

Bernd Ebert. *Simon und Isaack Luttichuys: Monographie mit kritischem Werkverzeichnis*.

Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009. 790 pp. index. append. illus. tbls. map. bibl. €148. ISBN: 978-3-422-06815-5.

Bernd Ebert's *Simon und Isaack Luttichuys: Monographie mit kritischem Werkverzeichnis* is magisterial. As stated in the title, the 790-page volume is comprised of a monograph and catalogue raisonné — the life and work — for two artists, the brothers Simon and Isaack Luttichuys. The arrangement of the book is traditional, the scholarship meticulous, and the research comprehensive. After the introduction, the initial chapters lay out the state of scholarship, including documentary evidence and past criticism, followed by Ebert's new archival findings and biographical information. The biography includes background information on the family, on each of the brothers, and on their place in society and the Amsterdam art world. Though it makes for a somewhat unwieldy outsize volume, the combined catalogue for the brothers Luttichuys works very well. The interwoven lives and shared social context as well as problems of attribution all benefit by the brothers being considered together. This is all the more so because Ebert, more than previous scholars, conveys the complexity of their careers: Simon as a portraitist as well as a still-life painter, and Isaack as a painter of figures in landscape in addition to his more standard portraits. Ebert documents Simon's origins as a portraitist in England before his move to the Dutch Republic and his continued connections in Amsterdam with the English Reformed community in the Netherlands. By training and confession (Dutch Reformed) Isaack was more immersed in Dutch culture from an earlier age. The distinctions Ebert conveys of the training, marriages, family lives, and patronage of the two brothers provides a rich picture of the cosmopolitan artistic life in seventeenth-century Amsterdam. For this detailed account he draws on numerous English and Dutch archival and literary sources, which he transcribes in an appendix at the end of the book. This new material and his careful review of previous research and criticism provide admirable groundwork for the subsequent essays and catalogue.

The chapters on the artists' works are extremely informative; they include careful documentation of signatures and dates together with detailed examination of each man's style and technique. Ebert carefully distinguishes between the brothers' approaches and among the works at various stages in their careers. Fine color illustrations, including well-chosen details, support his description of their development. Moreover, the essays set the artists' works within the conventions of their time and in relation to similar works by their contemporaries. The discussion of Simon's early still-life paintings with their *trompe l'oeil* effects and exquisite reflections is exemplary. Within the limits of the catalogue raisonné format, Ebert addresses the complex interpretative possibilities raised by these works. Though he stresses their *vanitas* connotations, he also considers the artist's references to art and science and conveys the rich possibilities of meaning and the resultant diversity of present-day scholarly opinion. Ebert's identification of each object in these pictures and his close attention to their meticulous rendering of textures and reflections are equally pertinent in conveying the intellectual and technical power of these intriguing paintings. The range of material covered even extends to his informative excursus on the original frames that survive for a number of Isaack's portraits.

The catalogue is beautifully illustrated. The numerous color plates include judiciously chosen details that convey the stylistic distinctions and nuances of technique. In addition to the standard information — provenance, literature, description, dating, pictorial motifs, condition — almost every entry includes a useful postage stamp-size illustration. Even most of the entries for formerly attributed works include illustrations. The book's final chapters contain a wealth of documentary information: transcriptions of documents and their sources together with an informative introduction and notes; a family tree; and inventory entries with appraisals of value. By combining close attention to the brothers' individual artistic achievements with the larger context of their cosmopolitan family, training, and society, Bernd Ebert reminds us of the immense riches and complexity of seventeenth-century artistic life still to be discovered artist by artist.

CATHERINE LEVESQUE  
College of William and Mary