An analysis of Solre's picture gallery makes it possible to consider the function of Van der Hamen's paintings in their intended context, as well as the larger social and political role that picture galleries played in the Spanish court.

The structure and composition of Solre's galleries echoed his political function at court. After years of negotiations, Solre finally moved from Flanders to Madrid as the main representative of the Southern Netherlands in the Spanish court. The new Spanish capital was a booming city in this period, providing many opportunities for political and social advancement. In May 1624, Solre was named captain of the archers of the Burgundian royal guard (the king's bodyguard), a prestigious organization that was entirely composed of Flemish nobles. And his membership in the Junta de Obras y Bosques (the royal public works commission, October 1624) and the Junta de Población (devoted to facilitate the settlement of Catholics from other countries in Madrid, November 1625) a few months later ensured his participation in some of the city's most ambitious urban projects.²⁴ Most relevant for this study is that Solre's main

²⁰The house was located between Alcalá and Greda Streets: Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005a, 135.

²¹About the Duke of Lerma's collection, see Schroth, 1990, 2001, and 2008, 86–95.

²²Carducho, 417. In the same passage, Carducho also praises the "scientific" conversations such collections inspired. About the custom of visiting collections, see Morán Turina, 162–63.

²³For the Flemish context, see especially Filipczak; Stoichita. For the Italian context see Fumaroli, 37–51. Notable exceptions for the Spanish context include Morán Turina and Checa Cremades; Burke and Cherry; Portús, 2002; Urquizar Herrera; Rey-Bueno and López-Pérez. More recently, see Bleichmar.

²⁴For an account of these negotiations and of Solre's various positions at the Spanish court, see Esteban Estríngana. About the Burgundian guard in general, see Hortal Muñoz.

mission at the Spanish court required lavish displays of hospitality to the many illustrious visitors who passed through Madrid. As Alicia Esteban Estríngana has recently shown, Solre was an active player in a royal campaign to promote the loyalty of Flemish elites to the new Spanish monarch after the restitution of Flanders to Spain in 1621, which was prompted by the death of the Archduke Albert in the same year and coincided with Philip IV's ascension to power.²⁵ This entailed not only attracting and facilitating the immersion of these Flemings into Madrid's political and economic life, but also convincing them of the benefits of allying with the Spanish Crown, an especially crucial task after the Twelve Years' Truce ended and hostilities with the Dutch resumed.²⁶ In effect, this meant that Solre was the official host on behalf of the king and thus responsible for showing guests the most sophisticated aspects of Madrid's aristocratic culture as well as overseeing their food, lodging, and other entertainments.

Such was the burden of these duties that, in a 1627 letter directed to Philip IV, Fray Íñigo de Brizuela tried to convince the king that Solre's services to the Spanish Crown deserved to be rewarded. He explained, "Solre has to cope with new expenses daily because he has to host in his house Flemish visitors who don't have anywhere else to go."²⁷ As mentioned above, Solre acted as a Flemish ambassador of sorts, but, although he counted upon the consent of the king, his mission was not financially sponsored. Rather, as this letter makes clear, the responsibility of constantly hosting, receiving, and entertaining guests generated considerable ongoing expenses for Solre's household. It is within this specific backdrop that Van der Hamen's paintings for Solre may be best understood. The prominent place they held in Solre's home also indicates that Van der Hamen, a Madrid-born artist of Flemish descent as well as a member of Solre's guard, was a meaningful artistic and political choice: being a product of Spain's imperial policies (his father, Jehan, had moved to Madrid in the sixteenth century), Van der Hamen both served and benefited from the Spanish rule over the Southern Netherlands, demonstrating the success that Flemings would continue to enjoy under the new order, and, more specifically, Spain's continuous patronage of Flemish painting.²⁸

²⁵Esteban Estríngana, 195. A similar campaign had started several years earlier, in 1613, when Philip III gave privileges to important members of the Flemish elite (including Solre, who became a member of the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1615) to ensure the success of the sovereignty of the archdukes. See *ibid.*, 203, 201.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 214–15.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 221: "cada día se alla obligado a mayores gastos por el acoximiento que a de haçer en su casa a los que vienen de Flandes que no tienen otra a donde acudir."

²⁸About Van der Hamen's parents, see Jordan, 2006, 45–48. The propagandistic function that could be associated with the collecting and display of Flemish paintings in Spain (especially with regard to the still lifes by Frans Snyders) has been discussed in Pérez Preciado, 2003, 284–85.

A 1638 inventory of Solre's collection shows that most of his paintings were displayed in two adjacent rooms.²⁹ The first, smaller room, or *camarín* (a term defined by Sebastián de Covarrubias in 1611 as "a *retrete* [small storage room or closet] where *las señoras* have their porcelains, earthenware pots, glass and other curiosities"³⁰) was decorated with Flemish still lifes, landscapes, and two unusual still lifes by Van der Hamen. *Still Life with Vase of Flowers and a Dog* (ca. 1625) (fig. 3) and *Still Life with Vase of Flowers and a Puppy* (ca. 1625) (fig. 4) were much larger than Van der Hamen's typical pictures, and their long rectangular format defied the genre's conventions. Moreover, the inclusion of the dogs, the spatially receding floor, and the two *aparadores* (large sideboards or credenzas displaying flowers, sweetmeats, preserved fruits, glass wine jars, and an elaborate clock) emphasized the paintings' trompe l'oeil effect, which deceptively recreated the appearance of the actual room.³¹

These two still lifes were unframed and flanked (or were mounted on) the two doors leading to the larger second room, or Galería Mayor.³² There, the theme of nature continued through the display of paintings of game, fruits, and landscapes, and was highlighted by the presence of *Vertumnus and Pomona* (1626) (fig. 5) and *Glycera* (1627) (fig. 6), which are Van der Hamen's only known allegorical works. Both allegories, which depict two elegantly dressed women in natural settings, display the painted fruits, vegetables, and flowers that normally appear in Van der Hamen's still lifes. Artificially pushed to the foreground and taking the form of a fictional frame, these still-life elements establish a visual relationship between the allegories and the painter's independent still lifes, while at the same time constituting illusionistic forms of still-life painting in themselves.

²⁹The inventory describing these paintings has been published by Burke and Cherry, 319–26.

³⁰Covarrubias, 179^v: "el *retrete* donde tienen las señoras sus porcelanas, barros, vidrios, y otras cosas curiosas." I am using the translation provided in Schroth, 2001, 13. For a discussion of the functions of these *camarines*, specifically the Duke of Lerma's, see Schroth and Baer; Schroth, 2001. *Ibid.*, 13–14, notes that these rooms were much larger than Covarrubias's definition implies, and their function was to display valuable objects, especially glass and earthenware. Solre's *camarín* must have been similar to Lerma's in size, since it allowed the display of paintings such as Van der Hamen's.

³¹Covarrubias, 77^t, defines *aparador* as "the *credenza* or table where the service tableware is displayed, and the objects of gold and silver all together are also called *aparador*." As Jordan, 2006, 175; and Cherry, 1999, 176, suggest, it is possible that these items were actual objects displayed in Solre's house.

³²Cherry, 1999, 176, has suggested that the words used to describe the way they were displayed in Solre's inventory, "a lo largo de una puerta" ("flanking a doorway"), could mean that they were mounted on the doors. Jordan, 2006, 172, also believes the doors led to this second room.



Figure 3. Juan van der Hamen y León. *Still Life with Vase of Flowers and a Dog*, ca. 1625. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Album / Art Resource, NY.

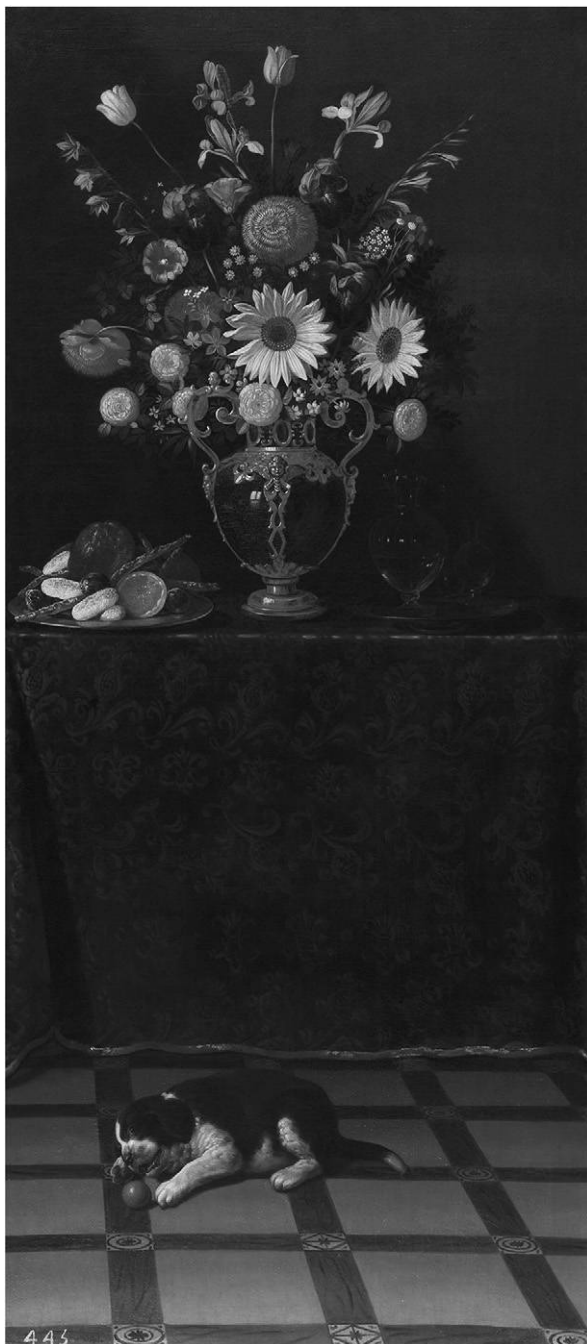


Figure 4. Juan van der Hamen y León. *Still Life with Vase of Flowers and a Puppy*, ca. 1625.
© Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado.



Figure 5. Juan van der Hamen y León. *Vertumnus and Pomona*, 1626. Madrid, Colección de Banco de España.



Figure 6. Juan van der Hamen y León. *Glycera*, 1627. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Album / Art Resource, NY.

HOSPITALITY AND CONSUMPTION

In addition to Van der Hamen's allegories, the Galería Mayor included a wide variety of Dutch and Flemish pictures that, following the decoration of the first gallery, or *camarín*, invoked the theme of hospitality: hunting scenes, still lifes, and especially a large painting on copper, *Banquet of the Gods* by an unidentified Flemish artist, underlined Solre's hosting responsibilities and, at the same time, presented Flemish visitors with familiar images of abundance.³³ Even more compellingly, with their close to life-size format, depiction of sophisticated foods on display, and strategic placement between the two galleries, Van der Hamen's trompe l'oeil still lifes functioned as visual reminders of the hospitality that was so central to Solre's political role in Madrid. As objects that not only depicted commodities, but were also themselves commodities, these paintings also manifest how the elite's consumerism stimulated and ultimately enabled practices of aristocratic hospitality at court.

An exchange not mediated by money, hospitality had been traditionally expected of the aristocracy. For example, in earlier times it was customary for landlords to open their country houses and share their tables with people of different social classes, which was also an obvious sign of magnificence. When landed elites started to settle in urban centers, new codes of civility and patterns of consumption evolved. By the seventeenth century, elite hospitality was dependent upon the city's commerce and was restricted to members of the same class. Thus, rather than sharing rustic foodstuffs with their lower-class subjects, the urban nobility entertained each other with the consumption and display of luxurious wares.³⁴

As the center of administrative and governmental functions, Madrid was the site of many political, religious, and social events that involved the exercise of this new urban hospitality: investitures, proclamations, royal entries, and canonizations that required feeding and entertaining visitors. As historians of the city have pointed out, such ostentatious public displays of abundance constituted one of the most characteristic features of courtly life in the first half of the seventeenth century, and were central to the image of splendor that became associated with the city and, in the 1620s, with the new monarch, Philip IV.³⁵ Moreover, once it was established as the permanent site of the Spanish

³³Burke and Cherry, 320–21.

³⁴Heal has developed these ideas regarding the English context. For a more recent account, also within the English context, see Smuts.

³⁵As Feros, 63, puts it: "While the austerity and reform program ordered by Philip IV and designed by Olivares and his collaborators was genuine, and did achieve some of its goals, a personal monarchy of the Spanish type could not exist without ostentation and luxurious consumption, with the public representation of the monarch in fiestas, processions, dances, and masquerades." See also Ezquerro Abadía, 5.

court, Madrid also became the national center for the elite's extravagant needs, which included exotic foodstuffs, expensive clothes, shoes and jewelry, carriages, furnitures, tapestries, and paintings. A number of recent publications thus picture seventeenth-century Madrid as a protocapitalist society comparable to the better-known (and more studied) cases of Amsterdam, Paris, or London.³⁶

The aristocratic banquet exemplifies how in seventeenth-century Madrid this nascent consumer culture overlapped with practices of courtly hospitality. Covarrubias's definition of *banquet* as "a feast, banquet, and splendid meal, abundant in delicacies, and rich in pomp" emphasizes the lavishness expected of any banquet's presentation.³⁷ Other written accounts from the period reveal that banquets were never limited to the display of food, but also exhibited a wide array of other commodities.³⁸ Most often, these were the accessories to serve, present, and contain foods and beverages, like the cups, *búcaros* (Portuguese and colonial earthenware jars), and gilded trays in Juan Bautista de Espinosa's *Still Life* (1624) (fig. 7).³⁹ In a 1622 *relación* describing a banquet offered by the Marquis of Astorga, the royal chronicler Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza draws attention to the spectacular character of the event by describing three large *aparadores*, each showcasing gold and silver, Venetian glass, and *búcaros*, respectively, all of them objects from different geographical areas with varied connections to the empire. As Almansa y Mendoza further reports, the presentation of these objects was complemented with "tableware, hangings, tapestries, canopies, chairs, beds, paintings and *camarines* [the small rooms described above]" that "foreigners from all nations" stopped by to admire because "word had spread through the court and the house was on the way to the [royal] palace."⁴⁰

³⁶The classic article on urban contexts as centers for conspicuous consumption is Fisher. For the specific case of Madrid, see Amelang; Ringrose, 1973 and 1983.

³⁷Covarrubias, 119: "un festín, convite y comida espléndida, abundante de manjares y rica en aparato."

³⁸For a discussion of the typical presentation of banquets in Spanish courtly circles, see Pérez Samper, esp. 63–64. I wish to thank Carolyn Nadeau for her useful bibliographic suggestions on this matter.

³⁹The *búcaros* depicted in Espinosa's still life have been identified as *búcaros de indias*, and the gilded trays have also been identified as colonial examples. For a discussion of this painting in terms of these colonial objects, see Phipps et al., 217–20; Codding, 101–04. The presence of *búcaros* as coveted commodities among the nobility during this period has received much attention in recent years: see Seseña; García Sáiz; and, most recently, Hamann.

⁴⁰Quoted in Simón Díaz, 1982, 215: "El menaje, colgaduras, tapicerías, doseles, sillas, camas, pinturas, y camarines"; "y que la entraron a ver (como se derramó por la Corte la noticia, y la casa está al paso de Palacio) estrangeros de todas naciones." About Almansa y Mendoza, see Borrego; Ettinghausen.



Figure 7. Juan Bautista de Espinosa. *Still Life with Silver-Gilt Salvers*, 1624. Colección Masaveu. Photograph copyright: Fundación María Cristina Masaveu Peterson, 2013. Photograph by Marcos Morilla.

As Fernando Bouza has shown, that so many of these *relaciones* documenting banquets circulated during this period indicates “a decisive willingness to ensure their diffusion” and their goal of “forging and transmitting the image of royal liberality and magnificence that was so important in the construction of the king’s rhetoric.”⁴¹ A pair of still lifes that Van der Hamen painted for the Marquis of Leganés (figs. 8 and 9), who, like Solre, had political ties with the Southern Netherlands, seem to give pictorial form to these written descriptions.⁴² Their stepped format, an innovation Van der Hamen introduced, effectively isolates and calls attention to the objects depicted, which are further enhanced by the strong contrast of light and dark. As Sarah Schroth and Ronni Baer have convincingly argued, this format may have originated within the context of the aristocratic *camarín*, which often included

⁴¹Bouza, 1995, 191.

⁴²About the activities of Leganés as collector, see Crawford Volk; more recently, Pérez Preciado, 2008.

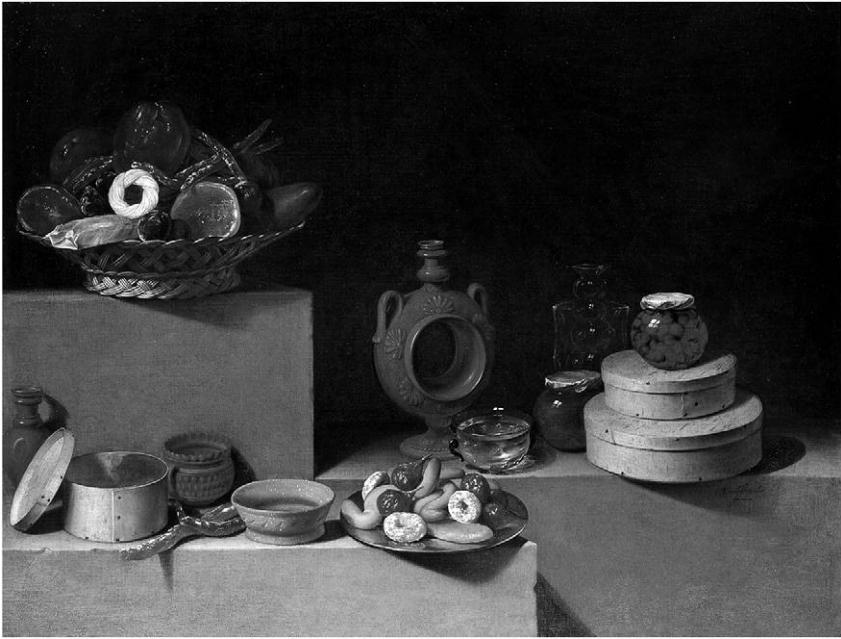


Figure 8. Juan van der Hamen y León. *Still Life with Sweets and Pottery*, 1627. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

built-in steps, or *gradas*, for display, like those in Van der Hamen's pictures.⁴³ Like the *gradas* described in Almansa y Mendoza's *relación*, these paintings showcase the material riches of a variety of countries: a German *Loch* (ring flask) and Mexican *búcaros* in the *Still Life with Sweets and Pottery* (1627) (fig. 8), and a Flemish-style bouquet of flowers (including expensive tulips) and a Wan-Li porcelain dish in the *Still Life with Artichokes, Cherries, and Vase of Flowers* (1627) (fig. 9).⁴⁴ Contrasting with the written accounts, these still lifes were not widely circulated, but they may have functioned in similar ways, doubling the grandeur of courtly hospitality while giving it an iconic form that could be easily remembered. Considering Van der Hamen's still lifes within the context of these *relaciones* also offers evidence of the artist's interest in the competition between painting and poetry. Through pictorial means, Van der Hamen captures at once the uniqueness of each object and the far-reaching variety of the whole ensemble,

⁴³See Schroth and Baer, 287. This interesting theory supports the connection between hospitality and display that I am discussing here. For a broader discussion of some of these items that were used for the display of objects and their relation to Spanish still life, see Portús, 2009, esp. 172–78.

⁴⁴The porcelain has been identified in Jordan, 2006, 191. Schroth, 2001, 14, notes that in Lerma's *camarín*, "foreign ware is always placed in close proximity to native ware," and identifies a similar pattern in Van der Hamen's *Still Life with Sweets and Pottery*.



Figure 9. Juan van der Hamen y León. *Still Life with Artichokes, Cherries, and Vase of Flowers*, 1627. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Art Resource, NY.

offering a more restrained visual parallel to the hyperbolic and metonymic rhetoric typical of *relación* writing. It is tempting to consider the possibility that through this visual glorification of objects (perhaps synecdoche of Spain's imperial heritage), Van der Hamen's still lifes may have contributed to the image of austere grandeur promoted by Philip IV and best exemplified in Velázquez's early portraits of the monarch.⁴⁵

A 1633 *relación* involving Solre also highlights the role that elements of display, specifically paintings, played in celebrations of hospitality at court. The document describes a ceremony in which Solre invested D. Juan Baptista de Capua, prince of Caspuli, with the Order of the Golden Fleece, the chivalric order most closely associated with the Spanish monarchy, and one with meaningful connections to Flanders.⁴⁶ The event, which culminated with "a

⁴⁵For this quality of Velázquez's portraits, see especially Brown, 1986; more recently, Bouza, 2013, who also discusses the competition between painting and poetry for the purposes of royal propaganda. A discussion of Dutch still lifes as synecdoches of the Dutch market and empire appears in Foster, 256.

⁴⁶The Order of the Golden Fleece was founded in Bruges by Philip III, Duke of Burgundy, in 1430. Starting with Charles V, it appears as one of the only royal attributes in portraits of the Spanish kings throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

splendid and holy banquet,” took place in Solre’s home, which the writer of the *relación* describes as having a gallery “overlooking the garden and highly adorned with chests and excellent paintings,” most likely the Galería Mayor, which was decorated with Van der Hamen’s allegories and the copper of the *Banquet of the Gods*.⁴⁷ With their suggestive trompe l’oeil effects, Van der Hamen’s two still lifes anticipated the elaborate feasts that Solre regularly offered in the Galería Mayor. Like the pictures Van der Hamen painted for Leganés, the still lifes for Solre present a fascinating catalogue of international luxury goods that probably were displayed in the same room as Van der Hamen’s pictures: expensive green damasks, vases of green Venetian glass with copper mounting from Southern Germany, expensive flowers arranged in the Flemish manner, an elegant bronze and silver clock, a cooler to chill the wine, and the much-coveted pastries.

As has been noted, the clock in one of the still lifes is approaching five o’clock, an appropriate time to receive a visit and offer a *merienda*, or afternoon snack.⁴⁸ Indeed, in addition to the lavish banquets for special occasions described above, less elaborate shows of hospitality were routinely practiced in aristocratic homes at court. These included the so-called *visitas*, courtesy visits among the elites in which, as illustrated in novels, plays, and memoirs from the period, the display of goods was expected. According to the diary of Cardinal Francesco Barberini’s secretary Cassiano dal Pozzo, the prelate (who, significantly, chose Van der Hamen as his portraitist over Velázquez during his visit to Spain in 1626) spent much of his time paying visits to the wives and mothers of Spanish Grandees.⁴⁹ Several decades later, in the *Mémoires de la cour d’Espagne* (ca. 1690), attributed to Madame d’Aulnoy, the author describes how in one of these exclusive visits “eighteen servants carried great silver trays filled with dried sweets, all wrapped in golden paper.”⁵⁰ As art theorist Francisco Pacheco saw it, Van der Hamen’s ability to depict such delicacies constituted the artist’s main pictorial achievement.⁵¹ Their ubiquitous presence in the artist’s still lifes also

⁴⁷Hervart, 8: “Dio una comida muy Esplendida y Santa.” *Ibid.*, 3: “que mira al jardín, muy adornada de escritorios y pinturas excelentes.”

⁴⁸For the identification of these objects, see Jordan, 2006, 172. For the significance of the time on the clock, see Burke and Cherry, 320.

⁴⁹The custom of the aristocratic *visita*, especially among women, is discussed in Deleito y Piñuela, 1946, 32–38, 102–07. For the *visitas* performed by Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1626, see Simón Díaz, 1980, 179–80. The diaries have been compiled and translated in Anselmi. For Van der Hamen’s portrait of Barberini, see Simón Díaz, 1980, 208; and, especially, Jordan, 2006, 203–08.

⁵⁰Díez Borque, 100. About the disputed authorship of the *Mémoires*, see M. Á. Vega.

⁵¹Pacheco, 512.

points to Madrid nobility's obsessive and costly taste for sweets during the period.⁵²

PICTURING HOSPITALITY: VAN DER HAMEN'S
VERTUMNUS AND POMONA AND THE REALITIES OF
MADRID'S ECONOMY

Despite depicting expensive commodities, Van der Hamen's paintings forego the emphasis on consumption that many scholars have seen as fundamental to Dutch still life, and instead picture delicacies and fine tableware as objects of display.⁵³ Specifically, the peeled lemons, empty oysters, and partially consumed pies so typical of Dutch still lifes yield to unwrapped sweets, tightly closed jars, and unconsumed fruits in Van der Hamen's pictures. There is, in sum, a sense of distance, a sacralization of the object that is not present in Dutch still lifes from the same period. In the aforementioned still lifes from the collection of the Marquis of Leganés, this sense of order and display is heightened by the stepped format. Similarly, in the still lifes for Solre, display itself is emphasized as the paintings' subject by means of the carefully arranged *aparadores*, crucial elements of the early modern banquet in which flowers, fruits, and beverages were presented. This focus on visual display and, at the same time, the absence of any sign of consumption draw attention to two contradictory but interconnected social values in early modern Spain: the outward display of wealth and the concealment of the economic sources that make it possible.

In other words, whereas the presence of consumption in Dutch still lifes reflects a culture that takes pride in trade and commerce, its absence in Van der Hamen's still lifes emphasizes the Spanish aristocracy's emphasis on outward display and rejection of commerce and labor as unfit for nobility.⁵⁴

⁵²The craze for sweets among Madrid's nobility is discussed in Deleito y Piñuela, 1942, 168–69.

⁵³This essential distinction has been commonly observed in previous literature. See, for example, Jordan, 2006, 117; Pérez Sánchez, 42. The emphasis on consumption and functionality of Dutch still life has been the subject of many studies. See, for example, Barthes; Foster; Bryson, 96–135. My own interpretation of Van der Hamen's still lifes have also benefited from Hochstrasser's work on Dutch still life and global trade.

⁵⁴It should be noted that this mentality was not always matched in reality. As MacKay, 87, notes: "Recent studies have confirmed that nobles throughout Spain were engaged in estate management, farming, commerce, transportation, manufacturing and banking, much of it far more profitable and productive than they had been given credit for." A good example of this appears in a 1621 document from the Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte, which denounces the existence of clandestine pantries within the elite's urban households. Most noblemen, the writer observes, "have pantries in their households, where they sell *cosas de regalo* [poultry, rabbit, beef, and wine] at excessive prices." Reproduced in "La Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte a Felipe IV," 211.

It is in this specific sense that Van der Hamen's still lifes give visual form to the practice of aristocratic hospitality while implicitly denying the economic realities derived from the production and consumption of luxury goods. As David Ringrose's classic analysis makes clear, despite its administrative and political functions, seventeenth-century Madrid was chiefly a city of consumption that exploited the wealth of the empire without productively contributing to it.⁵⁵ This situation did not go unnoticed at the time, and in the many "treatises against noble excess" that proliferated from the late 1620s onward, *arbitristas* (political advisers) lamented the nobility's tendency to live off rents that they did not invest productively but instead spent superfluously.⁵⁶ As Elizabeth Leffeldt puts it, "despite the occasional issuance of sumptuary laws and attempts to curb conspicuous consumption, the reigns of Philip III and Philip IV were marked by an extravagance that some perceived as decadent."⁵⁷

Indeed, the increasing demand for basic and luxury products that resulted from the court's presence in the city and, along with it, the exorbitant growth of its population had devastating consequences for the local economy, inflating prices and depressing Castilian agriculture.⁵⁸ Moreover, this local crisis was aggravated by a national one in which inflation became widespread. Starting precisely in 1627, shortly after Van der Hamen produced the still lifes and allegories for Solre, the negative effects of the Count-Duke of Olivares's reform policies (increased taxation and borrowing, and the issue of copper as fiscal device) met with serious harvest failures that "quickly developed into the most intense subsistence crisis for over thirty years."⁵⁹ Despite the celebrated military victories of the previous years, by 1627 Spain's economic fortunes had taken a bleak turn.⁶⁰

In this context, the wealth and urban sophistication foregrounded in Van der Hamen's still lifes for Solre can be seen as staging an elaborate visual fiction for visitors. On the other hand, Van der Hamen's two allegories in the Galería Mayor,

⁵⁵Ringrose, 1983, 4. For a more recent account of Madrid's economy, see Amelang.

⁵⁶About the writings of *arbitristas* during this period, see Gordon; MacKay, 72–108; Elliott, 1989, 241–61; Leffeldt.

⁵⁷Leffeldt, 487.

⁵⁸See Ringrose, 1973.

⁵⁹See Stradling, 69; Elliott, 1977, 330–31.

⁶⁰The year 1625, in particular, had been one of great military accomplishments, including the surrender of Breda, the recovery of Bahía, and the defeat of the English at Cádiz, among other victories. This *annus mirabilis* was commemorated with the famous series of battle paintings, including Velázquez's *Surrender of Breda*, for the Hall of Realms in the Buen Retiro palace. For these military victories, see Elliott, 1988, 226–43. For a classic study of the battle paintings, see Ellitott and Brown, 161–92.

which take as their theme the bounty of nature, justify and legitimize this illusion of prosperity.⁶¹ In particular, the allegory commonly known as *Vertumnus and Pomona* complemented the still lifes thematically by representing raw fruits and vegetables as gifts of nature herself. In the painting (fig. 5), which seems to illustrate an episode from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the goddess of orchards and fruit trees, Pomona, sits beside an overflowing cornucopia and offers a fruit to the god of changing seasons, Vertumnus, who in the story attempts to win Pomona's love by appearing to her in different disguises.⁶²

In Van der Hamen's version of the myth, Pomona, dressed in expensive and seemingly contemporary (although generic) fashion, resembles a seventeenth-century noblewoman, while a rustic-looking Vertumnus, wearing a simple brown garment, appears in the guise of a laborer, like those from Madrid's hinterlands.⁶³ This social distinction is emphasized through pictorial means: Pomona's idealized ivory skin (possibly modeled after Antonio Tempesta's 1613 engraving of a *Female Head in Profile* after Michelangelo) contrasts vividly with Vertumnus's more naturalistic portrayal, in which his dark and rugged features (likely modeled from life) are given prominence.⁶⁴

As Eric Jan Sluijter notes, this was "the most frequently depicted mythological subject in the Northern Netherlands."⁶⁵ It was also extremely popular in the Southern Netherlands. Given Solre's Flemish origins, it is thus likely that he or Van der Hamen had access to Netherlandish representations of the myth in print. The disposition of the fruits and vegetables in Jan Saenredam's engraving after Abraham Bloemaert's *Vertumnus and Pomona* (1605) (fig. 10) resembles the way they appear in Van der Hamen's picture (where, as described above, they work as a frame). However, both images are otherwise fundamentally different. As was typical in Dutch versions of the

⁶¹The opposition nature/artifice, emerging from the juxtaposition of Van der Hamen's allegories and still lifes for Solre, recalls the opposed character of two descriptions of ancient *xenia* (the Greek term for "hospitality," but also the term describing paintings of foods) that were included in Philostratus's *Imagines*: one of them described a painting with raw fruits and vegetables (book 1, section 31); the other emphasized the artificiality of elaborate dishes (book 2, section 26). As Bryson, 29, suggests: "The two *xenia* pictures function as type and antitype. Two opposing conceptions of prosperity, from the idyll of nature unadorned, pre-cultural, prior to cultural difference and hierarchy through to the portrayal of over-refinement, vitiation of taste, and sharp social division."

⁶²There seems to be no doubt that *Pomona and Vertumnus* represents one of the episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which had been translated into Spanish since the first decades of the sixteenth century, and must have been known to the artist. Ovid, 2002, 425–27; 430 (book 14, lines 623–97). The allegory has been traditionally identified with this theme.

⁶³Vertumnus's attire resembles that of other working types in Spanish Baroque painting, like, for example, the drunkards in Velázquez's *Los Borrachos* (1628–29). I wish to thank Amanda Wunder for her thoughts on Pomona's costume.

⁶⁴The possible connection with Tempesta's engraving has been suggested in Jordan, 2006, 181.

⁶⁵Sluijter, 71.



Figure 11. Peter Paul Rubens. *Vertumnus and Pomona*, ca. 1615. Spain, private collection. Courtesy of Professor Matías Díaz Padrón.

collection since 1623, and perhaps accessible to Van der Hamen.⁶⁶ Departing from the traditional iconography, in Rubens's picture Vertumnus reveals himself as an attractive youth and convinces Pomona to surrender to him.

Van der Hamen downplays such erotic connotations. Not only is his Pomona fully dressed and placed in a strict, almost rigid, profile, but, most significantly, she is accompanied by a coarse laborer who kneels in a humble and subordinate manner. Although unremarked upon, Van der Hamen's choice is highly significant. First, representing Vertumnus as a laborer was very unusual. The print illustrating the episode in Jorge de Bustamante's *Transformaciones* (1595) (fig. 12) — one of the most popular translations of Ovid's work in Spanish — represents Vertumnus as was customary, as an old woman.⁶⁷ Second, Van der Hamen's Pomona lacks one of her most distinctive attributes: the sickle that, as in Saenredam's and Rubens's examples, signals her occupation as gardener and farmer. Van der Hamen's innovative retelling of the story thus effectively transforms Pomona into a more leisurely figure who contrasts sharply with the roughness of the kneeling man. The

⁶⁶The Archduchess Isabella of Austria sent Rubens's painting as a present to Queen Isabel of Bourbon, first wife of Philip IV. See Díaz Padrón, 11.

⁶⁷Even those examples that represent Vertumnus as a laborer, like Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen and Pieter Coeck van Aelst's tapestry series in the Spanish royal collection (1545–50), depict him in a lofty, almost aristocratic manner. Van der Hamen's deviation from the typical iconography has been observed (though not examined) in Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005b, 366. For a discussion of the Spanish translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see Welles, 4. The illustration included here is from a Latin edition of 1580 with identical illustrations to Jorge de Bustamante's 1595 *Transformaciones*.



Figure 12. Virgil Solis. Printed illustration of Vertumnus and Pomona, from *Picta poesis Ovidiana: Thesaurus propemodum omnium fabularum poeticarum, Fausti Sabaei Brixiani, aliorumq[ue] clarorum virorum . . . tam veterum, quàm recentium, epigrammatis expositarum*, page 154. Frankfurt, 1580. Courtesy of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

subtle resistance of Saenredam's and Rubens's Pomonas (their bodies slightly turned away from Vertumnus) also contrasts with Van der Hamen's more receptive figure. In fact, the inclusion of the cornucopia, paired with her gesture of offering, suggests that Pomona may be perceived as the personification of nature's bounty.

This aspect of Van der Hamen's allegory seems to be informed by the pictorial tradition of Flemish allegories of the seasons, which typically stress the plenty of nature. An *Allegory of Summer* (ca. 1590) by Flemish artist Frederik van Valckenborch (ca. 1570–1623) (fig. 13), for instance, bears a striking thematic resemblance with Van der Hamen's painting. It depicts what appears to be a noblewoman surrounded by baskets of fruits and vegetables and seated next to a man who is lifting a basket of fruits. In the background, divided between laborers filling up baskets to the right and idealized pleasure gardens to the left, nature's bounty allows for work and leisure, laborers and noblemen, to coexist harmoniously.⁶⁸

⁶⁸Honig, 1998b, 138, briefly discusses this painting in the context of Flemish images of the market that appropriated conventions of traditional seasonal series to make market imagery more appealing to aristocratic audiences.



Figure 13. Frederik van Valckenborch. *Allegory of Summer*, ca. 1590. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Like Van Valckenborch's allegory, Van der Hamen's *Pomona* presents abundance as the result of nature's generosity rather than as the result of labor. This is emphasized by the sheer number of depicted fruits and vegetables that spill from her cornucopia, including not only grapes, cherries, lemons, pears, melons, peaches, pomegranates, cardoons, and cucumbers, but also American species such as tomatoes, peppers, and various types of squashes.⁶⁹ The specificity of this produce suggests that Van der Hamen may have represented the species that Solre cultivated in the garden of his house on Alcalá Street and in the *huerta* (vegetable garden) he owned on the banks of the Manzanares river, which, along with the representation of Vertumnus and Pomona as current figures, bring the myth into the context of Solre's home and, more broadly, of seventeenth-century Madrid.⁷⁰ More significantly, this unusual treatment of the ancient theme creates a new meaning for the picture, which can here be read as an idealistic portrayal of labor and aristocracy united under the aegis of nature.

Steven Orso has suggested that in its unusual conflation of mythological subject and contemporary lowly figures, Van der Hamen's *Vertumnus and Pomona* may have predated and possibly inspired Velázquez's inclusion of peasant types in his

⁶⁹The American species are identified in López Terrada, 155.

⁷⁰As Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005a, 136, have shown, the 1638 inventory of Solre's properties mentions citrus trees and other fruit and vegetable plants. For a discussion of Solre's second residency, see *ibid.*, 135–36.

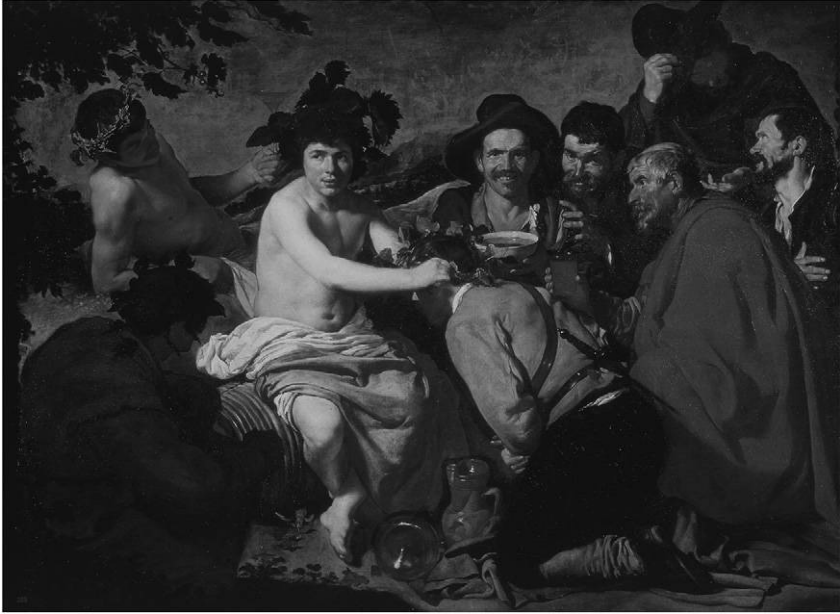


Figure 14. Diego Velázquez. *Los Borrachos*, 1628–29. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Alfred Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.

rendition of the myth of Bacchus in *Los Borrachos* (*The Feast of Bacchus*, late 1628 or early 1629) (fig. 14), which he interprets “as an edifying commentary on the kingship of Spain,” with the “god’s gift of wine” alluding to “the king’s duty to see to the well-being of his subjects.”⁷¹ As others have noted, the implications of Velázquez’s peculiar composition are much more complex.⁷² Nonetheless, both paintings could indeed be understood in the light of the valorization of labor and productivity that Philip IV and the Count-Duke of Olivares promoted as remedies against the country’s economic decline during those years.⁷³ More specifically, for Madrileños the peasant-like figure of Vertumnus in Van der Hamen’s painting may have brought to mind the humble peasant San Isidro, who came to embody

⁷¹Orso, 111. The rivalry between Van der Hamen and Velázquez is also discussed in Jordan, 2006, esp. 203–08, and 216–23; and, most recently, in Tiffany, 136–39.

⁷²See Umberger.

⁷³For instance, in a speech pronounced to the Council of Castile in 1627, Philip IV said that the “miserable vassals of Castile” are the ones who “have made us masters of all we possess, and who preserve us among them as the head and principal member of the whole body of the Monarchy.” Noted in Orso, 111. See MacKay for an in-depth study of labor in early modern Spain.

the ideal of agricultural labor and, as patron saint of the city since 1622, was closely associated with Madrid's identity.⁷⁴

HOSPITALITY AND THE ILLUSION OF ABUNDANCE

As historians and literary critics have noted, the story of Isidro (an eleventh-century laborer from Madrid) resonated with the social and economic dynamics of Madrid and its court in the first decades of the seventeenth century, where, as Elizabeth Wright puts it, "a small elite lived from rents that the villa's hinterlands yielded, at the same time that masses of impoverished immigrants struggled to earn subsistence wages." According to the story, rewritten during the sixteenth century on the basis of a thirteenth-century codex, while working the lands of the nobleman Iván de Vargas, Isidro performed a series of miracles that involved agricultural production, resolving the initial tensions between landowner and laborer and picturing their relationship in highly idealized terms.⁷⁵ Within the context of Madrid in the 1620s, and especially coinciding with the beginning of Philip IV's austere reign, the story of Isidro thus not only served to glorify labor, but also to reestablish the court as its natural beneficiary. A painting Van der Hamen made on the occasion of Isidro's canonization in 1622 (fig. 15) suggests that, as most painters working in Madrid during these years, he might have actively participated in the design of the saint's festivities.⁷⁶ In the painting, which represents Isidro with his customary working dress, Van der Hamen connects the saint with the court by representing him against a landscape with an austere stone palace in the manner of the Escorial.⁷⁷

As several *relaciones* — including that of Lope de Vega (1622) — indicate, the connection between Isidro and the court was exalted during the festivities for the saint's canonization, including elements that emphasized the themes of

⁷⁴As Lehfeldt, 473, has analyzed, the seventeenth-century discourse on Spain's decadence criticized "the idleness that led men to turn away from virtuous labor," and "Isidro, then, was the ideal male peasant who embodied the agricultural virtue that many believed would provide the key to Spain's recovery." The parallel between the process of canonization of San Isidro and the strengthening of Madrid as court and capital of the Spanish monarchy has been discussed in Río Barredo; and Wright. I wish to thank Laura Bass for drawing my attention to the significance of Isidro here.

⁷⁵Wright, 226.

⁷⁶See Jordan, 2006, 63; Mulcahy, 78. For an account of some of the artists involved in the festivities, see Antonio Sáenz.

⁷⁷A number of paintings with the same subject have survived. One of the most interesting, actually depicting the Alcázar, is a version by the court artist Bartolomé González. This painting is illustrated in *Madrid pintado*, 41. For the iconography of Isidro's dress in visual representations, see Orihuela Maeso.



Figure 15. Juan van der Hamen y León. *San Isidro*, ca. 1622. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland.

hospitality and bounty. For example, the commercial Plaza de la Cebada (where laborers from the hinterland sold their grain) was temporarily transformed into a flower garden and fruit orchard; and Ceres appeared in a triumphal cart

drawing fruits, vegetables, and flowers from her cornucopia, while two laborers were represented hoeing the land.⁷⁸ Just as in Van der Hamen's *Pomona*, the bounty of nature was presented as the result of the harmonic juxtaposition of rural labor and nobility.

With their idyllic undertones, Van der Hamen's allegory and Isidro's ceremonies idealized a reality in which there were in fact multiple tensions and conflicts. Not without irony, in his *Relación*, Lope recounts how Madrid's impoverished crowds quickly despoiled the fruits from the plaza, leaving little to the birds who were fooled by the orchard's bountiful appearance.⁷⁹ Evoking the artistic topoi of Zeuxis and other painters of antiquity whose illusionism deceived spectators, Lope's anecdote thus highlights the illusory and deceptive nature of the whole display. The same deception was also at work in Solre's gallery — in this case, quite literally, through Van der Hamen's trompe l'oeil still lifes, which meant to surprise the viewer with their deceptive re-creation of the trappings of hospitality, but also through their juxtaposition with Van der Hamen's *Pomona*. Its message of abundance as the result of nature, rather than labor or commerce, visually validated the presence of the commodities displayed in the still lifes (damasks, glasses, flowers, etc.), presented here as crucial to the exercise of aristocratic hospitality.

Not surprisingly, Van der Hamen's still lifes make no reference to the economic effects of the nobility's demand for such luxuries. In addition to inflation and serious food shortages, one of the greatest economic concerns during these years was what some perceived as an excessive reliance on commodities produced abroad. As José Pellicer de Tovar lamented in 1621, this dependence on foreign goods "caused inactivity and created idlers in Spain."⁸⁰ More alarmingly, these foreign commodities were paid for with imported American silver which, as a consequence, "immediately (went) to foreign kingdoms."⁸¹ Thus the Venetian glasses, Flemish-style bouquets of flowers, and (American?) silver objects that are visually glorified in Van der Hamen's pictures for Solre could, paradoxically, be perceived as the cause of the

⁷⁸L. Vega, 1622, n.p.: "In the earth carriage there was a mountain that signified stability, and on top of it there was a throne with a lavishly dressed (female) figure; she held a cornucopia from which she drew flowers and fruits that she spread over the people, and at the carriage's front, there were two feigned peasants hoeing."

⁷⁹Ibid.: "Every kind of fruit hung from the trees; such was the variety that, just as in the ancient fables the Gods punished Prometheus for stealing the celestial fire, here they could punish the farmer who created this garden, for stealing the fruits from nature. But when the sun rose, the birds, who had been fooled into living there for that brief period of time, didn't find any branches left for the night: such was the despoil of the masses."

⁸⁰Cited in Lehfeldt, 473.

⁸¹The Royal Council of Castile lamented this circumstance in 1617, as noted in Hamann, 18.

“ruin” of Spain’s greatness.⁸² By focusing on the fiction of hospitality as an exchange not mediated by money, Van der Hamen’s paintings for Solre effectively transmitted a message of abundance that excluded not only the great strains placed on Solre’s personal finances, but also those of the court, the city, and the country as a whole.

A CONFLICTING ARTISTIC IDENTITY:
VAN DER HAMEN’S *GLYCERA*

Van der Hamen’s still lifes for Solre not only reflect and re-create Madrid’s elites’ conspicuous consumption under the guise of nature’s bounty and the offerings of hospitality, they also both display and disavow the labor invested in their production, which paradoxically was the aspect that signaled the paintings’ monetary value.⁸³ With this in mind, Van der Hamen’s second allegory, *Glycera* (fig. 6), traditionally known as *Offering to Flora*, may be considered. This work underscores how Van der Hamen’s artistic identity navigated between the spheres of nobility and commercial profit. This painting has traditionally been thought to represent the goddess of flowers, and, in a broader sense, to be an allegory of Spring.⁸⁴ A wide variety of carefully arranged flowers in the immediate foreground frame the depiction of a natural setting that has been rigorously shaped by art. A statue of an ancient god presides over the space, and the *treillage* (latticework used to support climbing plants) evokes the shape of a classical vault. This representation of nature tamed, controlled, and transformed by human intervention declares the painting’s status as skillful artifice.⁸⁵ These effects of artifice are further underscored by the woman’s outward gaze at the viewer, as she points not only at the improbable array of blooms, but also at the artist’s signature on the rock in the lower-right corner.⁸⁶

The inclusion of Van der Hamen’s signature reinforces the recent suggestion that this work might be informed by Pliny’s account of Pausias and Glycera.⁸⁷

⁸²Ibid. See also Elliott, 1977, 7–26.

⁸³The higher prices paid for paintings with a more finished surface suggest that tight, polished brushwork could raise a painting’s monetary value. For a discussion of this issue in relation to Van der Hamen’s portraits, see Jordan, 2006, 152; Cherry, 1999, 154.

⁸⁴For this interpretation, see especially Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005b, 369.

⁸⁵As Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005a, 135–36, have shown, Solre was a lover of artificial re-creations of nature.

⁸⁶This was not an uncommon practice for Van der Hamen. A similar signature appears in one of the religious works he created for the Royal Convent of the Encarnación in Madrid, the *Adoration of the Apocalyptic Lamb* (1625). Here, too, the importance of this commission explains the prominence of the signature.

⁸⁷Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005b, 372.



Figure 16. Peter Paul Rubens (and Osias Beert). *Pausias and Glycera*, ca. 1612–15. Collection of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida, Florida State University.

According to the story, after falling in love with Glycera, the inventor of the flower garland, Pausias began to paint flowers and created a famous portrait of his beloved seated and wearing a garland of flowers, just as the female figure in Van der Hamen's allegory.⁸⁸ In Rubens's version of this subject (fig. 16), Glycera holds a wreath of flowers and looks up toward Pausias, who holds the portrait of his beloved. In contrast, in Van der Hamen's picture, Pausias is not represented, but his presence is implied: first, the distinctive facial features of the woman suggest that this is a portrait, and thus could be read as Pausias's famous portrait

⁸⁸As Jordan, 2006, 200, notes, Pliny's *Natural History* had been translated into Spanish by Jerónimo Gómez de Huerta, personal physician of Philip IV and famous naturalist who, significantly, had been portrayed by Van der Hamen as part of his portraits of illustrious men of letters.

of *Glycera*.⁸⁹ Second, *Glycera*'s pointing gesture and outward gaze direct the viewer's attention to the painted flowers, which became not only Pausias's specialty, but also Van der Hamen's. In other words, in this picture the female figure can be understood as *Glycera*, and Van der Hamen — famous flower painter and the author of her portrait — can be seen as taking the place of Pausias. It should be remembered that, in addition to still life, portraiture constituted Van der Hamen's main artistic focus and source of income.⁹⁰

Van der Hamen's identification with Pausias also celebrates the conventional praise of the artist's power to surpass nature. With their fantastic colors and intricate shapes, flowers constituted highly artificial products of nature that, like shells, were admired for resembling man-made objects.⁹¹ This sense of artifice was heightened when different flowers were artfully arranged in sensuous bouquets, like those represented in Van der Hamen's two still lifes. Following a well-established Flemish tradition, Van der Hamen has depicted radial bouquets of flowers that would bloom at different times of the year, including the artificially manipulated and highly valued white-and-red-striped tulip. Solre's inventory reveals that on the walls of the room where the still lifes were displayed there were also devices that held bouquets of real flowers, so that nature embellished and nature simulated could be measured against each other.⁹²

This playful competition between reality and illusion would also have been at work in Van der Hamen's *Glycera*. The gallery in which the painting was displayed had views onto a garden that probably resembled that in Van der Hamen's picture. In fact, Solre owned thirteen bronze figures of Roman emperors, which decorated his gardens, not unlike the marble sculpture represented in the allegory.⁹³ *A View of the Gardens of the Duke of Lerma's Palace* (ca. 1608) (fig. 17) also depicts this kind of aristocratic garden, which was an integral part of many elite houses in this part of the city, as can be seen in Teixeira's 1656 map of Madrid (fig. 18).⁹⁴ Moreover, flowers like those depicted in Van der Hamen's picture also decorated Solre's garden. As Felix Scheffler and Luis Ramón Laca have shown, Solre (like many Flemings) was a flower enthusiast and cultivated a wide variety of blooms. Thus the daffodils, tulips,

⁸⁹Jordan, 2006, 181.

⁹⁰Van der Hamen as portraitist has been examined in Jordan, 2006, esp. 145–68 and 194–200.

⁹¹See Brusati.

⁹²Noted in Burke and Cherry, 320.

⁹³Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005a, 141. For a list of these sculptures as it appears in Solre's 1638 inventory, see Helmstutler di Dio and Coppel, 221–24.

⁹⁴On Lerma's garden, see Schroth, 2001. For a description of this area of Madrid, see Gea, 83–85.



Figure 17. Spanish School. *View of the Gardens of the Duke of Lerma's Palace*, ca. 1608.
© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection.

and narcissus that spill from Glycera's cornucopia (and that form a very noticeable frame), many of them from Flanders, echoed the garden's actual flowers, which would have been visible through the gallery.⁹⁵ Encouraging the comparison between real and painted flowers, the original disposition of Van der Hamen's *Glycera* effectively enhanced the competition between art and nature that is at the core of Pausias's story and its association with Van der Hamen.

Interestingly, Van der Hamen's subtle reference to Pausias also points to his commercial approach to still-life painting. In fact, as in many of his anecdotes about artistic practice, Pliny's account of Pausias and Glycera stresses art's economic dimension: first, by mentioning that although Pausias's portrait of Glycera was known by some as "the wreath-binder," others called it "the wreath-seller" because Glycera made a living out of selling garlands; second, by informing us that Pausias sold the portrait for an extraordinary sum.⁹⁶ Significantly, in his *Arte de la pintura* (1649), Pacheco mentions this story immediately before one of his references to Van der Hamen, which appears in his discussion of flower painting. Following Pliny, Pacheco also recounts the origins of flower painting as a tale of the story of Pausias and Glycera, but when referring to Pausias's portrait of Glycera, he omits Pliny's reference to the first title of the painting (maker of garlands), and only mentions the second, *stephanopoli* (seller of garlands). Moving to his own time, Pacheco then explains

⁹⁵See Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005a, esp. 139–42.

⁹⁶Translated in Sellers, 151, 153.



Figure 18. Pedro Teixeira Albernaz. Topographical Map of Madrid (detail), 1656. Museo de Historia de Madrid.

that “some painters are drawn to the entertainment of this kind of painting, because of the facility with which it is done and the pleasure of its variety, and among those who have practiced it with force and art is Juan Vanderramen, *arquero* [archer] of Philip IV.”⁹⁷

Pacheco’s loose adaptation of Pliny’s story reminds readers that Van der Hamen was known and criticized at the time precisely for turning his production of still lifes into a commercial business. For example, in 1628, Fray Hortensio Paravicino mockingly addressed Van der Hamen as the “painter of chestnuts and turnips,” and, alluding to his production of portraits, described his workshop as a “big store with few faces and many stalks” in two of his sonnets.⁹⁸ As this poet’s joke implies, Van der Hamen’s artistic practice involved clever commercial strategies that, as can be seen in many of his still lifes, included specialization, repetition, and signing works executed by his assistants.⁹⁹

However, highly detailed works like the still lifes Van der Hamen painted for Solre illustrate Pacheco’s assertion that, in order to accurately depict inanimate

⁹⁷Pacheco, 508–10.

⁹⁸Noted in Jordan, 2006, 155.

⁹⁹These strategies are discussed in *ibid.*, 75, 89; Cherry, 1999, 153.

objects, a painter should modify and retouch his picture as much as needed, a meticulous process that required a considerable amount of labor.¹⁰⁰ In these examples, the level of detail and finish had the specific function of deceptively extending the room in which they hung. In other words, contrasting with Van der Hamen's less detailed and repetitive paintings, some of which he sold more cheaply to Madrid's bureaucrats and craftsmen, these still lifes were custom tailored to meet the demands of their aristocratic owner. The paintings are unsigned, which reinforces that highly illusionistic paintings could cause the painter to "disappear behind the work."¹⁰¹ Likewise, by leaving no traces of brushwork, Van der Hamen's technique conceals the artist's hand. At the same time, the absence of signatures also establishes these still lifes as particularly noncommercial.¹⁰² By signing works created by his assistants, Van der Hamen not only ensured that every work produced in his studio could be recognized as a Van der Hamen, but also that these works could be valued accordingly. In other words, within Van der Hamen's oeuvre, signatures constituted an effective commercial strategy. By omitting his signature in Solre's two still lifes, Van der Hamen is also effacing the commercial nature of his artistic production.

The absence of signatures in the two still lifes contrasts vividly with their prominent presence in the allegories: especially through Glyceria's pointing gesture, but also through the signed *cartellino* (trompe l'oeil piece of paper) that appears in the lower right corner of his *Pomona*. In part, this distinction responds to the function and nature of the paintings themselves. Whereas the lack of signatures in the still lifes reinforced their intended trompe l'oeil effect, their presence in the allegories lends importance to Van der Hamen's purported interest in the "interrelationship of Painting and Poetry."¹⁰³

As has been noted, in addition to the ancient writings of Ovid and Pliny, Van der Hamen probably drew inspiration from works by Spanish poets of his own circle to devise his allegories.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, local seventeenth-century viewers may have recognized in the pictures' fictional frames a reference to Lope de Vega's popular *bodegones literarios*, poetic lists of fruits and flowers that the writer

¹⁰⁰Pacheco, 511.

¹⁰¹Ebert-Schifferer, 17.

¹⁰²As Jensen Adams, 587, has argued in relation to Rembrandt (1606–69), signatures not only signaled a painting's authenticity, but, within the context of the marketplace, functioned as "the artist's claim to economic responsibility for, income from, and promotion of his paintings."

¹⁰³Quoted in Jordan, 1985, 104.

¹⁰⁴For example, Scheffler and Ramón-Laca, 2005b, 374–75, suggest that Van der Hamen's *Glyceria* could be related to the play *Valor, agravio y mujer*, written by Ana Caro de Mallén y Soto. Orozco Díaz, 171, on the other hand, relates the allegory to the theme of the artificial garden in seventeenth-century Spanish literature.

inserted within arcadian episodes in many of his literary works.¹⁰⁵ In the *bodegón literario* included in his *Isidro*, an epic poem about Madrid's patron saint that Lope published with great success in 1599, the shepherd Silvano's amorous enumeration of fruits and vegetables to the shepherdess Silvia brings to mind Van der Hamen's allegorical compositions, including their inclusion of cornucopias.¹⁰⁶ As Antonio Sánchez Jiménez has recently argued, with such poetic interludes Lope emphasized innate ingenuity and imitation as essential tools of literary creation while demonstrating, at the same time, his enthusiasm for still life.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, by directing the viewer's attention to his signature in the *Glycera* and, to a lesser extent, in the *Pomona* — works in which poetic evocations are literally framed by still-life elements — Van der Hamen may have been attempting to elevate and ennoble the status of his larger production of still lifes, which current art theorists regarded as lowly imitations of nature. Thus the ingenious self-referentiality of the *Glycera*, in particular, declares Van der Hamen's pride as portraitist and still-life painter, while presenting imitation as a worthy aim of painting in a context — that of the picture gallery — that encouraged such discussions.

This paradox has interesting implications regarding Van der Hamen's artistic identity: whereas the finish, look, and anonymity of the still lifes he painted for Solre deny the labor invested in them, the intellectual complexity and emphasis on authorship displayed in the allegories underscore painting's liberal (as opposed to manual) nature. Van der Hamen's membership in the Burgundian royal guard (of which Solre was the captain since 1624) further elucidates these artistic claims, for one of Solre's goals as captain was to accept into the guard only noble Flemings who did not practice mechanical arts.¹⁰⁸ Although Van der Hamen was a member of a Flemish family of the lower nobility, his profession as painter (and especially as painter of still lifes) involved manual labor and economic transactions that challenged both his social status and membership in the guard. By downplaying the commercial basis of his still lifes and emphasizing the intellectual character of the allegories, Van der Hamen established the nobility of his art in ways that mirrored Solre's (and the aristocracy's) strategic use of commodities to denote ideas of hospitality and abundance in the Spanish court.

¹⁰⁵About Lope's *bodegones literarios*, see especially Sánchez Jiménez, 2009; Sánchez Jiménez's introduction in L. Vega, 2010, 46–64; Sánchez Jiménez, 2011, 231–73. About the genre in general, see Osuna.

¹⁰⁶L. Vega, 2010, 452.

¹⁰⁷These issues are discussed in Sánchez Jiménez, 2011, 284–89.

¹⁰⁸Esteban-Estríngana, 210–16. The conditions that were required to enter the guard are described in Porras Rodríguez.

CONCLUSION

The still lifes and allegories that Van der Hamen painted for Solre and many other aristocrats in the 1620s must be understood as part of a historical and political context in which display and ostentation were encouraged and celebrated. In particular, these works enhance ideals related to aristocratic hospitality as was practiced in the court of seventeenth-century Madrid.

Relaciones from this period suggest that these events aimed foremost to impress local and foreign guests with the display of luxurious wares from a variety of countries, showcased in *aparadores* and *camarines* for that specific purpose. Van der Hamen's still lifes also emphasize display through formal qualities such as their restrained order and the absence of any sign of consumption, giving visual form to one of the essential features of aristocratic hospitality. In so doing, these works actively participated in creating the image of magnificence and abundance that legitimated Madrid as imperial capital while, at the same time, responding to Philip IV's rhetoric of austere grandeur, thus serving as potent tools of political propaganda. In this sense, Van der Hamen's paintings offer a visual (and arguably more effective) counterpoint to written descriptions in which such elements of display are also emphasized and glorified. Moreover, this aspect of Van der Hamen's paintings exemplify the complex ways in which the artist engaged with the topos of *ut pictura poesis*, helping to explain the popularity and high esteem that his still lifes enjoyed in aristocratic and literary circles. Solre's exhibition of them, on the other hand, perfectly illustrates how members of the Spanish court used picture galleries strategically, as ideal settings for the practice of hospitality. In these lavishly decorated rooms, Van der Hamen's paintings articulated fictions that operated on multiple levels: in the still lifes, by illusionistically re-creating and doubling the grandeur of actual displays of hospitality; in the allegories, by justifying and denying the economic costs of such celebrations while romanticizing agricultural labor.

Furthermore, Van der Hamen's paintings for Solre constitute an artistic manifesto on the value of still life as an intellectual and illustrious genre. Deliberately displayed in Solre's galleries, his still lifes and allegories framed by still-life elements represented real objects and settings, inviting comparisons between representation and reality, inspiring conversations about the superiority of painting over nature, and elevating the status of still life as a genre and of Van der Hamen as the best of its practitioners while, at the same time, downplaying the commercial and more mechanized nature of his larger production of still lifes.

The rhetoric of nobility and hospitality is so pervasive in Van der Hamen's pictures that scholars have been reticent to consider these commercial features. Yet the denial of commerce and emphasis on hospitality that appear as motifs in Solre's gatherings and Van der Hamen's still lifes is in fact a major theme of early modern Spanish culture in general. It appears prominently in legal suits

regarding the *alcabala*, a tax established in the Middle Ages that was applied to objects manufactured and offered for sale, including paintings. Rejecting the commercial dimension of painting in order to support the notion of its nobility, in 1625 Lope de Vega and other writers of the court objected to the painters' obligation to pay this tax.¹⁰⁹ A similar contradiction was at work in Lope's own literary career. Although Lope introduced the popular form of theater known as *comedia*, he rejected the taste of the masses and the logic of the market when he invoked aristocratic patrons in his more serious and prestigious literary works.¹¹⁰ Even more famously, the celebrated painter Diego Velázquez had to demonstrate that he never received money for his paintings in order to become knight of the military order of Santiago.¹¹¹ Clearly, a nascent consumer culture was transforming many aspects of artistic production in Madrid during the first half of the seventeenth century. As Van der Hamen's paintings for Solre and these examples reveal, however, the effects of this new economic order had to be masked and inhibited in order to perpetuate the illusory values on which the Spanish aristocracy was based.

Traditionally, analyses of seventeenth-century Spanish still life have focused on either formal features to explain stylistic developments and attribution or, conversely, on iconographic elements leading to symbolic or moralizing readings. In a similar vein, Spanish still life has been regarded as exemplifying the purported pessimism and penance of Spanish Baroque painting in general. In contrast, a social reading of both the meaning and popularity of Van der Hamen's works in parallel to a consideration of style and iconography brings attention to these paintings' historical, economic, and political contexts, and provides a more comprehensive interpretation of Van der Hamen's oeuvre. This social approach also underlines that, despite Van der Hamen's reliance on foreign pictorial models and literary sources, his paintings should be considered from the specific perspective of Madrid in the 1620s, the social and economic tensions that pervaded it, and the reluctance of its noble elites to fully embrace the values of an emerging consumer culture. Only by studying Spanish works from this period with attention to the contexts in which they were produced and displayed can they start to be understood in their own right.

¹⁰⁹Lope de Vega's statement was included in the "Memorial informativo por los Pintores en el pleyto que tratan con el señor Fiscal de su Magestad en el Real Consejo de Hazienda sobre la exención de la pintura," and was later reprinted in Vicente Carducho's *Diálogos de la Pintura*. For an English translation and commentary on Lope's text, see Enggass and Brown, 167–72.

¹¹⁰Gilbert-Santamaría, 27.

¹¹¹In the process, painters such as Alonso Cano, Juan Carreño de Miranda, Francisco de Burgos Mantilla, and Angelo Nardi declared that Velázquez had only painted as a personal distraction or to satisfy the king's wishes. For a discussion of this process, see especially the influential work of Brown, 1978, 87–110. See also Marías, 231–32.

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