One or other of these sections might have thought to devote an entry to Jan Bruegel the Elder who was in Italy by 1590 and resident in Rome between 1592-95. He is known to have visited Milan in 1593 and 1596. On another front, both the Lombard and Roman chapters seem to harbour an ingrained resentment or prejudice against, or perhaps it is just plain lack of interest in, the possibility that early still lifes, and even Vincenzo Campi’s market scenes (where the evidence is abundant), might be imbued with symbolism. Lombardy boasts the earliest dateable Italian still life, a small painted Plate of Dead Game, c.1591-94, by Ambrogio Figno. An inscription on its reverse reveals that the painting expresses a vanitas theme. This picture is critical evidence that is inexplicably thrown out of court: we read that ‘il casso di Figno è troppo isolato e, in un certo senso, troppo emblematicamente letterario per poter realmente contare’. Yet, Figno’s simple composition is the archetype of Lombard still lifes, and for once we know the date. Perhaps it is unfair to criticise specialised essays for narrow viewpoints. I hope that the next edition of this book will include an essay on still life in order to answer such questions as: Where and when did independent still life painting begin in Italy? What did the earliest examples look like? Was the invention of still-life painting influenced by ancient Roman mosaics and paintings and/or references in classical texts? What were the later still-life specialists influenced by classical art or literature? Were Northern European still life paintings (documented earlier) determinative influences on the invention of still life painting in Italy? What was Jan Bruegel the Elder’s role? Were the first Italian still lifes emblematic or not? What is the earliest reference to a still life in an Italian inventory?

Zeri’s La natura morta in Italia offers five essays on specialised themes separate from the regional survey of the main text. Eugenio Battisti has written on ‘iconography of the nude’, ‘Dead Game: Vento sull’invito’, which leads in fact to several interesting observations on their meaning. The essay submitted by Alberto Veca, entitled ‘I soggetti della natura morta’, is difficult to square with its professed title, since the approach is philological, not iconographic, and twenty-four of Veca’s twenty-five illustrations turn out to be non-Italian still lifes from a private collection. Nicole Dacos, the leading expert on Giovanni da Udine, has written a valuable survey of the artist and his influence on subsequent paintings of floral festoons and grottoes. Giuseppe Olmi’s ‘Natura morta e illustrazione’, is an informed and extremely useful survey of the natural science forebears of Italian still lifes. Finally, two authors, Antonella Casazza and Marco Roesi, have contributed a statistical analysis of a random and unrepresentative selection of privately published Italian inventories. As the authors point out, their data have no significance. In this particular sample, still lifes by Rubens, Cantarini, and Canuti occur as frequently as works by Porpora, Cerquozzi, and all the Ruoppolo in Naples.

It is true that early inventories and other documents on patronage can be extremely informative sources for still-life painters, who were mostly ignored in the standard artists’ biographies. Some excellent work in this vein is published by Ludovica Trezanni in the second volume. From several unpublished inventories of Roman private collections (including Chigi, Pamphilj, and dal Pozzo) Trezanni has culled the still-life notices and drawn many interesting conclusions regarding the careers and reputations of specialists in this genre. Elsewhere, for still-life painting in Italy, Valentina Gritti presents new and illuminating insights into the decorative scheme of the Castello del Valentino. Amongst the Florentine examples are the still-life emblems of the pale of the Accademia della Crusca, which were first investigated by Mina Gregori. One critical episode of still-life patronage is inexplicably omitted, though: the cycle of musical still lifes that was commissioned from Evaristo Baschenis for the library of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice. The details of this commission, which was already mentioned in the eighteenth century by F.M. Tassi, provide the only documented date in Baschenis’s œuvre, and, given Baschenis’s importance, this now-dispersed cycle of works (one of the paintings is in the Accademia, Venice) surely qualifies as a landmark in the history of the genre. In a future edition of this book a separate essay on still-life patronage would be welcome.

In the current state of scholarship, the connoisseurship of Italian still lifes remains more art than science. Distinguishing the lemons, peaches, and figs in one black-and-white photograph from another would make even a Morelli despair. So often the original canvases are inaccessible in private collections. And certain pictures are particularly perplexing: one attractive still life of flowers and fruit (Fig.1025) has already been attributed to Andrea Belvedere, Bartolomeo Bimbi, the Neapolitan School, and Luca Parenti. Yet, with a good fit. The anonymous Master of Palazzo San Gervasio, who once was credited with pioneering still-life painting in Naples and who was placed front and centre in the Civiltà del Secolo a Napoli show five years ago, suddenly finds himself put out to pasture: no longer Neapolitan, not worthy of an entry, still not identified.

In view of these rife uncertainties, and the frequent necessity to change one's mind, many scholars would do well to tread more lightly when they beg to differ with their colleagues. After a thousand pages of this catalogue prose, ‘inaccettabile’ – the word most applied to a disputed attribution sounds positively gracious compared to phrases such as ‘del tutto improbabile’. Even the priests at the Cathedral in Toledo, Spain, are ‘assurdo’ because they have not changed the label on their Caravageguesque St John the Baptist. The vehemence with which many authors express their disagreements with other scholars is possibly indicative of youthful zeal. That time and experience will teach forbearance, I would like to hope.

JOHN T. SPIKE


In this ambitious book, David Freedberg explores the aesthetic ideology that lies behind the ‘radical disjunction between the reality of the art object and reality itself’, and that it involves the repression of emotional reactions in which the distinction between art and life is disregarded. Sexual arousal, religious adoration and violent hostility are the most dramatic examples of responses to images that are ‘of the same order as our responses to reality’, and Freedberg claims that such reactions are not confined to primitive or pathological viewers, or to extra-canonical images: were it not for the evasive strategies of critics too embarrassed to acknowledge their ‘kinship with the unlettered’, they would inform the discourse of high art as well.

As an outline sociology of aesthetics, The Power of Images is hardly original: Ortega y Gasset’s well-known essay ‘The Dehumanization of Art’ (to which Freedberg does refer), and Taine’s ‘Invention’ both argue that the defining characteristic of ‘good taste’ is indifference to the basic human concerns that preoccupy the uneducated. Unlike Bourdieu, Freedberg emphasises the rôle of aesthetic discrimination in the ideology of a professional rather than a social class. What classifying an image as ‘art’ diminishes its potency by limiting response to academic discussion, and does not investigate the possibility that the power of an image is enhanced by becoming the cultural (and often legal) property of the dominant class. Freedberg is concerned with themes that are of more importance to the people that use them than to art historians, and not with images which, unless consecrated as ‘art’, would be of little interest to anyone.

Apart from the two chapters on erotic art, and Freedberg’s study of devotional images and the significance of images in popular piety. He has an enviable familiarity with the primary and secondary sources regarding the use of images in the Christian tradition, and the central section of the book contains rich and illuminating discussions of pilgrimage, meditation and miracle. Considered simply as a study of responses to religious imagery in the medieval and early modern periods. Freedberg’s work is interesting and valuable. What makes his approach unusual is the assumption that art historians should take account of these non-aesthetic responses to visual imagery, and admit their own aggressive, erotic or devotional impulses. The iconographical traditions of western art suggest that the resulting liberation may be of special benefit to heterosexual male theists, but it is right to insist that there is something both absurd and dishonest about ignoring the erotic appeal of a nude, or the pathos of a crucifixion. Following Panofsky, the transition from the pre-iconographical level (where artistic images are interpreted in the same way as other types of visual information) to the iconographical (where they take on their

Published to coincide with the exhibition ‘The Visions of Tondal’ and Manuscripts from the Time of Margaret of York at the Getty Museum, this book reproduces in colour all the miniatures from the copy of the Visions of Tondal written for Margaret of York by David Aubert in Ghent in 1474 and now MS 30 of the Getty Museum. Translated excerpts of the manuscript and an edition of the miniatures as illustrations and reveal that, while at times the author's words were closely followed, at others a more conventional range of after-life imagery was introduced. The text is discussed in the context of the traditions and functions of visionary literature in the opening introductory essay; the other two essays consider Margaret of York, her library and patronage and the miniatures, their attribution to Simon Marmion and their place in Netherlandish illumination of the 1470s. Although the problem of reconstructing Marmion's œuvre is acknowledged, the reader is never told what constitutes the 'largely circumstantial evidence' on which illuminations have been attributed to him and it is the plates rather than the text which will contribute to the debate on whether this manuscript belongs to the œuvre and its place in the accomplishment of image reproduction. The reproductions are handsome and there are some useful comparative illustrations, including, tantalisingly, an opening from the recently acquired Prayerbook of Charles the Bold, now MS 37, held to be a documented production of the illuminator Lieven van Lathem. Let us hope that the Getty Museum will continue to share the riches of their manuscript collection and that this key work will be the subject of a similar publication.

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Publications Received


Spencer MS 50 is a small parchment manuscript, possibly made for Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici, formerly in the library of the Rev. Henry Drury (1778-1841) and then in the Collection of Sir Thomas Phillipps; it was acquired by the NYPL in one of the