In 1660 David Teniers published the extraordinary Theatrum Pictorium, the first illustrated catalogue ever of a collection of paintings, which brings together text and image to represent 243 Italian paintings from the collection of Archduke Leopold-William, governor of the Low Countries under Spanish rule. The paintings are described in Latin, Spanish, French and German, and are minutely reproduced. With this book, not only was the museum made accessible, portable and reproducible, but there emerged a new and unique object located at the intersection of the spheres of art and writing and, significantly, between the space of the museum and that of the library.

This lecture will explore how the Theatrum Pictorium can serve as a paradigm of the unmistakable influence of art in literary fiction of the Hispanic Baroque by taking into consideration the enormous importance of the collections or proto-museums as spaces, in which an interest in painting and visual language emerged and pervaded all social strata.