



FACTVM
FOUNDATION

FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
IN CONSERVATION



From Antiope to Kardashian

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The Met is staging an exhibition at the moment, *Bartholomeus Spranger - Splendor and Eroticism in Imperial Prague* curated by Sally Metzler, showing the works of Spranger (1546-1611) - from his early life and scrapes in Antwerp, where influences from the Met's Collection are neatly used, through his successful life across Europe as a painter of great talent ...and also great imagination. He worked in the courts of Popes and Emperors and painted a great variety of subjects - but he is really remembered for a divers body of work which represents, through his C16th, highly educated, technically marvellous painterly style that is full of narrative, allusion and gesture, wonderfully realised characters but wearingnot a lot of clothes. The bodies are as good as they get - he created truly sensual, sexy narratives that could not be mistaken for anything else and his clients loved him. He broke bounds - but with taste, with style and with consummate skill - the only thing missing is oil on the rounded flesh. I will explain.

As the FT's Ariella Budick neatly points out in her intriguing review of the exhibition, at the same time that the Met staged this lush exhibition, Jean-Paul Goude in Paris was photographing, in his inimitable and remarkably fluid style - and releasing to a greedy press - the 2014 icon, Kim Kardashian. She is oiled, in your face, full on and very pleased. The photographic image has been created with the same panache that Goude used to celebrate the polished body of Grace Jones - a style summed up in his deeply memorable 1976 image of Carolina Beaumont in Champagne Incident - an image we all recognise - as we will Kardashian and her reflecting behind.

What can be noticed here, apart from the obvious, is that Spranger is not so well known now. He was when he was alive but time has let him shift into the shadows. What is clear is that people through the years since 1611 have cared for these paintings - they are in good condition, many survive vibrantly and we can enjoy, perhaps less prudently, their flourish now. We are lucky. I said we are lucky. We are, in this case, but generally we push our luck. We don't do enough to care for and respect what is created by great artists, though I'm glad to say this is changing now, but we still largely ignore the great gifts technology lays gently in our hands. This lack of care is especially true if the artist has gone out of fashion or is seen as a bit racy or irreverent, or we feel the subject is attention seeking or is simply relevant for his/her irrelevance. But who says? How much have we lost? If we simply recorded exactly - I mean we, as a generation - images /paintings/ works in every detail, digitally, what we think important when we have them n our hands then we could feel we are acting as real custodians without bias and with the future as judge.

What we can do now, and really only now - it is very recent, this ability - is to record everything we hold dear, its surface, its essence and its narrative. We luckily have Spranger's works and we also have Kim Kardashian's bottom - who can say what is more iconic. Whoever we are we should energetically support, encourage precise recording of all the things we cherish - or see as a mirror - in case our grandchildren recognise the icon we may have missed but ...they won't have the object that we have, through thoughtlessness or worse, unless we care. The Foundation was founded to help and can provide the technology and the skill and it can be done with little relative cost - we increasingly need the means and your desire - we can do the rest. And we are doing it, in many places now and we want to go on, working with custodians wherever we can.