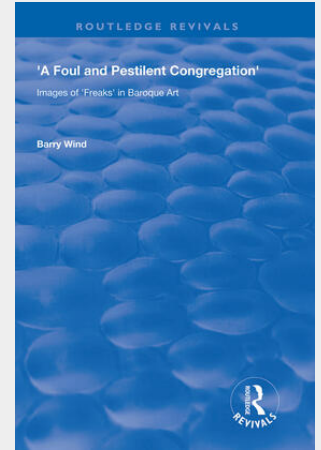


Wind

## A Foul and Pestilent Congregation

Images of Freaks in Baroque Art

First published in 1998, this volume explores how in the seventeenth century depictions of human oddity, hunchbacks, cripples, dwarfs, appeared regularly in the work of both minor and major artists including Velázquez, Rubens, Van Dyck and Rivera. In this, the first comprehensive study of these images, Barry Wind starts with the topoi for the mentally and physically infirm established in antiquity and traces their development into the Baroque period. A delight in the unusual was consonant with the contemporary collection of other exotica, convoluted shells and strange animals, but human 'freaks' provoked more than curiosity. Their representation ranged from taxonomic fascination to derisive mockery. They were frequently cast as imperfect foils to the fashionable courtiers who sought aggrandizement through juxtaposition. The images were also exploited as metaphors for a favourite theme of the period 'the world turned upside down'. In this synthesis of repulsion and fascination, mockery and dread, the portrayal of these 'others' reveals a dark underside of Baroque culture that has never been thoroughly investigated or understood. With the support of 75 reproductions of works from Italy, Spain and Northern Europe, Barry Wind examines representations of human deformity throughout the baroque period. He pursues his account into the eighteenth century and the expression of a new sympathetic understanding and compassion. His study, written with great clarity, makes available hitherto obscure and inaccessible material gathered from diverse sources such as medical treatises, literary texts, popular ballads and court documents to set these images in their context and explain this obsession with difference.



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