

examination of specific humorous depictions to reconcile the seemingly contradictory aspects of derision and devotion. In the second chapter, she draws more deeply into the common tropes of Saint Joseph as a doddering fool, henpecked husband, or cuckold, linking them to the profane traditions of humor and play, as well as the medieval concept of inversion or world upside-down. This approach is deepened in the following chapters, where Josephine imagery is placed more securely into the broader context of contemporary sources of humor and satire. Williams asserts the fundamental argument that laughter and humor did not challenge Joseph's sanctity, but rather were signs of the strength of his veneration. In chapter 3, Williams focuses specifically on how humor and laughter function in religious and devotional imagery, and posits a richly complex, multivalent reading of Saint Joseph through an examination of poetics and rhetorical concepts. In doing so, she further supports her argument that derisive images of the saintly figure exemplify a notion of veneration through laughter. She notes significantly that this use of humor is not simply a mechanism for connecting to the low or uneducated audiences of the laity, but also served the highly educated elite and religious as well. In her final chapter, Williams deepens the argument to access the multiple layers of meaning that might speak in an image to a variety of viewers, both lay and religious. This multivalence is explored to achieve a more complex understanding of how late medieval and early modern religious imagery functioned for its audiences.

Williams successfully reconciles the opposing ideals of ridicule, derision, and humor with reverence, veneration, and devotion, and in doing so reminds us that religious imagery functioned on multiple levels and drew diverse sources. Through this well-argued and well-supported study, Williams has contributed significantly to our knowledge of Josephine imagery and Saint Joseph's cult. Its larger contribution can be found in the insistence that religious imagery functioned more complexly than scholars typically are able to access. Through careful analysis of the imagery, the use of a much broader collection of sources, and a deeper examination of poetics and rhetoric within the specific cultural context of early modern humor, Williams provides a highly nuanced model for understanding how religious imagery functioned for early modern audiences.

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Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Religious Art for the Urban Community.

Barbara A. Kaminska.

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xiv + 242 pp. €121.

Over the past decade a young generation of art historians has substantially redirected the study of the art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Instead of examining the artist's

intentions—which can only be the subject of speculation for this most undocumented of major artists—these scholars have turned their attention to a subject that is much more amenable to research: the reception of Bruegel's panels among the upper echelons of art patrons in mid-sixteenth-century Antwerp. Barbara A. Kaminska's *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Religious Art for the Urban Community* fits squarely into this compelling approach. Perhaps as a result of the previous generation's emphasis on peasant Bruegel, the majority of recent scholarship has focused on Bruegel's secular subjects. Instead, as her title indicates, this author concentrates on six of his religious panels. It is a fruitful perspective given those turbulent years.

Kaminska conjectures that Bruegel's audience discerned that religious orthodoxy was no longer perceived to be the prerequisite of a peaceful polis. Consequently, a dogmatic public spirituality was replaced with a more discursive, contemplative one. She divides Bruegel's religious panels into two categories: the large-scale narratives intended for semi-public domestic spaces (the *Vienna Tower of Babel*, the *Conversion of Saint Paul*, the *Procession to Calvary*, the *Sermon of Saint John the Baptist*) and the smaller, more intimate grisailles (*Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* and the *Death of the Virgin*). Whether Bruegel was consciously reviving the pictorial tradition of biblical imagery, as the author asserts, or instead acceding to the demands of imperious patrons, or both, is, finally, unknowable. However, Kaminska's book will prove to be a valuable resource for the evidence gathered in support of her thesis. Our understanding of the perceptual habits that Bruegel's contemporary viewers brought to these panels is considerably enriched by it.

Like her predecessors, the author situates the large-scale panels within the context of the *convivia*, or banquets like the fictive one Erasmus describes in his *Godly Feast*, which was inspired, in part, by the dinners he had attended in the palatial home of the Flemish humanist Jerome van Busleyden. Busleyden died in 1517, the same year that the wealthy Antwerp entrepreneur Nicolaes Jongelinck was born. In his suburban villa that housed Bruegel's series of the *Months* as well as his *Tower of Babel*, Jongelinck assuredly hosted banquets for his mercantile colleagues. Consensus reigns among Bruegel scholars that in all probability Bruegel's panels hung in the dining room for guests to contemplate, comment upon, and debate, much like Erasmus had described. But mid-century Antwerp was a far more unsettled community than it had been in Erasmus's lifetime. We know nothing of Bruegel's formal education and have very little insight into his affluent beholders' proclivity to discern contentious subject matter in seemingly innocuous imagery. The analogy between the reception of Bruegel's images and the writings of one of the most erudite humanists of the century assumes a level of discourse that we have scant documentation to support.

On the other hand, Kaminska is the first Bruegel scholar to pursue the analogy between his paintings and the popular *tafelspelen*, or short plays written by rhetoricians and performed by two or three characters before, during, or after a festive meal or gathering in a guild hall. Here the issue is less a question of education or common

knowledge; rather, it pertains to analogous patterns of perception and reception. In many of these concise dramas the playwright broke through what was to become known centuries later as the fourth wall, that unseen barrier between the players and the spectators. In the rhetorician Cornelis Everaert's play *Sint Lasant*, for example, the actors query the members of the audience, soliciting their counsel on spiritual issues. A disinterested spectatorship did not appear to be an option. Much like leafing through a collection of emblems, the beholder is prevailed upon to respond, to resort to his or her wits in order to find connections between disparate elements. As Kaminska notes, such an invitation to an individual reply "might have even formed a prelude to a convivial discussion of the paintings on display" (138). It is a convincing context for these willfully enigmatic panels.

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Ad Vivum? Visual Materials and the Vocabulary of Life-Likeness in Europe before 1800. Thomas Balfe, Joanna Woodall, and Claus Zittel, eds.

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The eleven essays in this volume stem from a 2014 conference at the Courtauld Institute of Art on uses of the term *ad vivum* and its vernacular cognates (*from life*, *al vivo*, *au vif*, *nach dem Leben*, and *naar het leven*) across the early modern period in Europe. The volume usefully brings together material from England, Italy, France, and Germany, though there is a particular emphasis on the concept's use in the Low Countries, where notions of *ad vivum* were influentially elaborated in Karel van Mander's *Het Schilder-boeck* (1604). Case-study essays examine how *ad vivum* was used to qualify images and artworks in representational contexts as varied as botanical and anatomical illustration, city views, panel painting, pedagogy, and religious devotion. Arranged chronologically, the contributions chart shifts and overlaps in the functions of the term as a guarantor of reliable representation as well as an indicator of lifelikeness or enlivenment, and as a prompt toward particular modes of viewing and knowing. *Ad vivum* thus emerges as a textual supplement that negotiated between claims by and about images, on the one hand, and anxieties about human mediation in their making and reception, on the other.

The editors raise two questions that thread through the contributions: what is the "life" referenced in *ad vivum*, and what roles did the artist play in relation to *ad vivum* representation? As a pendant to their introduction, Robert Felfe's essay examines the historiography of the term and gives an overview of the main image types in which it had purchase: portraits, landscapes, *naturalia*, and castings and prints from nature.