

# “Here I stand. I can do no other!” Art of the German Reformation

**Art and the Reformation.** Colloquium at the Getty Center, Los Angeles, 2./3.2.2017. Program: <https://arthist.net/archive/14462>

**Renaissance and Reformation. German Art in the Age of Dürer and Cranach.** Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 20.11.2016–26.3.2017. Cat. ed. Stephanie Buck/Julien Chapuis/Stephan Kemperdick/Michael Roth/Jeffrey Chipps Smith/Dirk Syndram. Munich, Prestel 2016. 240 p., 190 ill. ISBN 978-3-7913-5539-9. \$ 49.95

On February 1, 2017 – roughly two weeks after Donald Trump had taken office in the White House – parts of a “religious freedom” executive order were leaked. Its controversial content prompted an outcry among the country’s more liberal minded. The president’s order, if signed, would de facto give carte blanche to organizations and individuals with objections to premarital sex, gay marriage, abortion, and transgender identity to discriminate, in various ways, those engaging in such ‘liberal lifestyles.’ Dressed up as “Establishing a Government-Wide Initiative to Respect Religious Freedom,” the order would have far reaching consequences for questions of human rights and equality on the one hand and of the role of religion and governmental interference in a civil society on the other. “Americans and their religious organizations will not be coerced by the Federal Government into

participating in activities that violate their conscience” (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-executive-order-draft-curtail-lgbt-rights/story?id=45209220>) – the draft order’s ultra-right foray into a questionable linkage of religion, conscience, and society inevitably leads to the fundamental question how far beyond the limits of permissive religious accommodations a president can go without violating the first amendment, which “prohibits the making of any law respecting an establishment of religion.” It also raises the question how consequential and weighty an argument based solely on one’s religious conscience can and should be.

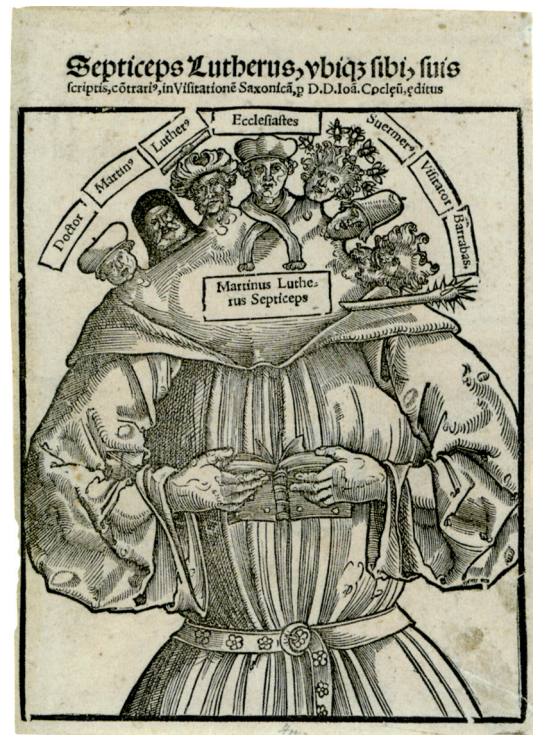


Fig. 1 Hans Brosamer, Seven-headed Martin Luther, c. 1529. Woodcut, 19,5 x 13,9 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (Cat. no. 36)

**Fig. 2 Albrecht Dürer, Portrait of a Young Woman with Pinned-up Hair, 1497. Watercolor on fine canvas, 56,5 x 42,5 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (Cat. Dürer. Kunst – Künstler – Kontext, ed. Jochen Sander, Munich et. al. 2013, p. 105)**

The leak could not have happened more timely, as it accompanied a two-day colloquium held at the Getty Center on February 2 and 3, 2017 on “Art and the Reformation.” Martin Luther’s vehement fight for individual freedom of conscience based on the unalterable truth of the bible rather than the church’s authoritative and consensual decision making sprang to mind, and the famous dictum ascribed to him – “for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God” – provided a critical backdrop for the questions discussed at the Getty. To avoid misconceptions: Politics in the “era Trump” are nothing like the political situation of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nations five hundred years ago, and Luther’s 95 theses, published in 1517, have not a whole lot in common with Trump’s preposterous political agenda of 2017. Yet there are parallels between 1517 and 2017, and some of them can be found in new tools of political communication in both time periods, the “Age of Reformation” and the “Global Age.” Luther’s vision and his ideology of the reconfiguration of a Christian society in staunch opposition to the alleged moral corruption of his times was disseminated quickly through the spread



of Gutenberg’s printing press and the authoritative nature of the print medium as alleged eye-witness testimony. Prints became propaganda tools, to the extent that the medium became the message. Today, the supposedly unfiltered circulation of information and the mere seconds it takes for statements to be posted and go viral, form an important part of the political far right’s perilously swift ascent, not just in the US. The fact that we can witness how via presidential Twitter even the most absurd charade, due to its perceived ‘immediacy’ comes across as ‘truth,’ while the fact-checking journalism of the more traditional print media is being discredited as “fake news” provides a thorough lesson in McLuhanism and the shaping of our perception through new media.

**Fig. 3 Dürer, Portrait of a Woman with Loose Hair, 1497. Watercolor on fine canvas, 56,3 x 43,2 cm. Frankfurt a. M., Städel Museum (Cat. Dürer. Kunst – Künstler – Kontext, 2013, p. 104)**



The close connection, across the times, between information technology and cultural change couldn't be more obvious. Ironically, the appalling carelessness in the political presentation of lies as "alternative truths" in a country so deeply coined by protestant ethics and the trust in words over images, comes at a point in time where these same politicians claim to reinstate proper moral and religious core values. A deep-seated religious and cultural mistrust in the visual arts – as intellectual, ambiguous, potentially disruptive, hence frivolous, and dispensable – certainly feeds into the right-wing Republicans' thrust to defund the two major national endowments to support the Arts and the Humanities, the NEA and the NEH. Political radicalizations do not tend to provide fertile grounds for artistic autonomy.

### **POWERFUL IMAGES AND THE DESTRUCTION OF IDOLS**

This, then, was the talk of the day at the Getty, and it fit the bill for a colloquium on "Art and the Reformation." Its conveners Thomas W. Gaetgens, Director of the Getty Research

Institute, and Gail Feigenbaum, its Associate Director, had brought together an impressive lineup of speakers. The colloquium coincided with a major exhibition, the more prominent of several in the US in 2016/17, at the Los Angeles County Museum, titled "Renaissance and Reformation: German Art in the Age of Dürer and Cranach" and an eponymous, richly illustrated catalogue. The significance of the colloquium for German art history, in conjunction with the LACMA exhibition, was underscored by the presence of several chief curators involved in the show – among them Michael Roth from the Kupferstichkabinett and Stephan Kemperdick from the Gemäldegalerie Berlin – as well as opening remarks by Michael Eissenhauer, director general of the Staatliche

Museen zu Berlin. Thirteen speakers presented in five sessions, with Andreas Tacke (Universität Trier), Jeffrey Chipps Smith (University of Texas) and Larry Silver (University of Pennsylvania) in the first panel. Tacke looked into the consequences of the Reformation for the art market and the artistic climate in sixteenth century Germany. Chipps Smith, the author of the catalogue's introductory essay (see below), discussed the failure of the German Catholic Church to successfully counteract the polemic print culture and its demonizing rhetoric established by the church reformers. In "Impotent Polemics: The Curious Case of Catholic Anti-Luther Prints," he presented prints that attempted to turn anti-catholic image strategies of caricature on Luther himself, showing the reformer as a seven-headed demon of the Apocalypse (*fig. 1*) or in league with the devil – and the responses they provoked. Silver shed new light on what was a prelude to the Reformation's ferocious outbreaks of iconoclasm. In "Idol Hands: Image Destruction in Early Dutch Religious Art" he looked at paintings and engravings of the destruction of idols, from Lucas van Leyden to Maarten van Heemskerck.

Next, Daniel Hess from the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg presented a broad sweep of discourses on the nature and power of images in the sixteenth century. In what could have served as a keynote address, aspects of the *paragone* of words and images in characterizing nature were discussed, and the ambivalence of Renaissance images, their 'insecure' status as painted illusion, based on the new possibilities of lifelike imitation, was foregrounded. Illusionistic art and its power of seduction in images by Dürer, Cranach, and Baldung in which ambiguity became a key ingredient, if not a guiding principle, appears condensed in the depictions of female bodies. Perhaps more than any other image type, the many paintings of German Lucretias and Judiths produced during the Reformation reveal visual strategies we associate mainly with the Italian Renaissance, and they clearly transcend the context of the Reformation's skeptical attitude toward images. The powers of illusion, allusion,

ambivalence and the 'sexy' status of images, according to Hess continued to live their own lives in the life-size Venus paintings mass-produced in the Cranach workshop.

The colloquium's first day concluded with "The Lost Honor of Katharina Fürlegerin," a case study presented by Christopher Wood (New York University). Wood, who likes to brush art history against the grain – by understanding images in diachronic and 'anachronic' ways in the sense of his and Alexander Nagel's *Anachronic Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA 2010; see the review by Marcia B. Hall in: *Kunstchronik* 64, 2011/11, 531ff.) – problematized the conventional art historical narrative of 'icon to image.' "What if," he asked, "the true era of art were the Middle Ages?" With the nature-bound Renaissance as a mere afterthought to the imaginative beauty created throughout the medieval period, an art that had a rich alternative world of images to offer, before the Fall into a new realism; with the sacredness of art diminished by its reliance on profane reality, the artist now a mere eyewitness who borrows from reality rather than adding imagined beauty to it; with the image burglarized of its holy otherness; with a Madonna who could now show a woman from the street? Wood traced down the ambivalence typical of so many paintings of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century in two well-known images by Dürer, the so-called *Portrait of Katharina Fürlegerin* in Berlin (*fig. 2*) and the so-called *Virgin Mary* in the Städel Museum in Frankfurt (*fig. 3*), both dated 1497. The two images have been compared on occasion, more recently in a double presentation for the important Dürer retrospective at the Städel in 2013, then labeled somewhat suggestively as "Image of a Young Woman with Pinned-Up Hair" (Katharina Fürlegerin) next to the "Image of a Young Woman with Loose Hair" (Virgin Mary; see <http://blog.staedelmuseum.de/bilder-des-monats-durers-ratselhafte-junge-frauen/>).

The paintings are both „auf Tüchlein“ (on fine canvas) and were most likely executed as a diptych.



**Fig. 4** Tilman Riemenschneider, *Saint Matthias*, c. 1500–05. Limewood, h. 105,5 cm. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst (Cat. no. 7)

Wood interpreted them as two images of the same sitter, perhaps one of Dürer's sisters. He emphasized their character as a private artistic experiment, documenting the painter's acknowledgement of the ambiguities created by the use of live workshop models for sacred paintings. In the

Berlin painting, the sitter confidently performs her public persona, in the Städel one, she recedes into pious introversion yet the portrait character remains strong enough to destabilize the religious image. The virgin is a *simulacrum*, her piety is performed, which generates exactly the sort of profanation deplored by Catholic and Protestant reformers alike. Even if one does not follow Wood's identification of the two women as the same sitter, the case for an artistic thought experiment on the limits and the potential of the 'realities' of portraiture was made conclusively.

### THE MAKING AND THE DEVOURING OF IMAGES

The second day started with an intellectual firework – “Art in the State of Siege: The Reformation of the Image Reconsidered” – displayed by Joseph Koerner (Harvard University). Taking the imaginative besiegement by enemies, a favored topic at the eve of the Reformation, as his point of departure, Koerner looked at the fabricated visual ‘facts’ of artistic production and the painter's potential role as *advocatus diaboli*. While images came under attack, Hieronymus Bosch seduced his viewers with sinful delights and a visual phantasy gone wild. And while art itself officially entered a state of siege, artists navigated their profession and the role of imagination in a tightrope walk, between optimism and nihilism. The breaking of images came with a new making of images and an imagination surviving in the ‘splendid isolation’ of phantasy reflections on the state of the arts and humanity in times of rigid moral besiegement.

Amy Powell (University of California, Irvine) went one step further in conceptualizing the shackles of an image skeptical, if not image devouring Reformation period. Based on Paul's argument that “idols are nothing at all” (1 Cor 8:4–6), she led the audience through the shift from idolatry as an act of imagination (which is immaterial, hence ‘nothing’) to the role of air as the emblematic medium of nothingness in the Renaissance. With Alberti's famous idea of the painting as a window, air became the ‘ground’ for painterly production, yet the painters' results

would per se remain dubious, airy stuff – to the point in which the window became an item to poke fun at painterly theory, as for example in the paintings of Adriaen Brouwer. Powell’s talk was a breathless and provocatively associative pursuit of the animating and annihilating powers of the wind, windows, and the ‘airiness’ of vision and vision theory in early modern paintings.

Idolatry, imagination, and the invisible were also at the center of James Simpson’s (Harvard University) paper, which traced the “Removal of Idolatrous Images out of the Psyche in Early Modern England.” In a lucid continuation, and inversion, of Powell’s starting hypothesis on the ‘nothingness’ of visual imagination, Simpson managed to show how reformatory idolatry was not merely aimed at material images but extended to the psychological, and that the destruction of physical images was a mere overture to the much more profound and painful attempts at eradicating the most private form of image making – human imagination – at its root in later sixteenth century England. Calvin, for example, targeted the imagination as a perpetual workshop of chimera, and reformers in his footsteps increasingly sought access to the darkest recesses of what they feared was an ever image-producing human psyche that was hard to stop. Yet what Simpson called aptly the “ghastly psychopathology of a disabled imagination” – a phantasy crippled and amputated by the regimen of reason and moral control – found its perfect therapy in an imagination set free in the works of a certain William Shakespeare, whose unleashed evocative poetry and plays served as antidote – a perfect cure for England’s hurt imagination.

### **IMAGES OF ALTERITY**

Susan Dackerman (Scholar at the Getty Research Institute), known for her path breaking exhibitions on print culture in Baltimore and at the Harvard Art Museum, and the author of the much-noted book *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA 2011), delivered a fascinating close reading and interpretation of Dürer’s etched *Landscape with Cannon* of 1518.

Produced during the heyday of fears of the “terror turcicus” and anti-Ottoman propaganda, the etching is an intellectually sophisticated pro-Lutheran statement. The print includes, most likely, the artist’s self-portrait in the figure of one of the two cannoneers. However, the picture’s true protagonist is the cannon, which can be identified as the product of local weapon makers, the so-called “Nürnberger Feldschlange,” – yet the weapon in the image is disabled. Dackerman surprised with an interpretation of the non-functional *cannon* as an allusion to the corruption of the *canons* (both words sharing the same Greek radical).

Through the outdated and inoperative cannon, canon law is implied as broken and in need of reform. What is more, the image and its making, fiction and facture, are related on a material and procedural level – through saltpeter, which is both the basic substance in gun powder used to fire canons and in the etching of copperplates. The artist here kills two birds with one stone: He manages to point his Lutheran finger at the rotten state of the church and church law, encouraging the viewer to look beyond the ‘canons’ (and into the scriptures), and he points in a self-referential gesture to his method of making. *Landscape with Cannon* is therefore more than just a visual support of contemporary calls to crusade against the Ottomans. It features a new Lutheran iconography materially and metaphorically inscribed into the image, creating a strong link between medium, message, and artistic invention, further underscored by the artist’s presence in his self-portrait.

In “The Savage Episteme,” Christopher Heuer (The Clark Art Institute) discussed another image of ‘alterity’ – not of the Ottomans, but the Inuit. A strange ‘Flugblatt’, printed in Augsburg in 1566, served as an advertisement of an Inuit couple’s public display in Antwerp and The Hague. In an odd fusion of New World curiosity and iconoclastic impulse, the letterpress text describes the two as ‘cannibals’ and ties their strange appearance to the image breaking campaigns ravaging Northern Europe. Heuer showed how the “wild man” paradigm and its projection of otherness is not only

**Fig. 5 Hans Baldung Grien, Portrait of Count Palatine Philip the Warlike, 1517. Oil on wood, 41,5 x 30,8 cm. Munich, Alte Pinakothek (Cat. no. 67)**



staged as a tension between the authority of word vs. image in the broadsheet but how it delineates an alternative sphere of New World “indigenous” life.

**THE NEXT  
“HOLBEIN-STREIT”**

The final session was dedicated to Hans Holbein. Jeanne Nuechterlein (University of York) presented a mathematical interpretation of Holbein the Younger’s famous *Ambassadors*. She understands the image’s puzzling arrangement of scientific objects as a painted debate of mathematical and philosophical dimensions, based on the question: How do the parts relate to the whole? Nuechterlein identified and closely examined all the objects and their histories in Holbein’s carefully staged yet psychologically strangely vacuous painting. She concluded that the image must be understood as an erudite visual discourse on the movement from mere possibility and what is attainable in the physical world to mathematical perfection in ideal celestial balance.

The conference culminated in an interesting new “Holbein-Streit.” Stephan Kemperdick (Gemäldegalerie Berlin) and Peter-Klaus Schuster, former director general of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, presented their differing interpretations of Holbein the Younger’s *Virgin of Jacob Meyer*. The painting exists in two versions, with the original now in the Collection Würth in Schwäbisch Hall

(formerly in Darmstadt) and a seventeenth century copy in Dresden. Kemperdick unfolded its complex history including wrong assumptions about the painting’s *pentimenti*, and suggested a likely function as family epitaph, probably for a place in the church of St. Martin’s in Basle. Its iconography seems straight forward at first sight, following the type of the Madonna with child and donors, showing the female members of the Meyer family on the proper right, Jacob Meyer and two boys on the left. Yet the iconography of the two boys remains debated. Given the painting’s presumed function as an epitaph, Kemperdick, following an older interpretation by Heinrich Alfred Schmidt, identifies them as Jacob Meyer’s two sons – one of them is possibly documented (Kemperdick discussed an archival source), the other, he concluded, would be a second son who died in childhood, hence his nakedness, evoking

innocence. The downward gesture of the baby's hand, in this interpretation would be an indication of the family tomb below. And indeed, the painting was meant to go up high on a wall – the Madonna's compressed dimensions require viewing from below.

Kemperdick's interpretation was contested by Peter-Klaus Schuster who identified the two boys as part of a Christian allegory. (For a summary of the painting's complex research history see Jürgen Müller, *Herr Du siehst, und Du hast Augen. Ein Beitrag zur Bildtheologie der Darmstädter Madonna*, in: Margit Kern [ed.], *Geschichte und Ästhetik: Festschrift für Werner Busch zum 60. Geburtstag*, Munich 2005, 19–31.) The painting's patron, Jacob Meyer zum Hasen, was a jack-of-all-trades, a warlord, money lender, real estate mogul, and mayor of the city of Basle. The painting documents his resolutely Catholic faith during a Reformation that was about to hit his town hard. Consequently, Schuster understands the image as a declaration of charity, with the boys playing a key role: the older one wears a green purse on his belt, with a prominent golden button in the form of a coin on it. Tenderly, he embraces the naked little boy, thus showing piety and charity – moral principles Meyer as a wealthy banker had reason to claim. The *Madonna of Jacob Meyer zum Hasen* is hence, and if we follow Schuster, a multi-coded painting, as religious as it is political: a devotional image, a family picture, but also a staunch Catholic propaganda image in times of the Reformation, commemorating the charity of a rich and powerful man who felt the need to justify his money business, perhaps not unlike Enrico Scrovegni's motivational grounds for the image program of the Arena Chapel in Padua. The conference thus concluded with a deeply Catholic work of art, taking its stance against the Reformation – *honi soit qui mal y pense*.

### **THE LACMA EXHIBITION**

The colloquium's conveners had arranged for an excursion to the show at the LACMA, co-organized with the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, and the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in Munich.

The exhibition, made possible by the German Foreign Office under the patronage of Frank-Walter Steinmeier, is an apparent and laudable attempt to attract more international attention to Germany's cultural history, which has not exactly been gaining ground in US American culture – at least not in recent years. The Getty was offered the exhibition project first but declined, so the Foreign Ministry turned to the County Museum in Los Angeles, a slightly less prominent venue on the global stage, yet perhaps the more suitable one given LACMA's strong German collections and its reputation for organizing important shows of German modern art (for example in 2015/16 the exhibition *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933*; see the review in: *Kunstchronik* 69, 2016/8, 406ff.).

During the proclaimed “Year of Luther” in 2017, more than 25 exhibitions are taking place in the German speaking regions of the EU (see our current schedule of events in *Kunstchronik* and the website [www.luther2017.de](http://www.luther2017.de)), and in the U.S. Minneapolis, New York City, and Atlanta have put together major Luther shows (see [www.here-istand.com](http://www.here-istand.com), and *Martin Luther. Schätze der Reformation*. Catalogue ed. by Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt. *Martin Luther. Aufbruch in eine neue Welt*. Essays ed. by Anne-Simone Rous et al., Dresden 2016. Sandstein Verlag. 488 and 495 p., var. III. ISBN 978-3-95498-211-9 and 978-3-95498-222-6).

What J. Patrice Marandel, – Robert H. Ahmanson Chief Curator of European Art, and in charge of the presentation, – managed to receive from Germany for the LACMA exhibition was a rather mixed bag, with several remarkable highlights. The show covered a broad terrain, from two exquisite limewood sculptures by Tilman Riemenschneider and Dürer's touching painting of the *Virgin as Mother of Sorrows* of 1495–98 to anti-papal woodcuts and copperplate engravings, and from Renaissance arms and jousting armors of the Saxon Court to a series of fine portraits by Dürer, Cranach, and the Holbeins. The exhibition was structured around five themes, all of which address, as LACMA laconically puts it, “changes that took



place in art and society during the Reformation:” Traditional Imagery and Devotion, Propaganda and Polemics, Arms and Armor, Humanism and Reality, and Portraiture. It provided a little bit for every taste and interest.

The space in the Resnick Pavilion is big, and it easily accommodated the five thematic sections. Yet already upon entering, one could not help but notice the somewhat bland exhibition design. A wall text welcomed the visitor with the information that the Reformation in Germany was also a time of prevalent anti-Semitism. Next we learned that while this was the case, the show was *not about* anti-Semitism. Rather, the objects were chosen for their beauty and aesthetic value, which left more than one visitor puzzled. The art of the German Reformation, not exactly known for its emphasis on the persuasive powers of aesthetics, presented because of its pulchritude? A revolutionary exhibition concept? I am afraid, not so much.

From the standpoint of a Renaissance art historian, “Renaissance and Reformation. German Art in the Age of Dürer and Cranach” wants a lot and achieves not quite enough in its slightly unfocused panorama of artistic production in sixteenth century Germany. That it is not a profound disappointment is owed largely to the intriguing quality of a good portion of the works. Those, however, do not necessarily need the framework of a “Reformation” exhibition. The combined concepts of Renaissance and Reformation are too broad to create a tight framework in which images and objects could really enlighten one another. It is a byzantine mix of the sacred and profane, of media and materials, of politics, religion, and court culture. While one might concede that such a mixture reflects the complexities of the times – the “Age of Dürer and Cranach” – one really misses the guiding questions to disentangle or intellectually highlight such complexities.

#### **A PRIMER IN REFORMATION ART HISTORY**

Let us briefly turn to the exhibition catalogue, which might have made up for the exhibition’s shortcomings. Clearly targeted at an audience not

very familiar with the German Renaissance or the Reformation, it provides concise information on the exhibits and is carefully edited. It features a glossary and excellent images, but very short catalogue entries. Just as in the exhibition, one would have wished for more background information and interpretational guidance. The brief references to literature are helpful but as the bibliography shows, they do not go beyond writings immediately related to the works proper. The catalogue reflects the exhibition’s structure, with one-page introductory essays addressing the sections’ headers – as broad as “Humanism and Reality” – which, in the end, cannot provide more than a general leitmotif. The catalogue entries are laconic and useful, yet sometimes too abridged to do justice to the questions raised by the works.

**T**he catalogue provides a longer introduction by Jeffrey Chipps Smith, one of the most eminent experts in the German Renaissance. The author, with his usual talent for synthesizing complex matters into a commendably concise and informative text, outlines a cultural framework of sixteenth century Germany, addressing its political, religious, and artistic innovations. His text also provides the rationale for the show and its concept. In taking Wilhelm von Kaulbach’s series of monumental frescoes for the grand staircase of the Neue Museum in Berlin of 1865 as a point of departure, in which the final scene depicts the *The Age of Reformation* as “a broad cultural landscape” including scientists, explorers, scholars, religious leaders, political rulers, and artists, Chipps Smith explains that “while the current exhibition explores the Reformation, its objects reveal a broader picture of the creativity, technical virtuosity, and thematic interests of artists in the German-speaking lands from ca. 1500 to the mid-sixteenth century.” (Cat., 29) The essay discusses the complex constitution of the Holy Roman Empire and the compartmentalized political landscape in Early Modern Central Europe, the central role portraiture achieved in various media in the sixteenth century, the ascent of landscape painting and studies after

nature, supplemented by an excursus on the role of morally charged still lifes and their iconography of objects, to then move on to the role of devotion in religious art at the eve of the Reformation and the impact of the Reformation on the arts, their iconographies and media, and the rise of an art market and new forms of collecting. The catalogue and its essays are basically an informative primer in the history of art of the Reformation age in Germany, but – again – the quality of the objects and images discussed and the overall panorama of a culture in transition make it an enjoyable read.

Likewise, the exhibition was anything but boring – although it did lack the crisp intellectual questions one might have expected, given its flagship status for German cultural affairs in the US. Some of the exhibits were stupendous. Riemenschneider's *Saint Matthias* (fig. 4) is among the finest in limewood carving, highly delicate yet almost dramatic in the carving's sculpted *chiaroscuro*. Rich in detail, the sculpture shows astoundingly portrait-like features and a subtle play of hands. Flanked by a second Riemenschneider work, an elegant and slender *Virgin Mary* with a lively baby Jesus, the two drew the visitor's attention away from another highlight of the show, Lucas Cranach the Elder's semicircular *Holy Trinity* (1515–20) from the Kunstsammlungen Dresden. The painting shows a sorrowful and furrowed God holding the limp body of his son framed by a bright mandorla with frayed contours in a washed-out, blood colored red – a burning image of death and giving birth alike, God's crimson mantle reflecting the son's blood sacrifice, sanctified by the dove of the holy spirit. The image and its iconography of the Seat of Mercy bespeak Cranach's Catholicism before he converted to Protestantism and as such it was an apt prelude to the exhibition.

### **SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EXHIBITION**

The collection of broadsheets presented in a separate room managed to outline an interesting spectrum of the Reformation's belligerent and acidic anti-Catholic polemic, and there were some fine copperplate engravings by Georg Pencz and

Heinrich Aldegrever – including his famous *Portrait of Bernd Knipperdolling*, one of the most ferocious Anabaptists in Münster, who was tortured to death after the city was recaptured by the Catholic in 1536. While the small collection of arms and armor at first seemed a bit out of place in a show focusing on the Reformation, it certainly added a welcome touch of object culture and courtly splendor to the exhibits. The section on “Humanism and Reality” could boast Lucas Cranach the Younger's *Adam and Eve* panels from Dresden, a captivating *Lucretia* from Berlin by Cranach the Elder, and several wonderful studies of game from the Cranach workshop.

**H**owever, the strongest section was dedicated to portraiture. Adriano Fiorentino's massive brass bust of Elector Frederick “the Wise” of Saxony had a commanding presence in the armor section, where its unusual material – brass instead of bronze – corresponded in interesting ways with the gilded and embossed copper of the luxurious harnesses, jousting outfits, and the iron armors. Of great subtlety were the various portrait drawings (several by Heinrich Aldegrever and Hans Baldung Grien), an art form increasingly used to study ‘character’ and reflect individual spiritedness in the Renaissance. Unrivaled were here the two Holbein drawings and his painted double-portrait of *Thomas Goldsalve and his Son, Sir John* of 1528. His seemingly effortless and minute silverpoint drawing of Anton Fugger from the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin shows a brilliant mastery in the interplay of fine line and white heightening, and his reworked silverpoint drawing of *Niclas Kungesperger in Left Profile*, likewise from Berlin, captures the sitter's pensive, somewhat absent mood inimitably well. The star of those portraits was undoubtedly young Count Palatine Philip “the Warlike,” whose amazingly self-assured and beautiful looks did its bit to captivate the viewers' imagination.

Hans Baldung Grien's portrait of the youthful Count Palatine (fig. 5) with the piercing and somewhat condescending look and his posh attire

epitomizes the worldly side of the German Renaissance. Philipp was known for his extravagant lifestyle, reflected in his motto „Nichts unversucht lassen“ – to spare no effort. Philipp's and the other portraits, in their detail-oriented intensity, their documentation of civic pride, and their modernity as 'character studies' were perhaps the era's best ambassadors – in a city whose lifestyle could not be further from the Age of Reformation in Germany,

yet in a country whose political system has become equally brittle and whose religious polarities are hardly less fierce.

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## Bis in die Maltechnik ideologisiert. Max Doerners Reichsinstitut in München

Andreas Burmester  
**Der Kampf um die Kunst.**  
**Max Doerner und sein Reichsin-**  
**stitut für Maltechnik.** (Schriften  
 der Bayerischen Staatsgemälde-  
 sammlungen und des Doerner  
 Institutes, 1). 2 Bde. Köln/Wei-  
 mar/Wien, Böhlau Verlag 2016. 893  
 S., 103 s/w und 57 Farbabb.  
 ISBN 978-3-412-50376-5. € 50,00

*Deutsche Kultur“ und das bildungsbürgerliche Un-*  
*behagen an der Moderne*, Münster 2001, 322–341).  
 Wie seine berühmte Schrift *Kunst und Rasse*  
 (1928) lieferten Schultze-Naumburgs Vorträge de-  
 nunziatorische Argumentationsmuster für die  
 Kampagnen gegen die Avantgarden im NS-Staat,  
 die bekanntlich mit der Propagandaausstellung  
 „Entartete Kunst“ einen Höhepunkt erreichten.  
 Tatsächlich war es kein Zufall, dass am 19. Juli  
 1937, als die Ausstellung in den Münchner Hof-  
 gartenarkaden eröffnete, offiziell auch das Reichs-  
 institut für Maltechnik (das heutige Doerner Insti-  
 tut) gegründet wurde. Es ist ein wesentliches, noch  
 ausführlicher zu erläuterndes Verdienst von Bur-  
 mester's Studie, die kausalen Zusammenhänge von  
 Theorie und Praxis der Maltechnik, wie sie das In-  
 stitut vertreten sollte, und der nationalsozialisti-  
 schen Kunstpolitik aufzuzeigen.

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**M**it dem Topos „Kampf um die Kunst“ stimmt Andreas Burmester seine LeserInnen ohne Umschweife auf das entscheidende Thema seiner zweibändigen, knapp 900 Seiten starken Veröffentlichung zu Max Doerners Reichsinstitut für Maltechnik ein. Unter dasselbe Motto hatte Paul Schultze-Naumburg zu Beginn der 1930er Jahre einen Lichtbildvortrag gestellt, mit dem er sich unter großer öffentlicher Resonanz in mehreren deutschen Städten präsentierte, um die „Entartung“ moderner Kunst und Architektur zu beklagen (Jürgen Gimmel, *Die politische Organisation kulturellen Ressentiments: Der „Kampfbund für*

### **AKRIBISCHE ARCHIVALIENERSCHLISSUNG**

Institutionelle Rahmenbedingungen und personelle Konstellationen, die die Ausrichtung des Reichsinstituts unter Max Doerners (1870–1939) knapp zweijähriger Leitung bestimmten, verfolgt Burmester bis ins frühe 20. Jahrhundert zurück. Zudem fasst er die Entwicklungen des Instituts nach Doerners Tod am 1. September 1939 und