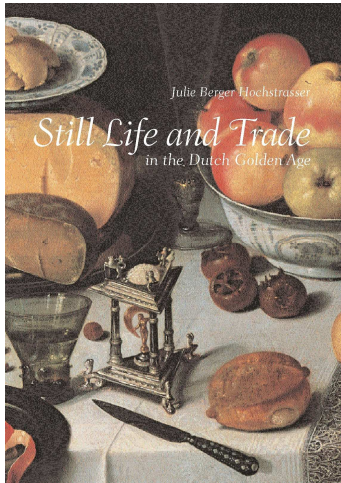


Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age / Julie Berger Hochstrasser.—New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, August 2007.—320 p.: ill.--ISBN-13: 978-0-300-100338-9 (cl., alk. paper): \$40.00.



Still-life paintings of the laid table groaning under fat wheels of cheese, crusty bread, luscious fruits, and beakers of wine can serve as visual celebrations of abundance and sensory pleasure or moralizing allegories of transience. During the seventeenth-century Dutch Golden Age, when the greater population bore vested interests in shipping and trade, these same cheeses, grains, fruit and wine can also be read as commodities exchanged in a quest for economic and political power. In this study, the author's objective is to explore histories of commodities depicted in still life with an eye for how they might inform meaning in pictures. "This book is about what Dutch still lifes show us of the seventeenth-century culture of commerce, but also and maybe more importantly, it is about what we might learn from the disjunctures of what they do not show us."

To that end, part one focuses on international trade as the source of Dutch prosperity and pride and then on specific goods. The first chapter presents period testimony, textual and visual, conveying attitudes toward trade. The second chapter looks in depth at Dutch exports: butter, cheese, herring, and beer. The remaining chapters address European imports: grains, lemons, and wine and deal with luxuries provided by the Dutch East India Company (pepper, porcelain, tea) and Dutch West India Company (salt, tobacco, sugar, and the human beings traded as slave labor).

Part two presents viewpoints from which commodities and their depictions can be analyzed. The views presented include the seventeenth-century Dutch perspective; Karl Marx's attention to Dutch history in his theories of market capitalism and the social costs inherent in goods produced during this Dutch colonial period; postcolonial theory and its application to New World contacts and power relationships through metaphors of control, anxiety, and wonder.

The volume's conclusion and epilogue, discuss what is absent from Dutch still-life paintings and relate the culture of consumption of the early modern period to our day.

Hochstrasser has written a number of essays on Dutch still life and visual and material culture. The book under review broadens investigations begun in her 1995 dissertation. Note that the manuscript for the current publication was completed in 2003 and more recent scholarship was not integrated.

Amplly illustrated with color and black-and-white images, the volume includes instructive close-up details. Five appendices provide text excerpts and translations. Extensive endnotes and a nineteen-page bibliography document related scholarship.

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