

The Microscope in the Dutch Republic: The Shaping of Discovery

By Edward G. Ruestow

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Focusing on the two seventeenth-century pioneers of microscopic discovery, the Dutchmen Jan Swammerdam and Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, the author demonstrates that their uneasiness with their social circumstances spurred their discoveries. Ruestow argues that while aspects of Dutch culture impeded serious research with the microscope, the contemporary culture shaped how Swammerdam and Leeuwenhoek responded to what they saw through the lens. For those interested in the history of science, this book considers the impact of institutionalization on microscopic research, and dissects the cultural, social and emotional circumstances that shaped early microscopic discovery.

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Review
"This book has been a revelation to me, as I think it will be to many other readers whose knowledge of the historical aspects of microscopy are largely confined to the 19th century....Members of the Microscope Historical Society will be particularly interested in having this book, but I believe microscopists in general will enjoy this book and learn a great deal. I personally found the entire story fascinating, particularly the accounts revolving around the debates over spontaneous generation." John Gustav Delly, Microscope

"Ruestow offers us an extremely thorough study of a fascinating period in the history of science....Ruestow is to be congratulated for producing a work that will be read with profit for many years to come." G. L'E. Turner, Nature

"...an interesting and well-researched book....the book is a richly detailed account of the personal and public challenges that faced Swammerdam and Van Leeuwenhoek, two complex heros in the drama that is the history of science. Apart from the book's other strengths...this is certainly enough to make the book well worth reading." Lissa Roberts, Ph.D., Journal of the History of Medicine

"Ruestow has written a wide-ranging account of moicroscopy through the early 1830's. It is an invaluabele contribution to our increasingly complex account of the growth of early modern science." Harold J. Cook, Journal of Interdisciplinary History

"...Edward Ruestow's book is a pleasure to consult. Each time one reads it new truths emerge. Ruestow presents his well-documented research in a careful concatenation of detail. Weaving disparate findings into a complex tapestry he offers some clues as to the personal pressures and intellectual dynamics that motivated Dutch microsopial research in its early years. The result is useful reading for historians of science from the broadest catchment." Brian J. Ford, Isis

"Ruestow's book is deeply researched and gracefully written. ...carefully documented and attractively illustrated, and the information...will do much to broaden and refine the currently contested notion of the Scientific Revolution." Catherine Wilson, American Historical Review

"This is an interesting and admirable attempt to reconstruct the social and intellectual context of discovery, in this case, discovery with the microscope in the seventeenth-century Dutch republic. This book represents an important contribution to the study of early modern science and technology in general." Pamela H. Smith, Technology and Culture

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