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Folly Beyond Words

Bruegel and Proverbs in Art

Samuel Mareel

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- **New perspective on art history:** Reveals how words, sayings, and popular culture shaped visual art across centuries
- **Features iconic masters:** Includes works by Hieronymus Bosch, Jacques Jordaens, Jan Steen, and Rembrandt van Rijn
- The first book dedicated to the tradition of visualized language in the art of the Early Modern Low Countries
- Published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp

This book is the first to explore the rich tradition of visualized language in the art of the Early Modern Low Countries, with Pieter Bruegel the Elder as its central figure. Through masterpieces by artists including Hieronymus Bosch, Jacques Jordaens, Jan Steen, and Rembrandt van Rijn, it demonstrates how proverbs, satire, and allegory inspired artists for centuries. From human folly and political tensions to sex, drink, and mortality, word and image emerge as closely intertwined. The book also places this tradition within a contemporary and global perspective, revealing the enduring relevance of Bruegel's visual language today.

Samuel Mareel is the Senior Curator of 15th- and 16th-Century Art at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA) in Antwerp, Belgium.

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