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Marika Takanishi Knowles, *Realism and Role-Play. The Human Figure in French Art from Callot to the Brothers Le Nain*. Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2021. xiv + 324 pp. Illustrations (black & white; color), index, and bibliography. $85.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781644531808; $37.50 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9781644532058.

Review by Todd P. Olson, University of California, Berkeley.

Few recent publications in English address early seventeenth-century visual culture in France.[1] This is due in part to a long-standing inclination in the Anglo-American art historical scholarship to study French revolutionary, French colonial era and nineteenth-century painting and political cultures.[2] Aside from Louis Marin's intervention in North America in the 1970s and 1980s, the center of gravity for much of seventeenth-century French art historical research in the United States had been aligned with Italian seicento studies.[3] Few authors embraced the dominant trend of social art history found elsewhere in the discipline. Seventeenth-century art historical scholarship in France attending to paintings has been robust due in part to commitments to *patrimoine*, the museums and their collections, as well as sustained institutional dedication to archival research.[4] Yet, from the vantage point of North America, the *dix-septièmistes* and the *dix-huitièmistes* among the *soixante-huitards* parted ways. But that is now old history. French seventeenth-century art historical scholarship became more international and more recently it has made a material turn or, like the book under review, has turned to alternative media and genres other than the single artist monograph.[5] Frédéric Cousinié's approach to broader questions and themes is exemplary in this regard.[6]

In her much-welcomed book, Knowles draws the center of gravity away from painting and the academic legacy by paying attention to printmakers such as Jacques Callot (known to non-specialists as the etcher of *Misères de la guerre* or, more recently as an artist from Lorraine who had an impact on the Medici court in Florence).[7] Few publications have integrated the study of print and painting cultures in the ways that Knowles has done in her first book. In addition to the two chapters dedicated to the printmaker Jacques Callot, one chapter is dedicated to the paintings of the Le Nain brothers and the book closes with Antoine Watteau and his legacy. The painters Claude Vignon and Jacques Blanchard are represented as well. We also find ourselves considering the face-off between Philippe de Champaigne and Simon Vouet in the Galerie Richelieu. The individual chapters are assembled as case studies in order to describe lesser-known episodes in the rich texture of seventeenth-century French visual culture. The paperback book offers a broad survey without compromising critical scrutiny.

The book's aim is to describe the visual and performative figuration of affect and present the cultural and discursive context out of which various types of affect arose. Through the act of writing and sustained description, Knowles explores the non-linguistic constitution of body and world. The book's greatest achievement is a sustained attention to prints as formally complex objects that too often have been treated as illustrations. Rather than having the prints serve as proxies for historical events or persons, the author attends to the shifts between social taxonomies and self-constituting embodiment (gesture, address, costume) of performative figures in representation. Knowles's over-arching argument hinges on the word "figure" as it designates both the social actor and the pictorial persona (image). In some of the best passages of the book, the word "figure" also occupies a third (pictorial) space that is rarely addressed in the extant art historical literature as well as affect and performance theory: the embodied performance as techne. This notion of techne links depicted figure and the visual artist, or more specifically the social actor and the early modern printmaker: "To speak of the figure's performance is to refer not only to the represented agency of the human figure, but also to the performance of bitten and inked line, all those little marks that accomplish the task of figuration" (p. 9). We might think in terms of Bruno Latour's all-encompassing notion of inscription, with specific attention to the biting of the copper plate.[8] These three aspects of the "figure" work against the conventional discursive/figurative binary. Indeed, this triangulation need not be fully integrated by an artist in a single instance. Nor does the inscribed figure merely reflect social behaviors. The figure as social actor (body), image and technical inscription may reside together in conflict.

There are numerous productive moments in the text. Knowles draws generously on a diverse bibliography in visual and literary studies. There is a sincere reckoning with scholarship spanning over several decades. Keywords such as "affect" and "shame" are resonant with cultural studies more broadly and therefore the argument moves in multiple directions, indeed with virtuosity. In chapter one, the author introduces the French colonization of Brazil in the early seventeenth century. The infrequently mentioned or illustrated episode fills out our understanding of the better-known earlier touchstones: the De Bry engravings after Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues in *Nouvelle Floride*, the prints in Jean de Léry's Brazilian account, and the engraving of the Tupinamba for the Entrée of Henri II into Rouen. Only on reading the whole book did I understand the logic of placing this episode in the book. Read on.

We learn in chapter two, where we are grounded in Lorraine, that the printmaker Jacques Callot explored the affinities between theatrical and courtly performances: "The affect of the figure is theatrical and self-conscious, a combination of the figure's pose as well as Callot's sweeping pen-lines, which contour the rippling edge of a cape in a single stroke.... These figures perform in that they appear to actively set their surfaces forth in the way an actor may set forth his role" (p. 42). This passage is key as it gestures towards Richard Schechter and Judith Butler, but stresses "graphic performativity" (p.42) as an embodied constitution of identity and agency.[9] This notion of the agency of the "figure" constituted in the act of inscription is an important move, one that is further supported by the author's attention to specific media, from brown ink to etching (or red chalk to oil). The author asks us to sustain the important differences among woodcut, engraving and etching (technique and function or context-specific use). Knowles urges us to be sensitive to the distinctions among the graphic media in order to grasp the implications of trans-medial practices: Callot appropriates the iconography of Veccelio's print, but rather than repeating the technique of the woodcut, etching provided Callot the swaggering "rapier-sharp, tapering lines, cut into copper" (p.56).

On one level, we enter a historically recurrent discursive field where studio jargon migrates to social practices, their metaphorical discourses and embodied performances (*éclat* is one example, *sprezzatura* another). Knowles reverses the direction of this metonymic migration in her formal analyses. Description slips metonymically between formal effects and embodied performance. Aristocratic performativity is set in the space of the printmaker's workshop, a *canevas*, or better, the copper plate laminated with Callot's innovative resilient mastic and linseed ground, inscribed with the oval-shaped *échoppe* (rather than the woodcut's chisel, the etcher's needle, or the engraver's burin), which "allowed him to swell, narrow and taper his line at will" (p. 55). What emerges is a performative graphic self that has important stakes for the representation of shame in marginalized bodies. In her discussion of shame, Knowles builds on the theoretical work of Silvan Tomkins and Eve Kofosky Sedgwick in affect studies by linking shame--the condition of being seen--directly to graphic performativity: "Artistic personality began to manifest itself in style and *faire* (facture, handling), artists increasingly began to present themselves in their works. In making themselves seen, artists threw themselves into the field of shame" (p. 147).[10]

In Chapter 4, Knowles ambitiously and adroitly shifts our attention to nobility and the construction of femininity: Amyot's translation of Tasso, the *Femme Forte* in, for example, Rubens's Marie de Medici cycle, and courtesan prints are all on display (and there is more). Most productive is the discussion of the metaphorical and technical term éclat and its association with whiteness. When we return to Callot in Chapter 5, the author compares the "neat and metallic" line of Callot's *Captain* with the jagged "crawling" line of *Capitano Baroni* or the facticity of the delineated *Beggar* (p. 161). Furthermore, the etcher's line is not solely linked to aristocratic self-fashioning. Style is linked to shame and subordination in the representation of marginal social types: Callot's linear style "performs operatic pathos in this detour into the characterization of misery…graphic style stages a diversion…drawing attention away from the beggars' misery to the independent interest of Callot's virtuoso linearity" (p. 164). One might say slumming virtuosity.

By locating affect in the technical virtuosity of etching, Knowles makes a significant contribution. Although aristocratic self-fashioning is conventionally associated with "inborn exemplarity" (p. 86) and the unlearned disavowal of labor and difficulty (against Molière's socially-striving *bourgeois gentilhomme*), Knowles stresses that in order for nobility to be made visible the male aristocrat relied on artisanal labor: "The noble's need to perform his superiority in bearing, dress, and wealth for a public of strangers made his figure dependent upon a craftsman whose ease with tools and his hands allowed the figure to appear" (p. 78). Knowles traces an alternative genealogy of aristocratic bearing linked to material culture and craft; rather than the amatory ease and effortlessness accorded the impersonators of d'Urfé's shepherds, Callot's figures display the "swagger" of "martial extravagance" (p. 55) and the "over-performance of aria, of extra extroversion, whereby a person aggressively projects themselves through movement, costume, carriage and other behavioral arts" (p. 53) Callot's hyper-masculine noble bodies (the reader has to be vigilant in marking the otherwise unmarked gendered category) are subject to the discipline of contemporary illustrated equestrian training manuals, where the "noble figure emerges as a result of techne rather than of birthright *sprezzatura*" (p. 82). Indeed, fencing and dressage were visual as well as "technical regimes." Ultimately, "swagger was not a product of *race*, but rather of profession" (p. 78). And "cutting a figure" oscillates between the etcher's and the noble body's share in swagger.

If the chapters on Callot draw on the notion of masculine self-fashioning found in Domna Stanton's discussion of the *honnête homme* and the dandy, the final chapter on paintings by the Le Nain brothers picks up where McGregor's essay (and Jacques Thuillier's scholarship) left off.[11] After having interrogated the prints of Tupinamba and swaggering nobles, Knowles takes seriously the painted figures as they are constituted by and in their social worlds: "The bodies of Le Nain's figures are closed, but the affect appears open, without resistance. By submitting to the visual surveillance of the père de famille, of the seigneur who owns the estate, and of the curious viewer who stands in for both, the figures of the Le Nain offer a decorous and obedient vision of rural dwellers" (p. 189). The author's sustained engagement with the paintings is commendable and the notion of an "affect of openness" is suggestive. And there are genuinely moving passages comparing George de La Tour's farcical peasants with Le Nain's fermiers: "These figures, as if sunk into their own thoughts appear unable to react to the situation unfolding around them" (p. 189). Knowles argues that in paintings by the Le Nain brothers, the seemingly anti-theatrical blankness of the peasants is not typological condescension. Instead, "it is by the very act of withholding description of their inner lives that the artists succeeded in intimating that such inner lives do exist" (p. 195). It is at this point that the social conditions in the countryside emerge from the Annales school and enter the artist's studio. The peasant's affective closure, or reticence to display oneself, was motivated by the fear of showing oneself to strangers in a "combative, oppositional social environment, in which every social encounter was lined with potential danger" (p. 197). Here again, the closed affect, the inexpression and blankness of the "figure," accounts for both the social actor and the artist's facture: in the Le Nain canvases, surfaces are neutral and opaque, painted with the same vague evenness. The figure inhabits a "'flat' landscape, affectively as well as physically, without points of distinction or marvel" (p. 203). Demography meets deadpan.

In the coda we find ourselves in the eighteenth century. There are sensitive readings of Watteau's chalk on paper drawings: "While Callot figured swagger through fluttering, windblown accessories, Watteau manipulates with a free hand the effect of the smudges of white chalk, as well as the energetic jittery strokes of the red sanguine pencil" (p. 213). We also find ourselves in more familiar territory (citing Mary Vidal and Mary Sheriff), where "painting marvelously captures the tension in Watteau's figural practice between the effortful figure and the performance of effortlessness" (p. 213). [12] The author productively rehearses and develops some of her earlier publications on Watteau's Pierrot, here fortified by the arc of the book where "nuance and drama accrue through the figure's relationship to the pictorial event, the consciousness that the figure betrays of being figured and seen" (p. 216). However, the characterization of Watteau's "blank, immobile figure" that is not subordinate to narrative (presenting a mask is "action enough") does not sit right with the allusion to sexual violence in *Voulez-vous triompher les belles dames?* or other recurrent pairings that presage *Les liasons dangereuses* (p. 223). Callot's repression of violence (indeed, of *histoire*) in the swaggering hyper-masculine figures may haunt Pierrot's blankness.

In her coda, Knowles asks us to think along the lines of a long seventeenth century extending to Manet, where the figural types and affects discussed in her book "enjoyed a meaningful afterlife"; despite the loss of the "charge of social encounter," Rococo ornament provided a "holding pattern, storing up figures for future use" (p. 226). Albeit the discussion of Watteau's reception is warranted, seeking phenomena that anticipate future developments, we risk making claims unmoored from historical particulars, a tendency found in art history from Alois Riegl to Michael

Fried. Better to write a micro-history of closely attended objects, which is consummately achieved by the author of this book.

NOTES

[1] PhD dissertations in English have appeared in both the UK and North America, among them one under my direction: Karine Douplitzky, *Du Naturel, or Philippe de Champaigne Against Nature. Portraiture, artifice and the natural in seventeenth-century France.* PhD dissertation. University of California, Berkeley, 2020. T.J. Clark's *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) is exceptional.

[2] Among notable exceptions is the classic Neil MacGregor, "The Le Nain Brothers and Changes in French Rural Life," published during the early institutional heyday of British social art history [*Art History* 2/4 (1979): 401-412]. Hillary Ballon's important early scholarship in French architectural history, for which she achieved recognition in France, has not yielded a sustained line of inquiry in North America. See Hillary Ballon, *The Paris of Henri IV: Architecture and Humanism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1991) and *Louis Le Vau: Mazarin's Collège, Colbert's Revenge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[3] Louis Marin taught in the United States from 1970 to 1977. *Le portait du roi* (1981) was translated into English as *Portrait of the King*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). *Détuire la peinture* (1977) was translated into English only after Marin's death, in addition to *Sublime Poussin* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999). Aside from a chapter on Michel de Montaigne, Charles Dempsey's and Elizabeth Cropper's *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) has a Roman focus. See also Jonathan W. Unglaub, *Poussin and the Poetics of Painting: Pictorial Narrative and the Legacy of Tasso* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and *Poussin's Sacrament of Ordination: History Faith and the Sacred Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013). Some exceptions include Sheila McTighe (*Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), who addresses Poussin's relationship to *libertinage*, and my own book *Poussin and France: Paintings, Humanism, and the Politics of Style* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

[4] In addition to exhibitions such as *Valentin de Boulogne: Beyond Caravaggio* (Musée du Louvre/ Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2017), *Poussin et Dieu* (Musée du Louvre, 2015) and, more recently, *Poussin and the Dance* (Getty Center, 2022), we are indebted to the late Jacques Thuillier and Antoine Schnapper for their contributions to archival studies. For over thirty years, the Macula series has produced important catalogue raisonnées. Lorenzo Pericolo contributed major monograph dedicated to Philippe de Champaigne, see Lorenzo Pericolo, *"Philippe, homme sage et vertueux": Essai sur l'art et l'oeuvre de Philippe de Champaigne 1602-1974)* (Tournai: La Renaissance du Livre, 2002).

[5] On recent scholarship in France, see Todd P. Olson, "Les Mots et les choses: nouvelles études sur les arts visuels français du XVIIe siècle," *Perspective: actualité en histoire de l'art* 1 (2017): 161-168.

[6] See, for example, Frédéric Cousinié, *Esthétique des fluides. Sang, sperme, merde dans la peinture française du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Félin, 2011).

[7] Sheila McTighe, *Representing from Life in Seventeenth-century Italy* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2020).

[8] Bruno Latour, "Culture et technique. Les 'vues' de l'esprit," *Réseaux 5*, no. 27 (1987): 79-96.

[9] See Richard Schechter, *Performance Theory: Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York: Routledge, 1988) and Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" in *Performing Feminisms Feminist Critical Theory and Theater*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 270-82.

[10] See Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness, Vol. 2: The Negative Affects* (New York: Springer, 1963) and Eve Kofosky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[11] Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

[12] Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature and Talk in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century France* (Yale University Press, 1992) and Mary D. Sheriff, ed., *Antoine Watteau: Perspectives on the Artist and the Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006).

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