

The Asses of Bosch

That in-your-face work—the eyes funnel it just about whole—what provocation!

But I have some notes written on its

weird business—can I manage it?

Can the in-your-face unfold in time?

Roaming is a function of time—

but what overwhelms in the painting is space.

Browsing the baffling book—I began to see,
in measured ways, the minute details (insofar as
reproduction allowed), every one of them a stunner.

Outlandish excesses caught my eye:

the bared asses—and what surfeit of ass to be found there!

I resolved to record them, one by one—

O unspeakable part—

to the best of my limitations.

This then a modest inventory.

Are asses in fashion (circa 2005)?

In custom, one speaks of the woman's ass—

while in Bosch it's the ass of man on display.

Unto this part of the body—the backside

where the back surrenders its honest name—

name given to the human buttocks—

or the rump of beasts—

in an era (circa 1500) when sodomy

meant death—

the brilliant Flemish painter abandons himself to the ass.

What's up with that? Outbursts of the libido?

Medieval queering? Auto-eroticism?

Bizarre beauty?

Over a field with eyes and a forest with ears—

the bared asses of Bosch—

asses with flutes or coins of gold or swallows,

asses with sticks, ass with anaphora—

special asses—the core of the libido.

Here, asses are not autonomous—

most of them are entangled.

Sketch—ass peeking from narrow basket,
a little man bent over the basket whacks at it
with mandolin—
there's something lodged between the buttocks
(honeycomb of bees?)
Sketch—fat ass and legs—
one tucked up—the other standing in a hat basket
up to waist and with spear
run-through from stomach's side and out the face.
Oil—circle of figures bottom left—whacking
bared ass—ass spewing steam.
And more?
Oil on panel—Hell—ass
plus legs with wings.
Ass with fine branch shoved in.

Ass penetrated by long cornet and legs.
Ass and leg huddled under hat
or mollusk covering upper section of body
to waist. Into the ass
goes a lance, emerging from the top
of the mollusk or hat.
Ass and legs in a vessel.
Ass and legs skewered with pole,
pushed along by an ape.
Monkey-tailed ass?

Oil—ass with kneeling legs,
beneath raised arras.
Little ass of child?
Sketch—asses with legs push
an axle with two circles—wheels!
Ass and legs with breeches and hat,
a toadstool to waist—
fish head and arms.

Oil—ass pricked with flute.
Ass climbing ladder, with banderilla.
Ass penetrated with pike.

Oil—O, a naked woman's ass—
from which flowers come.

Conclave of asses and legs circumnavigate
on knees, heads facing in
(not seen)—a great dark bird alighted on every ass.

Ass peeking out between two giant valves,
nude woman riding the ass.
Ass stuck with spines
of a giant red berry—the ass
becoming flower, turquoise spotted.
Three sky-blue asses, legs akimbo—
the torsos not seen; they're inside a reddish carapace,
which waves a scorpion tail.
A cluster of naked men shoulder it forth,
push it forward—a bear on top,
and atop the bear a little green bird.

Oil—beast with bird head.
Ass that fountains coins of gold.
Ass with big oval mirror, convex,
where the face of a woman is reflected
and that of wolf, too.
The body is on its knees,
cloaked in a cloth.
The legs of that ass become branches,
parched, entwining woman.
Ass with flute protruding
ass in the air from prone body—
head and arms inside beak
of great bird—the head
wears a pot for hat.
An arm of the creature holds up
the ass and legs—a flock of black swallows
flies out the ass.

Oil—Temptation of Saint Anthony—
back part (ass) of an animal,
feet in boots.
The head is a woman's, feathered,
she smokes—or blows on bagpipe—
she stares straight ahead—on her upraised tail
bird is perched—a manner of owl—
beneath whose tail a liquid shoots.

Ass on squatting legs from which
small branches bud—the body is hidden—covered
with hood of rich greenish cloth—
the head pokes out in silhouette,
arrow buried in its brow.
Boat in the sky—naked man's ass,
head looking back between thighs.

Oil—fat round ass from mud
vessel—its tail curves to make the handle—
sticks shoved up the ass—
from the rim of the vessel water is pouring.

Oil—ass and limbs of a Black man—
hairy, him—with thick forked branch,
thorn-covered, shoved in the anus—body
covered by a white rose.
Black legs wear white shoes.
White sword run through thigh.
On fixed branches in anus
a featherless egret stands
with peacock's tail, a flesh color—
almost transparent.
To a crotch of white branch
a rope is fastened, pulling little orange boat
sailed by ape's head,
claw hands digging into little head.

Ass I see, ass I covet!
Tie those horseflies up by their snaky tails!
Articulation of the articulo—it's
all Style, into or out of the ass.

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