

Ute Elisabeth Flieger. *Bürgerstolz und Wollgewerbe: Der Bilderzyklus des Isaac Claesz. van Swanenburg (1537–1614) in der Lakenhal von Leiden*. Münsteraner Schriften zur Volkskunde / Europäischen Ethnologie 16. Munster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2010. 146 pp. illus. bibl. €29.90. ISBN: 978–3–8309–2256–8.

The finishing and processing of wool had a 200-year history in Leiden before its waning in the late fifteenth century. By 1570, wool production was a mere one-seventh of what it had been seventy years earlier, and this decline devastated the local economy. The Dutch Revolt, however, resulted in the migration of textile workers from the southern to the northern provinces of the Low Countries after 1575. This immigration transformed the city's stagnant wool industry by introducing a new production focus, a blended material called *saai* (serge), which fueled the city's recovery in the subsequent decades. The serge guild's commission to Isaac Claesz. van Swanenburg (1537–1614) for seven paintings (1594–1612) to decorate its guild hall memorializes this economic rejuvenation and shift in manufacturing identity. Flieger examines these paintings — only six of which survive, four illustrating the process of serge manufacture and two celebrating the industry through allegory — as reflections of this transitional moment.

The strength of Flieger's self-described Panofskyian analysis is that she considers these works as documents of Leiden's history rather than as aesthetic objects. She employs accounts of textile production, writings on social networks, and studies of the city's markets to reconstruct the historical circumstances that informed the paintings' imagery. While some of this material had been uncovered previously, Flieger adds to this context by emphasizing the contribution of Swanenburg, who was not only an artist but also burgomaster and a draper's grandson. She contends that this combination of roles imbued him with the knowledge to create such rich illustrations of the new cloth trade.

With this information, the author demonstrates how Swanenburg faithfully depicted the world around him and also how he manipulated that reality in the name of civic pride. Her comparison of the loom and spinning wheels in *Spinning and Weaving* (1594–96) with images by Maerten van Heemskerck (1498–1574)

and a surviving instrument in Leiden's Stedelijk Museum, for example, reveals that Swanenburg's painting is a conscientious illustration of contemporary technology. Furthermore, the prominence of women in this scene attests to the division of labor by gender in serge production. The background of *Fulling and Dyeing* (1594–96) shows dyers stirring a large cauldron heated by a fire, and the author demonstrates that the cherry-colored tint of the contents corresponds to documented practices, for the color red demanded the highest temperatures for dyeing. Even the presence of Leiden's burgomasters in *The Granting of the Statutes to Industry* (1596–1601) evokes the glory of the local government while also trumpeting its role in the industry's quality control.

In spite of the grounding of these images in historical accuracy, Swanenburg made certain modifications to achieve his objective of "praising the city and industry." In the four paintings of manufacturing, for instance, Flieger observes that the participants wear colorful burgher attire, which would have been impractical for activities involving dyeing agents but also highly unlikely in a poor city experiencing economic recovery. She argues convincingly that Swanenburg made this choice to demonstrate the prosperity and equality that the serge industry had brought to Leiden. This crafted display of civic pride continues in the graceful gestures and consistently young miens of the workers, and it culminates in God blessing the new industry in *The Maiden of Leiden between Old and New Industry* (1596–1601). The author proposes early on that no image can objectively depict reality, but her ethnological analysis sheds light on serge manufacture in Leiden around 1600 so as to define the boundaries between authenticity and propaganda.

Directed toward an intellectual but non-art historical audience, the volume's concise format and thorough analysis secure the author's contribution to the literature on Swanenburg. The only criticism that the book warrants is its inefficient apparatus. It contains a useful glossary of Dutch terms, but it lacks in-text references to the illustrations. Furthermore, none of the paintings are reproduced with details, which would have been of great benefit to the reader. As a thorough contextualization of Swanenburg's most famous commission, however, this book highlights the unique perspective that the artist-burgomaster brought to the series to ensure the pride of Leiden and its new industry.

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