This incredibly ambitious and thorough tome is both an exhibition catalog and a catalogue raisonné. Editor and author Ainsworth, curator in the Department of European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has put forth the largest work on this single artist to date. Seven essays cover Netherlandish artist Jan Gossart’s vast output and influence, as he was considered the man who brought some of the first views of Italian classical architecture to the north via his paintings, drawings, and prints. He is also known for his humanistic and sensual subjects and style, and these luscious images are well displayed in this beautifully printed book.

Many revelations in the book appear to stem from new conservation techniques; an essay is dedicated to the topic. There is also an appendix with information on the dendrochronology of various paintings. For those who want to dive even deeper into the technical examinations, a second companion volume titled Jan Gossart: The Documentary Evidence is being published in Belgium.

There is something for everyone in this book. The essays are well written and thoroughly researched. The catalog entries are, for the most part, succinct, with well-printed reproductions of the pieces alongside comparative work. Nearly every painting entry includes a report on the piece’s condition, a technical investigation, provenance, a bibliography, and exhibition history. Entries for prints include information about where impressions are located as well as a bibliography. The paper is thick and the colors are rich, making it simply a joy to look at even if one glosses over the text.

Although the book is meant as the exhibition catalog for the Metropolitan’s show (taking place October 6, 2010–January 17, 2011), it really does feel more like a catalog raisonné, with the pieces put in chronological order rather than any order related to the exhibition. With so much more in the book than just the pieces from the exhibition, visitors who purchase the book may feel overwhelmed – or they may appreciate the chance to learn as much as possible about this influential artist.

This book is recommended for every library collecting in the field of art history as it covers an important artist in incredible detail. With nearly 500 pages, the price tag seems justified.

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