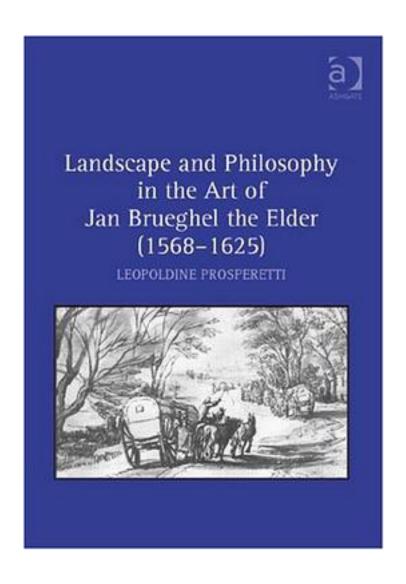
Landscape and Philosophy in the Art of Jan Brueghel the Elder



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In this first comprehensive full length study in English on the art of Jan Brueghel the Elder, Leopoldine Prosperetti illuminates how his work relates to a philosophical culture prevailing in Antwerp at the time. She shows, that no matter what scenery, figures, and object stock the pictorial field, Brueghel's diverse pictures have something in common: they all trace predictable trajectories toward the predetermined end of crafting a moment of spiritual repose. Rooted in the art of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Brueghel, these vistas are here treated as cultural artifacts that meet the expectations of their customers to discover in their pictorial mazes the rhetorical pathways for pursuing wisdom. The key issue is the ambition of pictorial images in general to bring into practice the humanist theory that philosophy and rhetoric are inseparable. This original study analyzes the patterns of thought and optical tropes that constitute a visual poetics for genres that are no longer devotional, yet share in the meditative goal of redirecting the soul towards the intuitive knowledge of what is good in life. This book reveals how everyday life is the preferred vehicle for delivering the results of philosophical pursuits. One chapter is dedicated to Brueghel's innovative attention to the experience of traveling in a variety of wheeled vehicles along the roads of his native Brabant. He is unique, and surprisingly modern, in giving contemporary viewers an accurate account of all the different types of conveyances that clutter the roads of his native Brabant. It makes for lively versions of one of his favorite themes, "The Traveled Road". By taking the pursuit of wisdom as its theme the book succeeds in presenting a new model for the interpretation of a range of visual genres that were popular items in the Antwerp picture trade.

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