

like Jan van Eyck's *Crucifixion* (c.1430), Robert Campin's *Annunciation Triptych* (c.1425-1430) and Hans Memling's *Annunciation* (1480-1489).

In 'Portraiture: A Meeting of the Sacred and Secular Worlds' the aim of the 'Netherlandish' artists is probably expressed more clearly than in any of the other chapters: to capture precisely the tangible reality of the world as it is seen. Petrus Christus' stunning portrait *A Goldsmith in His Shop, Possibly Saint Eligius* (1449) and Hans Memling's portraits of the Medici banker from Bruges, Tommaso Portinari, and his wife Maria (1470) are what catch the eye here.

The choice of a chapter on 'Workshop Practice' was a clever idea on the part of the New York organisers. The description of the studios in Bruges, Tournai, and Antwerp where works were produced almost on an assembly line by specialised masters, journeymen and apprentices, allowed the curators to show some lesser works as well. The accompanying chapter in the catalogue also permits the analysis of the expanding market in works of art in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A flourishing business, so it would seem, in which works were both commissioned and produced and sold in the open market – sometimes literally in the display windows of the studios.



Hans Memling, *The Annunciation*, 1480-1489. Canvas, 76.5 x 54.6 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

From the studio the catalogue moves to the paintings of the master Gerard David who was active in Bruges. The Metropolitan has the largest collection of his paintings in the world. The collection illustrates both his early and his late works, his rejuvenating approach to the art of landscape painting, his innovative approach to traditional themes and the original effects he achieved with light and colour, effects that were to influence whole generations of painters after him.

The catalogue brings the reader right into the sixteenth century with the chapter on 'Religious Painting from 1500 to 1550' (painters such as Juan de Flandes and Joos van Cleve), and concludes with a crescendo: an analysis of *The Harvesters* (1565) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, one of the paintings the New York Metropolitan is exceptionally proud of.

The six chapters are preceded by four introductory essays. One of these, 'How the Picture Got Here', reads at times like an engrossing detective novel. It seems that the Metropolitan bought Bruegel's *The Harvesters* in 1919 for a mere 3,370 dollars, from the heirs of the Belgian artist Paul Jean Cels who had died in 1917. But the Metropolitan acquired most of the works through gifts, mainly from New York collectors in the first half of this century. The taste, the financial resources, and the generosity of collectors like Benjamin Altman, Robert Lehman, Michael Friedsam and Jack and Belle Linsky were what shaped the Met's rich collection.

Other essays cover the growing market for art indicated above, the relationship between the Low Countries and Italy, and the evolution of taste for, and interest in, 'Early Netherlandish Painting' down the centuries. To sum up: a beautifully produced catalogue which – alongside catalogues such as that by Dirk de Vos of Hans Memling (1994) – forms a new milestone in the study of Early Painting from the Low Countries.

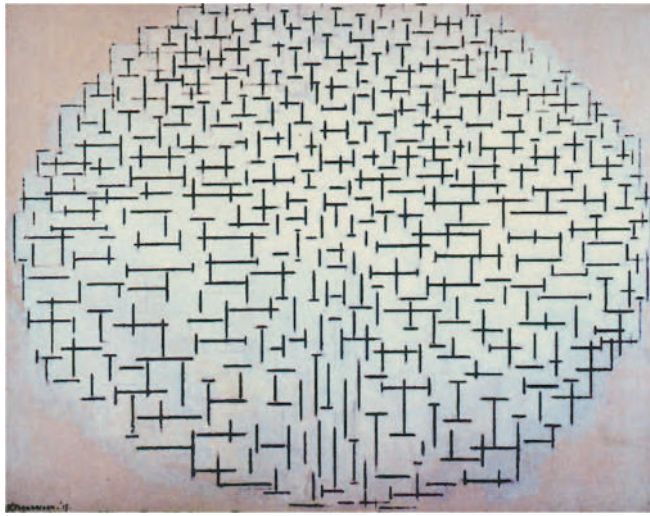
PETER VANDERMEERSCH
Translated by Sheila M. Dale.

Maryan W. Ainsworth and Keith Christiansen (eds.), *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art (distributed by Harry N. Abrams Inc.), 1998; 464 pp. ISBN 0-8109-6528-3.

The Mondrian Bible

The Catalogue Raisonné on Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) which appeared at the end of 1998 has turned out to be an impressive book. The product of more than 25 years' work by Mondrian experts Robert Welsh and Joop Joosten, it weighs almost 7 kilos and numbers more than 1100 pages.

The book comprises two volumes and three sections. The first section deals with the works up to early 1911 and has been put together by the leading expert on Mondrian's early work, Robert P. Welsh. Section II covers all works from the summer of 1911 up to Mondrian's last, unfinished work *Victory Boogie*



Piet Mondrian, *Pier and Ocean*
(*Composition no. 10*), 1915.
Canvas, 85 x 110 cm, Kröller-
Müller Museum, Otterlo.
© SABAM Belgium 1999.

Woogie and has been compiled by an equally eminent Mondrian expert, Joop Joosten.

Sections I and II contain as much information as could be garnered about all existing and lost works by Mondrian, and each work is illustrated. The title, signature, year of creation, materials and sizes have been established, but also the provenance of each work, the exhibitions where they have been shown, the critiques and the literature in which they are mentioned. Some of the works are provided with a commentary, in which reference is made, for example, to a closely related work, the origin or something about the provenance or significance of the work.

Section III contains the necessary summaries, such as a list of exhibitions, auctions and a bibliography. Compiling this Mondrian bible has been a real painstaking labour of love.

Notwithstanding all the authors' efforts, however, the *Catalogue Raisonné* is a big disappointment in one respect, and that is the quality of the printing. Anyone opening the book to look at the colour illustrations – and that is after all the first thing you do – sees the back of the illustrations through the other side of the page. On the pages containing Mondrian's early work this creates a restless impression and disrupts the viewing pleasure. On the pages containing the works from 1920 onwards, it is an out-and-out disaster. Mondrian's carefully constructed compositions of horizontals and verticals are joined by grey lines from the illustration on the other side of the page. The appearance of the works – which are so difficult to portray anyway – is totally ruined. Of course, anyone wanting to see the works really well must see them in real life, as it were, but what is the point of wasting such a perfect opportunity to bring together such a large group of works?

Small things, such as the out-of-focus illustration of *Composition no. 10* from 1912-1913 (section II, p.20, no. 825), or the sometimes difficult to view illustrations of the more subtle works, such as the flowers, in the catalogue section, can be forgiven. But someone paying so much for a book can surely expect an expertly printed tome.

And there is more criticism that can be levelled at the publisher. A brief acknowledgement or note on the publication would have been a good idea. The authors in their sections go to great lengths to explain the system they have used, but an explanation for a number of general selections is nowhere to be found. The reasons governing the selection of colour illustrations, for example, would have been greatly appreciated. As would an acknowledgement of the fact that the catalogue is based on information from 1993. A not unimportant point, because in the last five years a fair number of new articles and books on Mondrian have appeared, and several works have changed hands – such as *Victory Boogie Woogie*. And why are the authors not introduced anywhere? And why is the choice of the year 1911 to separate the sections not explained anywhere? Initiates know that this is the result of the authors' respective specialisms, but for slightly less initiated users of the book, the division may appear somewhat arbitrary. Then there is the difference in approach between section I and section II. Both authors used the same technique in describing the works. However, Robert P. Welsh provides notes for each group of works created in a given period, such as the first period in Amsterdam (c.1893-1897), and then describes the works in each group. In the section put together by Joop Joosten there are no such explanatory notes.

These omissions aside, this oeuvre catalogue is a tremendous book. Of course there are errors and omissions. For example, by M. Halbertsma's 1981 article in the *Journal of Women's Studies* about *Pier and Ocean* from 1915 – designated in the catalogue as *Composition 10 in Black and White* (879) is not mentioned (!). And one of the water-colours of a chrysanthemum with which I am familiar is nowhere to be found. Now that the book has appeared, these and probably many other data are bound to surface naturally, and this will only serve to make the picture more complete.

Question marks can also be placed alongside the choices made. For example, I wonder why a drawing of a flower is designated as 'dahlia' (c101) while it bears a striking resemblance to another drawing of a flower which is designated as a 'chrysanthemum' (c73). Why, in the description of the 'Hilversum Mondrian' or *Composition with Two Lines* from 1931 (B229) is there not a single word about the sale which caused such a furor? Of course, this falls slightly outside the usual factual information, but on the other hand an English reader, for example, who has heard something about the matter, might expect that this is the place to find out which work was involved.

The great significance of the catalogue, however, is

that we now have a virtually complete picture of Mondrian's oeuvre. Works which have already been regularly published or exhibited can now at last be compared with other, sometimes still 'hidden' works. Just leafing through the book, Mondrian's breadth as a painter becomes clear. For a long time, all attention was focused on his work under the banner of 'neoplasticism' and the path which led to it, but now a clear insight can be gained into the way Mondrian investigated all manner of possibilities. A fine example of this is the unusually – in Mondrian's oeuvre – mobile scene of a farmer's wife trying to control a cow, which Mondrian painted after the French artist Dupré. The photographic material in the catalogue also increases our understanding. Where necessary, the rear of a work is also shown, which sometimes contains yet another work (B146). And the section on his early work often contains photos of the subject, so that the choices Mondrian made with respect to his composition become clearer. In the list of exhibitions, photos of the exhibition are included where available. These photos not only show which works were shown at which exhibition, but also tell a great deal about the way they were presented: often much closer together than is normal in current gallery practice, and often hanging above each other.

Finally, it is worth noting that the publication advances research on Mondrian enormously. Two thick volumes, in which virtually all available information is brought together, will save researchers a great deal of work and enable them to concentrate their efforts on the problems they are seeking to solve. Moreover, the presence of so much information and image material raises new questions which can only increase our understanding of Mondrian's oeuvre.

SASKIA BAK
Translated by Julian Ross.

Robert P. Welsh and Joop M. Joosten, *Piet Mondrian. Catalogue Raisonné* (2 vols.). Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1998; 482 + 668 pp. ISBN 90-6153-367-8.

Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age

Michael North's *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age* is a readable and comprehensive survey of Dutch seventeenth-century art from an economic and social-historical aspect.

The first chapter provides a historical outline of different approaches to the interpretation of Dutch seventeenth-century art. From Hegel and Fromentin to contemporary studies, we are given an overview of successive theories of realistic reading, iconology and social-historical study of art. A particular point is made to emphasise that sociological analysis of Dutch art has been based on a model originally developed in the study of Italian Renaissance art. This idea reappears in the 'Conclusion' where the author suggests a brief typological comparison between Italian Renaissance and the Dutch Golden Age.



Bartholomeus van der Helst,
*The Amsterdam Merchant
Daniel Bernard (1626-1714)*.
1669. Canvas. 124 x 113 cm.
Museum Boymans-van
Beuningen, Rotterdam.

The strongest point of this historiographical introduction is its social-historical part. Sadly, however, it is selective and incomplete. For instance, there is no reflection on Simon Schama's cultural anthropology or any semiotics-related studies in art history, such as the book on Dutch marriage portraiture by David R. Smith or Mieke Bal's articles and monograph on Rembrandt. Also missing are considerations of recent innovative approaches by Svetlana Alpers and Celeste Brusati. Owing to the five-year gap between the original German publication and this English translation, the introduction is bound to be out of date. This becomes particularly noticeable when North's historiography is compared, for instance, to the anthology *Realism Reconsidered* edited by Wayne Franits and published in the same year as North's book. Franits' collection of old and new articles presents a more complete, contemporary and diverse survey of perspectives, issues and problems arising from our perception of the apparent naturalism of Dutch paintings in relation to their possible meanings.¹

The second chapter establishes what a Marxist might identify as the economic *basis* for the art *superstructure* discussed in the rest of the book. Making no direct reference to art itself, the chapter gives an economic history of the Dutch Golden Age that is implicitly presented as the material condition for the development of contemporary art. We are told how the Dutch Republic became 'a leading economic and world power' with an ever increasing per capita income, even in the years of stagnation in the second half of the century. The third chapter explores how this high