

La Perspectiva Curiosa

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TRASTOS Y FULLERÍA

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In the notice of the *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* (1693), Andrea Pozzo exposes to his readers the wonders of the technique he is about to teach them. He says that the art of perspective deceives with admirable delight the most perceptive of the senses, which is sight. For this, the painting must give the right situation and diminution to the figures; and the greater or lesser vividness that suits the colours and shadows. Following his treatise, the neophyte can learn (with increasing difficulty) to draw columns, parallelogram ceilings of all kinds, pediments or moldings. Knowing deeply the art of architecture, says the author, one will be able to fake it by means of calculus and geometry.

Pozzo used his skills in amazing ventures, such as the trompe l'oeil of the *Apotheosis of St. Ignatius* of the Roman College or the *false dome* of the Jesuit church in Vienna. To make a dome appear where there is none, the artist must calculate the encounter between the object represented. And the vision of the spectator, by means of a method called "legitimate construction". It's funny.

The history of art is full of more or less pompous tricks. With more time and space, we could compile a catalog of objects portrayed by artists fond of illusionism, starting at the Villa de Livia in Prima Porta and passing through the refectory of Sanchez Cotán in the Charterhouse of Granada until reaching De Chirico and company, so skilled architects of headache-inducing paintings. Given the occasion that concerns us, let's make a stop in 18th century Korea, where it became fashionable to represent studies by scholars. Going through the bibliography, I have found from the general category ('munbangdo'), to the detailed list of subgenres. They are commonly referred to as "chaekgeori", which literally translates as "books and things". They do not beat around the bush. Their flourishing is linked to the imposition of Confucianism (the "doctrine of the scholars") and the increase of commercial and cultural relations with China, Japan and Western missionaries. The concurrence of objects that appear in these still lifes depends essentially on the addressee of the work (the genre was not only popular among aristocrats): among the piles of neatly stacked books, usually with hidden spines, porcelain, jades, pots and vases, peacock feathers, fruit, candles or scribes are displayed. Sometimes the furnishings are veiled with curtains added by the most skilled painters. These works of accumulation were not only produced as decorative panels, but it is common to find them painted on screens, so that, when unfolded in accordion, the arrangement of objects acquires an effective *three-dimensionality*.

Any art historian who has spent enough time with a work of art will find hidden messages in the elements that compose it. In this case, I read that the daffodil represents longevity; the melon, pomegranates and grapes, fertility. I'm sure these interpretations are firmly founded, but it must be exhausting that the fruit bowl in the painting you have in your

office holds so many secrets. It would seem that the mere composition of plausible spaces full of pots and pans is lame without the support of a narrative. Great revelations emanating from a fork or a lily. The senses may be fine, but pay attention to the *message*. What a waste, what a wonderful piece of junk it is!