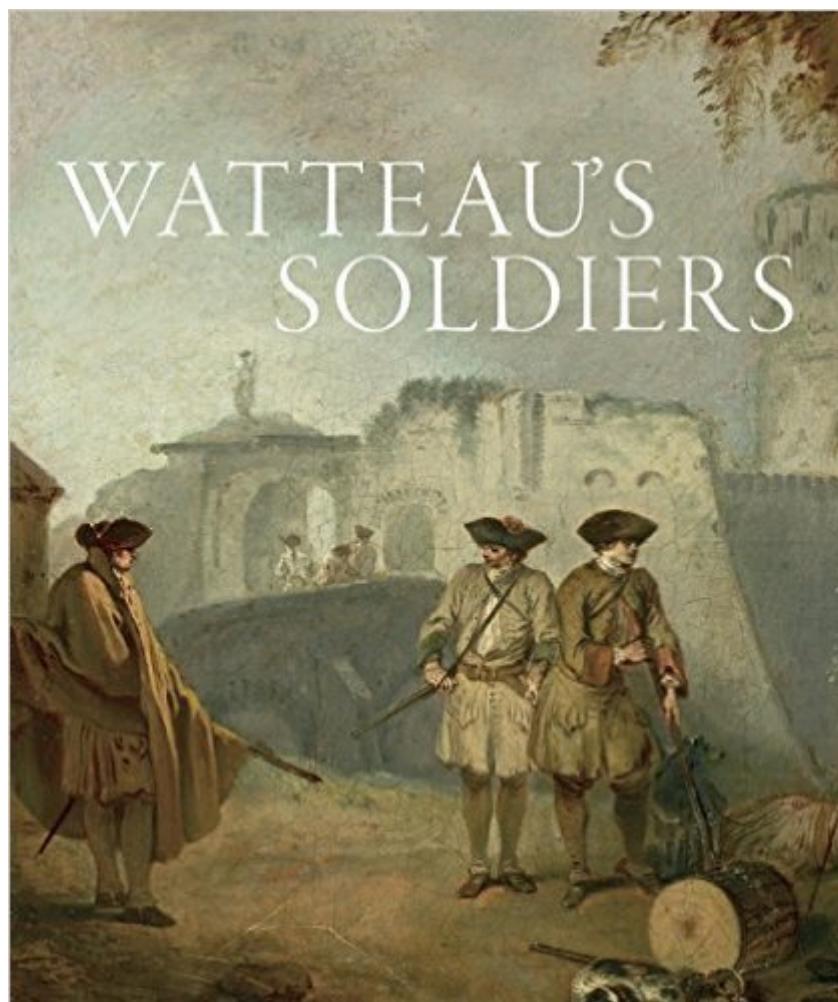


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Watteau's Soldiers: Scenes Of Military Life In Eighteenth-Century France



Synopsis

Celebrated for his dreamlike paintings of amorous aristocrats and melancholy actors, Antoine Watteau (1684–1721) also produced a number of captivating works with military subjects—paintings and drawings—at early in his career. They were executed when France was engaged in the costly and ultimately disastrous War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), but they look past the turbulence of battle and the heroic deeds of generals and kings to depict the more prosaic aspects of war—marches, halts, encampments, and bivouacs. They focus on the quiet moments between the fighting, outside of military discipline, when soldiers could rest, daydream, smoke pipes, and play cards. Although they owe a debt to seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish precedents, they put forward a new, thoroughly modern vision of war in which the soldier's inner life, his experience of war, is brought to the fore. *Watteau's Soldiers* offers a new interpretation of Watteau's military works. There is a catalogue raisonné of all Watteau works related to military subjects, and a lively and accessible essay by Aaron Wile that explores Watteau's engagement with the cultural history of war, and the ordinary soldier's experience of it. This visually appealing new volume is a welcome, thought-provoking study of a little-known aspect of this well-loved artist's career. Aaron Wile is the Anne L. Poulet Curatorial Fellow, The Frick Collection, New York, 2014–2016.

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