



SPANISH FASHION  
IN THE AGE *of* VELÁZQUEZ

*A Tailor at the Court of Philip IV*

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Front cover: Diego Velázquez, *Mariana in Black and Silver*, 1652  
(detail of fig. 27)

Frontispiece: Diego Velázquez, *Infanta Margarita in Blue*, 1659  
(detail of fig. 151)

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## Measurements and Prices

### Units of measurement

Fabric was measured by the Castilian *vara* (rod), a linear measurement slightly shorter than one English yard, which was subdivided into *pies* (feet) and *dedos* (fingers).

1 <i>vara</i>	=	84 centimeters
1 <i>pie</i>	=	28 centimeters
1 <i>dedo</i>	=	1.75 centimeters

Silk sewing thread and threads of silver and gold were measured by the *onza*, equal to one ounce today (approximately 28 grams).

### Currency

The currency units used in seventeenth-century Spain included, from smallest to largest, *maravedís*, *reales*, and *ducados*, which had the following relative values:

1 <i>real</i>	=	34 <i>maravedís</i>
1 <i>ducado</i>	=	11 <i>reales</i> = 375 <i>maravedís</i>

In this book, all prices have been converted into *reales* to facilitate comparisons.

Unknown Spanish artist, *Saint Francis of Assisi, Cloth Merchant* (detail of fig. 39)





## Introduction

### Dressing Las Meninas

Diego Velázquez painted *The Family of Philip IV*, known today as *Las Meninas*, on an extra-large canvas made from three lengths of hemp cloth that were stitched together.<sup>1</sup> After the canvas had been primed with gritty earth-toned paint, the painter quickly laid out the composition using a long brush that let him see his work from a distance.<sup>2</sup> The painting features twelve figures, eleven of them human and one canine, with the king's younger daughter, the Infanta Margarita, at the center. The child models the latest courtly fashions, most notably an enormous skirt that is almost as wide as she is tall (fig. 1). She is attended by two *meninas*, as noble maids of honor were called, one of whom kneels within the cage of her hoopskirt to present the infanta with a cup of water (fig. 2). Velázquez presents himself at work, brush and palette in hand, standing in front of a canvas as large as this one. He wears a courtier's tight-fitting suit made from unwashable silk, which was unlikely attire for the activity of painting. The artist first sketched himself looking down at the infanta but changed his mind and shifted the position of his head to gaze directly out at the viewer—or, rather, at the king and queen whose likenesses are reflected in the framed mirror hanging on the back wall of the room. When the work was almost finished, Velázquez daubed thick blobs of white paint on the girls' dresses and jewelry to create sparkling

highlights. Like an alchemist turning base metals into gold, he converted the rough hempen canvas and earthy pigments into smooth silks, intricate laces, and glittering silver trimmings. The members of the Spanish royal family and their court who are featured in *Las Meninas* reportedly visited the painter in his studio at the Royal Palace to watch the magic as it happened.<sup>3</sup>

Behind the scenes of *Las Meninas*, a small army of specialized artisans—tailors, hosiers, shoemakers, farthingale-makers, embroiderers, and laundresses, among many others—worked around the clock to craft and care for the elaborate court clothing that was worn by the royalty, ladies-in-waiting, dwarves, and painter in this picture.<sup>4</sup> One of them was Mateo Aguado (c. 1605–1672), head tailor in the queen's household—*sastre de cámara de la reina*—who was responsible for dressing the Infanta Margarita. Appointed tailor to the queen in 1630, Aguado occupied the position for over 40 years in a career that ran parallel to that of his famous colleague Velázquez. The two men surely crossed paths at court, although no documentation has surfaced so far to connect them directly. Both were engaged in the grand project of fashioning the royal image, and Aguado dressed many of Velázquez's portrait sitters: among them, the queens Isabel of Bourbon and Mariana of Austria; royal children Prince Baltasar Carlos, the

1. (facing page) Infanta Margarita in *Las Meninas*  
(detail of fig. 2)



followed proved Palomino correct: Velázquez's fame and reputation rose to eclipse those of his royal patrons, who are remembered today primarily as the painter's subjects, instead of the other way around.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Aguado was almost entirely forgotten.<sup>7</sup> There were no truly famous tailors until the English dress designer Charles Frederick Worth launched the era of the haute couturier in the late nineteenth century and rose to fame by fashioning himself as an artist.<sup>8</sup> While Aguado faded from memory, his work remained in the public eye through its representation in court portraits, especially after the opening of the Prado Museum in Madrid in 1819. Portraits of women dressed by Aguado inspired later generations of artists and dress designers. One was Jean-Philippe Worth (son of Charles Frederick), who recreated the pink and silver dress modeled by the Infanta Margarita in a portrait painted by Velázquez's

protégé and successor, Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo (fig. 4). The "infanta" costume was made for American socialite Kate Brice to wear to the famously decadent Bradley-Martin Ball at the Waldorf Hotel in New York City in 1897 (fig. 5).<sup>9</sup>

Aguado's fall into obscurity is not for lack of historical evidence. The tailor's lengthy career at court is prolifically documented in the General Archive of the Palace, and his personal and domestic life can be reconstructed in detail from notarial records that include a substantial postmortem inventory. Aguado's documentation includes no works of a personal nature to shed light on his inner world, but this is also true of Velázquez. That the painter was remembered while the tailor was forgotten is a product of the system in which they lived and worked. Painting was regarded as the higher art form, and there were deep-seated prejudices

against tailors in the popular culture in the seventeenth century. In the twenty-first century, Madrid's tailors as a collective have been the subject of works of social history, but the things that they made have attracted scant attention.<sup>10</sup> Academic studies and exhibitions have tended to focus on the period immediately preceding Philip IV's reign, when Spanish fashion was at the height of its global influence.<sup>11</sup> Following the example of British dress historian Janet Arnold, whose archival investigations brought to light the work of Queen Elizabeth I's tailor Walter Fyshe, this book seeks to rescue Mateo Aguado from obscurity.<sup>12</sup> By presenting Aguado's life and work in the first full-length study of an individual premodern tailor, the following pages make the case for his inclusion among the major culture-makers at Philip IV's court. In his role as tailor to the queen for over four decades, Aguado was the most

important and influential women's dress-designer in the seventeenth-century Spanish world. The goal of this book is to put the tailor back in the picture.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Art of Tailoring in Early Modern Spain*

A tailor was an artisan who "cut out clothes and dresses," as the job was defined by Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco in the first Castilian dictionary, published in 1611.<sup>14</sup> Throughout early modern Europe, a tailor was identified by his cutting shears: some London tailors signed official documents using a glyph of scissors.<sup>15</sup> In Giovanni Battista Moroni's famous portrait of an unidentified Northern Italian tailor, the elegantly dressed artisan is picking up a pair of shears with his right hand, on the verge of cutting into a piece of black



4. Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, *Infanta Margarita in Pink and Silver* (detail of fig. 170)

5. (facing page) "Infanta" costume by Jean-Philippe Worth for the House of Worth, 1897. White satin bodice and skirt overlaid with rows of organza ribbon and silver lace; organza sleeves with satin bands; machine-made cream lace apron, collar, and cuff edges. Museum of the City of New York







6. (far left) Giovanni Battista Moroni, *The Tailor*, 1656–70. Oil on canvas, 99.5 × 77 cm. National Gallery, London

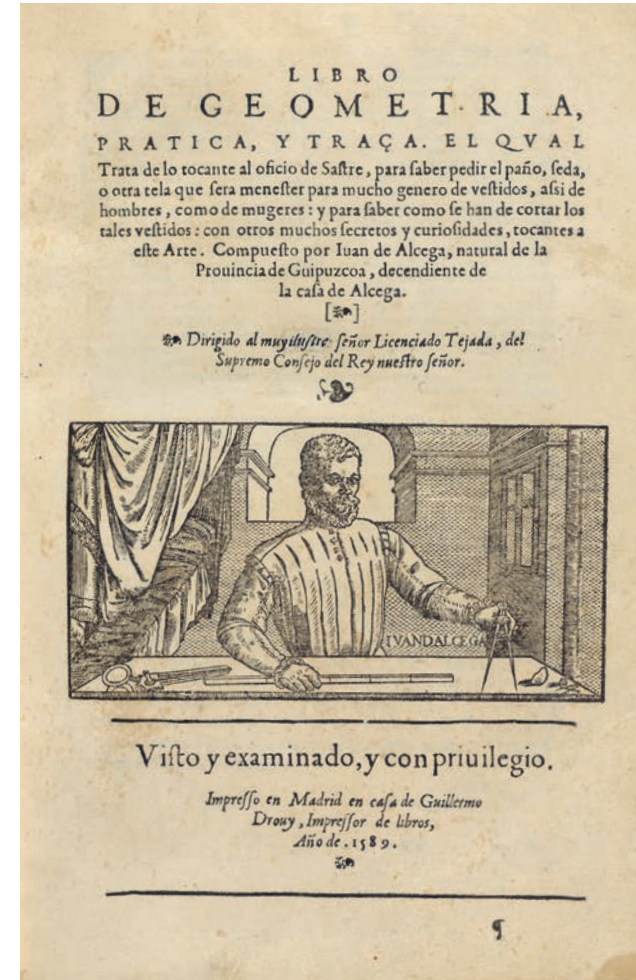


7. (left) Scissors, French, 16th century. Iron, 28 cm long, weight 576 grams. MAK–Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna

cloth that has been lightly marked with white cutting lines (fig. 6). A tailor’s scissors were a tool of substance: a sixteenth-century pair similar to those used by Moroni’s tailor weigh well over half a kilogram (fig. 7).<sup>16</sup> Miguel de Cervantes used the association between tailors and their sizeable shears to comic effect in his play *The Great Sultana* (1615), in which a character masquerading as a tailor boasts, “I’m Spanish and a tailor, with such large scissors that the sun’s great tailor doesn’t have the like in his sphere.”<sup>17</sup> Between 1580 and 1640, a sequence of manuals was published in Spain by master tailors who sought to distance their profession’s association with the manual labor of cutting by emphasizing instead their

intellectual practice based in geometry.<sup>18</sup> The first of these manuals, the *Book of Geometry, Practice, and Design* (1580, republished in 1589) by the Basque-born master tailor Juan de Alcega, opens with a portrait of the author manipulating the geometer’s compass and rule, while his scissors rest on the table in front of him (fig. 8).<sup>19</sup> In another tailoring manual, published in 1617, the Catalan tailor Baltazar Segovia poses with the tools of his trade just like Alcega did, although his fashionable attire has been updated and he wears a significantly larger ruff around his neck (fig. 9).<sup>20</sup>

Tailors and painters were both categorized as *oficiales de manos*—that is, craftsmen who worked with



their hands, along with carpenters, silversmiths, and shoemakers.<sup>21</sup> But there was a hierarchy among *oficiales de manos*, which was outlined by the lawyer Gaspar Gutiérrez de los Ríos, son of a royal tapestry-weaver, in his book of art theory, the *General Notice of the Estimation of the Arts*, in 1600.<sup>22</sup> A mechanical craft came naturally and could be learned in just half an hour, the author explained. In contrast, a mechanical art took time to learn, was governed by certain rules, and required its

8. (left) Author portrait of Juan de Alcega, *Libro de geometria, practica, y traça* (Madrid, 1589). Woodcut, 30 × 21.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

9. (below) Author portrait of Baltazar Segovia, *Llibre de geometria del offici de sastre* (Barcelona, 1617). Wood engraving, 11.5 × 11.5 cm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris



practitioners to have the use of reason. Cooking to feed oneself was a craft, for example, whereas cooking for a prince was an art. Gutiérrez de los Ríos categorized tailoring as a mechanical art, since it had rules for cutting out different kinds of garments and its practitioners had to master the skill of *tanteo*, which was estimating how much fabric was needed to make a garment. This was a complex calculation that depended on the garment pattern, the size of the client, and the fabric width





14. Author portrait of José de Casanova by Pedro de Villafranca, *Primera parte del Arte de escribir todas formas de letras* (Madrid, 1650). Engraving, 31 × 22 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The king had found the look, and the painter, that would define his reign.

The style of courtly dress that was established for men in the early 1620s remained more or less unchanged, with only minor adjustments, for the rest of Philip IV's reign.<sup>40</sup> Women's courtly fashions began to evolve in the 1630s after Mateo Aguado became the queen's tailor. During Aguado's four decades in office, women's fashions changed continuously, as the chapters in this book describe in detail (for a summary of these developments, see the Chronology of Women's Dress, pp. 214–18). Throughout Philip IV's reign, men's and women's fashions retained the elements of the Spanish style, which was characterized by closely fitted garments worn with support structures made from stiff materials that reshaped the body.<sup>41</sup> The clothes were uncomfortable and restrictive according to José de Casanova, a handwriting expert who complained about the fashions of the day in an off-topic aside in his *Art of Writing* (1650). A man's shoulder-wings—seen in Casanova's author portrait (fig. 14)—made it impossible for him to move his arms, while his legs were “skewered and oppressed” by fragile silk stockings and tight breeches. It was a time, Casanova lamented, when “the clothes are more in charge than the person.”<sup>42</sup> Regarding women's fashions, he denounced the *guardainfante*, a farthingale so wide that a woman wearing one filled an entire street, and he expressed dismay over women's immodest low-cut bodices and transparent mantles. In a view of Madrid painted in the 1650s, men and women dressed just as Casanova described them frolic along the banks of the Manzanares River on the June 24 feast day of Saint John the Baptist (fig. 15). Amid the dancing and picnicking revelers, the working men and women carrying bundles of laundry are dressed in simple, ragged clothes without the uncomfortable and bulky garments that defined and confined the elites.



15. Unknown Spanish artist, *View of the River Manzanares During the Festival of Saint John the Baptist*, c. 1650–60. Oil on canvas, 103.8 × 157.5 cm. Abelló Collection, Madrid

Madrid was the fashion capital of the far-flung Spanish Empire, which at this time included Portugal, territories in the Netherlands and Italy (including the cities of Naples and Milan), colonies in North Africa, the Philippines, the Viceroyalties of New Spain (Mexico) and Peru, and islands in the Caribbean and Pacific. The restrictive style of Spanish fashion clearly identified subjects of the Spanish Crown and its allies at a time when other European courts—led by France—

were adopting a less structured, more relaxed style of cultivated “negligence,” as it was called, in men's and women's dress.<sup>43</sup> In a portrait painted in 1650, Swedish nobleman Nils Nilsson Brahe dresses in French style with a short doublet, richly trimmed in lace, that is undone in the front to show the billowing white shirt underneath (fig. 16). But Brahe had to exchange his French attire for a more buttoned-up Spanish suit in early 1655, when he traveled to Madrid to notify Philip





48. Woman's *cuera* with round sleeves, Spanish, c. 1590–1610. Uncut velvet with silk taffeta lining. Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

seen trailing behind Queen Isabel in a view of the royal family in a fantastical palatial setting (fig. 49).<sup>70</sup> With its train and multiple sets of sleeves, a *saya entera* was made from an enormous amount of fabric: the *saya entera* with rounded sleeves that Francisco de la Rocha Burguen made for his court exam required 15.4 meters of velvet or

damask, according to the pattern that he published in his 1618 tailoring manual (fig. 50).<sup>71</sup>

The dresses that Soria's workshop made for the queen were not distinguished by the cut of the garments—pattern layouts for the same styles were published by tailors such as Rocha Burguen for

49. Attributed to Juan de la Corte, *Philip IV and Isabel of Bourbon in a Colonnade*, c. 1630. Oil on canvas, 181 × 303.8 cm. Pollok House, Glasgow

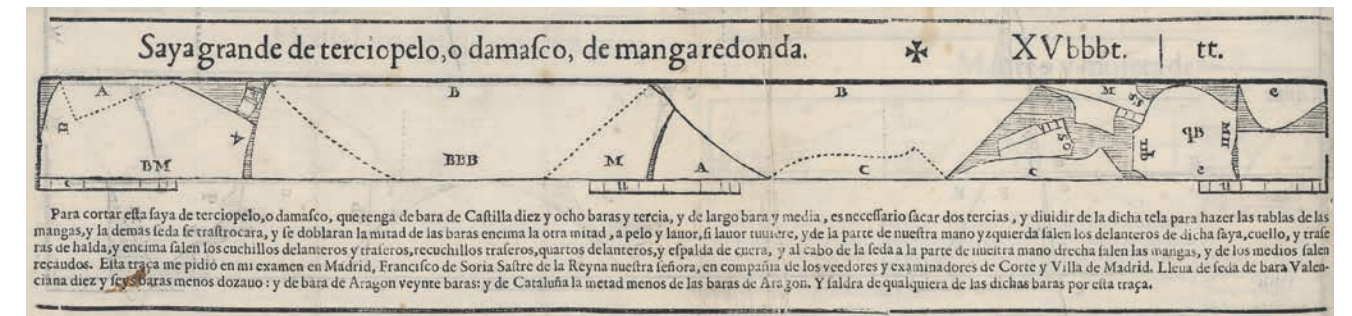


50. (below) Pattern layout for a *saya grande* (*saya entera*). Francisco de la Rocha Burguen, *Geometria y traça perteneciente al oficio de sastres* (Valencia, 1618). Woodcut, 8.5 × 39.5 cm. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid

widespread use—but rather by the luxurious fabrics and decorations that were used to make them. The richest fabrics in the queen's wardrobe combined silk with threads of silver or gold. Many of her dresses were made from brocade (*espolín*), a silk fabric with flowers of silver or gold, or both. One such green silk brocade has survived in the form of a chasuble (fig. 51). Shimmering lamé (*lama*) combined colored silk with silver or gold threads that were woven end-to-end. The richest fabric of all was cloth of silver or gold

(*tela de plata* or *oro*), which was made predominantly from metal threads; it was extremely rare, even in the queen's wardrobe.

In the 1620s, over two dozen varieties of silk fabric were used to make the queen's dresses. The most common fabric was taffeta (*tafetán*), a lustrous, lightweight ribbed silk with a crisp quality, which was worn in the warmer months. Variants of taffeta called ormuzine (*ormesí*) and camlet (*camelote*) were specially treated to have a rippled, watered effect (*de aguas*). The







## 4. Interlude in Black

### ♦ The Tumultuous 1640s

“It is imponderable just how good the King looked in a soldier’s suit,” fawned an anonymous admirer who saw Philip IV in person wearing the same red and silver campaign outfit that he modeled for Velázquez in 1644 (fig. 104).<sup>1</sup> This portrait of the king was painted in Fraga, on the border between Aragon and Catalonia, which had become the new front in Spain’s war with France after the rebellious Catalans accepted French protection in January 1641 (see Map 1). The Catalan revolt gave Philip IV an opportunity to realize a long-held ambition to act—and dress—the part of commander in chief. In the Fraga portrait, the king wears a brilliant red cassock decorated with silver *alamares*.<sup>2</sup> The French-style cassock with long skirts is open beneath the sternum to reveal a yellow buff jerkin.<sup>3</sup> The king has abandoned his trademark *golilla* to wear a “campaign collar” (*valona de campaña*) trimmed with very fine Flemish lace.<sup>4</sup> Velázquez chose not to depict the details of Philip’s collar, which was probably very similar to the one that King Christian IV of Denmark was wearing when he was wounded in a naval battle on July 1, 1644 (fig. 105).<sup>5</sup> As advertised by Philip IV’s outfit in the Fraga painting, the Spanish king had joined the illustrious company of those

monarchs who personally led their troops to war—although he remained on the Aragonese side of the border with Catalonia and never got too close to the fighting.

Philip IV was absent from Madrid during three campaigns in Aragon for a total of almost 22 months between April 1642 and October 1644. While the king was away, Queen Isabel was placed in charge of the government of Castile.<sup>6</sup> During the king’s first campaign in 1642, the queen acquired a reputation for “great prudence, vigilance, and succor,” in the words of the king’s official chronicler, José Pellicer, who reported that Isabel had sold her own jewels in order to raise funds to form a new regiment in her name.<sup>7</sup> While the queen was winning plaudits at home, Philip IV’s first military campaign ended in a disastrous defeat to French and Catalan troops outside of Lérida in October 1642.<sup>8</sup> The king returned to Madrid and forced his increasingly unpopular *privado*, the Count-Duke of Olivares, into retirement in January 1643, declaring that the queen was now his only advisor: “My *privado* is the Queen.”<sup>9</sup> By this time, Mateo Aguado had served as the queen’s *sastre de cámara* for over 12 years. Now he faced a new challenge: to dress a woman who held genuine power.<sup>10</sup>

104. (facing page) Diego Velázquez, *Philip IV in Fraga*, 1644. Oil on canvas, 129.9 × 99.4 cm. The Frick Collection, New York





127. *Virgin of Patrocinio*, mid-17th century. Polychromed wood, 130 cm tall. Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, San Lorenzo

Patrocinio, a devotional sculpture with articulated joints and a built-in farthingale that was made to be dressed (fig. 127). Mariana was exceptionally devoted to this image of the Virgin, which was located at the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial in a chapel with portraits of Philip IV and Mariana of Austria kneeling in prayer (see fig. 136).<sup>24</sup> Mariana wore her brown wool boned bodice and petticoat beneath a pair of scapulars, a secular variation of the garment worn by members of religious orders, such as Sister María de Ágreda (see fig. 116). Aguado made habits like this for the queen regularly, approximately one to three per year in the 1650s.

Mariana's walnut-brown habits were unusual in a wardrobe that was otherwise bright and varied, with colors that included sky blue, olive- and grass-green, lemon-yellow, sand, and pearl gray. Unlike Queen Isabel, who had worn sober shades after her elevation to queen consort in 1621, Mariana did not give up the pleasures of color after she became queen. Aguado used twice as many colors in Mariana's wardrobe as he had for Isabel, and new colors were introduced almost every year. These fabrics included shot silks woven with more than one color to create complex shades like *colombino*, which was pink and white, like a radish flower, and *aire*, a pale apricot color that resembled the sky at dawn.<sup>25</sup> Black was used only for solemn occasions, such as mourning and Palm Sunday. The only color in Mariana's wardrobe that could be considered sober was musk-brown (*musco*, or *amusco*), which was usually combined with silver. Almost 40 percent of Mariana's dresses in the 1650s were made from silks interwoven with silver that likely resembled a piece of light green silk shot with silver threads that has survived in the form of a chalice veil (fig. 128).

The military-style dress decorations that had characterized Aguado's work for Queen Isabel were

replaced with markedly feminine ornaments. *Alamares* became quite rare, while bows became ubiquitous. Gold buttons were out, and sparkling diamond buttons were in—but only for a brief time. Black and gold dress decorations disappeared, replaced by everything silver (see the 1650s in the *Chronology of Women's Dress*, pp. 217–18). Silver bobbin lace was immensely popular at the Spanish court, and across Europe, in the second half of the seventeenth century, but very little of it has survived.<sup>26</sup> A woman's cap made of brocaded silk and decorated with metal lace is one of the exceptions (fig. 129).

Aguado used various silver trimmings to create decorative patterns that included bows, waves, whorls, half-pipes, diamond tips, and a pattern of scales called "goshawk breast" (*pecho de azor*). One of the new designs that Aguado introduced at the beginning of Mariana's reign was a latticework pattern called *celosía*. It is no coincidence that the Spanish word for "lattice" is connected to the word *celos*—"jealous"—for lattices were installed on windows, doors, and balconies so that women could look outside without being seen themselves.<sup>27</sup> In a portrait of Mariana from the later 1650s, she wears a brown dress (probably musk) decorated with wide bands of silver *celosía* that run vertically up her dress and hanging sleeves (fig. 130). The decorative latticework on Mariana's dresses evoked the ideal of female enclosure—but the queen who wore it was required to put herself on display to the public.

128. (above right) Green watered silk shot with silver. Chalice veil (detail), possibly Italian, 1600s–1700s. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

129. (right) Woman's cap (side view), Spanish, 17th century. Silver lamé brocaded with metal thread and decorated with silver bobbin lace. Museu Tèxtil, Terrassa



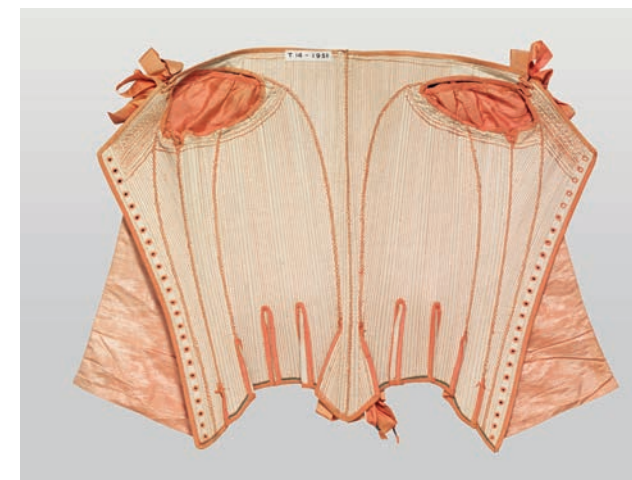




134. Diego Velázquez, *The Toilet of Venus* (“*The Rokeby Venus*”), c. 1647–51. Oil on canvas, 122.5 × 177 cm. National Gallery, London

of silver and black velvet from Holland that hid over 8 meters combined of buckram (*bocací*), canvas (*anjeo*), fustian (*fustán*), and baize (*bayeta*).<sup>43</sup> Much of that material was used to stiffen the doublet. Skirt hems were reinforced with canvas and covered with silk damask matching the dress fabric. Most of the queen’s dresses were lined with taffeta, a crisp silk that contributed additional body to the fashion fabric. Even with all of this built-in structure, the queen’s dresses required a stiff scaffolding underneath to achieve the radical silhouette of *Mariana in Black and Silver*.

In Velázquez’s only known female nude, *The Rokeby Venus*, the ideal woman has long legs, rounded hips and buttocks, and a very narrow waist (fig. 134).<sup>44</sup> This is the shape of *Mariana in Black and Silver*, although the queen did not come by it naturally. Shaping garments hidden under Mariana’s dress—a boned corset, a farthingale covered with multiple layers of stiff skirts, and platform shoes—molded the queen’s body to conform to her dresses. Mariana’s corsets were made by her tailor: Aguado had begun to fill this role when she arrived in Spain, and in 1654 he successfully defended his right to continue the



135. Front (left) and interior (above) of a woman’s boned corset with sleeves and stomacher, probably Dutch, 1660–80. Pink watered silk with edges bound in grosgrain ribbon, fully boned and backstitched, lined in linen. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

work and officially hold the office of royal corset-maker.<sup>45</sup> The boned and backstitched corsets that Aguado made for Mariana were very similar to the *corpiños* that Isabel of Bourbon had worn, except now they were called *cotillas*. In the 1650s, Aguado made Mariana four to ten *cotillas* per year from double taffeta in shades of pink and red: crimson, mother-of-pearl, and incarnadine (*encarnado*, an ambiguous color that usually refers to carnation pink but could also be blood-red). A salmon-pink watered-silk corset made around the same time in Northern Europe reveals what a backstitched boned corset looked like,

inside and out (fig. 135).<sup>46</sup> Mariana’s corsets usually had fitted sleeves, and their skirt extensions were large enough to have pocket openings (*golpes*) in them. They were decorated with 15 meters of silver galloon.

Portraits of Mariana from the 1650s show the queen with skirts of different shapes, with *Mariana in Black and Silver* being the most extreme. The queen’s farthingale-maker made three different structures to shape her skirts: *verdugados*, *caderas*, and *guardainfantes*. The *verdugado* was the classic funnel-shaped farthingale with hoops sewn into a floor-length skirt, which could