

Joost Vander Auwera and Irene Schaudies, eds. *Jordaens and the Antique*. Exh. Cat. Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, and Fridericianum, Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel. Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2012. 320 pp. \$65. ISBN: 978-0-300-18871-4.

Jacob Jordaens has long been considered a painter of the Flemish people — someone who took an uncomplicated view of everyday life in such cheerful pictures as *The King Drinks* and *As the Old Sing, the Young Pipe* — and a follower of Rubens, although one who lacked the erudition to take on learned subjects. But *Jordaens and the Antique*, the catalogue accompanying the exhibition shown in 2012 and 2013 in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels and in the Fridericianum Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, reveals Jordaens's oeuvre in a totally different light, viz. from the point of view of the deep interest in classical antiquity that this Antwerp master evidently had.

In concise essays and associated catalogue texts, the book follows the construction of the exhibition, which on the basis of nine themes brings out the way that Jordaens incorporated into his work the heritage of classical antiquity. It is a splendid book, spacious in design and with fine illustrations. Also, the reference illustrations are mostly allowed a generous format and are

printed in color. The exhibition and the book justifiably claim that they are presenting Jordaens in a new light. In the young Belgian state in the nineteenth century, the image was created of Jordaens as the painter of the Flemish people, and only then was his name changed from the French Jacques to the Flemish equivalent of Jacob.

Just how anachronistic the image is of Jordaens as a popular counterpart to the learned Rubens is evident from Jordaens having painted for important royals and princes: for the Swedish and English royal houses and for Amalia van Solms he painted in the Oranjezaal of Huis ten Bosch. His correspondence over the latter commission shows how assured Jordaens was in his knowledge of antiquity. He proposed a number of changes to the design earlier made by Jacob van Campen, partly because in his view the depiction of classical personages and architecture was incorrect. Justus Lange shows that also in the eighteenth century it was in fact mainly for his classical subjects that Jordaens was highly regarded.

Jordaens himself never visited Italy, but this was no impediment to a thorough knowledge of classical antiquity, as Irene Schaudies demonstrates. Important classical authors were available in translation, drawings and prints of sculptures and reliefs circulated, and antiquities were also obtainable in Antwerp. Time after time, Jordaens resorted to the classical themes of the Triumph of Bacchus, Satyr and Peasant, Psyche, and Abundance. It is argued that there were erudite philosophical insights lurking behind these apparently popular scenes. Careful analysis of the elements of these images shows that Jordaens also used the classical texts themselves. It becomes clear that it was not only the work of Rubens that served him as inspiration, but also, for example, that of Abraham Janssen. We see too how frequently and skillfully Jordaens borrowed elements from classical sculptures and reliefs. The relation that Joost Vander Auweren brings out between Jordaens's early compositions — with strongly sculptural and full groups of figures, parallel with the image plane and standing with feet placed on the bottom edge of the painting — and the reliefs on Roman sarcophagi is particularly illuminating.

Sometimes, and this mainly applies to the catalogue texts, there is almost an excessive emphasis on comparison with classical or contemporary examples. Not only are some of these comparisons more convincing than others, but it is a pity that the image of Jordaens and his artistic circle remain somewhat unidimensional as a result. The impression is given of an artist who only reacted to other works of art. In short, one misses the public. For which patrons or buyers were these images intended? To what extent did they determine the subject matter and did Jordaens respond to their wishes? We learn too little about this aspect. Just occasionally, and this refers mainly to the contributions of Joost Vander Auwera, the public does play a role. When this occurs, interesting points of view are opened: for instance, that the painting with Pan and Syrinx made around 1620 coincided with a popular play of the time; or that Jordaens's allegories of fertility were bought by a very wealthy and erudite public. Koenraad Brosens's essay on Jordaens's tapestry series is also

insightful, with its attention to the complex relation among designer, producer, and clientele. It is these essays addressing Jordaens's public that particularly evoke a desire to have more such research, of which one hopes this fine and interesting catalogue will be a stimulus.

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