

great masters. . . . For painters at all stages of their careers, whether or not they ever had the chance to travel to see the original works, these prints were an introduction to the styles and forms of countless artists, as well as a ready source of pictorial ideas and solutions to problems of pose, composition, historical costume and decor, and more besides." His description of such a 17th-century "dialogue with the past," as it were, is very much contrary to the concept of "originality" as understood today in modern art. Then, it was absolutely lawful that an artist "quoted" other artists in his paintings. One example of many is Johannes Vermeer, whose "paintings inside the painting," are paintings he "quoted" to give full meaning to his own ideas.

Illustrative is the beautiful still life in the lower right of Steen's painting, which Walsh rightly describes as "one of the delights of Steen's picture." The still life is comprised of objects that are part of the familiar repertoire of *vanitas*, reminding us that life is short, that excessive pleasure is dangerous, that human achievements are fleeting, and that even fame, symbolized by the wreath, will perish. In addition, each

object alludes to one of the five senses: the fur muff for touch, the pipe for smell, the wine for taste, the book for sight, and the lute for hearing. Walsh observes, "In making a seductive painting out of these temptations, the painter is both repeating the warning and creating yet another enticement for the senses," and adds, "paradoxes like this were grist for the mill of 17th-century meditation."

The musical metaphor in art

Walsh accomplishes, in a beautiful way, as he says he intends to do in his introduction to the book: "My role will be that of a conductor—to switch to a musical metaphor—looking at the individual passages, rehearsing the parts, then trying to restore overall sense to the composition by playing the whole thing. By sense I mean historical sense: not merely a pleasing contemporary rendition but a reasonably consistent and well-supported account of the associations or meanings the picture would have had for the artist and his audience."

As one closes his book after reading the last page, one can say with satisfaction: It was certainly a good lesson.

Leonardo, Rembrandt exhibits in New York

The American Museum of Natural History is hosting an exhibition, titled "Leonardo's Codex Leicester, A Masterpiece of Science," running through Jan. 1, 1997. This exhibition of the only Leonardo manuscript in the United States, offers a unique view of the scientific thinking of one of history's greatest geniuses.

Composed on loose, double-sided sheets of linen paper, comprising 72 pages in all, the Codex Leicester embraces topics ranging from astronomy to hydrodynamics, and includes Leonardo's observations and theories related to rivers and seas; the properties of water, rocks and fossils; air, and celestial light. The Codex includes more than 300 of his pen-and-ink sketches, drawings, and diagrams, many of which illustrate experiments.

Although the primary subject of the Codex Leicester is water, a secondary subject is light. Leonardo held the conviction that, in order to learn how to paint, students needed to learn about the ways in which light is reflected, and about the importance of the infusion of

water vapor and smoke into the air. One of his most brilliant discoveries, described in the manuscript, is that the dimmer, secondary light of the crescent Moon—that which appears to be cradled within the crescent—is the reflection of light from the Earth and its oceans. A century later, and before Leonardo's own work in this field had come to light, Johannes Kepler arrived at the same discovery.

The Pierpont Morgan Library is hosting "A Fine Line: Rembrandt as Etcher," an exhibit of over 100 of the master's finest etchings, running through Jan. 5, 1997. The exhibit offers fascinating comparisons of different states of the same etching, allowing the visitor to trace the artist's development. Rembrandt created etchings of a broad range of subjects, all of which—themes from Scripture, portraits, allegorical and genre scenes, and landscapes—are represented in this exhibit. The Morgan Library is also hosting a complementary exhibition of "Seventeenth-Century Dutch Drawings" from the library's collection.

