Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Fall of the Rebel Angels: *Art, Knowledge and Politics on the Eve of the Dutch Revolt*. Tine Luk Meganck.
Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2014. 200 pp. €28.

In Tine Meganck's original new book, Bruegel's *Fall of the Rebel Angels* (1562) becomes a prism through which a variety of Netherlandish cultural phenomena are viewed. Most originally, Meganck considers Bruegel's painting as a register of the growing knowledge of the world that captivated so many educated Europeans. Bruegel's detailed and enormously varied references to natural creations — though corrupted at the fall from heaven — are seen as related to the *Wunderkammer* that began to proliferate among the literate elite. The references to exotic animals — presented in fragments and recombined into Boschian hybrid forms — are linked to sixteenth-century interest in the world's disparate and surprising fauna, which were explored in a number of contemporary publications.

Meganck notes that this hunger for knowledge embraced leading artists of the time. During his visit to the Netherlands in 1521, Albrecht Dürer visited the palace of Count Hendrik III of Nassau in Brussels, where he noted a meteorite, Aztec realia, and other "curiosities" that the count had collected. Natural wonders drew particular attention. Lambert Lombard, the leading painter of Liège, drew an armadillo. His pupil Frans Floris, Antwerp's great history painter, included a mongoose in a family portrait. Meganck links Bruegel to a network of scholars and dilletantes particularly interested in zoology and botany. She observes that Bruegel's principal contact in Italy, the Bolognese doctor Scipio Fabius, was a noted naturalist. Fabio, in turn, was related to the famous Ulisse Aldrovandi, who has been considered the father of natural history. And Aldrovandi was an acquaintance of the Antwerper Samuel Quiccheberg, who moved to Bavaria, where he wrote the first account of a *Kunstkammer*, the *Inscriptiones vel Tituli Theatri Amplissimi* of 1565 — appearing three years after Bruegel painted his *Fall of the Rebel Angels*. Meganck sees Bruegel's references to this more scholarly and educational interest in exotic natural forms as a type of serious joke, along the lines of Eramus's *Praise of Folly*.

Meganck places a certain weight on Bruegel's move to Brussels from Antwerp in 1563. The change of cities brought him closer to the renowned tapestry workshops of Brussels, and Meganck convincingly posits a relation between his inventions and the tapestry designs of his putative teacher, Pieter Coecke van Aelst, in particular. Hans Sedlmayr and others have suggested an interest in Bruegel's part in tapestry, but mostly on formal grounds — Bruegel's reliance on broad fields of color in his later peasant paintings for example (Bruegel's *Macchia*, in Sedlmayr's words). But Meganck sees more an iconographic and compositional relation between Bruegel's picture and certain of Coecke's tapestries — most notably, his series the *Seven Deadly Sins*. Bruegel's move to Brussels also brought him closer to the court and the leading noble families, who were most likely to share an elevated interest in curiosities and *Wunderkammer*. Among these

was Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle, prime minister to Margaret of Parma and a prominent patron of the arts. Granvelle owned paintings by Bruegel, Titian, Frans Floris, Albrecht Dürer, and other notables, and he fought with William of Orange over ownership of Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*. He possessed many tapestries, including two series of the Apocalypse that would seem closely allied to Bruegel's painting of the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*. And Granvelle also owned representations of *naturalia*, including a painting of a South American guinea pig.

In the final section of the book, Meganck examines the possibility of political significance. Was Bruegel's *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, a subject commonly used to illustrate the consequences of pride, seen as a reference to the growing political tension in the Low Countries on the "eve of the Revolt"? Meganck notes that Luther could be represented as a new Lucifer. Were the rebels against Philip II, the Gueux, associated with the rebellious angels, she asks. For many reasons, Meganck thinks it possible that Granvelle may have been the owner of Bruegel's picture. At the very least, she suggests that Bruegel toes an orthodox, Habsburg political line in pictures like the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, executed after his move to the court city. This view of Bruegel as a "princely" painter, Meganck notes, goes very much against the traditional view of Bruegel as a painter of the people.

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