



1992

Review Essay: Kristine Koozin, *The Vanitas Still Lifes of Harmen Steenwyck: Metaphoric Realism*

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Recommended Citation

Joost-Gaugier, Christiane L. (1992) "Review Essay: Kristine Koozin, *The Vanitas Still Lifes of Harmen Steenwyck: Metaphoric Realism*," *Quidditas*: Vol. 13 , Article 36.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra/vol13/iss1/36>

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about erotic melancholy and much else. Thanks to their painstaking identification of and quotation from Ferrand's sources in the notes, this volume will provide much instruction to anyone interested in the history of medicine or in Renaissance intellectual history. Social historians will find fascinating the discussion of Ferrand's reaction to the 1620 banning of his book by the ecclesiastical authorities of Toulouse, though they will regret the absence of the 1610 edition from this already large volume. Rather than retreat from positions the church found offensive in his 1610 treatise, which was addressed to the lovesick courtier, in the revised edition of 1623 Ferrand strengthened the anticlerical tone by categorically denying clergy the capacity to effect a cure of this melancholic disease rooted in somatic dysfunction. The editors' comparison of these two editions seems full of subtle insight, as does their handling of the long history of complex medical, philosophical, and literary ideas that underlie Ferrand's pre-Cartesian work.

William Klein

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Kristine Koozin, *The Vanitas Still Lifes of Harmen Steenwyck: Metamorphic Realism*, Renaissance Studies 1, Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, 128 pp., ill., biblio., \$59.95.

This book arises from a year spent in Holland by an American painter whose aim was to explore the reading, or content, of the vanitas still lifes of Harmen Steenwyck, a little-known Dutch seventeenth-century painter. The result, more like an introductory essay on Dutch seventeenth-century still life as exemplified by Steenwyck, is modest and personal. While not an essential scholarly study on the subject, *The Vanitas Still Lifes of Harmen Steenwyck* provides a subdued commentary on a group of paintings that otherwise might have gone unnoticed.

The book opens with a brief chapter on metaphor, a chapter that makes unexplained leaps between literature and art from Aristotle to the seventeenth century, via the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Without logical transition, the second chapter opens with a discussion of how the *memento mori* metaphor, through the presentation of objects that suggest the transitoriness or brevity of earthly life, reminds one of death. In citing the late sixteenth-century anatomical theater of the University of Leyden as an example of the early "blend of science and

spirit" that led in art to skeletons holding moralizing mottos (20-21), the chapter makes no mention of the earlier history of this subject, which, as Erwin Panofsky has shown, extends back to thirteenth-century tomb sculpture. (Certainly also, Masaccio's fresco in Santa Maria Novella of the skeleton with its accompanying inscription for the supposed tomb of Adam deserves mention as an early and widely known expression of this idea.)

The reader's attention is again directed in the third chapter to the subject of the *vanitas* still life. Here the discussion passes over possible Italian origins of this theme and neglects to consider Spanish and Franco-Flemish traditions in order to discuss the works of Steenwyck, which are the subject of the last chapter. The preoccupation with iconographical analysis isolates each still life from its position in a wider perspective of the *vanitas* theme as represented in works by Holbein, Steen, Titian, La Tour, Vermeer, and others.

The author uses documentation only superficially and sporadically. The quotations presented do not address difficult iconographic problems but rather seem to be a conflation of textbook phraseologies arranged to guide the reader quickly to the book's main focus. In this respect the work is limited, for there is little attempt to set this work in the context of the artist's career as a whole, which must have been more interesting than merely his birth and death dates suggest. Likewise, stylistic developments in Steenwyck's art are overlooked as are Steenwyck's relations with his contemporaries and with other artists past and future. The author's inclination to concentrate on "reading" each painting object by object limits the book to a dictionary-like format. This approach fails to persuade the reader of the poetry in this series of metaphoric paintings. Though clearly sincere, Kristine Koozin's contemplation of Steenwyck's paintings offers little more than a basic explanation of a category of works by an artist who probably will not become less obscure as a result of this publication.

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Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katherine E. Maus, eds., *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, University of Chicago Press, 1990, 352 pp., \$47.50.

Soliciting Interpretation, a collection of twelve essays by as many authors, demonstrates the new historicism that "conceives the relationship