

Enough is Definitely Enough

Artist: Lucy Renton
Title of work: *A Gift for Doña Margarita Maria of Austria*
Date: 2019
Media: hardwood, card, collage from *World of Interiors*

What if anything, does *Las Meninas* mean to you?

Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) was *the* iconic image for deconstruction and analysis for a painting student at St Martins School of Art in the 1980's. It had provoked critical writing and visual responses by multiple artists, and our discussions took in critiques by Michel Foucault, John Berger and others, also Picasso's 1950's series of transcriptions of the painting, and Richard Hamilton's 1973 etching, serving as an homage to Picasso's different periods of style.

It seemed a go-to image for talking about the gaze, about the portrait, perspective, the painter as more than just a royal craftsman, and as something that makes the viewer reflect on their own position in relation to the painting and implicate them in the composition, as they feel themselves standing next to the royal parents that appear only in reflection in the painting.

A bravura performance by the artist that questions the subject and nature of the portrait, and the status of the painter (here given equal standing in an intimate scene of royal family life), *Las Meninas* continues to resist resolution of interpretation even now.

What did you do with your postcard of *Las Meninas* and why?

I thought about the focal point of the painting, the Infanta Doña Margarita Maria of Austria, fourth in line to the Spanish throne, and how the painting is somehow about everything except for her; about space, light, power, multiple viewpoints, reflections, hidden characters

and interiors, as well as the presence and gaze of the painter. The painting is a puzzle for grown-ups to decipher; I wanted to give the little girl something that could suggest a child's view. So, to reinsert her perspective while trying to engage with these different ideas, I cut up the postcard and worked with images from the *World of Interiors* magazine to create a mise-en-abyme paper theatre of reflections and dissimulation. This childlike toy also references painted curiosities of the same period, like Samuel van Hoogstraten's *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House* of 1655-60, which I had seen many times in the National Gallery just down from the old location of St. Martin's.

In my version, as in *Las Meninas*, the viewer is made aware of their own position in the composition, they may catch a glimpse of themselves reflected in the scene, their eye peering through the peephole, looking back.