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**Gehring, Ulrike, and Pieter Weibel, eds. Mapping Spaces:
Networks of Knowledge in 17th Century Landscape Painting**

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Gehring, Ulrike, and Pieter Weibel, eds.

Mapping Spaces: Networks of Knowledge in 17th Century Landscape Painting. Munich: Hirmer Verlag; distributed by Chicago University Press, 2015. Pp. 504, [10] + colour ill. ISBN 978-3-7774-2230-5 (hardcover) \$75.

Mapping Spaces is a welcome, if flawed, addition to the body of literature on the relationship between art and science in seventeenth-century Netherlandish painting. Its primary focus is the symbiotic relationship between seventeenth-century Netherlandish artists and the cartographers, surveyors, and engineers who produced maps, measured the landscape, and designed surveying tools and military equipment. As a companion to the eponymous exhibition sponsored by the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe (ZKM) in 2014, *Mapping Spaces* is ostensibly an exhibition catalogue. However, in contrast to the conventional format of an exhibition catalogue, it does not include entries that relate to individual objects on display. Rather, it is comprised of thirty-seven short essays by art historians, scientists, historians of science, mathematicians, geographers, and theologians. As such, the editors describe the book as an international, transdisciplinary project. The volume is lavishly illustrated with many of the 250 objects that were displayed in the exhibition; in addition to the expected artworks, there are, for example, books, maps, globes, and various instruments.

Ulrike Gehring, whose initial research on the rationalization of space in seventeenth-century Dutch painting formed the basis of the project, provides a lengthy but somewhat woolly introduction. Drawing together the numerous and disparate topics covered in the volume must have been a daunting task, but for this reader, a coherent argument remained elusive. The absence of a clear, unifying idea is underscored in an essay in the final section of the book where Peter Weibel, Gehring's co-editor, makes the bombastic pronouncement that both the exhibition and publication are "an appeal to rethink not only media history, but also the history of painting. [...] With the present publication, the ZKM wants to put media art on a new artistic basis, create an in-depth history, anchor media art in the history of painting and simultaneously rewrite the history of painting" (457). Such a wild claim weakens the credibility of the overall project.

Despite these problems, the remaining thirty-five essays are, for the most part, lucid and interesting accounts of scientific and technological

developments and how they affected—and are reflected in—seventeenth-century Netherlandish imagery.

Following the introduction, Rienk Vermij provides a concise overview of the changes that occurred in the understanding of the structure of the universe from the classical to the early modern periods. Essays in the middle sections of the book discuss how Dutch artists were able to take advantage of the knowledge produced by developments in cartography and navigation. Of particular interest are essays by Friso Lammertse and Jenny Gaschke. Lammertse explains that by receiving permission to sail with the Dutch fleet for several weeks in 1666, the painter Willem van de Velde I (1611–93) was able to produce remarkably accurate images of naval battles based on first-hand observation. In an essay on seascapes, Gaschke makes the important point that many seventeenth-century Dutch landscape paintings conform to artistic conventions and are iconographically complex: for example, the depiction of turbulent seas can function as a metaphor for the trials and tribulations of earthly life. Knowledge acquired from first-hand observation as well as from maps and technical manuals could be brought to bear on relatively accurate depictions of a particular place as well as on landscapes that were, to varying degrees, imagined. There are also several essays about the expansion of global exploration and the role played by artists in recording important information about the topography, flora, and fauna of distant lands.

A further section of the book is devoted to an examination of an innovative approach to battle scenes by the Flemish artist Pieter Snayers (1592–1666) in which there is a merging of a bird's eye view landscape with a map-like description of the distant background. Following the discussion of Snayers's battle scenes are a number of essays about the role of technology in military fortifications and weaponry, the importance of mathematics in surveying, the impact of land reclamation, and the increasing importance of landscape as an independent genre in the Dutch art market.

The final section of *Mapping Spaces* includes three essays that attempt to bring the discussion of science and art into the modern period. These are only tangentially relevant to the issues addressed in previous essays. In addition to Weibel's essay on media, Andreas Beutin, director of the ZKM, outlines the technical developments that have resulted in increasingly accurate aerial views, culminating in the images obtained by battle drones. The concluding essay by Linnea Semmerling briefly explores the phenomenology of viewing landscape

in both painting and cartography with reference to the interactive installations *Folding Perspectives I and II* by Bernd Lintermann and Nikolaus Völzow. According to Semmerling, these installations involve large-scale, computer-generated images that “enable their viewers to experience the landscapes of Pieter Snayers and Jacob van Ruisdael through their own bodies.” This adds little to one’s understanding of the basic theme addressed by the book.

An enormously ambitious project, the breadth of *Mapping Spaces* is both its strength and weakness. It is difficult to identify a potential audience. The absence of an index weakens its usefulness as a resource for specialists, and its very specialization makes it somewhat intimidating for a general audience, a quality compounded by the obscurity of the introductory essay. While some readers will find a number of the individual essays valuable, the book would have benefitted from a more rigorous and realistic account of its purpose in an introductory essay that included contextual information about the rise of pure landscape as an independent genre in early modern Europe. It is telling that one of the most important images in this development, *The Battle of Alexander at Issus* (1529) by Albrecht Altdorfer (1480–1538), is mentioned only briefly in the essay on aerial views in the final section. Readers expecting a coherent account of the impact of the often collaborative relationship between seventeenth-century Dutch artists and those involved in cartography, surveying, and military technology will be disappointed. *Mapping Spaces* is best approached as a richly illustrated compendium of loosely connected essays.

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GLN 15–16. *Les éditions imprimées à Genève, Lausanne et Neuchâtel aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles.*

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Le répertoire GLN 15–16 de données bibliographiques sur l’étonnante production d’imprimés à Genève, Lausanne et Neuchâtel au cours des XV^e et XVI^e siècles représente à n’en pas douter l’œuvre de toute une vie de chercheur