



# The Rhetoric of Perspective: Realism and Illusionism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still-Life Painting

*Hanneke Grootenboer*

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Perspective determines how we, as viewers, perceive painting. We can convince ourselves that a painting of a bowl of fruit or a man in a room appears to be real by the way these objects are rendered. Likewise, the trick of perspective can prevent us from being absorbed in a scene. Connecting contemporary critical theory with close readings of seventeenth-century Dutch visual culture, *The Rhetoric of Perspective* puts forth the claim that painting is a form of thinking and that perspective functions as the language of the image.

Aided by a stunning full-color gallery, Hanneke Grootenboer proposes a new theory of perspective based on the phenomenological aspects of non-narrative still-life, *trompe l'oeil*, and anamorphic imagery. Drawing on playful and mesmerizing baroque images, Grootenboer characterizes what she calls their "sophisticated deceit," asserting that painting is more about visual representation than about its supposed objects.

Offering an original theory of perspective's impact on pictorial representation, the act of looking, and the understanding of truth in painting, Grootenboer shows how these paintings both question the status of representation and explore the limits and credibility of perception.

"An elegant and honourable synthesis."—Keith Miller, *Times Literary Supplement*



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