

Sheila McTighe. *Representing from Life in Seventeenth-century Italy*. Amsterdam University Press, 2020. 251 pp. 67 illus. \$ 136.00. Review by RUTH SARGENT NOYES, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF DENMARK.

This monograph by Sheila McTighe, Senior Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, takes up the theme of images designated as from, to or after (the) life (hereafter: From Life)—otherwise known as according to the terminology *ad vivum* and its multilingual iterations such as *dal* (or *al*) *vivo*, *dal natural*, *au vif*, *au naturel*, *d'après nature*, *nach dem Leben*, and *naer het* (or *nae't*) *leven*—in the context of early modern Italian art of the early- to mid-seventeenth century, widely-recognized for its naturalism. The book focuses on approaches representing From Life by both native Italians and migrant artists from northern Europe who worked in Italy, with special attention to the court centers of Rome and Florence, through the art of Caravaggio, etchings and graphic works of Jacques Callot and Claude Lorrain (as well as their acolytes and collaborators), and the works of Flemish and Dutch artists like Pieter van Laer who were members of the so-called *Bentvueghels* and *Bamboccianti*. In the most transcultural and trans-media study of the phenomenon of From Life picturing to date, *Representing from Life in Seventeenth-century Italy* investigates across works in print, graphic media, and painting to reveal new aspects of the artistic practice of a diverse cadre of artists in international Italian milieu and the critical implications of depicting *dal vivo* in Italy (and beyond) as a self-conscious departure from the norms of Italian arts, inflecting concepts of artistry and authorship, authority of images as sources of knowledge, boundaries between repetition and invention, and relations between images and words. As a self-conscious heir and corrective to prior scholarship on notions of From Life pictorial praxes (on which see more below), which have overwhelmingly focused on northern European art (above all prints) and issues of epistemology (especially in regards to the natural world) to the exclusion of other cultural spheres, media, and motivations, this book restores richness and multifaceted complexity to the phenomenon, reframing it as a polysemous mode of picturing and unfolding the different utilities of representing From Life that served a range of meta-artistic, socio-political and cultural interests and agendas both

individual and collective.

Chapter 1, “Caravaggio’s Physiognomy,” revisits the long-standing question (dating back to biographer Giovan Pietro Bellori) of Caravaggio’s supposed (over)reliance on painting directly from posed models. This chapter maps investigation of period physiognomic discourse that analogized human and animal facial morphologies against recent studies of his painting technique that enable the virtual excavation of his multi-layered process to reveal earlier compositional layers beneath the surface of his paintings. McTighe discloses deep paradoxes and meta-artistic inflections of Caravaggio’s realism, shedding light on one level on his choice and repetition of certain models across his lifelong oeuvre, and on another his altering of models’ facial features from underpainting to finished work, bringing new insight to some canonical works.

The second chapter, “Jacques Callot, Drawing Dal Vivo around 1620: Commerce in Florence, Piracy on the High Seas,” turns from painting to print-making and the graphic arts, and from the turn-of-the-century papal Roman to the Florentine Medicean milieu during the early Seicento, taking up questions of why, how, and to what ends Flemish practices of drawing from life were cultivated at the Medici court. As a case study in the ambit of Lorenese Jacques Callot and Neapolitan Filippo Napoletano, Chapter 2 explores these and other court artists’ emulative and performative output characterized by pictorial strategies of eye-witnessing, particularly representations of Medici court festivities and Tuscan as well as Mediterranean topographies in service to Grand Duke Cosimo II and propagandistic ends promulgating the Tuscan Grand Duchy’s prosperous regulation of urban commerce and military supremacy over the Mediterranean coasts. A highlight of this chapter is a re-reading of Callot’s renowned 1620 etching of *The Fair at Impruneta*. Chapter 3, “Jacques Callot’s *Capricci di varie figure* (1617): The Allusive Imagery of the Everyday, Represented ‘from Life’ and Emulating a Text,” presents a microhistorical case study of Callot’s enigmatic series of fifty diminutive etchings dedicated to the dissolute young Prince Lorenzo di Ferdinando I de’ Medici. Taking up a reconstructive approach similar to that brought to bear on Caravaggio’s multi-layered canvases in Chapter 1, McTighe’s analytical recourse to the print series in its original bound format

enables an interpretation of the *Capricci* through the Erasmian lens of the Mirrors of Princes genre to clarify how Callot's marshalling of From Life pictorial modes formed and informed the etchings' theatrical and often vulgar, yet edifying and witty sequential narrativistic unfolding.

"The Motif of the Shooting Man, and Capturing the Urban Scene: Claude Lorrain and the *Bamboccianti*," the book's fourth chapter, returns to Rome in the 1630s, and further expands the book's trans-cultural purview by exploring the practices of preparing landscapes, genre and urban scenes From Life in the works of the Lorrenese painter, Pieter van Laer (nicknamed *Bamboccio*) and other members of the so-called *Bentvueghels* and *Bamboccianti*, loosely associated cadres of Northern migrant artists working in the Italian (primarily Roman) ambit around mid-century. The chapter turns around the author's in-depth excursus of the period expression *tirer au vif*—meaning both "to shoot live prey" and "to portray from life," implying the "pulling" of an image or tracing of a likeness from a present prototype—against the geometrically contrived perspectival structures employed by this circle of artistic compatriots, to argue that these and "even Claude's later Arcadian landscapes were grounded in a particular notion of depicting from life" (179). Chapter 5, "The absent eyewitness: the *Revolt of Masaniello* and depiction *dal vivo* in the middle of the seventeenth century," is conceived as another case study around a single work by Pieter van Laer's Italian follower Michelangelo Cerquozzi, a celebrated topographic view of the market in Naples' piazza del Carmine framing a scene of the 1648 Neapolitan popular uprising, painted for consumption by an elite Roman viewership. Redounding this analysis of Cerquozzi's painting against the earlier account of Callot's *Fair at Impruneta* and period printed siege views, McTighe re-visits conflicting claims surrounding *Revolt of Masaniello's* status as a proto-journalistic first-hand depiction or an instantiation of absent witnessing resonating notions of From Life image-making to consider broader reconciliations of concepts of pictures' self-professed (topographical) accuracy and the reconstructive methods by which such pictures were manufactured in this period on both sides of the Alps.

As alluded to in the book's Introduction (31–32) and closing chapter (203), McTighe's study furnishes a long-overdue realization of a crucial but mostly overlooked axis of research raised in Peter Parshall's

seminal and oft-cited 1993 article “*Imago contrafacta*: Images and Facts in the Northern Renaissance,” published in *Art History*, which has in the nearly three decades since remained largely unpursued. Namely, Parshall’s recourse to an image produced by an artist of Northern European origin (Israhel van Meckenem) made in or after a sacred subject in Italy (the so-called *Imago Pietatis* icon in the church of Santa Croce di Gerusalemme in Rome), as possibly the first reproductive print and paradigm of a certain species of picture (the “counterfeit” image) that subsumed claims regarding its own origins in the presence of the subject through the artist’s first-hand, objective eye-witnessing. Attending to multicultural aspects of Rome and Florence as centers of courtly and touristic life that inherently attracted a diverse cadre of artists, it is as if McTighe is circling back to fulfill Parshall’s proleptic gesture to Meckenem’s *Imago Pietatis*. McTighe thereby not only succeeds in decoupling From Life image-making from the purview of a particular cultural sphere, but also demonstrates that this mode could attain its fullest hermeneutical potential in crucibles of cultural interaction, where different artistic traditions comingled to the point of inextricability.

Similarly, McTighe’s study also provides a welcome and timely counterpoint to the recent volume of papers titled *Ad vivum? Visual Materials and the Vocabulary of Life-Likeness in Europe before 1800*, edited by Thomas Balfe, Joanna Woodall, and Claus Zittel, and published by Brill in 2019. While their respective publishing timelines did not allow for these books to explicitly engage with each other, McTighe’s Introduction acknowledges the other volume, which derived from a conference where McTighe also participated, although they did not contribute to *Ad vivum?* (30). Implicitly, these two nearly contemporaneous works enter into (and can be productively read in) mutual conversation, with *Representing from Life in Seventeenth-century Italy* offering a valuable corrective in several respects to the Brill volume, as the latter, following conventions established by Parshall, focuses on primarily (though not exclusively) Northern European art and aspects of the subject related to questions of early modern epistemology and the study of nature.

Representing from Life in Seventeenth-century Italy will be a valuable resource to art historians interested in the now decades-long corpus

of scholarship taking up the issue of questions of From Life picturing, regardless of geographical focus, and more broadly to scholars of the early modern period concerned with notions of verisimilitude, accuracy, reproductivity, and naturalism in the arts. Instructors of seventeenth-century art will find the first chapter on Caravaggio especially helpful for refreshing approaches to this canonical artist, and the volume is accessible for advanced undergraduate and graduate-level students in the field.

Joshua Calhoun. *The Nature of the Page: Poetry, Papermaking, and the Ecology of Texts in Renaissance England*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. xii + 212 pp. + 30 illus. \$55.00. Review by CYNDIA SUSAN CLEGG, PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY.

In his “Reminders” (epilogue) to *The Nature of the Page*’s principal chapters, Joshua Calhoun concludes that “If readers of this book can never again look at paper, especially in an archival library, and see it as blank or white, then *The Nature of the Page* is at least partially successful” (153). Only in an ill reading of Calhoun’s book could one escape its success in fixing our attention on the early modern page’s plenitude. The page’s material nature—the pulp from which paper is made (whether flax, straw, or wood); the animal glue that coats/sizes the paper (or doesn’t); the detritus the paper traps—both inspired seventeenth-century writers and shaped how readers read and interpreted the words printed. This study centers upon the premise that the material page is intimately related to natural materials which, despite human efforts to shape them to our own ends, experience recurring cycles of abundance and scarcity. To illustrate this, Calhoun sketches a history of materials that record written words—from wax, to papyrus, to parchment, to paper made from rags, and later, from plants like straw and wood. At each stage abundance gives way to scarcity, which gives rise to adaptation.

This model of abundance, scarcity, and adaptation suggests that *The Nature of Page* is an ecological history of making paper. It is not, although it certainly refers its reader to important histories of paper.