

cal assumptions that came to make up the basis of Descartes' natural philosophical beliefs. More specifically, Secada skilfully examines Cartesian metaphysics in the context of the dominant Scholastic views regarding essentialism, existentialism, theology, and sense experience. For this reason, it would be a useful source for scholars wishing to establish a solid understanding of the complexities that came to make up Descartes' natural philosophy.

Ronni Baer, with contributions by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., and Annetje Boersma; ed. by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. *Gerrit Dou (1613-1675): Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*. Washington: National Gallery of Art; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000. 159 pp. \$65.00. Review by LINDA STONE-FERRIER, THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS.

Gerrit Dou (1613-1675): Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt, a beautifully illustrated, scholarly catalogue, accompanied the exhibition of the same name that opened in 2000 at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and traveled to the Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, and to the Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis, The Hague. The international loan exhibition offered the first focused look at 35 paintings by the esteemed Leiden painter, Gerrit Dou. Although the young artist trained for three years with Rembrandt, Dou's subsequent style of painting, which was referred to in his own time as *fijnschilderij*, or fine painting, differed significantly from that of his teacher by virtue of its stunning illusory and detailed effects. Dou enjoyed a lifetime of professional and commercial success as a painter of domestic scenes of mothers and their children, scholars, astronomers, artists in their studios, portraits, still lifes, and religious hermits. Later generations of collectors and critics, however, did not always find Dou's bejeweled painting surfaces as praiseworthy.

In the first of the three scholarly essays in the exhibition catalogue, Arthur Wheelock charts from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century the changing critical and commercial suc-

cess that Dou's paintings received and proposes reasons for such fluctuations. The second essay, written by Ronni Baer, presents an overview of Dou's life and art. The third essay, written by Annetje Boersma, analyzes Dou's technique as a result of the conservation of two of his paintings. The three essays are followed by catalogue entries for each of the 35 paintings in the exhibition, which are stunningly illustrated with full-color reproductions and several details. A full bibliography follows the catalogue entries.

In his essay, "Dou's Reputation," Wheelock charts the commercial success that the painter enjoyed and the professional esteem in which he was held until the mid-nineteenth century. Early commentators praised Dou's seemingly effortless manner of what was actually painstaking painting that resulted in remarkably detailed images and the convincing representation of material surfaces, such as satin, fur, glass, and metal. Shortly before the tide of taste turned in the mid-nineteenth century, Dou's paintings found praise for the patience with which he depicted scenes of daily life that included figures with emotions and gestures that were regarded as truthful as those rendered by the best Italian painters (13). Dou's reputation, however, and the concomitant collecting taste for his painting, plummeted after mid-nineteenth century with the recovery of the reputations of Frans Hals and Rembrandt and the resulting demand for their loosely painted, gestural art work. Where previously Dou's paintings had been regarded as impressive by virtue of the technical virtuosity and the patience required for their execution, they were now assessed as dry and uninspired (14). Wheelock cites many art historians and critics who, into the first part of the twentieth century, perpetuated Dou's fall from favor by their dismissal of his meticulous painting style (14-16).

Curiously, none of the cited observers before mid-twentieth century who admired *or* reviled Dou's art analyzed the subjects of Dou's paintings as if the value or lack of value of his artwork lay completely in the manner in which the images were produced. This insistence on the separation between Dou's painting style and the subjects of his works—as if the paintings could ever be divided into two unrelated elements, that is, style and iconography—is not

addressed by Wheelock. What did the lack of analysis of Dou's subject matter by his earlier admirers and his later critics reveal about the ways in which pictures assumed value?

On the other hand, just after mid-twentieth century, when Dou's reputation began to be revived by the art historian Jan Emmens, the scholarly emphasis was placed on the painter's subject matter, which was argued to have either philosophical or serious moralizing meanings. Emmens' discussion excluded any consideration of Dou's meticulous painting style, as if there were no meaning inherent in the manner in which the works were painted (17). Although Wheelock acknowledged this "irony" and claimed that we "now recognize the intimate connections between style and content" (19); subsequent scholarly examinations of Dou's paintings (Eddy de Jongh, Eric Jan Sluijter, Peter Hecht) (19-20) leave our understanding of the meaningful relationship between his painting style and his specific choice of subject matter still elusive. Wheelock's final question, "Can Dou's refined technique express an inner, spiritual life as well as surface texture?" (22) perpetuates the traditional criteria for assessing Dou's paintings rather than getting closer to an understanding of the idiosyncratic ways in which the *integration* of Dou's style and specific choice of subject matter bears meaning.

Ronni Baer's essay, "The Life and Art of Gerrit Dou," presents an overview of Dou's biography and paintings that provides relevant background to the works in the exhibition. We learn, for example, that Dou was particularly known for various subjects that he interpreted in a characteristic way, including the hermit in a *vanitas* context, the doctor with a vial of urine, the grocery shop, artificially constructed window niches, the illusion of a parted curtain or tapestry over the edge of the painting, and the incorporation of the lighting effects of candles and lanterns (27). The author details Dou's family background, his early training with Rembrandt in Leiden and that city's social and economic climate (27-31). Dou enjoyed the patronage of European royalty as well as the States of Holland and Westfriesland (31-32). The high price of his paintings (600 to 1000 florins each, comparable to the cost of a house)

resulted in the wealth and esteem that Dou enjoyed until his death (31). The author comments that Dou never married and for that reason would not have had children (32). One wonders then what might account for the fact that he painted domestic scenes of mothers and children as much as he did. Although Dou produced self-portraits throughout his career, by the mid-1640's he significantly reduced the number of portrait commissions that he accepted and concentrated on scenes of daily life, solitary religious hermits, astronomers, schoolrooms, musicians, doctors, elegantly dressed, flirtatious young women, and shopkeepers (34-39).

Perpetuating the traditional division between discussion of Dou's subject matter and discussion of his painting style, the author moves from the sub-section "Subject Matter" to a separate sub-section entitled "Working Method" and the evolution of his *fijnschilder* technique (39). We learn that the artist used a magnifying device, that he was said to be obsessed with attempts to keep dust out of his studio, that the painter introduced gold into his pigments, and that curiously, no preparatory drawings are extant (39-40). The "Working Method" sub-section, however, continues by re-introducing a discussion of Dou's subject matter "that is often situational rather than anecdotal or narrative. Intended to embody ideas, or personify concepts, his works, more often than not are metaphorical abstractions and do not depict a moment in time, despite the plausible reality of the scene" (40). The re-introduction here of a discussion of subject matter is confusing in light of the distinct sub-division of sections into "Subject Matter" and "Working Method." We learn that Dou employs the *tableau vivant* construction to cue the viewer that his paintings are self-conscious artistic constructions (40), which prompts the reader to want to know more about the artist's relationship to contemporary Dutch theater. Baer's essay is most provocative when she acknowledges the inseparability of style and content in Dou's paintings and addresses his "active engagement of the viewer by all means: beautiful surfaces; small dimensions; convincing illusionism; seductive subject. This uncanny congruence of medium and message is fundamental to an understanding of the appeal of the artist's paint-

ings" (41). Much still needs to be done by art historians, however, in accessing "this uncanny congruence" through the close looking and thoughtful analysis of individual paintings.

Annetje Boersma's essay, "Dou's Painting Technique," offers the reader an excellent example of the type of highly sophisticated technological examinations that many seventeenth-century Dutch paintings have undergone—most notably as undertaken by the Rembrandt Research Project—through x-radiography, infrared reflectography, and the stereo microscope. In her discussion of Dou's *Young Mother* (The Hague: Mauritshuis) and *Lady at Her Toilet* (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen), Boersma unfortunately does not define these technical processes of examination or the related terms that she employs in her essay, although she does report on her findings in several different categories: perspective, pentimenti (underdrawings), supports, ground, craquelure (cracking of the paint surface), cross sections, and Dou's use of color. In some instances, the reader is apprised of the author's findings without any conclusions drawn, for example, the ground consists of a very thin layer of chalk and the paintings manifest "alligatoring cracks" (58). In other instances, the author shares the significance of her findings for our better understanding of Dou's paintings. We learn that the artist understood one-point perspective as revealed by pinholes in the paintings that are consistent with the vanishing points from which string would have been extended to assure correct orthogonals (57). Boersma reports how x-radiography, infrared reflectography, and the stereo microscope reveal compositional changes in both paintings that indicate that the artist worked and re-worked his paintings over long periods of time (57-58; 61). Further, Dou worked on single panels without joins to help ensure the polished finish of his *fijnschilderijen* (58).

The catalogue entries for the 35 exhibited paintings include their provenance, bibliography, and the known exhibition history of each picture. The most thorough and provocative essays in the catalogue entries begin with a careful description of the paintings and fan out to interpretive issues raised by the paintings' style and/or subject matter; a comparative discussion of works by con-

temporary artists of the same subject, identification of patronage, if known, and a discussion of the larger cultural context in which the works of art were produced. After one reads the catalogue entries and admires the beautiful reproductions of the exhibited paintings, one wonders out of scholarly curiosity what were the determining criteria for the selection of these 35 stunning paintings for this important exhibition, as opposed to other works from Dou's oeuvre.

Gerrit Dou (1613-1675): Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt offers the specialist in seventeenth-century studies a long overdue, in-depth look at a Dutch artist whose dazzling paintings were revered in his own day and whose reputation has been justly resuscitated since the middle of the twentieth century. At the same time, the scholarly essays, catalogue entries, and bibliography also provide the reader a welcome overview of the current research on seventeenth-century Dutch genre imagery in general.

Michael Zell. *Reframing Rembrandt: Jews and the Christian Image in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. xix + 264 pp. + 114 illus. \$55. Review by AMY GOLAHNY, LYCOMING COLLEGE.

Despite the chronological breadth of its title, this study interprets select images from the Old and New Testaments by Rembrandt from around 1655 in light of philosemitism. Combining evidence from the study of history, theology, art, and philosophy, Zell proposes that Rembrandt expounds a Protestant view that seriously re-affirms the Old Testament as the basis for Christian salvation. His study builds upon the firm ground laid by Christian Tümpel and Henri van de Waal, and other outstanding scholars including Julius S. Held, Franz Landsberger, Erwin Panofsky, and Shelley Perlove. Their studies have generally presented Rembrandt's relationship to the Jews as one of mutual sympathy and kindred ethical and spiritual values. Zell revises this point of view in light of a nuanced reading of broad cultural is-