Las Meninas
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Children can find traditional art tedious and irrelevant, while being dragged around musty art galleries by well meaning adults often only serves to fuel their resentment. The intuitive design and hands-on approach of this book transform Las Meninas by Diego Velásquez into a living work of art and encourage us to question everything we see, while the mystery surrounding this enigmatic painting will intrigue even the most obstinate art sceptic.

Author Patricia Geis is thought provoking from the start, as she asks the reader to consider the subject of the canvas that Velásquez is working on within Las Meninas. The suggestion that the artist may be looking at us heightens the painting's sense of immediacy and intimacy. The design of the book stimulates the reader to investigate, leafing through books within books, examining pop-ups from different angles, and viewing the painting reflected in a mirror. A pocket at the end of the book contains cut-outs of the characters on the canvas to arrange as in the painting, as well as a cardboard camera obscura, to experiment with the techniques that Velásquez may have employed in his art.

A brief biography of Diego Velásquez charts his development through detailed early canvases to more impressionistic later paintings, putting Las Meninas into its historical context. A double page pop-up introduces us to the subjects of Las Meninas, and the reader is invited to dress the Infanta Margarita from the cut-outs at the end of the book. A fold out section reveals an in-depth analysis of the aerial and linear perspective techniques which Velásquez used, then cleverly converts into the backdrop for Las Meninas, so that the scene can be recreated with the cardboard figures provided. There is intriguing analysis of the theories surrounding the subject of the painting within the painting. To further emphasise the way that Las Meninas plays with our perceptions of viewer and subject, a pop-out enables us to view from the other side of the canvas, and a mirror image makes us feel that we are inside the picture itself.

There is no doubt that this book will help readers to thoroughly understand and appreciate Las Meninas, as well as making them want to see the work itself. It will also equip them to look at other works of art with a more knowledgeable eye and a fresh perspective. The information is organised in an accessible format, which lends itself equally to browsing or to in depth study. Overall, this book would make an inspired teaching aid, and it is also recommended for pure enjoyment. It is an excellent candidate for translation, as it brings one of the most famous and universal works of Spanish art to life for young readers, their parents and teachers, as well as encouraging all of us to use our eyes and to question everything.