

Pleasure and Piety: The Art of Joachim Wtewael. James Clifton, Liesbeth M. Helmus, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., eds. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. xxvi + 210 pp. \$65.

In a small oil painting on copper, now in the Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Joachim Wtewael depicts the *Wedding of Peleus and Thetis*, a subject to which he returned repeatedly throughout his career. Measuring approximately 14 by 16 inches, Wtewael's image teems with incident as a gathering of Olympian gods, satyrs, and putti engage in all kinds of festivity. The painter has ordered the densely packed array of gracefully disposed figures, animals, and objects, including foodstuffs and finely crafted vessels and furniture, to give us a view into the deep background where a subsequent event, the Judgment of Paris, is occurring. The picture invites and richly rewards close, sustained scrutiny while displaying the multiple forms of appeal it would have had for seventeenth-century collectors. Situated among the paintings and drawings comprising the first exhibition devoted exclusively to this artist, much admired in his era, the *Peleus and Thetis* assists in demonstrating Wtewael's inventive pictorial wit and dazzling command of multiple subjects, genres, formats, and media. *Pleasure and Piety: The Art of Joachim Wtewael* is the handsomely produced catalogue of the exhibition, a collaboration among the Centraal Museum, Utrecht; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The catalogue opens with a brisk overview of Wtewael's life and workshop followed by five short essays. Anne Lowenthal, author of numerous scholarly publications on Wtewael, including her authoritative 1986 monograph on the artist, discusses his translation of and experimentation with the refined courtly style of his contemporaries Hendrick Goltzius and Abraham Bloemart. Liesbeth Helmens focuses on the allure, and subsequent censorship, of Wtewael's multiple images of *Venus and Mars Surprised by Vulcan*, in which comic and erotic effects are brilliantly intertwined. James Clifton situates Wtewael's sacred pictures within the pluralistic religious climate in Wtewael's native Utrecht, which by 1580 was officially Calvinist but retained a large Catholic population, arguing that the artist's own conversion from Catholicism to the conservative Counter-Reonstrant faction of the Reformed Church had little effect on his work. Instead, in Clifton's account, Wtewael's sacred images generally featured subjects like the Adoration of the Shepherds that would have had broad ecumenical appeal and were produced within a confessionally diverse "community of artists [that] was as important as any community of faith" (29). Arthur Wheelock tracks the trajectory of Wtewael's reputation, especially in terms of the waning taste for his mannerist style over the course of the seventeenth century and beyond. Stijn Alsteen deftly contends with a small body of securely attributed drawing to assess the functions of Wtewael's works on paper, a thorny and hence largely neglected topic. In addition to these essays the catalogue includes full color illustrations and catalogue entries for over fifty paintings and a small selection of drawings. While some of the entries are limited to technical data and provenance, others include brief discussions and comparative material. The scholarly efficacy of the book is unfortunately hampered by the lack of a "literature" category in the entries, requiring the reader to move between the essay notes, catalogue entries, and bibliography to track the scholarship on discrete works.

The first major publication on Wtewael's art since Lowenthal's monograph, *Pleasure and Piety* both draws renewed attention to this particular figure and contributes to our understanding of the diverse practices and varied tastes at play in the dynamic world of Dutch visual culture in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Equally importantly, it invites further consideration of topics beyond the rubrics of pleasure (mythological subjects) and piety (sacred ones), such as profit and politics. For example, as noted briefly in several of the essays, Wtewael's considerable wealth derived principally from his successful flax business, allowing him to act as a distinct kind of artist-entrepreneur during a period of the commercialization of the arts in the Netherlands. Similarly, his oeuvre provokes further consideration of the diversity of visual registers operating during this period for the narration of the Dutch Revolt and the representation of its political ideals. Moreover, the catalogue's generously scaled illustrations provide the visual delight that alone will surely attract new audiences to Wtewael's work.

Lisa Rosenthal, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*