

den, sie geben kurze Sacherläuterungen und Querverweise. Die leider nur schwarz-weißen Abbildungen der teils kolorierten *Desenhos das Antigualhas* Hollandas haben die Illustrationen des Faksimiles zur Vorlage.

So aber ersetzt der vorliegende Band weder die Arbeit mit den portugiesischen Textausgaben noch die Lektüre der Forschungsliteratur. Auch die zweisprachige Ausgabe JOAQUIM DE VASCONCELLOS' bleibt nach nunmehr hundert Jahren unersetzlich.

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**Carolyn Smyth: Correggio's Frescoes in Parma Cathedral;** Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997; XVI +158 S., IV +141 Abb.; ISBN 0-691-03747-7; £50.-

After numerous publications on the decoration of the Duomo in Parma and its painter Antonio Allegri da Correggio, Carolyn Smyth deemed it right to open a new discussion on the subject. Instead of concentrating on the chronology of execution and the development of the decorative system as documented in the drawings, she takes up the question of the iconography. In spite of, or maybe because of the renown of the cupola frescoes, the significance of the decoration has never been thoroughly discussed – the „Assumption of the Virgin“ seemed too logical an explanation to investigate upon. Carolyn Smyth not simply discusses what can be seen, but more importantly how. Although the result of this method is not strikingly different from earlier explanations – the „Assumption of the Virgin“ is still the main subject – it elucidates the perception of the decoration more profoundly. The viewpoint from the side permits the reading of more details in the fresco, and thus a more thorough consideration of its iconography. By pointing out the prototypes used by Correggio in developing his iconographical and compositional system, she proves that Correggio stood firmly in the tradition of depictions of the Assumption, but at the same time extended upon the given possibilities to an unprecedented, and almost unsurpassed, work of art.

Correggio decorated the Duomo of Parma between November 1522 and November 1530; at least, as far as the documents suggest<sup>1</sup>. Considering that in 1522 Correggio was still involved in the decoration of San Giovanni Evangelista in the same town, he would have started painting in the Duomo only after 1523 – contracts for workmen preparing the surface of the dome for fresco were being paid in November of that year. The first payment to Correggio on November 25th, 1526 suggests an even later date. Correggio however never finished his part; for an unknown reason he left the apse and the choir of the Duomo undecorated. He was not alone in leaving this task unfinished; other painters involved, like Parmigianino, Araldi, Ron-

<sup>1</sup> CECIL GOULD: *The Paintings of Correggio*; London 1976, p. 106.

dani and Anselmi left before finishing, or even never started. It has been supposed that internal problems of the patrons, the Canons of the cathedral, caused a final break in the execution. Carolyn Smyth assumes that the stingy attitude of the canons and their lack of artistic appraisal of the executed parts caused Correggio to stop his work prematurely. The existence of an overall program at this time remains unknown, although most writers assume – based on remarks in the contracts – that the canons held a firm control over the execution. The lack of a written program and the unfinished state of the decoration leave the art historian with almost nothing to begin with. This book thus concentrates on the one part that was executed at the time, the cupola fresco by Correggio.

Carolyn Smyth takes the reader on an imaginary walk in the cathedral, which becomes in her words an „unveiling process“. Chapter by chapter, we move towards the centre of the building, and each time a new part of the fresco comes into view. Every time, there is an addition in meaning transmitted to the onlooker, until it has unfolded itself completely. In this, Carolyn Smyth diverges from the usual explanations of the iconography of the cupola as given by John Shearman, Paola Ceschi Lavagetto and most recently David Ekserdjian, where the assumption of a static viewpoint prevailed<sup>2</sup>. In accordance with the eighteenth-century tradition, these writers discuss the fresco from the middle of the crossing, and thus the profusion of figures around the edges of the composition disturbs its legibility. The method followed by Carolyn Smyth opens a deeper understanding of the relation of an artwork to an ideal beholder. When the visitor comes into the Duomo through the main doors, the fresco is largely concealed by the arch of the crossing. Only the attributes of the two saints in the squinches are to be seen, and the ornamental frieze between them. Both parts are explained by Carolyn Smyth as introductory symbols. The miter and the staff on the right, belonging to saint Hilary, inform the faithful that they are at the bishops' See, and the lamb on the left side underlines the Eucharist, distributed here. From the next station, the second bay of the nave, the saints themselves become visible. Saint John holds the lamb, and directs his gaze upward to heaven. Symbolically, he underlines the salvation of the human soul because of Christ's sacrifice; but compositionally, he directs the viewer to the next part of the fresco. In itself, the motif also conveys a meaning: the special relationship between John and the Lamb, which exemplifies itself in the affectionate way he holds the animal, symbolizes the dual relationship between Salvator and Salvated as mutual love. Opposite, the figure of Saint Hilary of Poitiers is depicted, for whom Correggio invented a mode of representation that alludes in the first instance to the spatial organization of the Duomo. Hilary points in the direction of the pulpit, from where the Word of the Bible was spoken to the faithful. The book, carried by one of the angels, for the more initiated onlooker alluded to his religious treatises. Contemporaries of Correggio regarded Hilary as a learned Latin theologian, with a high flown style. This eloquence was of

<sup>2</sup> JOHN SHEARMAN: Correggio's illusionism, in: *La prospettiva rinascimentale. Codificazioni e trasgressioni*, hrsg. von M. Dalai Emiliani, Florenz 1980; S. 281-294; DAVID EKSERDJIAN: Correggio, New Haven/London 1997 p.241-63; zu PAOLA CESCHI LAVAGETTO s. die folgende Anm.

particular importance to the preaching from the pulpit, which in the sixteenth-century Duomo stood between the space for the laymen and the canons of the Duomo.

At the third station, halfway along the nave of the church, the figures above the cornice become visible. These are two Apostles standing before a marble bench, looking up to the scene in the cupola proper. By the shielding of their eyes, it becomes clear that something miraculous is taking place there. They are standing between the real architecture of the church and the fictive space within which the Assumption of the Virgin takes place. Upon the marble dado there are angels standing and sitting, occupied in various activities. They are filling incense burners, attending to candelabra, activities connected not with the traditional theme of the Assumption, but with the Death of the Virgin. However, according to Carolyn Smyth their expression is not of grief, but of gaiety: they already know the happy outcome of the funeral. The status of the marble bench is not, as assumed by previous authors, the grave of the Virgin. The decoration itself, but also the position of the Apostles within the wall, precludes such an assumption. It is illusionistic architecture, connecting the space of the church with the heaven, in which the Virgin rises. The activities of the angels likewise connect the real space with the fictional space; they complement the church ritual taking place at the altar.

The Virgin comes into view when the spectator moves forward to the steps leading up from the nave into the crossing of the church. At this point, the arch of the crossing neatly encloses the composition with Mary in the centre rising up to heaven, surrounded by a host of angels. The illegibility, complained about by many writers on the theme, is here revealed to depend only on the angle from which the fresco was viewed. The iconographical aspects of the exact pose and depiction of the figure of the Virgin therefore become relevant issues. The foreshortened poise, an extreme *contrapposto* seen *dal sotto in su*, is linked to treatises of Lomazzo and Leonardo, where the turning of the body is regarded as a display of vitality. Stressing the physical aspect of Mary's Assumption in this way, the onlooker was pointed at her earthly existence as mother of Christ. In turn, this constituted His dual nature, as God and man, as preambule to the Redemption. The literal presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist, subject of fierce debate between Protestants and Catholics, in this way was linked to his human descent. From the base of the stairs, the angels likewise recover from visual confusion, and prove to belong to different orders. Analogous to the treatise by Pseudo-Dionysios, they are submitted to a hierarchy. This concept influenced the Renaissance mode of depiction, where not all the canonical nine orders were included, but reduced to three sorts. In the Duomo fresco Correggio followed this tradition. In chapter five, the last and final view on the fresco, as attainable for the layman, unfolds itself. This only adds the figures directly surrounding Mary, Adam and Eve. They greet the Virgin as the Redemptress from the Original Sin, a fact underlined by the conspicuous apple in the hand of Eve.

In the next two chapters, a more privileged view on the fresco is discussed. The stairs leading up to the presbytery were only accessible to the clergy during ritual services, and prohibited – by means of a ban, and more physically by a railing bet-

ween the last piers of the nave – for the laity. From this viewpoint, more Old Testament figures become visible, all of them prefiguring the Crucifixion of Christ. David and Goliath, Judith and Holofernes, and Abraham and Isaac all in different respects offer analogies; they form the first examples of humankind striving for liberation from Original Sin. As such, they are antithetical to Adam and Eve. The connecting figure is Mary, who by giving birth to Christ offered Redemption to humankind. The presence of the Old Testament figures in heaven shows, that that already happened, and Mary is now rewarded for her part in Salvation. This reward is her coronation, preceded by the Assumption. The moment between those two events is the theme of the cupola-fresco by Correggio, but that only reveals itself when the onlooker reaches the top of the stairs. Then Christ appears in view, descending towards Mary to welcome her into heaven. According to Carolyn Smyth, the identification of the figure in the center of the composition with Christ is not as problematical as former authors on the subject suggested. The beardless, young and unstigmatized figure is indeed Christ, but not in his guise as Redeemer, but as the Spouse awaiting his Bride. Because of the combination of two iconographical traditions, the composition is not as unprecedented as many authors assumed. The presence of Christ in the Assumption, where normally God the Father is shown, is explained by the Coronation acted out normally by Christ himself. Carolyn Smyth argues that the solution reached by Correggio is a creatively new one, and at the same time in essentials readable to the spectator. One station further, when standing at the altar, extreme foreshortening reduces the readable part of the fresco to the figure of Christ. The priest saying mass thus has the incarnated Host before his eyes, when he holds it up to show to the faithful.

The last chapter describes the part of the fresco when seen from the eastern apse, where the clergy congregated during mass. Their view on the fresco is limited by their elevated position to the base of the dome, with the angels and Apostles. According to Carolyn Smyth, the angels depicted on the marble dado look to the other side of this fence. Their function is to remind the clergy of their pastoral duties, by pointing in the direction of the nave where the laity is gathered. The figures in the western squinches equally remind the bishop – or his representative – and canons of their ecclesiastical duties. On the right hand side, the figure of Saint Bernardo degli Uberti displays loyalty to the pope. This saint from the late eleventh century chose the pontifical side in the struggle for power with the emperor. Uberti was backed by Mathilda of Canossa, and restored the papal power in Parma, of which he was elected bishop around 1204. In this respect, there was a direct connection between the twelfth century and the age of Correggio; in 1521 the papal troops recaptured the city from the French, and the newly appointed bishop Alessandro Farnese affirmed papal power in the city. But in another respect Bernardo was an example to the clergy in the apse: in his vita he was described as modest, an example of humilitas. His inclusion in the program is however not entirely clear. In spite of the assumption made by previous authors, Saint Bernardo was not yet patron saint of Parma in 1530. He was revered, but only in 1548 proclaimed protector of the city, when his relics were given a new, and more sumptuous monument in the crypt of the cathedral. His presence

thus must have been more politically inspired than strictly religious. On the left hand, Saint Joseph indeed is one of the patron saints of Parma, chosen on March 19, 1528 – when Correggio was executing the fresco proper. The exact outfit of Joseph – angels hold the attributes of the flask, the staff and the dates that were offered to Christ during the Flight to Egypt – exemplifies the saint as the protector of Mary and Jesus on their journey. Saint Ambrose explains Joseph in relation to this position as *typus apostolorum*, the priest or bishop married to the church. Joseph thus offers the canons and bishop another role-model in their priestly behavior, as the angels reminded them of their flock.

The cupola itself is hardly visible from the eastern end of the apse. From the throne of the bishop only the Apostles can be seen, and the clouds hovering overhead. Christ, let alone Mary, is out of sight. The Apostles partially share in this situation, because the cloud overhead shields them from the light emanating from the Savior. They only perceive the Virgin, and react to her Assumption. One of the most curious details in the cupola-fresco comes into view from this position. This is an angel, hovering in the air, with only the lower part of his body sticking out of the cloud. In contrast to the Apostles, he is able to see Christ. For the viewer this means, however, that the genitals of this angel are exposed. Two possible explanations for this problematic detail are given. Through the extreme perspective, the figure seems to suggest that the cloud is actually lowering into the space of the church itself; and thus makes the suggestion of reality even stronger. The obvious suggestion of corporeality can also be explained by means of the Incarnation of Christ – the bodily presence of an angel in heaven underlines the fact that Christ (and Mary too) was taken up physically. Both suppositions can be true, when the exact cultural references of the onlooker remain to be constructed.

In a general view, the Virgin refers in this program to the Church, bringing Christ to the faithful, and at the same time being accepted by Him as his Bride. In the wider context, the iconographical program proclaims the victory of the Church – the decoration had been commissioned to celebrate the renewed control of the papal authorities over the town of Parma. When regarded in the context of the Reformation, the theological defense of the position of the Virgin comes at the same time that Luther denied her holiness; and the corporeal presence of Christ in the Host is affirmed at the same time.

In her conclusion, Carolyn Smyth alludes to a couple of texts in defense of reconsidering the iconography of the fresco from the oblique viewpoint. Vasari stated that a great multitude of figures was visible in numerous views. This could imply that in the sixteenth century the central view from under the dome was not considered the exclusive one. In the contract that Correggio signed for this commission, the phrasing could refer to the sense of movement of the spectator: he would paint the cupola and the apse „*andando al sacramento*“. But these scarce, and dubious written proofs offered here can be considered superfluous after the convincing preceding chapters. Other examples of dome-decorations from around 1510 affirm the attunement of perspective to the physical position of the viewer; the Cappella Chigi by

Raphael in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome is a case in point. The separation of two different audiences, and the different message transmitted to each of them, is a likewise logical proposition. In this case, however, the argumentation lacks important links. The spatial division of clergy on one side, and faithful on the other only explains the differences in what they could see. We are not told in what context the laity could come up to the foot of the stairs, and neither do we know, how the clergy moved through the space according to liturgical prescriptions. As only the liturgical handbook of the Duomo from 1417 has been handed down to us, the exact liturgy in 1530 cannot be reconstructed in full. But an attempt to establish a connection between the fresco and more specific religious services has not been undertaken by Carolyn Smyth – possible because of these problems. Likewise, the referential background of the laymen in the church has been left out. The cited theological sources have not been regarded with respect to their actual influence; the classical texts by well-known churchfathers and sermons, available in the library of San Giovanni in Parma, and in that of the canons of the Duomo themselves, offer no insight in the theological topics of the early Cinquecento. With respect to the clergy, this argument is less pressing, but for the people in the nave this represents a very important clue for their understanding. Popular treatises predetermined the expectations of the laity, and the way they interpreted the decoration. Admittedly, there is no study available on the devotional culture in Parma at the time of Correggio, but one on the popular literature on the Virgin during that time belongs to the possibilities<sup>3</sup>. Likewise the lack of material on the personalities of the canons who contracted Correggio in 1522 could be filled in by such contextual information.

The movement of the visitor in the building is the last, but most important question left open by Carolyn Smyth. In her view, this explains the unfolding of the iconography in logical sequences. But why did the laymen proceed from entrance to crossing at all? The fresco itself cannot have been the sole reason for this – such an assumption equates the sixteenth-century viewer with the twentieth-century museum-visitor. Only on p.30 the annual celebration of the feast of the Assumption is mentioned briefly; but even there, the liturgical use of the Duomo, and the spatial relationship between the attendants of this event and the fresco are not explored. Their reasons to attend, and the form of these liturgies can provide the clue to the why of this iconography, as an extension to the how and what.

In her introduction, Carolyn Smyth stated that it „has become customary on the part of many recent writers, (...), to set Correggio against the cultural ambiance of Parma; the investigation of this culture, while informative, becomes a substitute for careful examination of the fresco itself, especially of its content“. This book proves

<sup>3</sup> In PAOLA CESCHI LAVAGETTO: *La cupola del Duomo. Traccia per una ricerca storica e iconografica*, in: *Correggio. Gli affreschi nella cupola del Duomo di Parma*, Parma 1981, pp. 22-33, reference to the statement by EUGENIO BATTISTI confirms this omission. In ANNE JAKOBSON SCHUTTE: *Printed Italian Vernacular Religious Books 1465-1550: A finding list*, Genève 1983 pp. 249, 259-69, information on the large production of early sixteenth-century treatises on the Virgin can be found, including liturgical books on the topic.

that a return to the artwork itself can provide new clues on the way it functioned, by an almost hermeneutical iconological method. But only the study of popular and official devotional literature can provide insight into the cultural references of the visitor – left undefined in their cultural and historical respects by Carolyn Smyth – and thus into the culture that produced this magnificent fresco, and its intricate iconography.

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**Christoph Martin Vogtherr: Das Königliche Museum zu Berlin** (*Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen, Bd. 39, Beih.*); Berlin: Gebr. Mann 1997; 302 S., 76 Abb.; ISBN 3-7861-1972-4, ISSN 0075-2207; DM 166,-

Rund zehn Jahre nach dem Fall der Mauer zeigen sich in der Kunstwissenschaft erste Früchte dieser politischen Veränderung. Was jahrzehntelang im Osten nur schwierig oder gar nicht zugänglich war, steht nun der Forschung zur Verfügung. Besonders betroffen von der deutschen Teilung war die Aufarbeitung der Berliner Museums-geschichte, da fast das gesamte Quellenmaterial in ostdeutschen Archiven verwahrt wurde. Gleich zur Wende begannen junge Kunsthistoriker dieses nahezu unbearbeitete Feld zu erschließen. Ein Ergebnis ist die nun vorliegende Dissertation der Freien Universität Berlin von Christoph Martin Vogtherr, die als Beiheft des Jahrbuchs der Berliner Museen erschienen ist.

Abrupt ist der Einstieg. Vogtherr verzichtet auf einen Literaturüberblick, nur in einer Fußnote wird auf die Überblicksdarstellung von WALTER HOCHREITER (Vom Musentempel zum Lernort. Zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Museen 1800-1914; Darmstadt 1994) und den Sammelband „Verzamelten. Van rariteitenkabinet tot Kunstmuseum“ (Heerlen 1993) und die Studie von VOLKER PLAGEMANN (Das deutsche Kunstmuseum, 1790-1870; München 1967) hingewiesen. Da frühere Autoren von Studien zur Museumsgeschichte kaum Zugang zu den Quellen hatten, wäre eine Kritik ohnehin deutlich ausgefallen. Vogtherrs historische Analyse setzt einen neuen Standard, auf dem weitere Forschungen nun aufbauen können.

Das Alte Museum, beziehungsweise das Königliche Museum zu Berlin, wie es vor dem Bau des Neuen Museums bezeichnet wurde, ist keinesfalls das erste Kunstmuseum. Es hat aber ohne Zweifel die weitere Entwicklung geprägt und maßgeblich die Einrichtung beeinflusst, die wir bis heute als Kunstmuseum begreifen. Unter Kunstmuseum versteht Vogtherr ein Museum, das sich als eigenständige Einrichtung neben dem Hof etabliert hat, das Konzept der Wunderkammer aufgibt und sich ganz auf Kunst beschränkt, systematisch geordnet ist und von einer wissenschaftlich geschulten Verwaltung geleitet wird. Der Weg zum Alten Museum, wie er in der Literatur beschrieben wird, ist jedoch verschlungen und voller widerstreitender Positionen. Daß das Konzept des Kunstmuseums, wie es sich nach der Eröffnung des