

# BRUEGEL

Rose-Marie and Rainer Hagen



TASCHEN

Taschen  
BRUEGEL (I) #BASICART

Rainer & Rose-Marie Hagen

BA

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### **Il significato di una scena**

#### **Un maestro della composizione racconta la società contadina**

Il grande fiammingo **Pieter Bruegel il Vecchio** (c. 1526/31–1569) fu un pittore e disegnatore dotato di un'inventiva eccezionale, che lasciò il segno nella storia dell'arte con i suoi **splendidi paesaggi evocativi** e i soggetti religiosi, notevoli tanto per **il linguaggio vernacolare** quanto per l'**attenzione alla vita quotidiana dell'epoca**.

Per la sua capacità di immergersi nelle comunità rurali e nei piccoli villaggi, Bruegel seppe rappresentare meglio di chiunque altro **la realtà contadina e la cultura popolare**, guadagnandosi il soprannome di "Bruegel il contadino". Che si trattasse di cacciatori infreddoliti in mezzo alla neve o di chiassose fiere di campagna, Bruegel **diede dignità artistica ad attività agricole, sagre, ritrovi e passatempi della cultura rurale**. Al tempo stesso, i grandiosi soggetti religiosi e morali di Bruegel, quali *Il trionfo della morte* e *La torre di Babele*, restano ancora oggi opere importanti e stupefacenti quanto lo erano nel XVI secolo, in grado di influenzare la cultura contemporanea tanto nelle dinamiche scene di battaglia del *Signore degli anelli* quanto nel romanzo *Underworld* di Don DeLillo.

Dalla mietitura alla conversione di Saulo, dai pittoreschi cortei nuziali alla salita di Cristo al Calvario, questo libro racchiude la ricca varietà di soggetti trattati da Bruegel per introdurre le sue potenti composizioni a tema biblico o temporale.

#### **La collana:**

Ciascun volume della collana Basic Art di TASCHEN comprende:

- Una sintesi dettagliata che ripercorre cronologicamente la vita e l'opera dell'artista, soffermandosi sulla sua importanza a livello storico e culturale
- Una biografia concisa
- Circa 100 illustrazioni a colori con didascalie esplicative

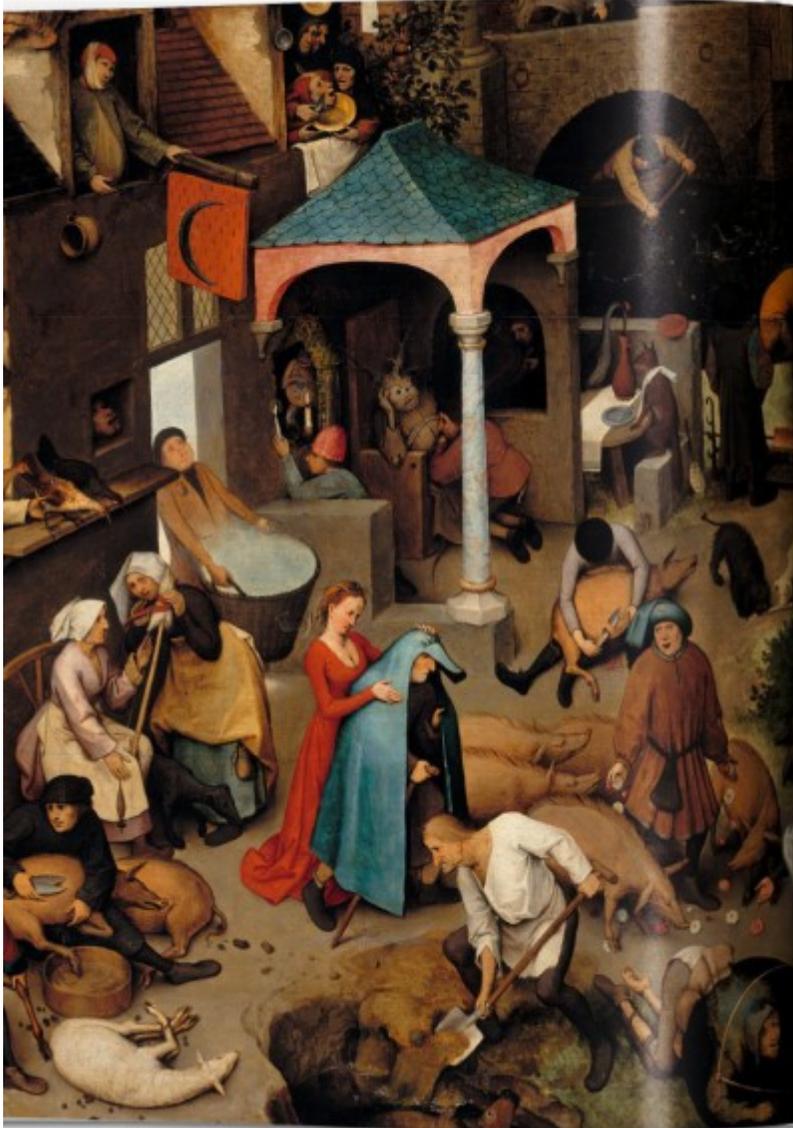
#### **Gli autori:**

**Rose-Marie Hagen** è nata in Svizzera. Ha studiato storia e lingua e letterature romanze a Losanna. Dopo aver proseguito gli studi a Parigi e a Firenze, ha insegnato presso varie istituzioni, tra cui la American University a Washington, D.C.

**Rainer Hagen** è nato ad Amburgo. Si è laureato in letteratura e studi teatrali a Monaco di Baviera e in seguito ha lavorato per la radio e la televisione, ricoprendo il ruolo di direttore di un'emittente pubblica tedesca.

Insieme i due autori hanno collaborato alla realizzazione di diversi libri per TASCHEN, tra cui *What Great Paintings Say I e II* e le monografie *Pieter Bruegel e Francisco de Goya*.

#BasicArt



## Exploring the World

Medieval paintings primarily depicted biblical figures, the saints, Heaven and Hell. Such works, most of them in churches and monasteries, were meant to show the faithful what they could not see with their own eyes. They thus served a devotional and didactic purpose.

In the Renaissance (which began in Italy some 300 years before Bruegel's birth), the focus of attention turned to man. The medieval concept of Earth, as a vale of tears filled with wretched sinners, faded. The status of man was enhanced; painters showed that he possessed a body, and placed him – with the aid of perspective – in a three-dimensional earthly environment. Reality was studied not only by the artists but also – even more so – by empirical scientists. The first circumnavigation of the world, undertaken by Magellan, had proved in 1521 that the Earth was round; in 1548, Pierre Coudenberg had laid out a Botanical Gardens in Brussels for the purpose of studying exotic plants, one of many such study gardens in this century; in 1560, the Church lifted its ban on the dissection of corpses, releasing the human body for examination; and in 1570, Abraham Ortelius published the first atlas of the world.

The Antwerp geographer Ortelius was a friend of Bruegel. Thanks to this man and others, the painter was familiar with the exploratory enthusiasm of his century. He too explored, after his own manner, presenting in his works areas of life previously neglected or even held in contempt. One rather peculiar example of this is the picture *Children's Games* (1560, ill. pp. 34–35).

The subject of childhood had hitherto been virtually ignored in western painting and thought. Childhood was not viewed as a phase of life with any requirements of its own, but merely as the preliminary stage to adulthood. Children were treated as little adults, as the clothing portrayed in Bruegel's picture indicates: the girls' aprons and bonnets resembled those of their mothers, while the boys' trousers, jerkins, and jackets echoed those worn by their fathers. Moreover, there were hardly any toys: only tops, hobby-horses, dolls, and windmills on long sticks. Most of Bruegel's children are managing without toys or making do with pigs' bladders, knucklebones, caps, barrels, hoops – such things, in other words, as could be found simply lying about.

Emotional affection was probably slight in comparison with that exhibited by parents and relations in the nuclear families of today. It was simply a matter of too many children being born, and too many dying in early childhood. Something of this lack of interest, this absence of any deep feeling, is conveyed in Bruegel's picture. The childlike element is stressed neither in the faces nor in the physique of the children. Some of them seem dull and rather stupid, all of them ageless. There is no trace of the idealizing manner with which children would be portrayed in the pictures of the centuries to come.



*Warship Seen Half from Left*, isolated  
Engraving by Hieronymus Cock after a drawing  
by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

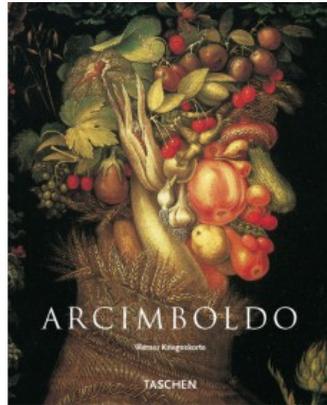
The Netherlanders possessed one of the largest merchant fleets, and mercantile initiative led to the reconnaissance of distant lands. Bruegel took great pains with his technically exact depictions of ships.

PAGE 28  
Detail from *Netherlandish Proverbs*, 1559  
(ill. pp. 30–31)

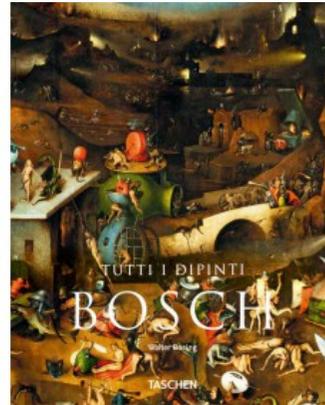
The collecting of proverbs was one of the many encyclopaedic undertakings in the 16th century. Bruegel is offering more than a simple catalogue here: he presents us with a topsy-turvy world, with the Devil seen in the center of the picture hearing someone's confession (nos. 31).

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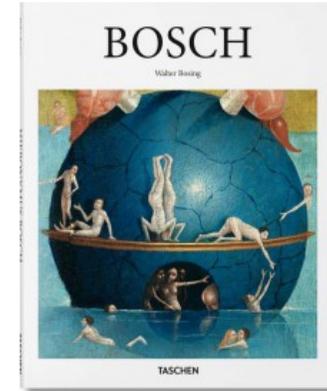
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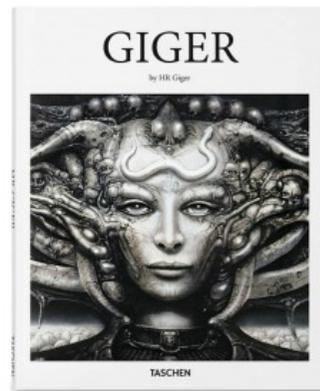
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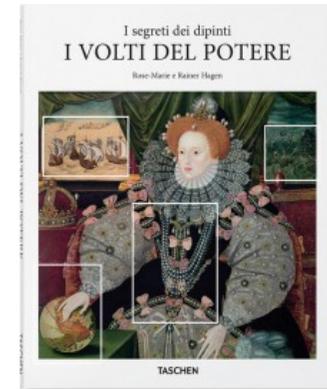
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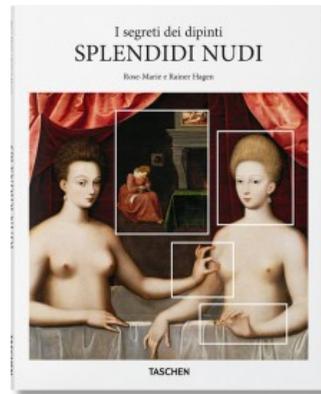
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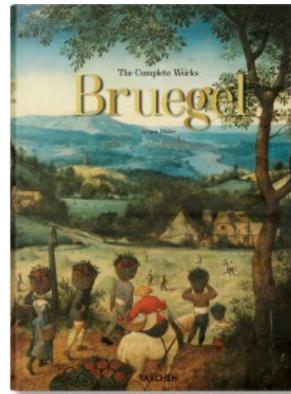
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