

Marisa Anne Bass, *Insect Artifice: Nature and Art in the Dutch Revolt* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, 312 pp., 192 color illus., 65.00\$, ISBN: 9780691177151.

This beautifully illustrated and exquisitely printed book offers a poetic reading of the *Four Elements* manuscripts (1570s–1600) of Joris Hoefnagel (1542–1600). Bass presents a different paradigm to interpret Hoefnagel's works, using the lens of his experience as an *émigré* during the turbulent time of the Dutch Revolt. As a learned Flemish illuminator, painter, draftsman, and merchant, the versatile Hoefnagel and his works have consistently received attention within discourses of art and science. One of the latest contribution to this historiography is the impressive volume of *Joris and Jacob Hoefnagel: Art and Science around 1600* by Thea Vignau-Wilberg in 2017. This comprehensive monograph details the life and works of Joris Hoefnagel and his son Jacob. Published not long after Vignau-Wilberg's monumental book on Hoefnagel, one could not help but wonder what more could Bass bring to the table.

Bass enriches the historiography on Hoefnagel by turning to his life in exile, before he found tenure at the courts of Wilhelm V of Bavaria and Rudolf II of the Holy Roman Empire, just to name a few. The author largely questions a close association between the production of the *Four Elements* and the historiographically renowned curiosity collections as knowledge production centres at European princely courts. Instead, Bass argues that the manuscript series was a project through which Hoefnagel took refuge in art, in order to cope with the hardship he endured at a time of war and political turmoil – a hardship that would indeed become a fundamental element of his life. The author does so by articulating in depth her visual and textual analysis in two parts for a total of seven chapters. The book opens with how the Dutch Revolt and Iconoclasm impacted the visual and intellectual culture in the Low Countries, and places Hoefnagel in the changing political climate of Antwerp. It establishes – with Hoefnagel as a witness – how intertwined were such conflicts and political events, the emergence of new genres in the art market, and the rise of natural history intertwined during this period.

Bass first shows in Chapter 1 how Hoefnagel adapted to this environment and sheds light on the several mottos the Flemish illuminator chose at different stages of his life as an *émigré*. Through the mottos, readers learn about Hoefnagel's command of Latin and his intellectual exchange with his contemporaries. The rest of Part I focuses on three genres of Hoefnagel's works – the emblem book, the atlas, and the *album amicorum* – and situates him within a larger circle of artists, merchants, and scholars in the Low Countries. Bass selects those of Hoefnagel's works which bear a strong interaction between

image and text, and uses them as a venue to inquire into how Hoefnagel utilizes the manuscript medium in these genres. Chapter 2 demonstrates how the emblem book, a device combining word and image to formulate ideas, is essential in interpreting Hoefnagel's activities. By highlighting Hoefnagel's first manuscript to survive, the *Patientia* (1569), Bass discusses its themes and motifs in conversation with contemporaneous emblematics. Chapter 3 delves into Hoefnagel's travels and uses them to provide a geographical context. Centering on Hoefnagel's contributions in the atlas *Civitates orbis terrarum* (1572–1617), the author brings to attention the emphasis on the wonders of nature in Hoefnagel's landscapes. Chapter 4 turns to the *album amicorum* and explores the impact of its materiality on Hoefnagel's works. By underlining the thought and labor that goes into making an entry in an *album amicorum*, Bass elucidates the ingenuity of Hoefnagel.

Part 2 of the book shifts the focus to the three themes of animal, fossil and insect and the relevant images in the *Four Elements* manuscripts. Chapter 5 further questions the "scientific" intention of the *Four Elements* by examining the organization and the content of the volumes. Bass points out that the grouping of earth (*Terra*), air (*Aier*), water (*Aqua*), and fire (*Ignis*) in correspondence with quadrupeds, birds, fish, and insects is not as coherent as they appear. By closely studying the quadrupeds and birds in the series, the author addresses the issues of Hoefnagel's visual references in paintings and woodcuts of natural history. Chapter 6 deals with the curious nature of fossils and other strange water creatures. Starting with an unidentified specimen depicted by Hoefnagel in the *Four Elements*, Bass presents the letter exchanges between Hoefnagel and his humanist circle on their emblematic understanding of mollusks, polyps, ammonites, and echinoderms. The last chapter, albeit brief, illuminates the uniqueness of the *Ignis* volume within the *Four Elements* and of Hoefnagel's insect studies within images of natural history in the early modern period. The author carefully analyzes the selected images in relation to their inscriptions and shows how Hoefnagel mastered representing insects in their tiniest details.

Much like the miniatures of Joris Hoefnagel, *Insect Artifice* is eloquently written and finely produced. High-quality printing and clean graphic design enhance the conversation between text and image throughout the book. Thirty-nine selected plates from the *Four Elements* are reproduced faithfully to their original size and in full color, thus giving readers a simulated experience of studying the manuscripts in person. Bass expressively contextualizes how the life in exile for Hoefnagel and his community is reflected in the *Four Elements* and his other works. Consequently, the eloquence of this book might come with a price. Readers who are more accustomed to or prefer a neutral wring

style may find some passages subjective. Perhaps, however, it is through this poetic language that readers are reminded of the role that rhetoric played in sixteenth-century scholarship.

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