

Review

Reviewed Work(s):

Rubens: The Garden of Love as "Conversatie à la mode"

by Elise Goodman

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Source: *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 136, No. 1100 (Nov., 1994), p. 779

Published by: Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/886296>

Accessed: 26-03-2019 21:07 UTC

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est, such as Winifred Nicholson sending round a roll of canvas to the impoverished Héliion in 1934 or Clement Greenberg punching Max Ernst deliberately in the eye at a party. Rather it is an account of the artistic debates which marked Héliion's career in New York and Paris, covering the impact of politics on the artist and a period of existentialist interrogation, of 'the anguish of being at once part of the world and detached from it'. There are valuable references to conversations with friends such as Mondrian, Léger, Giacometti and Balthus, but also perceptive assessments of other contemporaries, notably Picasso.

Héliion's painting, although bestriding the classic years of modernism, was also at the same time notoriously at odds with its mainstream directions. When he gradually moved from the orthogonal abstraction of the early and mid-1930s to develop a determined realism in the late 1940s and early 50s, he was exposed to long periods of critical ostracism. He is constantly at pains to explain how his ultimate subject – images of archetypal human behaviour embodied in street scenes, couples sharing an umbrella, newspaper readers, and quotidian objects, vegetables and discarded items of clothing which take on a surrogate human existence – is, in the end, a continuation of his abstract project rather than a schism from it. The *Journal* thus becomes a moving testament of the artist surviving in opposition, his moods ranging between despair, defiance and optimism. It is precisely in these entries, which tackle the essential questions of the relations between art and life, the special task and responsibilities of the artist as a particular kind of individual that much of the value of Héliion's writing lies.

In addition to providing an invaluable resource to cataloguers and students of Héliion's work and of his period in general, the *Journal*, with its often epigrammatic, but always considered and critically honest statements, could provide an encouraging voice to artists of later generations who might themselves be subjected to the experience of rejection and misunderstanding. To that end, it is to be hoped that a selection from the *Journal* might one day be available in translation and in a cheaper format.

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the river Meurthe, south-east of Nancy on the Moselle, on prime trade routes between Italy and the Low Countries, and the Low Countries and Germany, it had close contact with Champagne and great towns in the Empire.

The Dukes of Lorraine took a personal interest in both saint and church. Nicolas was considered to have contributed to the victory of Duke René II at the battle of Nancy in 1477; and the present building is reported to have been begun under the same duke's auspices in 1481. The high standing of the foundation is clear in the glass also, for the three apse windows were the gift of René, c.1508–10, and his eldest son who are represented there.

As the general introduction explains, the patronage and style of the varied glazing, carried out c.1508–44, reflect not only the interest of the dukes, but also the wealth of the merchants and their extended trading contacts. There is unusually informative documentary evidence (set out in full in an appendix), naming a number of glaziers of different origin, including Nicolas Droguet of Lyons (1510), Jacot of Toul (1510) and Valentin Bousch, probably of Strasbourg origin (1514). The later history of the glass is presented, including the sack of Franco-Swedish troops in 1635 and the attempted reconstruction of what remained in the nineteenth century.

This reconstruction survives largely intact today and offers the main challenge to the author in reassessing the status and possible interrelationships between the often-shattered and restored as well as the recorded panels. Little use can apparently be made of the iconography, which shows few unusual features (and hardly any evidence of the principal local cult). The primary tool is rather stylistic analysis, over two-thirds of the general introduction being dedicated to the identification of workshops and their origins, convincingly gathering related pieces from around the church. There are important discoveries, such as the attribution of panels of the Adoration of the Magi to the Hirschvogel workshop in Nuremberg (c.1510), to designs by Hans Süß von Kulmbach. Glaziers such as Nicolas Droguet and Valentin Bousch emerge as accomplished artistic personalities.

The catalogue section has an introduction to each group of windows, with diagrams bringing together separated panels where possible, as well as details of bibliography, history, condition, iconography, style and ornament. The descriptions of the individual panels are to the meticulous standard of the series, with restoration diagrams, the result of close observation from scaffolding between 1984 and 1988. The book is very well illustrated, but there are no references to the illustrations anywhere in the text. This strange omission makes the general introduction particularly difficult to follow, focusing as it does on stylistic analysis. The price is not unreasonable for the high quality of the production.

TIM AYERS

François 1^{er} et ses artistes. By Cécile Scailliérez. 161 pp. incl. 8 col.pls. + 133 b. & w. ills. (Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 1992), FF250. ISBN 2-7118-2382-2.

This useful volume, one of the *Monographies des musées de France*, deals with François 1^{er} and his collection, as represented in the various departments of the Louvre. The observations on individual works are prefaced by an account of François's connexion with the Louvre, followed by a study of the king's collection itself. This has much detail in diplomatic gifts, on the rôle of Italian intermediaries and on the artists sent to Italy to acquire works of art for the king (here, however, Caroline Elam's contribution on Battista Della Palla in 'Art and Diplomacy in Renaissance Florence', *Journal of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts*, CXXXVI, 1988, esp.pp.821–823, was unfortunately overlooked). The introduction, which gives a general but informative account of the issues treated, is followed by 66 catalogue entries, almost half of them dealing with images of the king, from the earliest por-

traits in the Louvre to nineteenth-century historical treatments of the life of the sovereign by artists like Gros, Revoil and Ingres. Then come works which belonged to the King, today in the Louvre: celebrated paintings by Leonardo, Fra Bartolomeo and Raphael for example, but also sculptures and lesser known works, such as the 'Côte de Bretagne', a 206-carat ruby which was still uncarved when it entered François's collection, after his marriage to Claude de France. The third section of the catalogue, finally, deals with preparatory drawings for the decorations at Fontainebleau.

JEAN MICHEL MASSING

Versailles: French Court Style and its Influence. Edited by H.C. Collinson. 214 pp. + 51 b. & w. pls. (University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies, Toronto, 1992). ISBN 0-7727-7550.

The edited texts of 14 lectures presented at the annual Decorative Arts Institute in Toronto in 1992 focus more on the influence of Versailles than the Château itself. Catherine Arminjon writes on the drawings for Versailles silver now in Stockholm, Renier Baarsen on Dutch silver and furniture, Geoffrey de Bellaigue on Carlton House, Meredith Chilton on Chelsea vases, Claire le Corbeiller on Saint-Cloud porcelain, Kimerley Rorschach on gardens and Guy Walton on diplomatic gifts.

D.B.

Rubens: The Garden of Love as "Conversatie à la mode", by Elise Goodman. x pp. + 199 pp. incl. 1 col.pl. + 66 b. & w. ills. Oculi: Studies in the Arts of the Low Countries, IV. (John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1992). ISBN 90-272-5334-X (Europe); 1-55619-269-X (USA).

This book, which originated as a thesis and was later developed into a substantial article in the *Art Bulletin*, provides a stimulating account of the iconography of the *Garden of Love* or *Conversatie à la mode* as Goodman would prefer to call it. Although the author takes this painting as her point of departure and return, she is as much concerned with the depiction of women in mid-seventeenth-century literature and graphic art. She begins by rejecting various allegorical and neoplatonic readings that have been proposed for the picture, and focusing on it as a depiction of 'people who amuse themselves and are engaged in the social interplay of the sexes' (p.5).

Goodman goes much further than is usual in arguing that Rubens became an ardent francophile in the 1630s, proposing that the men and women in the *Garden of Love* behave according to the precepts of French etiquette books, for which she finds confirmation in some verses by Jan Davidsz. de Heem (the still-life painter), appended to engravings after it (though dated some thirty years after it was painted). Not all aspects of this supposed French influence are convincing; that Rubens's set out to get hold of books by French authors does not necessarily mean he approved of them, and there is more polite irony in some of Rubens's letters than Goodman allows. The idea of Peiresc as a devoted intimate of Mme de Rambouillet's salon (p.28) stretches credulity; Rubens and Peiresc corresponded over many things but not the latest French fashion and amorous verses.

Unfortunately, Goodman provides no account of how Rubens established meaning and expected his work to be read, losing sight of Rubens's consistent taste for mixing genre with mythology.

The book's usefulness is undermined by a failure to provide details of the picture, but it will serve to extend the study of Rubens's subject-matter into new, and thought-provoking areas.

JEREMY WOOD

Publications Received

Les Vitraux de Saint-Nicolas-de-port, Corpus Vitrearum, France, VIII/1. By Michel Hérold. 220 pp. incl. 32 col.pls. + 216 b. & w. ills. (CNRS, Paris, 1993), FF480. ISBN 2-222-04735-8.

This volume catalogues the most important surviving group of late medieval stained glass in Lorraine, varied in style, but often of exceptional quality, in a building of great historic significance. The former priory church of St-Nicolas-de-Port gained fame and wealth through possession of a relic of St Nicholas. A flourishing town had grown up around it by the fifteenth century, trading primarily in cloth. Lying on