

Newberry Seminar in European Art

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Evidentiae Resurrectionis: On the Mystery Discerned but not Seen in Pieter Bruegel's *Resurrection* of ca. 1562-1563

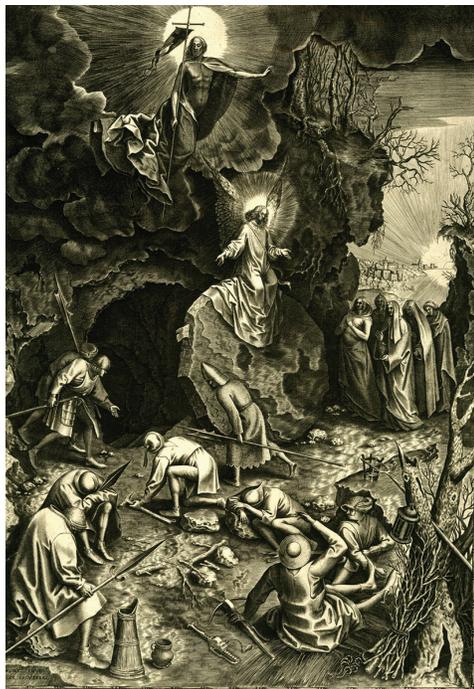
Walter Melion, Emory University

Friday, October 9, 2015

1:30pm to 4:30pm / Prints and Drawings Dept. Study Room

The Art Institute of Chicago / Michigan and Adams Streets / Chicago IL 60603

(Please arrive in the lobby just inside the Michigan Avenue entrance by 1:30pm to be escorted to the Print Study Room.)



Engraved by Philips Galle after Pieter Bruegel, the *Resurrection* of 1562-1563 explores a problem central to the exegetical tradition—namely, that this great mystery of faith, as set forth in the Gospels and Epistles, was witnessed by no one and must thus be known solely by means of the evidentiary signs left in its wake. Bruegel takes great care to show his protagonists responding to these traces: two of the soldiers peer down into the rock-cut tomb; another looks at the sealed stone; and two of the holy women have just begun to look up at the seated angel who addresses them. Moreover, the viewer's vantage point precisely correlates to the seal, situated at mid-height, whence one can either look down with the soldiers or up with the women, following their lines of sight. Bruegel portrays the risen Christ as present and yet unseen, radiant and yet occluded: his gesture of pointing directs the viewer's eyes toward the rising sun, which functions as a visual analogue to the Resurrection. Christ can be seen to license this and other proxies for the mystery fulfilled, not least Bruegel's picture or, better, picture of a framed picture, whose status as yet another kind of visual evidence the artist thereby underscores. The *Resurrection*, in these and other ways, emphasizes that vision is an instrument of faith. My paper explores how Bruegel's grisaille and Galle's engraving, in the arguments they put forth about vision, break with pictorial convention in order directly to engage with the exegetical tradition.

Walter Melion is Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Art History at Emory University in Atlanta, where he has taught since 2004 and currently chairs the Art History Department. He was previously Professor and Chair of Art History at The Johns Hopkins University. He has published extensively on Dutch and Flemish art and art theory of the 16th and 17th centuries, on Jesuit image-theory, on the relation between theology and aesthetics in the early modern period, and on the artist Hendrick Goltzius. He was elected Foreign Member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2010. Between 2014 and 2015, he was Chaire Franqui at the Université Catholique de Louvain and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Melion is the recipient of the 2016 Distinguished Scholar Award from the American Catholic Historical Association.

To request a copy of the paper, please email Mary N. Kennedy at kennedym@newberry.org

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