

PHILIP II THE COLLECTOR

THE INVENTORIES OF THE TREASURY OF THE REAL ALCÁZAR OF MADRID AND OF THE TAPESTRY COLLECTION

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When Philip II died at El Escorial on 13 September 1598, he left not only a wearied kingdom beset with serious economic problems and, in truth, exhausted by his long period in government, but also substantial possessions and a very large network of Royal Sites consisting of palaces, gardens, convents and monasteries located mainly around Madrid. He likewise bequeathed to his successor an impressive number of art objects and works of art spanning a broad variety of genres which had made him the greatest European art collector of the second half of the sixteenth century.

Together with the so-called *Libros de entregas de Felipe II a El Escorial*,¹ the records of the objects sent to decorate El Escorial, the two inventories published here are the most important testaments to Philip's collecting zeal and provide an insight into the Real Alcázar of Madrid, on which the monarchy's governance hinged. The Alcázar was the king's main residence, the seat of the councils and the main palace from which he ruled over the territories of the largest and most powerful monarchy of the period.²

The first and most important of the documents referred to, the inventory of the Guardajoyas (Treasury) – *Inventario Real de los bienes que se hallaron en el Guardajoyas del Rey Don Phelipe segundo nuestro Señor que Santa Gloria aya*³ – was the subject of a pioneering study which was published by Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón between 1956 and 1959 and has been a reference work for scholars of Philip II to date.⁴ We are now publishing the complete document, as the distinguished historian left out certain parts he considered to be repetitive, such as the sale of Philip's estate, even though, as readers will see, they contain valuable instructions in the margins and notes, for example on the destination and dispersal of many of the inventory items. Some of the entries and mentions pub-

lished in the earlier work are likewise recorded more accurately here and have been transcribed in accordance with current palaeographic criteria.

The second document, *Tapiceria de el Rey nuestro señor que este en el cielo*,⁵ is a post-mortem inventory of the king's tapestries. It was hitherto known to scholars only through the references to entries for several of the tapestry series made by the tapestry historian Guy Delmarcel in his study of Philip II's tapestry collection and until now has never been published in full as a document in its own right.⁶

Therefore, as occurred earlier with the *Libros de entregas de Felipe II a El Escorial*, we are dealing with the first complete and reliable publications of two documents that are essential to understanding the Prudent King's art collecting.

Philip II's interest in the arts had arisen in his youth, especially during the two trips he made to the Netherlands as Prince of Spain and during his brief stint as King of England (1548–1551 and 1554–1558). The consequences of these two journeys for the royal collections can clearly be seen in the two documents published here. This influence is particularly perceptible in the inventory of tapestries, as many of the series recorded in it were acquired during these travels.⁷

When Philip II returned to the Iberian Peninsula permanently as King of Spain following the abdications (1555–1556) and death in Yuste (1558) of his father, the Emperor Charles V, he found a court surrounded by a system of palaces and gardens to which he had helped give shape during his years as prince.⁸ Two buildings in particular played a very important role in the system: El Pardo Palace and the Real Alcázar of Madrid. As is well known, in the late 1550s and very early 1560s work had not yet

begun to build the monument which would be the fullest embodiment of his interests, the Monastery of El Escorial.

Despite the spectacular extensions carried out during Charles V's reign, which had almost doubled its area, the Real Alcázar of Madrid was still under construction and greatly in need of decoration. Notwithstanding its political and symbolic importance, the Alcázar could be said to have been under constant refurbishment from its medieval origins until it was razed by fire in 1734, well into the eighteenth century. Even so, from the start of Philip II's reign it housed a fabulous art collection which reached its zenith at the end of Philip IV's reign and during that of his son Charles II.⁹

This book does not set out to study the architectural development of the building or the extensive fresco decoration carried out during the Renaissance chiefly by Gaspar Becerra (1520–1570) and his team, and during the Baroque period by the Italian painters Agostino Mitelli (1609–1660) and Angelo Michele Colonna (1604–1687), and Juan Carreño de Miranda (1614–1685) under the supervision of Diego Velázquez (1599–1660). We do, however, wish to draw attention to the fact that the task of arranging and hanging Philip II's picture collection was not completed. There are two possible reasons for this curious fact, of which the inventory published here provides telling evidence.

The first is related to space. Despite the abovementioned extensions carried out by Charles V's architect Alonso de Covarrubias (1488–1570) and the construction of the so-called Torre Dorada (Golden Tower), designed by Juan Bautista de Toledo (c. 1515–1567) during Philip II's reign, the sheer size of the collection of paintings and tapestries, the fresco decorations and other pre-existing schemes prevented the works Philip II inherited and acquired throughout his reign from being properly displayed. Nor should we rule out the question of time. Philip II succeeded in fitting out the Casa Real del Pardo with paintings and other decorations. This small palace was almost finished by the start of his reign and housed an exquisite collection of works by Titian (c.1490–1576), Anthonis Mor (c.1517–1576), Bosch (1450–1516), Alonso Sánchez Coello (c.1531–1588) and Antonio de las Viñas (c.1512/1525–1571), among other artists.

Similarly – and this must have been the main problem – he practically completed his favourite building, the Monastery of El Escorial: not only the architecture but also the vast fresco decoration executed mainly by Italian artists brought expressly to his court for that purpose. He furthermore embellished it with a prodigious collection of artworks, relics, reliquaries and other ornaments, to which the abovementioned *Libros de entregas* provide an abundant and exhaustive testament.

Philip II. Testament and codicil (1594 and 1597). Post-mortem inventory (1598–1607)

In his will, made on 7 March 1594, Philip gives instructions for his heir to hand over all the movable assets remaining at the time of his death to the executors so that they can pay his debts without delay and fulfil the legacies and bequests specified in it. For this purpose, he instructs them to sell as many of his possessions as necessary to comply with these provisions: *los dichos mis bienes, o, tanta parte de ellos como será menester para el cumplimiento de lo susodicho*. This entails drawing up an inventory of Philip's possessions, with a few exceptions that are clearly mentioned: jewels, arms, horses and paintings. He likewise gives orders in this will for a few pieces of valuable jewellery, the 'rich' tapestries and other movable property deemed suitable for the prince's use to be given to him and his successors for what the executors deem a moderate price and value.¹⁰

Further on in the document the king declares the famous *Fleur-de-lis* of Burgundy to be non-alienable; the fact that it is the first of the items listed in the inventory clearly indicates that it held the highest symbolic value of all his possessions:

Item por quanto en mi guardajoyas esta Una floredelis de oro con muchas reliquias que fue del Emperador mi señor que sea en gloria y de nuestros pasados Duques de Borgoña quiero y es mi Voluntad que no se pueda Vender ni enajenar por ninguna causa sino que siempre se conserve y perpetúe y Vaya Junta con la sucesión estos Reynos [...] y lo mismo sea y se entienda en el lignum Crucis que esta en la dicha guardajoyas que así mismo fue del Emperador mi Señor que aya gloria.¹¹

He goes on to make a similar provision for six 'unicorn horns' (*cuernos de unicornio*) – that is, narwhal tusks – also preserved in the Guardajoyas, which end the section on possessions that are non-alienable or whose sale is restricted. As specified in another clause, with respect to the gold, silver, jewels and everything else (*en todos los dichos mis bienes oro y plata Joyas y todas las otras cosas que de Suso he nombrado y declarado y consignado*), he empowers his executors to take possession of all these effects in order to freely dispose of them.

Some three years later, on 23 August 1597, at El Escorial the king added a codicil ratifying the provisions of his will and significantly amending a few of them. In this document, which once again shows that his chief concern with respect to his possessions was the care of the Monastery of San Lorenzo, he again specifies that a few unique pieces of jewellery are not to be sold in the estate sale. The items referred to are a reliquary cross with a *lignum crucis*, a gift from his sister Joanna, with its inkstand; an ebony reliquary with a silver crucifix; an image of Saint Anne; and a Virgin of the Pietà. To this should be added two tapestries, one with the image of Christ