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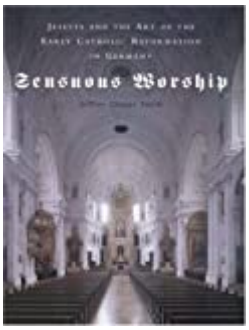

Jeffrey Chipps Smith. *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. ix + 261 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-09072-6.

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In May 1555 Jerome Nadal, a leading Jesuit emissary, warned his superior, Ignatius Loyola, that "there is a very grave danger that if the remnant of Catholics here are not helped, in two years there will be not one in Germany" (p. 12). A sense of crisis pervaded Germany's Catholic Church, particularly after the signing of the Peace of Augsburg on September 25 of that same year, when it became clear that Germany would henceforth be permanently divided between two confessions. During the second half of the sixteenth century, however, Catholic prospects were transformed, thanks to a large extent to the educational and missionary efforts of the Society of Jesus. The Church's position was consolidated and strengthened and by the early-seventeenth century Catholicism had re-emerged as a militant, if not yet triumphant, force within the Holy Roman Empire.

In this excellent study Jeffrey Chipps Smith explores the Jesuits' contribution to the revival of Catholic religious art in Germany, a theme that emerged from his 1994 monograph on German sculpture of the later Renaissance (*German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance, c. 1520-1580: Art in an Age of Uncertainty*). Between the late 1570s and 1648 the Society of Jesus built or substantially restored thirty churches in its German provinces. Smith argues that this building activity was an important part of the Jesuits' mission to renew Catholic culture and identity, and that it set an example for other orders to follow. In the course of the study, which is richly illustrated, Smith explores some truly wonderful art and architecture, much of it probably unfamiliar to an Anglophone audience.

The Jesuits saw art as an invaluable tool for their pedagogical and missionary efforts. In his introductory chapters, Smith considers the Jesuit notion of *Bildung*, the formation of a Christian through self-betterment, with union with God as its ultimate goal. In this process of *Bildung* images could instruct, but more importantly could also engage the senses, the intellect and the spirit. They were an important part of the Jesuits' pastoral activity, which was designed to assist the individual on every stage of his or her journey towards God. Smith rightly devotes considerable attention to Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, the key text for all members of the Society of Jesus, which provided a structured program of religious experience and validated the use of sight in meditative practice. He also uses other Jesuit texts and their illustrations, in particular Antoine Sucquet's *Via vitae aeternae* (Antwerp, 1625) with engravings by Boetius a Bolswert, to elucidate the major themes of Jesuit spirituality.

The pivotal section of the book deals with the church of St. Michael in Munich, built between 1583 and 1597 by Duke Wilhelm V of Bavaria, head of the militantly

Catholic Wittelsbach dynasty. St. Michael's was the first major Catholic church to be built in Germany in over half a century and, unlike many of the other churches that Smith discusses, still survives intact. Smith provides an illuminating discussion of the respective roles of the patron and of the Jesuits themselves, in particular of the process by which Wittelsbach triumphalist aims were reconciled with the building's spiritual functions. He demonstrates how the program of religious experience prescribed by Loyola and by other Jesuit authors was translated into visual form by the church's designers. He provides a compelling interpretation of the iconographic scheme, from Hubert Gerhard's monumental bronze of St. Michael fighting the devil on the facade, which had particular resonance in context of the Catholic struggle against Protestant heresy, to the furnishings of the nave, chapels, crossing and choir, which lead the worshipper through the prescribed stages of self-examination, illumination and finally union with God.

The following chapters analyze other important churches, considering their architectural designs, their pictorial programs and the stylistic choices that were made by the Jesuits and their patrons (Smith is particularly interesting on the deliberate interplay between the indigenous Gothic and more modern Renaissance styles). The two churches established by Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm of the Palatinate-Neuburg at Neuburg an der Donau and at DÃ¼sseldorf are perhaps the most fascinating. The duke converted to Catholicism in 1614, and the Hofkirche at Neuburg an der Donau, which was originally constructed as a Lutheran church, was handed over to the Jesuits and filled with a profusion of arch-Catholic iconography, especially with visual litanies to the Virgin Mary and the saints. There is also an interesting chapter on Mariae Himmelfahrt in Cologne, another Wittelsbach foundation, distinguished above all by its theatricality (the 1628 tabernacle included a mechanized *expositorium* that displayed the consecrated host) and by its amazing profusion of relics.

Smith acknowledges that it is impossible to isolate a specific Jesuit style.[1] Architectural designs varied, depending on the availability of money, of skilled architects (he mentions several cases where parts of churches collapsed due to inadequate planning) and of construction space, although there were some common features, for example galleries and simple choirs. Once removed from their original contexts, paintings can generally only be identified as Jesuit in origin if they include characteristic saints or the IHS monogram. But Smith's assertion of the significance of the overall coherence of Jesuit design, in a period when few German church interiors conformed to any coherent plan, is compelling.

The book combines a wealth of art historical information, from architectural plans to artists' biographies, with an admirable awareness of historical context. Its greatest strength is perhaps the author's ability to provide sensitive readings of texts and images in conjunction, in order to elucidate complex visual programs whilst simultaneously maintaining a realistic assessment of their original audience's capabilities. Smith avoids the classic academic trap of assuming that every early modern observer knew as much about Jesuit spirituality as he does, and points out that some would have had only a fairly basic knowledge of the catechism while others were fully trained in Ignatian spirituality. The images could, he therefore argues, be read at different levels. Overall, the study is an invaluable contribution to a neglected field, and many of the churches Smith discusses certainly deserve to be better known amongst the canon of post-Tridentine ecclesiastical art. The book will be of great interest to both art historians and historians, though whether Smith's assertion that art was "one of the primary reasons why German Catholicism survived and indeed rebounded dramatically" (p.1) can be upheld against the better established claims of Jesuit preaching and education remains to be seen.

Note

[1]. Wittkower and Jaffe reach a similar conclusion in R. Wittkower and I. B. Jaffe ed., *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972).

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