



Visions

On the occasion of the 100th Preprint in the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science series we offer three brief, speculative reflections on the splendid allegorical painting "Vision" by Jan Breughel the Elder and Pieter Paul Rubens. These are essays in the root sense of the word: tentative, exploratory attempts to survey the depth and breadth of a subject, rather than detailed monographs or sharply formulated arguments. We write as historians of science, not as historians of art, and although our interests in botany, scientific instruments, and natural history collections in early modern Europe inform these essays, our aim was not simply to analyze this or that detail of the painting from these specialist standpoints. We also wanted to experiment with a form of thinking and writing that was deliberately associative, deliberately disrespectful of disciplinary boundaries, and deliberately open-ended. We hope that these essays capture something of the experimental, open-minded spirit of our young Institute.

About the painting: "Vision" (65 X 109 cm, 1617) is one of a series of five allegorical paintings on "The Five Senses" executed by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Pieter Paul Rubens. All five paintings are now part of the permanent collection of the Museo del Prado, Madrid ("Vision": cat.nr. 1.394). Further information in: Matías Díaz Padrón, *El Siglo de Rubens en el Museo del Prado. Catálogo Razonado de Pintura Flamenca del Siglo XVII* (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 1995).

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A Thousand Flowers

Hans-Jörg Rheinberger

The Allegory of Vision is part of the Prado cycle on the five senses jointly painted by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens. Art historian Justus Müller Hofstede postulates that the cycle owes its basic allegorical structure and emblematic design to Rubens.¹ It is nonetheless thanks to Brueghel's subversion of that structure and design from which the painting appears to me to derive its enigmatic, even magical character. In any case, Müller Hofstede could, in 1984, still claim that despite considerable attention,² "the painting has neither been exhaustively analyzed nor satisfactorily interpreted up to this day."³ Continued efforts notwithstanding,⁴ I have a few new additional observations to offer. Yet the following remarks are deliberately point-illistic, and do not even remotely aim at a systematic and exhaustive analysis or a satisfactory interpretation of Brueghel and Rubens's painting.

Duplication, Mirroring, and Identity - Individualization, Contrast, and Difference

One of the paradoxes of the painting is the following: On the one hand, there is no nature in this highly stylized princely cabinet full of naturalia and artificialia of all sorts; no natural 'order' or functional connection is to be detected among them. On the other hand, there is "al wat ter werelt is" painted "naert leven":

"Wat belanct de Vyf sinnen, hebbe die met lust onder handen om alles naert leven te doen, als ooc het subject playsant is om al wat ter werelt is daer in te connen maken."⁵

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- 1 Justus Müller Hofstede, 'Non Saturatur Oculus Visu' - Zur "Allegorie des Gesichts" von Peter Paul Rubens und Jan Brueghel d.Ä., in H. Vekeman und J. Müller Hofstede, Wort und Bild in der niederländischen Kunst und Literatur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts. Erfstadt 1984, pp. 243-288.
 - 2 See, e.g., Matías Díaz Padrón, Pedro Pablo Rubens. Madrid 1977-1978; Klaus Ertz, Jan Brueghel der Ältere (1568-1625). Die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog. DuMont, Köln 1979, pp.328-362.
 - 3 Müller Hofstede 1984, p. 243.
 - 4 See Matías Díaz Padrón y Mercedes Royo-Villanova, David Teniers, Jan Brueghel y los gabinetes de pinturas. Madrid, Museo del Prado 1992, pp. 112-125, and bibliography therein.

Usually, but wrongly, this sentence is attributed to Brueghel de Velours.⁶ It is actually from his son Jan II who continued to produce allegories of the five senses for an international, even overseas clientele and which, as he reports, a thousand people came to see in his atelier.⁷ But the father's work is perfectly captured in the utterance, potentially everything being worthy of attention and depiction. On the occasion of a flower painting for his friend and customer Cardinal Federico Borromeo in Milan a decade earlier -- "una Massa de vario fiori" as he called it in his broken Italian --, the elder Jan Brueghel had even traveled to the gardens of the Archduke Albrecht VII in Brussels, "per ritrare alcuni fiori del natural, che non si troue in Anuersa."⁸ The Archduke had a predilection for rare flowers.⁹ Two years later, Brueghel wrote to Borromeo's agent Ercole Bianchi about "un quadret de fiori, qualo io retroue con discomede alli giardini: simili fiori son trop in e' stimi per auer in casa."¹⁰ And on another occasion, he explained to Bianchi: "Gli fiori bisogno fare alle prima, senza dessegni o boitsaturo: tutti fiori uengeno in quatra mesi, et sense inuencioni bisogno giungere in seime con gran discretcion."¹¹ From an analysis of Brueghel's letters to Cardinal Borromeo and of the flower pieces themselves, B. Renninkmeyer-De Rooij convincingly argues that Brueghel must have painted at least some of his rare flowers directly into the bouquet, in the order in which they blossomed during a four month season. This may also explain the fact that the different flowers, perfectly recognizable in their form, are not drawn to size with respect to each other. Brueghel may even have painted to some extent in the open air of the garden, which was quite exceptional at that time.¹² Brueghel's flower bouquets exhibit the same encyclopedic spirit as do the courtly gardens, those "open air equivalents to the Kunst- and Wunderkammer."¹³ And they exhibit the same encyclopedic amassment as does our cabinet painting: they are collections, "Massas", that do not have an identifiable overall cohesion in terms of, e.g., season or habitat, let alone system. They follow the criteria of rarity, particular beauty, and relational aesthetic fit.

All things in this cabinet painting are rendered as individualized items: flowers, animals, instru-

5 Jan Brueghel the Younger to the art dealer Chrisostomo van Immerseel in Sevilla, September 2, 1631. J. Denucé, *Briefe und Dokumente in Bezug auf Jan Breugel I und II. Quellen zur Geschichte der flämischen Kunst*. De Sikkel, Antwerpen 1934, p. 71.

6 See, e.g., Christian Klemm, *Weltdeutung - Allegorien und Symbole in Stilleben*. In Gerhard Langemeyer und Hans-Albert Peters, *Stilleben in Europa*. Aschendorff, Münster 1979, pp. 140-218, on p. 169; Ute Kleinmann in *Pieter Breughel der Jüngere - Jan Brueghel der Ältere. Flämische Malerei um 1600. Tradition und Fortschritt*. Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen, Luca Verlag, Lingen 1997, p. 314.

7 Denucé 1934, documents 32, 33, 39, 41, 42, 45, and 83, especially p. 83.

8 Giovanni Crivelli, *Giovanni Brueghel, pittor fiammingo o sue lettere e quadretti esistenti presso l'Ambrosiana*. Milano 1868, p. 63.

9 Ertz 1979, p. 254 sq.

10 Crivelli 1868, p. 110.

11 Crivelli 1868, p. 168.

12 B. Renninkmeyer-De Rooij, *Zeldzame bloemen, 'Fatta tutti del naturel'* door Jan Brueghel I. *Oud Holland* 104 (1990), 218-248.

13 Norbert Schneider, *Vom Klostergarten zur Tulpenmanie. Hinweise zur materiellen Vorgeschichte des Blumenstillebens*. In Gerhard Langemeyer und Hans-Albert Peters (eds.), *Stilleben in Europa*. Aschendorf, Münster 1979, pp. 294-313, p. 302.

ments, sculptures, busts, pictures. Therefore, the identification of the pictures in the picture, for instance, poses no insurmountable problem. Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel himself are present, of course, alone and with coproductions. Tizian, Mancini, Raffael, Snyders, van Balen, and Pieter Brueghel the Elder are likely to be identified as further painters in the gallery.¹⁴ The dominance of Flanders and Italy is overwhelming. Both Brueghel and Rubens had spent a few years in Italy as young painters. The pictures in the picture present the different genres that the painters of the Antwerp St. Lucas guild had to offer at the beginning of the seventeenth century: biblical history, saints, and mythology on the counter-reformational side; historical painting, portraits, marine painting, landscape, hunting, still life on the secular. They too present the different types of usage of the art of painting: altar pieces and devotional pictures on the one hand; chimney pieces, supraportas, and cabinet paintings of different sizes on the other. Many of them, such as Rubens's Bacchanal, can be retraced to the collection of the Archduke.

In a marvelously variegated and multiple way, this Allegory of Vision is about duplication, mirroring, and identity; individualization, contrast, and difference. Vision is not exposed in the translucent immediacy of presenting a reality to the eye; it is on the contrary registered in an explosive multidimensionality of re-presentations, in which nonetheless everything is and remains "naert leven." This picture is about the endless game of representation. No detail is exempt from the game. Consider the Madonna in a Flower Garland that has long been taken for a replica of the garland painting which is part of the Louvre collection. Minutiae in the construction of the garland tell that it is not. For instance, a parrot-like bird is present and part of the upper left of the Louvre Garland. Instead, in our Allegory, a parrot colored in red and blue sits on the top left of the picture -- but to the right of the painting --, thus enforcing its material presence as a piece of art, an image, and emblematically, as an imitation for which the parrot stands. Ironically, the parrot also mirrors, in the color of his feathers, the color of Maria's clothes. It is assumed today that it is the copy of a Madonna that has been lost and that was painted for Albrecht VII of Austria, the Governor General of the Southern Netherlands.¹⁵ As the portrait to the left of the painting, the two-headed Austrian eagle of the lustre, and other details indicate, the Allegory is dedicated to Albrecht VII and his wife Isabella Clara Eugenia.¹⁶

14 Díaz Padrón and Royo-Villanova 1992, pp. 112-125.

15 Ute Kleinmann, *Blumen, Kränze und Girlanden: Zur Entstehung und Gestaltung eines Antwerpener Bildtypus. In Pieter Breughel der Jüngere - Jan Brueghel der Ältere. Flämische Malerei um 1600. Tradition und Fortschritt.* Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen, Luca Verlag, Lingen 1997, pp. 54-66.

16 Ertz 1979.



Now, where do we stand with respect to representation, duplication, and mirroring? The Allegory of Vision is a co-production of Rubens and Brueghel. The most prominent picture in the picture is doubtlessly the Madonna in a Flower Garland to the right.¹⁷ In this case, Brueghel obviously broke the chain of mirrors and painted Rubens's madonna himself. The weight of the piece is enforced by the 'visionary' triangle constituted by the telescope pointing to the oculum in the upper right of the gallery, from where rays of light enter the cabinet and cut the upper left edge of the madonna portrait. As a game with light, it is an element of the intricate network of the Allegory. The garland madonna itself is a depiction of another co-production of Rubens and Brueghel, first duplication. The madonna, in turn, itself consists of a picture in a picture: another duplication. The painting of the madonna with the child in the center oval medaillon has a dark border around it, from which the flower wreath seems to be detached, even to step out from the surface. The garland thus introduces yet another layer of duplicity and thereby enforces the presence of the madonna as an image. This tends to make the garland into something like a 'living' entourage of a painted figure. This impression is stressed by the individual character of the different flowers which are easily recognizable in kind and species. They are not at all idealized flowers, although they are part of a deliberately artificial arrangement. Its composition principle is a succession of amassed large flowers interspersed with and surrounded by small florescences. In order to undo this effect of realism, a bird is sitting on the outer frame and thus gives back to the construction as a whole its identity as a picture. Tellingly, the bird, surrounded by the interior of the constkamer, has its head oriented into the direction of the arc that opens to the gardens of the Archduke's Palace in Brussels in the upper left,¹⁸ where the motif of the bird is taken up by a couple of peacocks near a fountain. But as if mirroring had no end in both directions, to the outside as well as to the inside, the garland of the outer part of the picture is repeated as a flower corona in the inner picture - another crown-like garland which an angel deposits on Maria's head.

The Allegory of Vision is a self-representation of the art of painting in which, in contrast to the famous -- and somewhat later -- Velázquez (*Las Meninas*) and Vermeer (*De Schilderkunst*) renderings among so many others, especially the gallery pictures of David Teniers de Jonge, the painter is not integrated as a figure into the picture. The painters are instead present with prominent works of their ateliers. At the place where we would expect the painter standing or sitting before his easel, we find, in the center of the foreground -- an ape. Just like the parrot, the ape too can be taken as an emblem of imitation in the deceptive mode of this activity. This motif is doubled, mirrored, represented in the representation, an emblem in the emblem, by the ape wearing eyeglasses. Eyeglasses, in the emblematic tradition, stand for deception and not, as we

17 For the origins of this genre, see David Freedberg, *The origins and rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands*. *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* 32 (1981), 115-150.

18 Padrón 1977-78, p. 122.

today might be inclined to assume, for clear and distinct vision.¹⁹ And the ape is glaring, in the midst of the interior of a royal Wunderkammer, at a picture that displays and discloses, in the innermost of the ensemble, the endless bright horizon of the sea, itself an allegory of vision par excellence, with its ships that bring -- guided by a lighthouse, an 'eye' of the sea -- so many of these beautiful things to Antwerp that are rendered in the painting. This is all a game with identity and difference, as Foucault has described it for the classic age and distinguished it from the epistemic mode of the Renaissance game of similarities.²⁰ In order to topple the scene, not only does the ape wear a pair of glasses, he holds another pair in his left hand and thus perfects the display of a simulation of simulation. He sees nothing through the glasses he is wearing. That is, after all, the essence of being an ape in common perception and reception: surprisingly similar to a human -- his image, so to speak -- and yet, it's all simulated. As we have seen, the beautifully colored parrot on the top left of the flower garland madonna is involved in a similar game of deconstruction.

Equally center stage and in the front of the picture, immediately to the right of the ape, the picture-in-the-picture motif itself is taken apart. On a chair, two black-framed paintings are displayed, one slightly overlapping the other. The upper, bigger one pointing to the foreground contains a flower drawing painted in the manner of a coloured botanical illustration such as the ones that left the Antwerp ateliers of the Plantin-Moretus Press around 1600. The lower one, vague and blurred, almost receding into invisibility, is another madonna with child. Here we have the two elements of the garland painting separated, and the painter leaves no doubt as to which one of them he judges to be the more important one. We might even be inclined to assume that the eyes of the little dog beneath the chair in a sense take up the difference: its left eye, that under the madonna, appears to be smaller than the right one under the flower. Here we have another aspect of the allegory: sharp, botanically motivated observation supersedes indefinite, religious vision.²¹

Flowers and Gardens

This little botanical painting in the gallery makes us aware of the fact that there is a scientific background to the Fluwelen Brueghel's flower painting. Brenninkmeyer-De Rooij has argued that the white lilies which show up in the right upper quarter of the flower garland of the Louvre Madonna - and in our flower garland as well - are not the traditional 'madonna lilies' but repre-

19 Arthur Henkel und Albrecht Schöne (eds.), *Emblemata. Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*. J. B. Metzler, 1967/1996, pp. 1424-1425.

20 Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*. Gallimard, Paris 1966.

21 This interpretation stands in direct opposition to the religious and philosophical overtones that Ertz sees at work in the Allegory. Ertz 1979, pp. 343-348.

sent *Lilium hemerocallis*, which Brueghel may have painted after Rembert Dodoens's Stirpium historiae pemptades sex, first printed with Plantin in Antwerp 1583.²²

Botany had achieved prominence in the Southern Netherlands during the sixteenth century. Herbal tradition gradually was left behind, the first taxonomies were undertaken, and the first regional 'floras' made their appearance. Under the influence of new exotic plants brought from the Indies and the Americas, botanists started to realize not only that they had barely begun to recognize the full scope of vegetal forms all over the world, but that there were regional characteristics of floral composition in Europe as well. Rembertus Dodoens from Malines (1517-1585), Carolus Clusius from Atrecht (1526-1609), and Mathias Lobelius from Lille (1538-1616) all contributed to the expansion of botanical knowledge throughout the century in Flanders. If it is safe to assume that about 1000 plants were known to the European botanists at the beginning of the sixteenth century, by the end of the century the number had risen to about 6000. In addition to his floristic studies in many parts of Europe, Clusius, who had been at the Court of the Habsburgs in Vienna under Maximilian II and Rudolph II between 1573 and 1588, ended up laying out the botanical garden in Leiden in 1593.²³ He especially also contributed to the knowledge of exotic plants by drawing on the herbals of the Spaniard Nicolás Monardes as well as of the Portuguese Garcia ab Orto and Christophorus a Costa. The majority of their works were printed in the Officina Plantiniana in Antwerp. Christopher Plantin, who was active as a publisher and printer from 1555 to 1589,²⁴ produced no less than twenty botanical works in this period. Among them are six by Dodoens, three by Clusius, three by Lobelius, one by a Costa, three by Monardes, and another three by ab Orto.²⁵ After Plantin's death, the related Moretus and Raphelengius families took over and continued to produce new botanical books and reissues of old ones over the next half century in Antwerp as well as in Leiden.

But the scientific concern is only one element in the rise of the artistic interest in flowers. The others are foreign floristic trade and domestic horticulture, the two cornerstones of a growing botanical commerce and hallmarks of Flanders at that time. In his Plantarum seu stirpium historia, one of Plantin's editions from 1576, Lobelius writes:

22 Brenninkmeyer-De Rooij 1990, p. 234.

23 It had been officially founded in 1590. Leslie Tjon Sie Fat, Clusius' garden: A reconstruction. In: Leslie Tjon Sie Fat and Erik de Jong (eds.), *The Authentic Garden*. Clusius Foundation, Leiden 1991, pp. 3-12. Clusius was aided by the pharmacist Dirck Outgaertsz. Cluyt (ca. 1540-1598). J. Kuijlen, C. S. Oldenburger-Ebbers, and D. O. Wijnands, *Paradisus Batavus*. Bibliografie van plantencatalogi van onderwijstuinen, particuliere tuinen en kwekerscollecties in the Noordelijke en Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1550-1839). Pudoc, Wageningen 1983, p. 10.

24 Elly Cockx-Indestege en Francine de Nave (red.), *Christoffel Plantijn en de exacte westenschappen in zijn tijd*. Gemeentekrediet, Brussel 1989.

25 L. Voet, Christopher Plantin as a promoter of the science of botany. In: F. de Nave and D. Imhof (eds.), *Botany in the Low Countries (end of the 15th century - ca. 1650)*. The Plantin-Moretus Museum and the Stedelijk Prentenkabinet Publication No. 27. Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, Antwerp 1993, pp. 39-45.

"This entire, considerable and prominent region of Belgium (long ago known to the world as Flanders or Low Germany) is indeed the most famous warehouse in the whole of Europe. The most extraordinary and desirable of goods from across the globe are imported here in abundance over land and sea, and all the treasures of Europe, Asia and Africa are brought together here. The land is rich in brilliant talents, excellent in every art and science. Although the Northern climate is less suited to cultivating many plants because of its harsh cold, long winters, persistent lashing storms and other (additional) ravages, the zest for work, the precision and persistent care with which the inhabitants preserve the fragile plants from these conditions is nevertheless so great, that nowhere in the world can a plant be found which is not grown here under new techniques, and outstandingly cultivated by the unremitting labour and unflagging toil of an outstanding and distinguished people who spare no expense to this end. For this very reason, and not mistakenly, I would offer the first prize for developments in botany, the most important science befitting the greatest scholars, to the Belgians. For in this area alone one encounters more species and varieties of plants, shrubs and trees than can be found in ancient Greece, wide Spain, Germany, England, France and refined Italy, or any other neighbouring country or region."²⁶

Lobelius then goes on and mentions a few major gardens: that of the prince of Chimay, Karel van Bossu, viscount of Brussels; Gilbert d'Oignies, bishop of Tournai; and Cornelius Gemma and Jan Viringius, professors of the University of Louvain. To these we may add the gardens of Charles de Saint-Omer, Heer van Drenouter, Moerkerk and Moerbeek, of Gérard van Veltwijck from Brussels, of Jean de Brancion,²⁷ and the famous garden of the pharmacist Pieter van Coudenberghe (ca. 1520-ca. 1594) from Antwerp, who created one of the oldest private gardens in 1548 where he cultivated up to 600 species, many of them exotic.²⁸ During the winter, he kept his exotic plants in special shelters. They soon developed into what became known as orangeries.²⁹ Nobody, if wealthy enough, appears to have been excluded from the pleasures of gardening in sixteenth-century Flanders. Private gardens belonged not solely to aristocrats, but also to clergymen, university professors, pharmacists, and other wealthy citizens. If we add the botanical gardens of universities such as Leiden, we are not surprised to learn that the demand of amateur collectors and professionals greatly contributed to a flourishing trade of commercial gardeners. They especially expanded their business from the end of the sixteenth century throughout the seventeenth century and produced an unprecedented wealth of new varieties and hybrids of garden plants. The oldest known book entirely devoted to garden models, Johannes Vredeman de Vries's *Hortorum viridariorumque elegantes*, dates from 1583 and was, of course, also printed in Antwerp.³⁰ Thus we get a glimpse of the cultural entourage in which

26 Mathias Lobelius, *Plantarum seu stirpium historia*. C. Plantin, Antwerp 1576, preface. Quoted in: F. de Nave, *From auxiliary science to independent discipline: Botany in the Southern Netherlands during the 16th century*. In: *Botany in the Low Countries (end of the 15th century - ca. 1650)*. The Plantin-Moretus Museum and the Stedelijk Prentenkabinet Publication No. 27. Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, Antwerp 1993, pp. 11-18.

27 Kuijlen, Oldenburger-Ebbers, and Wijnands 1983, p. 31.

28 A catalogue of Coudenberghe's garden was first printed in Conrad Gesner, *De Hortis Germaniae*, Strassburg 1561. See also L. J. Vandewiele, *The garden of Pieter van Coudenberghe*. In F. de Neve and D. Imhof 1993, pp. 23-31.

29 Erwin B. W. van den Muijzenberg, *A History of Greenhouses*. Institute for Agricultural Engineering, Wageningen 1980.

30 The complete title is: *Hortorum viridariorumque elegantes & multiplicis formae, ad architectonicae artis normam affabre delineatae*.

flower painting reached a new climax and early mastership with Jan Brueghel the Elder in Antwerp at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The development of a culture of ornamental garden plants toward the end of the sixteenth century was a main incentive for the flower still-life.

Until 1550, roses, lilies, irises, peonies, columbine, stocks, and carnations dominated the gardens of Flanders and Holland as well as those of other European countries. They were a heritage of medieval gardening, with a few of them even going back to Roman times. A few others, such as *Dianthus caryophyllus*, had made their way from Arabic gardens through Spain and France to Northern Europe.³¹ From a close inspection of contemporary herbals and flower books, Sam Segal has concluded that between 1500 and 1550, about ten new species appear to have been introduced to the region of Flanders, whereas between 1550 and 1600, the number explosively grew to more than hundred, and between 1600 and 1615, another 120 were added.³² It is interesting to note that in Italy the numbers are about the same during the sixteenth century: about fifteen exotic species introduced before 1550, and more than a hundred from 1550 to 1600. But in contrast to Flanders and Holland, only eleven new species were added between 1600 and 1615.³³ This period of European, predominantly North European gardening was "probably the most exciting of the whole history of gardenig."³⁴ It also saw a tremendous spread of books with flower engravings intended for amateur and commercial rather than for scientific use. Among them we find Pierre Vallet's *Le Jardin du Roy Tres Chrestien Henry IV* (1608), Emanuel Sweerts's *Florilegium* (1612), Johan Theodor de Brij's *Florilegium Novum* (1612-1614), pharmacist Basilius Besler's *Hortus Eystettensis* with the plants from the garden of the prince bishop of Eichstädt, Johann Conrad Baron of Gemmingen (1613), and Crispijn de Passe's *Hortus Floridus* (1614).³⁵ They responded to the growing needs of wealthy citizens who established private gardens even in the back of their town houses, for example between the Keizersgracht and the Herengracht in Amsterdam.³⁶ Emanuel Sweerts is very explicit in this respect. On the front page, he announces:

31 André Lawalrée, *Peinture et botanique*. In: *Tableaux de fleurs du XVIIe siècle*. Peinture et botanique. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique 1989, pp. 25-30; W. T. Stearn, *Les fleurs et l'art, une affinité élective*. In: Sabine van Sprang (dir.), *L'empire de flore. Histoire et représentation des fleurs en Europe du XVIe au XIXe siècle*. La Renaissance du Livre, Bruxelles 1996, pp. 15-25.

32 Sam Segal, *Flowers and Nature. Netherlandish Flower Painting of Four Centuries*, Amstelveen 1990, Introduction, p. 42.

33 P. A. Saccardo, *Cronologia della flora Italiana, ossia repertorio sistematico delle piú antiche date ed autori del rinvenimento delle piante (Fanerogame e Pteridofite) indigene, naturalizzate e avventizie d'Italia e della introduzione di quelle esotiche piú comunemente coltivate fra noi*. Tipografia del Seminario, Padova 1909.

34 Stearn 1996, p. 19.

35 Kuijlen, Oldenburger-Ebbers, and Wijnands 1983.

36 C. Swan, *Les fleurs comme curiosa*. In: Sabine van Sprang (dir.), *L'empire de flore. Histoire et représentation des fleurs en Europe du XVIe au XIXe siècle*. La Renaissance du Livre, Bruxelles 1996, pp. 86-100.

"So iemand waer die lust heeft van dese boecken ofte bloemen die daerinne begrepen staan te coopen dye kome inder Messtyt vor het Raethauys opten Roemer inden laden van desen auteur Manuel Sweerts: Na de Messe tot Amsterdam by Paulus Aertssen van Ravesteyn Boeckdrucker sall een jeder goet bescheyt doen."³⁷

New imports declined after this surge for the rest of the seventeenth century. Instead, however, selecting new varieties and breeding new hybrids became a dominant preoccupation of the gardeners. A new wave of imports, this time from South Africa, followed later between 1690 and 1760.³⁸

With a few exceptions, such as *Tagetes patula* and *Tagetes minuta*, the garden flowers -- in contrast to vegetables such as maize, bean, potato, tomato, and tobacco -- did not yet come from the Middle and South Americas. Most of the newly imported garden flowers in the second half of the sixteenth century came from Eastern and Southern Europe and from Asia Minor, notably from Turkey, where the garden culture was more developed at that time than in Europe.³⁹ The Turks had conquered Constantinople in 1453 and besieged Vienna in 1529 without success. Thereafter, diplomatic relations between the Habsburg empire and Turkey became important. Among the new imports, to quote only those which can be found in the bouquets and garlands of the *Fluwelen Brueghel*, were *Adonis vernalis*, *Anemone coronaria*, *Antirrhinum majus*, several *campanulas*, *Fritillaria imperialis*, *Fritillaria meleagris*, *Hyacinthus orientalis*, *Jasminum officinale*, *Lychnis chalcedonica*, *Muscari botryoides*, *Ranunculus asiaticus*, *Syringa vulgaris*, and most importantly, *Tulipa spec.*⁴⁰ The Belgian Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522-1591), ambassador of the Habsburg emperor Ferdinand I to Sultan Suleyman II in Istanbul between 1554 and 1562, is said to have played a decisive role in bringing the tulip to Western Europe. As far as we know, it grew in the garden of Heinrich Hewart in Augsburg in 1559, where it was described and depicted for the first time in 1561 by Conrad Gesner. In Brussels and in Antwerp, it made its appearance between 1560 and 1562, and it soon spread around Flanders and North Holland. In Flanders, Dodoens described it for the first time in 1568, and in 1581, Lobelius, in his *Kruydtboeck*, listed no less than 47 types. The *Florilegium* of Emanuel Sweerts, published in 1612, offered already around hundred varieties of the new garden star. Around 1635, at the outset of the famous Tulipomania,⁴¹ the first tulip books exclusively devoted to this flower appeared, and in the middle of the Golden century, around 1000 names of varieties were circulat-

37 Emanuel Sweerts, *Florilegium*, Vol. I. Frankfort aan de Main 1612.

38 Segal 1990, p. 42.

39 D. Onno Wijnands, *Commercium botanicum: The diffusion of plants in the 16th century*; and Nevzat Ilhan, *The culture of gardens and flowers in the Ottoman empire*. In: Leslie Tjon Sie Fat and Erik de Jong (eds.), *The Authentic Garden*. Clusius Foundation, Leiden 1991, pp. pp. 75-84 and 131-138.

40 *Tableaux de fleurs du XVIIe siècle. Peinture et botanique*. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique 1989.

41 N. W. Posthumus, *The tulip mania in Holland in the years 1636 and 1637*. *Journal of Economic and Business History* 1 (1929), 434-466; E. H. Krelage, *Bloemenspeculatie in Nederland - De Tulpomanie van 1636-'37 en de Hyacintehandel 1720-'36*. P. N. van Kampen & Zoon N. V., Amsterdam 1942; E. H. Krelage, *De pamfletten van den tulpenwindhandel 1636-1637*. M. Nijhoff, 's-Gravenhage 1942.

ing.⁴² They might have corresponded to about 500 different varieties.⁴³



42 Sam Segal, *The Tulip in de Gouden Eeuw*. In Michiel Roding and Sam Segal, *De Tulip en de kunst. Verhaal van een symbool*. Waanders, Zwolle, pp. 74-113.

43 Kuijlen, Oldenburger-Ebbers, and Wijnands 1983, p. 52.

All of the above mentioned flowers or garden varieties thereof figure prominently in Brueghel de Velours's flower paintings, especially in his bouquets. Our floral wreath and the little bouquet of cut flowers on the gallery painting are somewhat less exuberant in this respect. Besides roses, anemones, snowdrops, syringe, and a variety of narcissi, about half a dozen of varieties of tulips can be identified in a blue porcelain vase. The latter reappears in a central position on the corresponding Allegory of Smell of the Prado cycle. In contrast to the thick flower package of the garland to the lower right, the cut flowers to the upper left of the painting form a rather loose assortment. And whereas in the thick package of the wreath the flower heads are the most important elements of composition, in the vase, each flower stands on its own and is shown in its characteristic habitus. Quite unusually, the roses include even a bud, and one of the anemones is withering. The individual flowers are drawn in approximately correct proportions, and they are mostly spring flowers. From the position of the little flower vase on a chest of drawers, it is only one more step, so it seems, to the flowers growing in the garden on which the cabinet opens - the diagonal clearly pointing from inside to outside. What a contrast to Jan I Brueghel's overstuffed early bouquets such as the Large Flower Bouquet from Vienna!⁴⁴ And what a contrast to the tight package of the garland! Although all its flowers are identifiable in principle,⁴⁵ the garland forms an impossible ensemble. As in Brueghel's large bouquets, the flowers in the wreath are not drawn to their respective size, they span the seasons, and they are a mixture of wild and garden plants. But this is not the whole play of identity and difference in the flower part of the picture. For behind the flower bouquet, to the uppermost left, we encounter a wall tapestry that responds to the madonna in a very intricate way. First, it too contains a flower garland around it. In contrast to the madonna picture, however, the tapestry flowers appear stereotyped and perform the proper function of a frame. Thus they display nothing of the prominence of the garland to the right, which almost seems to protrude from the plane, and from which single flowers such as the *Fritillaria meleagris* to the left and right even lapse into the madonna painting. In the upper left, this function is taken over by the vase with the cut flowers, which partially overlaps the frame of the carpet, and which partially even protrudes into the open air and the twigs of a tree behind the cabinet. The tapestry, as a counterweight to the religious motif of Maria and Child, essentially displays a landscape. But like the wreathed madonna, the landscape of the tapestry presents itself again as a kind of picture in a picture. For the trees and branches that form a garland-like foreground surrounded by the flower frame open the view onto the landscape in the middle ground, which again opens itself to a mountainous horizon.

44 Museum of Art History Vienna, Gallery of Paintings, Inv. Nr. 570.

45 So far, I have been able to identify *Allium* sp., *Anemone coronaria*, *Anemone hepatica*, *Anemone hortensis*, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, *Borago officinalis*, *Convallaria majalis* (fruits), *Dianthus caryophyllus*, *Fritillaria meleagris*, *Gentiana*, *Hyacinthus orientalis*, *Iris* sp., *Jasminum officinale*, *Leucojum vernalis*, *Lilium bulbiferum*, *Lychnis chalconica*, *Narcissus* sp., *Nigella damascena*, *Primula* sp., *Ranunculus* sp., *Rosa* sp. (also buds), *Scilla* sp., *Syringa vulgaris*, *Tulipa* sp., *Viburnum opulus*, *Vinca*, *Viola tricolor*.

Representation

This picture is a game with representation. The constkamer which is depicted is, to begin with, in itself a prime instance of representation. The constkamer, in turn, is represented as a gallery picture. In this gallery, there is a picture that is again a representation of a representation, and so on. Differences and identities all over again. References, not similarities, referential displacements into the depth of the space as well as across its surface. Although there is clearly an allegorical impact, indeed, the whole picture is part of an allegorical cycle, there is no prescription here, no heavy load of moral tales to tell about seduction and other vices of the visual sense. But there is no narration either. In a sense, this picture has no plot, although it is able to tell innumerable different stories. Wherever we start, we are led onto another itinerary. If there is an epistemological message to this composition, it is this: There is endless raffinesse in description, "alles naert leven," and potentially everything, "al wat ter werelt is," is worth being described. Like the contemporary *Sinnepoppen*,⁴⁶ it gives rise to potentially endless connections, to numerous stories, all of them being worth of being pursued in their own right, be they religious as in the case of the madonna, or pagan as in the case of the Rubens' Bacchanal leaning to its lower left edge, a contrast which is taken up by the pagan Venus who is contemplating Christ healing a blind man presented to her by Amor. The painting lives from these contrasts, but there is no totalizing center, no overall prescription, no dominating narrative. There is a potentially endless unfolding of vision instead, without a privileged view but, to speak with Svetlana Alpers, with a overwhelming "microscopic taste for displaying multiple surfaces."⁴⁷

In *Un cabinet d'amateur*, Georges Perec tells us the story of a remarkable exhibition in Pittsburgh, "conçu pour le seul plaisir, et le seul frisson, du faire-semblant," as he tells his reader in the last sentence of the novel.⁴⁸ The story revolves around a cabinet painting of the young painter Heinrich Kürz, who appears to have drawn the ultimate consequence from Brueghel's composition principle:

"Et c'est là qu'ils auront une merveilleuse surprise: car le peintre a mis son tableau dans le tableau, et le collectionneur assis dans son cabinet voit sur le mur du fond, dans l'axe de son regard, le tableau qui le représente en train de regarder sa collection de tableaux, et tous ces tableaux à nouveau reproduits, et ainsi de suite sans rien perdre de leur précision dans la première, dans la seconde, dans la troisième réflexion, jusqu'à n'être plus sur la toile que d'infimes traces de pinceaux: *Un cabinet d'amateur* n'est pas seulement la représentation anecdotique d'un musée particulier; par le jeu de ces reflets successifs, par le charme quasi magique qu'opèrent ces répétitions de plus en plus minuscules, c'est une oeuvre qui bascule

46 Roemer Visscher, *Sinnepoppen*. 1614.

47 Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing. Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*. Penguin Books, London 1989, p. 90.

48 Georges Perec, *Un cabinet d'amateur. Histoire d'un tableau*. Editions Balland, 1979 et 1989, p. 125. I thank Peter Geimer for having drawn my attention to this book.

dans un univers proprement onirique où son pouvoir de séduction s'amplifie jusqu'à l'infini, et où la précision exacerbée de la matière picturale, loin d'être sa propre fin, débouche tout à coup sur la Spiritualité vertigineuse de l'Eternel Retour."⁴⁹

49 Perec 1989, pp. 22-23.

Visions: The Disorder of Things and the Unity of Art and Nature

Lorraine Daston



Copiousness: the first impression of the painting¹ is of overflowing fullness, of much too much to look at, of vision surfeited. This response was common among visitors to early modern Kunst- and Wunderkammern, who often travelled from city to city, guidebook in hand, to gape in astonishment at the wonders of art and nature displayed in floor-to-ceiling abundance. When the French royal counselor Balthasar Monconys for example visited the Dresden collection of Elector August of Saxony in November 1663, he valiantly tried to list the contents of each room of the collection, but soon lapsed into summaries: "La 3. chambre est pleine de Tableaux, mais il n'y en a de bons, que d'Albert de Lucas, & un deluge de Rubens...La 4. est toute pleine de divers instruments de Mathematique, & d'une petite orgue toute de verre de Barcelona, tous les tûiaux, & la porte du cabinet...[La 7. automates] il y a une infinité d'oiseaux, & d'autres choses, qui

1 Jan Brueghel and Pieter Paul Rubens, *Vision* (1617), Museo del Prado, Inv. Nr. 1394.

chantent, remüent, & marchent...".² Such lists began as an attempt to focus the viewer's attention and to individualize the objects piled high in cabinets and vitrines, but they eventually lumped all except the most singular objects together, finally trailing off in an endless etcetera. The sheer quantity and variety of the objects, as well as the custom of arranging them cheek-and-jowl by one another, reduced the curious to a state of blurry-eyed exhaustion. Vision was first stimulated, and then overwhelmed. It is perhaps in wry commentary on this well-known aspect of early modern (and for that matter modern) tourism that the winged genius in the foreground of the Brueghel/Rubens painting shows a Venus figure, herself an allusion to the desire to see and possess³, a small painting of Jesus healing the blind man (John 9: 1-12).

Was there an order hidden beneath the clutter the paintings, coins, gems, flowers, instruments, seashells, sculptures, books, tapestries, and drawings in the Breughel/Rubens *Kunstkammer*, or in the other early modern collections so eagerly sought out by travelers like Michel de Montaigne, Monconys, John Evelyn, John Locke, Felix Platter, and others? In order to answer this question, some further differentiations are necessary within the broad class of collections variously known as cabinets of curiosities, repositories, studioli, galleries, thesauri, and *Schatz-, Kunst- Raritäten- and Wunderkammern*.⁴ Although the painting is of an imaginary *Kunstkammer*⁵, peopled (so to speak) by allegorical figures, the collection is easily identifiable by type: it is a princely cabinet, depicted in a palatial setting and filled with precious objects. Princely collections like those of the Medici in Florence, Archduke Ferdinand II in Ambras, Emperor Rudolf II in Prague, Elector August in Dresden, King Frederick III in Copenhagen or Czar Peter I in St. Petersburg traced their ancestry directly back to the medieval *Schatzkammern*, and featured precious metals, jewels, and expensive craftsmanship and artworks by recognized masters such as Dürer and Rubens. Even with the category of princely collections, emphases might differ according to individual tastes: August was a passionate collector of artisanal tools and machines; Rudolf II assembled a superb collection of paintings; Peter I favored human monsters, live as well as stuffed.⁶ In contrast to the princely penchant for expensive artificialia, the col-

2 Balthasar Monconys, *Voyages de M. de Monconys*, 4 vols. (Paris: Chez Pierre Delaulne, 1695), vol. 3, pp. 103-107.

3 Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800*, trans. E. Wiles-Portier (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).

4 On the early modern terminology of collections, see C. F. Neickelius, *Museographia, oder Einleitung zum rechten Begriff und nützlicher Anlegung der Museorum oder Raritäten-Kammern* (Leipzig/Breslau: Michael Hubert, 1727), pp. 2-3; Johann Daniel Major, *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken von Kunst- und Naturalien-Kammern insgemein* [1674], reprinted in D. Michael Bernhard Valentini, *Museum Museorum, oder Vollständige Schau-Bühne aller Materialien und Specereyen nebst deren natürlichen Beschreibung, Selection, Nutzen und Gebrauch* (Frankfurt a. M.: Johann D. Zunner, 1704), pp. 4-11; Paula Findlen, "The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy," *Journal of the History of Collections* 1(1989): 59-78.

5 Gisela Luther, "Stilleben als Bilder der Sammelleidenschaft," in Gerhard Langemeyer and Hans-Albert Peters, eds., *Stilleben In Europa* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1979), pp. 88-128, esp. pp. 121-126. A number of the painting in this imaginary *Kunstkammer* can however be identified: S. Speth-Holterhoff, *Les Peintres flamands de cabinets d'amateurs au XVIIe siècle* (Brussels: Elsevier, 1957), pp. 53-55.

lections of physicians and apothecaries concentrated on naturalia: rarities like unicorn horns and quinine bark from South America were also pharmaceuticals; moreover, naturalia could usually be purchased far more cheaply than highly finished works of craftsmanship or art.⁷ Nevertheless, almost all collections, princely and scholarly, contained some mix of artificialia and naturalia, albeit in very different proportions and forms. In princely collections the nautilus shells, coral branches, and ostrich eggs that were staple naturalia of all collections were often elaborately worked in gold or encrusted in gems in order to increase their value and make them worthy of display, just as paintings might be set off in elaborate frames.⁸ Hence even the naturalia became to some extent artificialia.



The *Kunstkammer* in the Breughel/Rubens painting follows this general pattern: artificialia dominate naturalia both numerically and visually. Paintings--especially the oversized rendition of a madonna encircled by a flower wreath, also by Breughel and Rubens and now belonging to the Louvre, that holds the eye at the far right side of the painting--command pride of place, followed by the shelves of sculpture in the upper center. This is a *Kunstkammer* in the narrow sense of the term. The naturalia are to be found in nooks and crannies: the vase of flowers next to the armillary sphere on top of the inlaid cabinet at the upper left; the basket of shells tucked between two paintings at the lower right; the gems (all sumptuously set) scattered before Venus and on top of the tapestry-covered table to her left; next to them the alabaster and agate goblet, possibly with a nautilus shell base, worked in gold; the parrot, two monkeys, and three dogs arranged among the paintings.⁹



6 Joachim Menzhausen, "Elector Augustus' *Kunstkammer*: An Analysis of the Inventory of 1587," in Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, eds., *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinets of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 69-75, on p. 71; Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, *The School of Prague: Painting at the Court of Rudolf II* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Oleg Neverov, "'His Majesty's Cabinet' and Peter I's *Kunstkammer*," in Impey and MacGregor, *Origins*, pp. 54-61, on p. 60.

7 For two such medical/naturalist collections, see Ferrante Imperato, *Dell'istoria naturale* (Naples, Costantino Vitale, 1599) and Olaus Worm, *Museum Wormianum seu Historia rara rariorum* (Leiden: Elsevier, 1655) : both books depict the authors' collections in their frontispieces. On the relationship between medical simples and collecting see Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 248-256; on the early modern markets for naturalia and exotica see Antoine Schnapper, *Le Géant, la licorne et la tulipe: Collections et collectionneurs dans la France du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), pp. 219-223.

8 The figure of a nautilus cup with a coral branch base Southern German, belonged to the collection of Kurfürst August von Sachsen (early 17th century), today to the Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe.

There are also instruments at least partially associated by 1617 with the study of nature--the two telescopes, the globe, the astrolabe and compass, the armillary sphere--as well as with architecture and engineering, but contemporaries would have unhesitatingly classed these among the artificialia, especially because the exemplars in the painting exhibit fine workmanship. (On the same grounds, one might have queried the classification of the gems and agates as naturalia: although their natural provenance is indisputable, they have been transformed by skilled artisans into ornaments.)



To return to the question of a hidden order: is there a common term that unites these diverse objects? With very few exceptions (perhaps the rather ordinary-looking brown dog scampering about in the sunlit gallery in the upper right of the painting?) all of the objects are ostentatiously costly, at least to the early seventeenth-century eye. We immediately recognize the high price tag on the strands of pearls, the antique busts, the artistic masterworks, the fancy instruments, and even the exotic animals; we are however less conscious of how valuable certain flowers and shells appeared to early modern Europeans. Although the bouquet of spring flowers in the blue porcelain vase (itself an expensive piece of exotica in 1617) is not as sumptuous as the garland of blossoms Breughel painted around Rubens' madonna, tulips and narcissi counted as luxury items even before the Dutch tulip craze of 1637, during which single bulbs could fetch 4000 guilders or more (approximately ten times the annual salary of a Leiden master carpenter at the time). These astronomical prices were admittedly anomalous, and none of the tulips in Breughel's bouquet seem to be of the especially coveted (and correspondingly expensive) white-flamed-with-red variety; nonetheless, such a massing of flowers still represented a considerable monetary investment--wealth here flaunted, since cut flowers of course fade more quickly than those left in the garden.¹⁰ Shells in general did not compete in price with the most expensive flowering bulbs, but



9 Princely collections were often combined with a menagerie of exotic animals: in Dresden for example the dazed tourist exited from the chambers of filled with ostrich eggs and coconut shells, paintings, automata, petrified wood, instruments, etc. to the adjoining menagerie, which boasted bears (one white), lions, tigers, and two monkeys. Monconys, *Voyages*, p. 108.

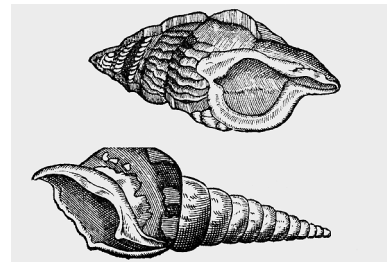
10 On the prices and economic meanings of flowers in seventeenth-century Dutch flower paintings see Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 2-16. The striped tulips were the result of a virus, and hence could not always be counted upon to breed true, increasing their rarity and value. Jan Breughel the Elder did include some of these striped tulips in other flower paintings, e.g. his *Flower Piece*, Coll. Thurkow, The Hague (also with a blue porcelain vase, apparently of Chinese origin).

there was also a brisk Dutch market for exotic varieties (mostly from the Indian Ocean), which supplied collectors throughout Western Europe in the seventeenth century.¹¹ Parrots and monkeys both carried emblematic meanings of imitation in the contexts of paintings like this one ("art the ape of nature")¹², but parrots additionally figured as costly presents in the Low Countries during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. When Albrecht Dürer for example toured the Netherlands in 1520, among the many lavish gifts he and his wife received--sugar cane, a gold ring, porcelain, feathers from Calcutta--was a parrot.¹³

But there was a further feature, beyond costliness, that would have connected the naturalia in the Breughel/Rubens *Kunstkammer* for an early seventeenth-century spectator. Seashells, flowers, gemstones, and brightly colored bird feathers belonged to the category of the *lusus naturae*, or sport of nature. This was a notion ultimately traceable back to Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, but whose referents and significance expanded markedly in Renaissance natural history.¹⁴ Pliny had remarked, specifically in connection with the variety of flowers, gems, and seashells, on nature's aesthetic bounty in these realms:

"Ut nihil instituto operi desit, gemmae supersunt et in artum coacta rerum naturae maiestas, multis nulla parte mirabilior. tantum tribuunt varietati, coloribus, materiae, decori, violare etiam signis, quae causa gemmarum est, quasdam nefas ducentes, aliquas vero extra pretia ulla taxationemque humanarum opum arbitantes, ut plerisque ad summam absolutumque naturae rerum contemplationem satis sit una aliqua gemma."¹⁵

These sentiments were often echoed by early modern naturalists who wrote not only on minerals but also about flowers and shells. The French surgeon Ambroise Paré for example exclaimed over the variety of seashells: "Il se trouve en la mer de si estranges et diverses sortes de coquilles, que l'on peut dire que la Nature, chambriere du grand Dieu, se joue en la fabrication d'icelles..."¹⁶ The English naturalist Robert Plot, writing about the figured stones found in some Oxfordshire quarries, explained that it was "the wisdom and goodness of



11 For example, Philipp Hainhofer, the Augsburg purveyor of curiosities to several princely collections, bought shells for his clients at Dutch markets: Hans-Olof Böstrom, "Philipp Hainhofer and Gustavus Adolphus' Kunstschränk in Uppsala," in Impey and MacGregor, *Origins*, pp. 90-101, on p. 92.

12 For an emblematic interpretation of this painting and others, see Matthias Winner, *Die Quellen der Pictura-Allegorien in gemalten Bildergallerien des 17. Jahrhunderts zu Antwerpen* (Diss. Köln, 1957). On interpretations of Breughel's floral cartouches like that around the Rubens madonna, see David Freedberg, "The Origin and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands," *Münchener Jahrbuch* 32(1981): 115-135.

13 Jane Campbell Hutchison, *Albrecht Dürer: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 139. Dürer's celebrated aquarelle of the wing of a blue roller (Vienna, Albertina, 1512) bears witness to his own artistic fascination with the colors and textures of bird feathers.

14 Paula Findlen, "Jokes of Nature and Jokes of Knowledge: The Playfulness of Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe," *Renaissance Quarterly* 43(1990): 292-331.

15 Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, XXXVII.1.

16 Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres et prodiges* [1573], ed. Jean Céard (Geneva: Droz, 1971), p. 102. The woodcut figure of shells appears on p. 117.

the *Supreme Nature*, by the *School-men* called *Naturans*, that governs and directs the *Natura naturata* here below, to beautifie the World with these varieties; which I take to be the end of such productions as well as most *Flowers*, such as *Tulips*, *Anemones*, &c. of which we know as little use as of *formed stones*."¹⁷

These personifications of a playful nature diverged from Aristotelian comparisons of nature's products to those of a human artisan. Naturalists in the Aristotelian tradition had never tired of pointing out how the most ordinary objects of nature, especially organic nature, were highly various and ingeniously constructed. But these diverse organic forms differed from the *lusus naturae* in serving equally diverse functions, which Aristotelians identified as the final causes of organisms and their parts. Nature's skill consisted in matching form to function with elegant economy: "nature does nothing in vain," as the scholastic maxim put it. In contrast, the naturalia of the Kunst- und Wunderkammer were admired for their excess of ornament, indifferent to function. What was the use so many different shapes and colors of flowers, shells, and gemstones? It was precisely this pointless variety and studied uselessness that linked luxury and ornamentation to play: all flaunted the workaday utility of ordinary objects, both natural and artificial. In seventeenth-century usage, the word "curiosity" could be used as the antonym of "utility", as when Bernard de Fontenelle, writing about the activities of the Académie Royale des Sciences in Paris, admitted that some parts of mathematics and physics (as opposed to history) "were only curious" rather than "useful".¹⁸ This was one of the senses in which the objects of the princely Kunstkammer qualified as "curiosities": not only were trompe l'oeil paintings, nautilus shells turned into gold-handled pitchers, cutlery with handles of branching coral, delicate nested polyhedra of turned ivory, and other Kunstkammer items "curiosities" in the sense of being finely wrought (returning to the root sense of *cura*, or "care"); they were also "curious" in flaunting utility.¹⁹ Extravagant of labor and materials, Kunstkammer objects were *objets de luxe*. Hence the personification of nature in the context of Kunstkammer



17 Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Oxfordshire* (Oxford: Theater, 1677), p. 121.

18 Bernard de Fontenelle, *Histoire du renouvellement de l'Académie Royale des Sciences en M.DC.XCIX et les éloges historiques* (Amsterdam: Pierre de Coup, 1709), p. 16; on the shift from "curiosité" to "utilité" as a motivation for Académie research, see Christian Licoppe, *La Formation de la pratique scientifique: Le Discours de l'expérience en France et en Angleterre (1630-1820)* (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1996), pp. 88-126.

19 The figure shows Georg Haintz, *Stilleben mit Kunstkammerschrank*. Kopenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst.

naturalia like tulips and exotic seashells was as virtuoso artisan, who more resembled the goldsmith, ivory-turner, or painter of flower pictures than Aristotle's humble shipwright.²⁰ Like the virtuoso artisan--like Breughel himself perhaps²¹--the nature of *Kunstammer* naturalia played with form and matter in defiance of function.

The aesthetic of the *Kunstammer* left its mark on early modern natural history and natural philosophy. In the specific case of tulips and seashells, seventeenth-century classifications fixed upon the dazzling appearances of these objects, and preserved their varieties. Linnaeus rebuked his predecessor in botanical taxonomy, Joseph de Tournefort, for having unnecessarily multiplied species by being too attentive to variable appearances: "Tournefort enumerates 93 Tulips (where there is only one) and 63 Hyacinths (where there are but two), and others have often been no less extravagant."²² But Linnaeus himself was content simply to latinize the seventeenth-century names of shells coined according to their resemblances to everything from leopards to papal tiaras to snakeheads; Georges Cuvier was still complaining in 1790 about the state of the shell collection of the one-time Cabinet du Roi when it became part of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle during the French Revolution.²³ More generally, early modern naturalists showed a pronounced taste for *lusus naturae*, as the contents of the first scientific journals like the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, the *Histoire et Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences*, and the *Acta eruditorum* amply testify.²⁴

Let us return to the dazed onlooker of Brueghel's and Ruben's imaginary *Kunstammer*. Wonders of art and nature are strewn about in studied profusion; even the more tidily hung paintings in the barrel-vaulted gallery to the upper right stretch from floor to ceiling; the lap-dog crouched under the telescope between Venus and the Cupid-like genius can barely move without stumbling over a pouch of coins or a volume of cosmography. The eye of the spectator flickers restlessly from object to object: wherever attention rests for a moment--on the red-and-blue feathered wings of the parrot (or those of the putto-genius), on the painting of the savage hunting scene above the sculptures, on the handsome bronze astrolabe at Venus' feet--it is almost immediately distracted to some other shiny, bright-colored surface. This splintering of attention mimicks the stupefied wonder evoked by the cabinets of curiosities themselves. This is the dumbstruck wonder that douses rather than ignites intense inquiry; in this sense, the cabinets of

20 Aristotle, *Physics*, II.8, 199b26-30.

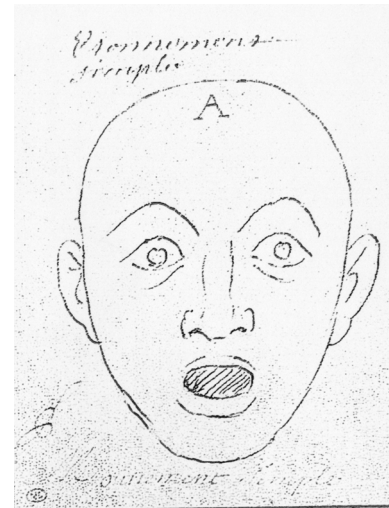
21 Simon Schama notes that seventeenth-century Dutch (and one assumes also Flemish) artworks, especially landscapes and flower paintings, were treated as commodities, and their makers as skilled artisans: Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 318.

22 Carl von Linnaeus, *The Critica Botanica Of Linnaeus* [1737], trans. Sir Arthur Hort, rev. Miss M.L. Green, with an Introduction by Sir Arthur W. Hill (London: Ray Society, 1938), Aphorism 259, p. 122.

23 Schnapper, *Le Géant*, pp. 74-75.

24 Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), pp. 215-254.

curiosity, by their very prolixity, killed curiosity. Both Francis Bacon and René Descartes were therefore disapproving of the wonder that exhausts vision and fragments the faculties. Bacon described wonder as "broken knowledge" and disdained the aimless trials of empiricists who "ever breaketh off in wondering and not in knowing."²⁵ Although Descartes deemed wonder the first of the passions, and essential for the acquisition of new knowledge, he was equally critical of excessive wonder or astonishment (*estonnement*) which froze the whole body and mind.²⁶ Yet both Bacon and Descartes owed a secret debt to the artificialia and naturalia of the Kunst- und Wunderkammer. Each insisted that the ancient distinction between art and nature was false, that nature and art differed only in their efficient causes (as Bacon put it)²⁷ or in the fineness of their mechanisms (Descartes)²⁸, not in their ontological essences. And each appealed to examples--*lusus naturae*, automata--made visible and concrete to themselves and their readers in the Kunst- and Wunderkammer objects that deliberately blurred the boundary between art and nature. Although the myriad varieties of tulips and shells that so delighted seventeenth-century viewers of Brueghel's and Rubens' Kunstkammer have disappeared from scientific taxonomy, the vision of art and nature unified endures.



25 Francis Bacon, "Valerius Terminus, or The Interpretation of Nature," in *Lord Bacon's Works*, ed. Basil Montagu, 16 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1825-34), vol. 3, p. 246.

26 René Descartes, *Passions de l'âme*, Art. 73, in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 12 vols. (Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1897-1910), vol. 11, p. 118. The figure is taken from Charles Le Brun, who based his lectures to the Académie de Peinture in Paris in 1668 on Descartes' *Passions de l'âme*: Musée de Louvre, Paris, G.M. 6465.

27 Bacon, "Description of the Intellectual Globe," in *Works*, vol. 15, p. 153-154.

28 Descartes, *Principes de la philosophie* [Latin 1644, French 1647], Art. 203, in *Oeuvres*, vol. 9, pp. 302-303.

Rettung aus Sehnot

Unorthodoxe Anmerkungen zur “Allegorie auf den Sehsinn” (1617) von Jan Brueghel d. Ä. und Peter Paul Rubens

Jürgen Renn

Bilderverbot der Wissenschaft

Bilder in der Wissenschaft sind suspekt. Sie gehören eigentlich nicht zu ihrer Sphäre der Rationalität, die ausgrenzt, worüber man nicht reden kann. Das Primat der Sprache in der Wissenschaft stuft Bilder oft zu bloßen Hilfskonstruktionen herab, zugelassen allenfalls als Illustrationen, etwa zum Zweck der Popularisierung – ebenfalls einer nur bedingt legitimen Grenzüberschreitung von Wissenschaft –, oder als letztlich in sprachliches Verstehen aufzulösende Bilderrätsel.

Vor diesem Hintergrund wirft die Darstellung von Wissenschaft im Kontext eines Bildes, wie sie die “Allegorie auf den Sehsinn” von Brueghel und Rubens zeigt, ein Problem auf: Beugt man sich dem Bilderverbot der Wissenschaft, dann muß man eine solche Darstellung entweder zur Illustration einer Analyse etwa der in diesem Bild gezeigten wissenschaftlichen Instrumente degradieren (in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte) oder zur bloßen Chiffre eines ikonographischen Programms abwerten (in der Kunstgeschichte). Beide Vorgehensweisen entmächtigen das Bild zu einem Ausdruck von ihm letztlich unabhängiger, sprachlich zu formulierender Gedanken. Dabei spielt es kaum eine Rolle, ob diese Gedanken das wissenschaftliche Wissen der Zeit, die Stellung der Künstler in der damaligen Gesellschaft, ein politisches, ein epistemologisches oder ein theologisches Programm betreffen.

Ist es demgegenüber möglich, das Bild selbst als ein eigenständiges Medium der Reflexion zu begreifen? Das würde insbesondere für die Darstellung von Wissenschaft in diesem Bild bedeuten, sich bei ihrer Deutung nicht auf vorgefaßte epistemologische Auffassungen zu beschränken, sondern in erster Linie die im Bild selbst eingenommenen Positionen wahrzunehmen und sich mit ihnen auseinanderzusetzen. Daß es sich lohnen könnte, diese Herausforderung anzunehmen sei hier nur angemerkt.*

* Das Folgende nimmt Bezug auf zwei grundlegende Arbeiten über dieses Bild:

Klaus Ertz, Jan Brueghel der Ältere (1568 – 1625). Die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog. Köln 1979, S. 328–362.

Justus Müller Hofstede, ‘Non Saturatur Oculus Visu’ – Zur “Allegorie des Gesichts” von Peter Paul Rubens und Jan Brueghel d.Ä., in H. Vekemann und J. Müller Hofstede, Wort und Bild in der niederländischen Kunst und Literatur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts. Erfstadt 1984, S. 243–288.

Eine epistemologische Allegorie

Ein Auge blickt nach außen

– das andere nach innen.

Totenschädel mit zwei Augenhöhlen, Bühne des Gesichts.
Kunstkammer, Atelier, Laboratorium?
Wer hier reinschaut und durchblicken will,
muß sehen können oder sehen lernen.
Wer bloß glotzt, bleibt blind.



**Unerhört: eine Frau, die
zwischen Venus**

Auf einen Tisch gestützt
sitzt eine fast nackte Frau
und betrachtet ein Bild,
das von einem ebenfalls nackten
Jungen gehalten wird.
Der Junge ist durch die Flügel
als Amor gekennzeichnet.
Da sich Amor als Sohn und Gehilfe
der Venus am ehesten mit dieser
in Verbindung bringen läßt,
wird die Benennung der Frau
als Venus sinnvoll.
(Klaus Ertz)

und Juno changiert!

Die von Rubens gemalten Figuren der
“Allegorie des Gesichts” von 1617 stellen
nicht Venus und Cupido, sondern Juno
und einen ihr dienstbaren Genius dar. Damit
wird das gesamte Kernstück der von K. Ertz
vorgelegten Interpretation des Gemäldes
hinfällig.
(Justus Müller Hofstede)

Wider die Trennung von geistigem und körperlichem Auge

Die Chancen der Juno optica: Cupido und Teleskop!

Da sitzt das schöne Weib im Zentrum
und bleibt doch nur Modell.
Schön postiert,
blau drapiert.
Licht, bitte! Langeweile.
Modelle repräsentieren Modelle,
repräsentieren Modelle.
Akademisches Sehen - akademische Langeweile,
saturnische, melancholische,
aussichtslose Unendlichkeit.
Totes Wissen verstopft das Herz:
Akedie, Todsünde der Repräsentation.
Der Blick ins Leere ist nur dann nicht verloren,
wenn ein anderer ihn auffängt.
Ein Königreich für einen Genius!



Ohne das körperliche Sehen bleibt nur die Melancholie!



Der Pfau der Juno ist das Gegenbild zum Cupido der Venus.

Er ist der Vermittlung von Innen und Außen nicht fähig,
obwohl er die Grenze zwischen beiden bewacht.
Zu ihm gehört die kleine Statuette
auf dem äußersten Rand des Präziosenkabinetts,
auch an der Grenzlinie
zwischen Innen und Außen.
Sie stellt einen zerbrechlichen Merkur dar,
den Gott der Vermittlung.
In der Tat, die muß nicht immer gelingen.
Als er versuchte, Io, die Geliebte des Zeus zu befreien,
als Huftier getarnt vermeintlich der Rache von Juno entzogen,
da trennte Merkur ihrem Hüter, dem Argus, vom Leibe das Haupt ab:
“Argus, du liegst! Das Licht, das in so viel Lichter du faßt,
ausgelöscht ist's. Ein Dunkel deckt deine hundert Augen.”
Vergebens jedoch, den Wahn der Rinder bekam die Kuh,
auf Junos Geheiß und Argus' Augen ihr Vogel, der Pfau.

Ein erster paradoxer Hinweis: Heilung von körperlicher Blindheit durch geistiges Sehen

Die Argusgeschichte führt ins Dunkel. Den Weg zum Licht zu finden gehen wir zwei Hinweisen nach, der Geste des Cupido, der Juno ein Bild vorhält, dessen Betrachtung ihren Blick ins Freie wenden würde, und dem Fingerzeig des Teleskops – beide weisen zur Quelle des Lichts. Auch der Doppelblick des habsburgischen Doppeladlers kennt zwei Wege, zum äußeren und zum inneren Himmelslicht – beides offenbar aus derselben Quelle!

Das Schlüsselbild im Bild ...



Wie kann sehen gelingen?
Nur wenn Sphären sich durchdringen!
Was kann aus der Blindheit wecken?
Nur das, was Kunst und Wissenschaft entdecken!

die Heilung des Blinden: Durch den Glauben? Durch die Liebe?



Die Überdroge: Kunst!

Wirkmächtig ist selbst die Religion
nur durch die Macht der Kunst.
Sie, die Kunst, ist die Erlöserin,
die zur *vita activa* anleitet.
Ihre Perspektive: teilzuhaben
an der von Venus versprochenen Einheit
von Zivilisation und Natur,
wie sie der Ausblick
auf den wohlgeordneten Garten
und die großangelegte Architektur
der Brüsseler Residenz
erahnen läßt.

Der Prunkleuchter gibt Auskunft über die
Herkunft der Regenten. (Klaus Ertz)



Foedera eterna.

Kunst: Doping auch für die Wissenschaft!

Ein zweiter paradoxer Hinweis: Heilung von geistiger Blindheit durch körperliches Sehen

Das “telescopio” ... sollte nicht in die Himmelssphäre eindringen, die zur Herrschaft Gott und zur Auslegung der Theologie vorbehalten war, sondern im weltlichen Bereich der irdischen, physikalischen Gesetze operieren.

...
In diesem Sinne ist der Erdgloбус dem Fernrohr Galileis ... absichtsvoll als weltlicher, irdischer Betrachtungs- und Untersuchungsgegenstand zugeordnet (ähnlich wie dem Affen als adäquates Objekt das Schiffsbild vorgesetzt wurde) ...

...
Die symbolische Bewertung des Fernrohrs auf niederer Rangstufe ... erwuchs aus der Einfügung in die ikonographische Disziplin eines gegenreformatorisch geprägten Bildprogramms. (Justus Müller Hofstede)



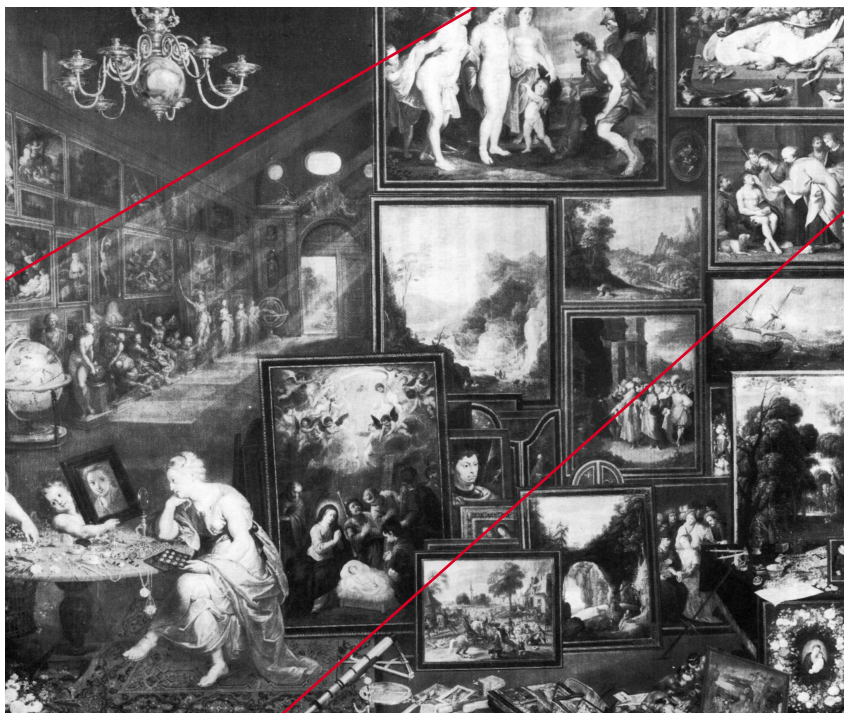
Die Sonne – Zentralgestirn von Religion, Kunst und Wissenschaft.

Das Fernrohr und der Engel: *Sacrificium intellectus* oder epistemologisch-theologische Interpretation des Kopernikanismus durch den Galilei-Verehrer Rubens?

Galileische Theologie der zwei Offenbarungen im Bild!

Im Teleskop erscheint nicht unmittelbar Gott sondern zunächst ein Engel, zugleich der Künste Genius: *umbilicus mundi*. Dennoch keine Nabelschau!

Die Blickachse des Teleskops geht zum geistumwehten inneren Auge, welches das ganz reale Licht der Sonne empfängt.
Der Blick nach innen ist durch Körperliches vermittelt: Cupido und Fernrohr.
Der Blick nach außen ist durch Geistiges vermittelt: Cupido und Heilsgeschichte.



Jan Brueghel d.Ä. und Peter Paul Rubens: Allegorie des Gesichts und Geruchs.

Auch hier befreit das Fernrohr von der Blindheit und ist auf die Quelle des Lichts gerichtet.

Ein Bild als politische Propaganda?

Ein Bild für das logistische Zentrum der niederländischen Reformbewegung am Hof der Erzherzöge

Werden in der "Allegorie auf den Sehsinn" zeitgenössische politische Programme ungebrochen zum Ausdruck gebracht?

Wer es hier zu lesen vermochte, dem enthüllte es sich auch als ein lehrhaftes Inventar möglicher Propagandaformen der "*fides catholica*".
(Justus Müller Hofstede)

Wenn das Porträt des Paares nicht zufällig ... in dem Bereich steht, in dem sich auch wissenschaftliche Geräte befinden, so kann das darauf hindeuten, daß die Regenten allgemeiner als Förderer der Wissenschaften verehrt werden sollen.
(Klaus Ertz)

Eingegangen in den Himmel der Präziosen



Isabel und Albrecht diese beiden wollten sich an ihrem Anblick weiden. Also ward ein Künstler angestellt ihr schönes Abbild zu erhalten. Für immer wollten sie der Welt, zeigen, was sie galten. Eingerahmt im eigenen Kragen, weltgewandt und ohne Fragen, aus der teuren Wäsche stierend, als Klunker unter Klunkern frierend sitzen sie im Bilde fest und ahnen wohl das Ende schon. Ach, was nutzt die Repräsentation – wenn man tot ist, bleibt kein Rest.

Propaganda war wohl dabei, auch für die Antwerpener Meister und ihr Angebot. Sie konnten einem Herrscher ein Stück Ewigkeit verschaffen.

Aber zugleich wird hinter diese Ewigkeit ein Fragezeichen gesetzt:

Ist es nicht doch nur ein Himmel der Präziosen und damit letztlich eine Sphäre der Vergänglichkeit?

Das Bildnis der beiden Herrscher ist zugleich ein Spiegel des Betrachters: Selbstbetrachtung, Kontemplation, Prudentia, gewiß, aber das sind nur vorläufige, vordergründige Arten des Sehens. Jeder Spiegel ist immer auch ein Eulenspiegel!



Ist die Kunst nur Waffe im Religionskampf oder selber schon Partei?

Lassen sich die verschiedenen Bedeutungsebenen der Allegorie des Gesichts *enträt-seln* als didaktische Umsetzung gegenreformatorischer Religionspropaganda? Werden im dargestellten Kabinett Kunstwerke nur als Instrumente sittlicher Belehrung vorgeführt, eingesetzt *in bono* und *in malo*? Oder wird Religionskunst hier schon zur Kunstreligion, die sich nicht mehr auf solche Plattitüden reduzieren läßt?

Wenn manche Papageien in manchen Bildern sprechen könnten, würden sie "Ave" sagen, in anderen wohl eher nicht.



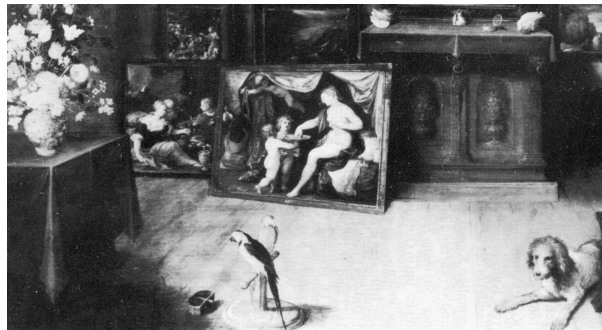
Mit dieser Schaubühne der Antwerpener Malerei formulierten Rubens und Jan Brueghel d.Ä. einen Anspruch, der nun die alte Scheldemetropole zum Rüstplatz für die gegenreformatorische Unterweisung und Auseinandersetzung erhob. (Justus Müller Hofstede)

Der auf dem Gemälde Mariens sitzende Papagei erläutert einen mit dem christlichen Gedanken des Übels, der Erbsünde, zusammenhängenden Gedanken. (Klaus Ertz)

Impotenz des reinen Geistes, dessen schales Licht von hinten einfällt. Aus dessen weißer Taube ist hier allerdings ein roter Papagei geworden. *Imitatio Christi* oder *imitatio naturae* – ist da noch ein Unterschied?

Gemalte Himmelsmutter versus Göttermutter Juno als Modell. Maria im Blumenkranz: Gelungene Repräsentation, die Unvergängliches und Vergängliches versöhnt – ein *argumentum ad oculos* für den Glauben. Die Kunst als Mittlerin der Religion, die ohne solche sinnliche Vermittlung offenbar machtlos wäre.

Noch ein Haustier ist der Papagei



bei Francken II –

Francken II: Kunstkabinett mit Bildbetrachtern und Ikonoklasten (Ausschnitt), um 1612-1614.

bei Rubens/Brueghel ist er frei.

Klassifikation des Wissens oder Reflexion der Konstruktionsbedingungen des Sehens?

Wer in diesem Bild nach Hinweisen auf die klassischen Einteilungen des Wissens und Könnens sucht, z.B. nach den *septem artes liberales*, wird hier ohne Zweifel eine Bestätigung seiner gelehrten Vorkenntnisse finden. Dann aber stellt sich das Problem, ob solche traditionellen Schemata und Hierarchien hier nur dargestellt oder auch in Frage gestellt werden. Vor allem aber: wie wird in diesem Bild über Wissen reflektiert, wenn überhaupt? Oder handelt es sich letztlich doch nur, wie Justus Müller Hofstede pointiert formuliert, um “ein gemaltes, unter ein bestimmtes Rahmenthema gestelltes Emblembuch”?

Spannungslinien statt Stufen.

Folgende Kombinationen lassen sich finden:

Globus: für Grammatik und Geometrie
Buch: für Grammatik, Musik, Astronomie und Rhetorik
Meßplatte: (am linken Tisch angelehnt) für Arithmetik und Geometrie
Sextant: für Astronomie
Zirkel und Kompaß: für Geometrie und Astronomie
Gerolltes Blatt Papier: für Dialektik und Rhetorik
(Klaus Ertz)



Folgende Spannungslinien lassen sich finden:
Globus: Modell der Wissenschaft, umgeben von Kunst, korrespondiert Juno als Modell der Kunst, umgeben von Wissenschaft – Sphärenverschränkung.
Buch: mit dem Titel “Cosmographie” – darüber
Gerolltes Blatt Papier mit dem Namen Brueghels – bezeichnet den universellen Repräsentationsanspruch des Unternehmens.
Meßplatte: ist in Wirklichkeit ein Jakobsstab – altes Instrument der Astronomie abgelöst vom Teleskop, das neues Sehen möglich macht.
Sextant: korrespondiert dem vom Affen beglotzten Seestück – Instrument und Repräsentation lassen sich nicht trennen.
Zirkel und Kompaß: den alten werden die neuesten Instrumente gegenübergestellt, darunter: Proportionalzirkel von Mordente und Bürgi.

Armillarsphäre und Blumenvase – Mutter Erde, umgeben von kosmischen Sphären und Vergänglichkeit.
Auch eine Muttergöttin im Blumenkranz, in anderer Weise offenbart.
Dazwischen Herkules, der an des Atlas Stelle den Himmel auf seinem Nacken trug.
In der Tat: ein neuer Atlas ist gefordert, denn erschüttert sind die Sphären, und Vergänglichkeit ist auch in der Erkenntnis des Ewigen.

Stufen des Sehens:
Stumpfes Glotzen –
Wissenschaftliche Beobachtung –
Kontemplative Anschauung –
Erkenntnis im Glauben.
(Justus Müller Hofstede)



Was den niederen Sphären abgeht und warum es ohne sie doch nicht geht

Das Marinebild:
 "eine lächelnde,
 selbstironische
 Andeutung
 Jan Brueghels,
 des Autors
 dieses Marinebildes"
 (Justus Müller
 Hofstede)

Wenn hier nicht nur eine gradlinige Stufenleiter der Erkenntnis emblematisch verschlüsselt zur Darstellung kommt, dann muß die Frage nach der Rolle von Bildern, die auf den ersten Blick nur Hinweisschilder für Wohl- und Fehlverhalten zu sein scheinen, neu gestellt werden. In welcher Beziehung stehen sie zueinander, wenn nicht nur in der von *bonum* und *malum*?

Was nicht repräsentiert wird, kann auch nicht erlöst werden.

Die didaktische Interpretation steht vor einem Dilemma: warum mit sovieler Mühe darstellen – und zwar nicht nur als Bild im Bild, sondern auch als Bild – was am Ende doch nur verdammenswert erscheint?

Weitere "Bilder im Bilde", die sich als Gemälde kleineren oder großen Formats in der rechten Hälfte der Madrider Komposition präsentieren und nach Thematik wie Sinngehalt zweischichtig angeordnet sind, nehmen die Antithese der beiden Blindenszenen auf, sind ebenfalls "in bono" und "in malo" auszulegen und bieten als Erweiterung der Kerngruppe ein reich variiertes, in vielfältigen Facetten durchgespieltes belehrendes Programm über die "vita voluptuosa" und über die heilsgeschichtliche Bestimmung des Menschen.
 (Justus Müller Hofstede)



Irdische und himmlische Liebe? Ein an Mariae Bildnis angelehnter Silenzzug.

Nur keine Scheu, treten Sie ein in den Dunstkreis von Dionysos!
 Die entblößten Damen haben zwar etwas seltsame Beine –
 aber kommt's darauf wirklich an?
 Muß man so genau hinsehen, wenn man nur genießen will?
 Der angetrunkene, unbekleidete Herr mittleren Alters,
 der sich den Damen mit sichtlicher Mühe nähert, tut das jedenfalls nicht.
 Aber was könnte der schon sehen?
 Selbst als Bachus ist er impotent.
 Und wäre er Herr Lot, er würde seine eigenen Töchter nicht erkennen.

Die Gegensphäre: akademische und militärische Disziplin. Mars und Venus, mais quel niveau!

**Lust ohne Erkenntnis ist blind,
 Erkenntnis ohne Lust ist leer.**

Ganz vorn im Bild ein gelehrter Affe, der Repräsentation von Repräsentiertem nicht scheiden kann. Seine Instrumente sind die scholastischer Bücherweisheit, zwei Brillen für Haarspaltereien, an denen die weiten Ausfahrten über das Meer, die neue Erfahrung, spurlos vorübergegangen sind.

Auch ein Fernrohr wird diesem Affen nichts nützen.
 Kein Lusthündchen sitzt ihm zu Füßen, kein Genius zeigt ihm den Weg.
 Nicht die Kunst, ein knochentrockner Köter ist sein Kompagnion,
 der militärisch knurrt und anklafft, was er nicht versteht.
 Mit Disziplin allein läßt sich das Sehen nicht erlernen!

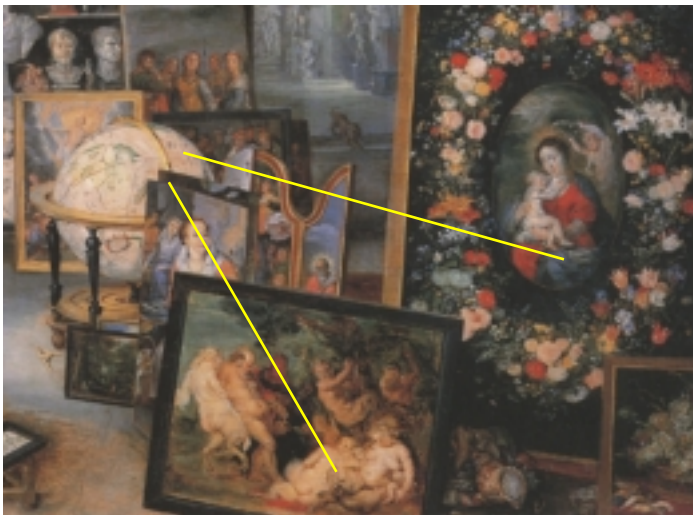
Das Feldherrnbild, obwohl zum Bereich der Widmung gehörend, steht dennoch eher im Weg als auf dem Weg, der die Sphären verbindet und trennt.
 Auf niedriger Staffelei aufgestellt, ist es fast schon ein Grabmal, mit Blumen- und Madonnenbild. Ein bloßer Ort des Todes, dem bloßen Leben gegenüber.

Die Repräsentation von Spannungen oder: die Universalität des Repräsentationsanspruchs

Der Betrachter dieses Bildes ist ein Experimentator: hundert Arten der Blindheit hat er schon erprobt und sich in Sphären verloren, aus deren Dunkel kein Ausweg ist. Dennoch ist hier kein Labyrinth angelegt, aus dem es nur *ein* Entrinnen gibt. Denn die verschiedenen Arten des Sehens schließen einander nicht aus, sondern ergänzen sich, wie die beiden Arten der Offenbarungen durch den Blick nach Außen und den Blick nach Innen.

Umfassende Repräsentation: tridentischer Wissenschafts- und Kunsttrieb!

Gelungenes Sehen ist gelungene Repräsentation. Und gelungene Repräsentation kann hier immer nur Repräsentation eines Ganzen sein und setzt deshalb den Einsatz aller Mittel voraus, auch der avanciertesten, insbesondere aber auch eine Verschränkung der Sphären von Kunst, Wissenschaft, Religion und Macht. Aber wie?



Der Globus – Modell der Wissenschaft und rundum geglättete Repräsentation. Dennoch ergänzungsbedürftig durch die Kunst. Sie zeigt: was er repräsentiert ist selbst schon Repräsentation eines Fluchtpunktes kontrastierender Sphären: Maria – geschlechtsloser Geist, Silen – geistloses Geschlecht; Altar und Genrebild, diese Sphären nähern sich der Erde, mischen sich (so muß es sein!) und – dahinter: Auferstehung – weisen über sie hinaus.

Der Werkzeugcharakter der Repräsentation – auch darin treffen sich Kunst und Wissenschaft.

Aus ganz anderer Perspektive steht die Erde zwischen der apollinischen Sphäre des Frauenbezwingers Perseus (die halbverdeckte Büste mit Medusenhaut hinter dem Globus) und der dionysischen Sphäre des von Frauen bezwungenen Bachanten (im Vordergrund). Auch dies eine Herausforderung auf der Suche nach einer Balance zwischen Spannungen! Dennoch sind weder Perseus noch der Auferstandene Zentralfiguren in diesem Bild, vielmehr stehen beide Überwinder – von anderen Objekten überschritten – an relativ untergeordneter Stelle. Doch wer ist die Zentralfigur?

Die Kunst läßt uns nicht vergessen, daß der Globus nur ein Bild ist und damit Instrument des Sehens, ebenso wie der am Boden liegende Zirkel. Repräsentation als nachgeschaffene Schöpfung, auch daher ihr Universalitätsanspruch.

Die Kunst des Sehens ist die Kunst der Repräsentation der Welt. Doch nur wenn sie deren Spannungen erhält, kann Kunst Konflikte lösen. Besser jedenfalls ein Schlachtengemälde als eine Schlacht. Besser auch ein umkippbares Feldherrnbild als ein umgekippter Feldherr.

Die Läuterung der Sphären: ein Balanceakt

Doch auf dem Rückweg vom Hades überwältigt sie die Neugier und sie öffnet das Gefäß. Nur durch die Hilfe Amors ... kann sie vor dem Tod gerettet werden.
(Klaus Ertz)

Sehen ist wie: einmal Unterwelt und zurück

... so kann die Verfehlung der Psyche, die ebenso wie die der Eva auf ihrer Neugier beruht, hier als Zeichen für das in die Welt gekommene Übel stehen ...
(Klaus Ertz)

Eine nur zweischichtige, didaktische Sichtweise ist diesem Bild ebenso unangemessen wie seine Auffassung als ein Spannungen austreibendes Harmonisierungsunternehmen oder seine Auflösung in eine leere Unendlichkeit von Repräsentation und Reflexion. Dagegen spricht schon die Wiederkehr der niederen Sphären als geläuterte, aber immer noch spannungsreiche Welten in den "höheren Regionen" des Bildes, der Welt der Venus ebenso sehr wie der des Mars.



Nur eine Psyche, die dem Tod ins Antlitz geschaut hat, ist eine würdige Adeptin der Venus.
Die Sündhaftigkeit der Neugier ist hier überwunden durch die rettende Macht der Liebe.

Sehen ist wie: eine Jagd auf Löwen und Tiger

Sind es Tiere oder Menschen, die da oben miteinander ringen? So zentral in diesem Bild – da kann es nur um's Ganze gehen. Orient und Okzident, Dunkel oder Licht, wer sehen will, muß kämpfen können, ohnedem geht's nicht.



Aber, aber wer wird den gleich in die Luft gehen und seine Zivilisation vergessen? Denken wir doch an unsere antiken Vorbilder, die die Grundlagen geschaffen haben, auf denen wir alle stehen, und die sich damit einen festen Platz für ihre Büsten im Regal redlich verdient haben. Geht es nicht auch etwas humaner? Vielleicht schon, aber geht es mit diesen blassen Figuren da? Das ist die Frage.

Es muß wohl ein Glaubenskampf sein, der hier stattfindet, vergleichbar dem Kampfe Simsons mit dem Löwen, oder auch dem Daniels in der Löwengrube. Aber sichtlich bleibt dieser Kampf ein Akt der Barbarei. Wer kann in einem solchen Streit noch vermitteln oder gar nach Balance suchen? Die Kunst etwa? Hier jedenfalls ragt nur Alexander aus dem Regal heraus, der große Vermittler zwischen den Sphären, kein Künstler freilich, aber vielleicht offenbart sich ja gerade darin der Realismus dieser Kunst.



Alexander der Vermittlingsheros

Er ist das eigentliche Spiegelbild, das den Herrschern vorgehalten wird.