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Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann. *Painterly Enlightenment: The Art of Franz Anton Maulbertsch, 17241796.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. xi + 162 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2956-1.

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The Enlightenment of Franz Anton Maulbertsch

The subject of this short book is the art of the central European painter Franz Anton Maulbertsch (1724-1796) and its relationship to the Enlightenment in the Habsburg monarchy of the mid- to late eighteenth century. Maulbertsch's paintings, mainly frescoes, are to be found in locations across the present-day states of Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania. Maulbertsch worked for a variety of secular and ecclesiastical patrons. His productions ranged from, for example, a fresco depicting the assumption of the Virgin in the Piarist Church of Maria Treu in Vienna (1752) to a crucifixion scene for a parish church in SÃ¼meg in Hungary (1758), and an allegorical "Triumph of Light" for the ceiling of the *Prunksaal* of the palace at Halbturn in the Austrian Burgenland (1765). Although a substantial secondary literature on Maulbertsch has been prepared by central European scholars, he remains relatively little known elsewhere–largely, it seems, because his work is difficult to relate to standard historical accounts of European art in the eighteenth century, making his style appear eccentric and even retrograde, typical of the Baroque rather than the Enlightenment. Maulbertsch never, for example, subscribed to the Enlightenment neo-classicism of his younger contemporary, Jacques-Louis David. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann's aim in this book, based on his Bettie Allison Rand Lectures in Art History, is to re-integrate Maulbertsch into broader interpretations of the history of eighteenth-century art, by examining his work in its historical context and showing the extent to which it reflected more general contemporary intellectual and artistic concerns. In his final chapter Kaufmann also briefly suggests that Maulbertsch's work is of more than historical interest, and that his use of coloring in particular, which was noted by his contemporaries, anticipates modernist painting (p. 9).

Following an introduction to Maulbertsch and the difficulties of interpreting his art in chapter 1 ("Introducing an Original Strangeling"), Kaufmann turns to Maulbertsch's relationship to the Enlightenment in chapter 2. Kaufmann draws attention to the problems of defining the Enlightenment and makes it clear that one should not expect a single Enlightenment, but a plurality of enlightenments, even within a single city, such as Vienna, where, he writes, "different versions of the Enlightenment coexisted that inspired, tolerated, overlapped, or

fought with each other" (p. 44). The main Viennese enlightenments, Kaufmann writes, were "an Enlightenment ordered by Joseph II (what is commonly called 'Enlightened despotism'); a bourgeois Enlightenment, related to middle-class thinkers and the literature they engendered; an antique Enlightenment, one oriented toward Johann Joachim Winckelmann and the rage for classical antiquity; a natural historical Enlightenment, related to scientific inquiry; and a Freemasons' Enlightenment. To these may be added a 'Catholic Enlightenment," related to church reforms" (p. 44). Kaufmann then focuses on the relationship of Maulbertsch to the "Catholic Enlightenment," or "Reform Catholicism," as it was also known, suggesting that ultimately this reform movement within Catholicism clashed with the secular tendencies of the Enlightenment. His argument about the incompatibility of Enlightenment thought with Catholicism appears to rely on Peter Gay's classic and magisterial work on the Enlightenment as the "rise of modern paganism" (p. 45). Gay's interpretation has, however, been qualified in recent years by scholarship on the "Religious Enlightenment," and it now no longer seems self-evident that Catholicism was bound to come into conflict with enlightened thought. It is also not evident that the claims of revelation were invariably opposed to reason, as Kaufmann suggests (p. 45): many, probably most, eighteenth-century theorists held that reason and revelation harmonized; they might be separate categories of knowledge, but very few thinkers would have believed that reason necessarily undermined revelation, or vice versa. The connections Kaufmann draws between Maulbertsch's paintings and Enlightenment ideas may also occasionally seem rather tenuous. He argues, for example, that the allegorical "Triumph of Light" in the palace at Halbturn reflects Enlightenment ideals, because light was one of the most commonly used symbols in the Enlightenment. But this is hardly convincing evidence, since light as a symbol is not specific to the Enlightenment. Even if the sunrise had by the 1760s become "the most common allegorical symbol of the Enlightenment" (p. 39), the use of light as a symbol does not necessarily indicate the presence of Enlightenment ideas. Similarly, it seems questionable whether Maulbertsch's depiction, in the Innsbruck Hofburg, of happy Tyroleans (1775-1776)–smiled upon by Ceres, Pomona and other pagan gods–reflects the influence of the Enlightenment. Kaufmann argues, perhaps a little casually, that "these scenes ... seem to represent Enlightenment ideals, in particular what has been called a characteristic belief in the intense delight in nature's bounties and man's productive energy" (p. 63).

From the 1760s and 1770s, Maulbertsch's style changes in a variety of ways: the coloring is modified, "the proportions of figures are less elongated ... the drawing is relatively tighter, and the handling of paint less extravagant" (p. 79). In chapter 3, Kaufmann explains this transformation in Maulbertsch's work by relating it to a debate about "good taste" and "noble simplicity"–concepts associated in particular with the work of the German classicist, antiquarian and historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Good taste, Winckelmann claimed, had originated in ancient Greece, but gone into decline under the Roman Empire, and had to be restored by imitating Greek art, which was characterized by "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" (p. 85). Attempts were made to persuade Winckelmann to become secretary of the newly-founded Viennese Kupferstecherakademie; he was invited to Vienna for this reason in 1768, but was killed shortly afterwards in Trieste. However, after Winckelmann's death, Maulbertsch's patron in Innsbruck, Joseph Freiherr von Sperges, oversaw the publication of the second edition of Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* (*Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*; [1776]), and Winckelmann's friend Anton von Maron became head of the Viennese academy. Kaufmann argues that Maulbertsch, through these and other members of the Viennese Kupferstecherakademie, could have become familiar with Winckelmann's ideas, especially his praise of simplicity and rejection of excessive ornament (p. 87). Kaufmann also raises the possibility that a sculptor named Andreas Schweigel, or Maulbertsch's visit to Saxony exposed him to Winckelmann's ideas about the nature of "good taste", but these possibilities, as Kaufmann's choice of words makes clear, remain speculative (p. 88). He also argues, however, that regardless of these potential direct contacts of Maulbertsch with followers of Winckelmann, writings on art criticism, art theory and art history were part of the expanding discourse of painting in the eighteenth century. Publications constituted a public sphere, which enlarged the audience for the visual arts, so that more people, "notably the bourgeoisie" (p. 90), could participate in it. Coffeehouses, "a Viennese institution par excellence," salons, and new institutions such as the Kupferstecherakademie also provided environments in which these debates could be conducted (p. 90). In essence, Kaufmann's view is that Maulbertsch would have become familiar with new ideas of good taste through the emerging public sphere in the Habsburg monarchy.

Patrons' demands would have contributed to the pressure on Maulbertsch to adapt his style to current

artistic fashions. One of his contracts, for example, specified that he use "antique decorations" in painting a room (p. 94). Maulbertsch also appears to have voluntarily adopted some of the new aesthetic ideals associated with Winckelmann's work. The changes in his style therefore do reflect some of the artistic and intellectual concerns of the Enlightenment, as exemplified by Winckelmann's writings, but Maulbertsch's works still fell short of a fully-fledged classicism. Significant differences remain between Maulbertsch's art and that of contemporary neo-classicist painters such as Anton Raphael Mengs, let alone David. At the end of this chapter, Kaufmann thus qualifies some of his conclusions by returning to the question of the plurality of enlightenments. Winckelmann's theory was not representative of the Enlightenment as a whole, and there were many other theories of art, which ran counter to Winckelmann's ideas and were just as typical of the Enlightenment. There are, therefore, potentially, other ways of integrating Maulbertsch's art with the Enlightenment than the theory of Winckelmann, one of which Kaufmann addresses in his final chapter, "On the Margins of Modernism."

This final chapter considers Maulbertsch's use of color as a distinctive feature, which was commented on by his contemporaries. Kaufmann examines the early modern debate over coloring, which, in the mid-eighteenth century, was linked to the aesthetic concept of the sublime. The discussion of this drew on an ancient treatise traditionally attributed to Longinus and had been carried on in German writings since the 1730s (pp. 114-115), in an attempt to valorize the imagination contrary to the emphasis on the intellect (*Verstand*), associated especially with the German critic Johann Christoph Gottsched. Maulbertsch's art, Kaufmann suggests, was "brought directly into the discussion of such notions of the sublime" (p. 116) and the term "sublime" was directly applied to Maulbertsch's art. Kaufmann then reconstructs the connections between Maulbertsch and this debate; he also contrasts Maulbertsch's art to that of another contemporary artist noted for his use of color, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770). At the very end of this book, Kaufmann compares Maulbertsch's use of color with that of modernist painters such as Marc Rothko or Vassily Kandinsky, drawing attention to both similarities and differences.

In sum, this is an elegant and illuminating volume in which the author presents several possible ways of interpreting Maulbertsch as an Enlightenment painter, though Kaufmann's own view is sometimes rather elusive, as many of his conclusions are tentative, speculative and eventually appear to be qualified by himself. Occasionally the evidence for the actual rather than possible presence of enlightened ideas in Maulbertsch's work seems limited, as discussed above. The quality of some of the plates (such as number 32) could also be better. It may also be worth considering whether the Enlightenment to which Maulbertsch's work is being related has not become so broad that it is more or less identical to the totality of the culture and thought specific to the eighteenth century. This may, of course, be the best definition of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment there is.