The transformation of proverbs and other verbal expressions into visual images has long fascinated artists and their public, but never more than in the Netherlands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This subject has also engaged my attention for some years, resulting in a number of short publications, for the most part listed in the Selected Bibliography. These excursions into proverb imagery have generally been limited to the explication of particular examples, and similar concerns can also be found in the present book, which, in addition, addresses some broader issues. Why were proverb images so immensely popular in these centuries? Did the depiction of proverbs change over time, and if so, how? And why did some proverbs, to the exclusion of others, find such favor with the picture- and print-buying public?

Our current understanding of proverb imagery, I fear, does not permit any conclusive answers to these questions. Nevertheless, my first two chapters offer provisional responses, while the three case studies that follow provide insights into the range and diversity of proverb images in Renaissance Netherlands, as well as the ways in which some of them were transformed over time. I have also suggested why certain proverbs or groups of proverbs—and in Chapter five, the mode of depicting a particular proverb—enjoyed widespread currency.

Some of the ideas treated in this book appeared in tentative fashion in my short monograph on Pieter Bruegel published in 1977, while their various aspects were elaborated in presentations at professional con-
ferences, among them the 1995 Medieval Conference at Western Michi-. gan University in Kalamazoo, the 2002 International Conference of the Historians of Netherlandish Art in Antwerp, the Sixth Colloquium of the Misericordia International at the University of Sheffield, in 2003, and the annual College Art Association Conference held in Boston in 2006. I have greatly benefited from the resulting discussions on these occasions. I would also like to thank the three readers of the manuscript, especially Barbara C. Bowen and Wolfgang Mieder, who not only submitted my text to their expert scrutiny but also generously shared their formidable knowledge on topics outside my area of study. Professor Mieder was particularly helpful on matters proverbial. Colleagues and others who were always ready to answer my questions include Edwin Buijsen, Zirka Filipczak, Nancy Kay, Elizabeth Keiffer, A. Monballieu, Takami Matsuda, Yoko Mori, Jeroen Vandommele, and Robert Volz. They all have my warmest thanks, as do Jan Piet Filedt Kok, Malcolm Jones, Eddy de Jongh, Naomi Kline, Jos Koldewij, R. H. Marijnissen, and Kathryn M. Rudy for their help in obtaining visual material. I am also much indebted to Diane Scillia for her valuable assistance at various stages of my research, and to Samuel Y. Edgerton who kindly translated several Latin inscriptions for me.

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The late Elaine C. Block has signally increased our knowledge and appreciation of medieval and early modern profane imagery, both through the Misericordia International, the association of which she was
the founder and long the guiding spirit, and through her many publications, not least those dealing with proverb imagery. This book is dedicated to her memory.

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