

Introduction

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THIS issue of *Central European History* may at first seem somewhat unexpected. All the following papers pertain to the early modern period. All of them moreover originated in connection with an exhibition of works of art, "Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire, 1540–1680. A Selection from North American Collections," its published catalogue,¹ and a symposium, "The Culture of the Holy Roman Empire, 1540–1680," held on the occasion of the exhibition's opening. The papers published in this issue are accordingly essays in art, literary, intellectual, and, more generally, cultural history; some words may be needed to explain how they come to appear here now.

If the early modern period in Central Europe is a field not much frequented by American historians, and therefore not often explored in this journal, it is all the more unfamiliar to art historians in the English-speaking world. From the scant literature in English on the period after ca. 1540 it might almost appear as if the history of art in Central Europe stopped with the death of Albrecht Dürer in 1528 or Hans Holbein in 1543. While in Europe itself recent publications and exhibitions have begun to make the era better known, art in Central Europe between the age of Dürer and the eighteenth, if not indeed the nineteenth century remains largely *terra incognita* on this side of the Atlantic. Almost no American art historians specialize in the early modern period in Central Europe, few museums make any major effort to collect works from the area in this epoch, and as a consequence the larger public has little chance to see art, particularly of the period ca. 1540–1680, on display.

In order to try to remedy this situation, as well as to call attention to

I would like to thank Anthony Grafton, James Parente, and James Vann for their suggestions, some of which have been incorporated into this introduction.

1. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire, 1540–1680: A Selection from North American Collections* (Princeton, 1982).

Reference is made to this catalogue in the following papers. Some of the remarks made in the present introduction summarize the arguments of the catalogue introduction.

the rich holdings that have nevertheless surprisingly, and at times quite by chance, been accumulated in North America, in 1982 the Art Museum, Princeton University, organized the exhibition "Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire," which in 1983 travelled to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and to the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh. "Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire" represented the first systematic examination of North American collections for works by artists active in Central Europe 1540–1680. As such it exhibited material that was largely unfamiliar even to specialists in drawings and experts in the art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not to mention the larger public.

Because of the previous neglect of the period and the unfamiliarity of its drawings, material was chosen for display not only to make a point about inherent aesthetic quality and artistic interest, but also to represent the larger historical situation. Historical considerations also determined the organization of the exhibition into the chronological divisions 1540–1560, 1560–1620, and 1620–1680, and the further division of the two later periods into local centers. The court of Rudolf II in Prague ca. 1600, which was important for art throughout Europe, formed the geographic and chronological midpoint of the show.² Taken as a group, however, the drawings illustrated a wide diversity of artistic genres, formal styles, and subject matter. In addition they reflected a particular art historical situation in which Central Europe received crosscurrents from Italy and the Netherlands at the same time that it adhered to some of its own rich local cultural traditions.

The catalogue for the exhibition consequently presented the objects in a way that corresponded to the show's broader historical aims. Catalogue entries not only dealt with individual art historical problems—of attribution, chronology, iconography, and artists' biography—but also raised questions about the cultural context in which the drawings were made. Numerous historical issues were addressed, such as the persistence of local traditions in book production and stained glass window design; the reception accorded to the ideals of Italian humanism; the development of new genres such as landscape, still life, and cityscape; the coexistence of diverse stylistic modes related to different genres and divergent functions of art; the role of geographic and social milieux and the origins of artists; and their interaction with Central European patrons.

2. For art at the court of Rudolf II, see now Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *L'Ecole de Prague: La Peinture à la cour de Rodolphe II* (Paris, 1985).

These historical issues evoked extended discussion in the introduction to the catalogue, which was subtitled “An Essay Toward Historical Understanding.” The introduction also considered why the period of Central European art from 1540 to 1680 has belonged neither to the historical canon of European art, nor even to the more limited canon of German art. Central European art between the age of the “Old German Masters” and the Age of the “Baroque” in Austria, after the second siege of Vienna, or the Rococo in eighteenth-century Germany, has been neglected even in German historiography, and judged against the norms established by these periods. Yet unless the art or an artist of a particular period such as the age of Dürer be taken as forming an absolute standard against which the history of art in Central Europe can be weighed, aesthetic considerations of works of art themselves can not alone account for the treatment of the period 1540–1680 in the historiography of German art. It can rather be demonstrated that conscious or unconscious nationalistic biases have helped frame a vision of Central European art that dates back to Romantic preconceptions, and has persisted up to the present.³ According to these notions, the achievements of Central European art have been seen as of little consequence at best, and generally as a sign of decline. During the period 1540–1680, art in Central Europe rejoined common European traditions, adopting Italianate norms and models; ideas and images were spread in part by wandering artists, or by artists born outside the area, and through prints and drawings. Yet an art history of more or less direct nationalist coloration has evaluated these features negatively: the cosmopolitan aspects of Central European art are characterized as “rootless,” as a decline from the more pure great “German” art of the preceding, or even the following, period.

3. These issues are discussed at length in *Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire*, 3ff. Nevertheless, one additional quotation may suggest some of the quality of an attitude that has continued to dominate scholarship, even after the Second World War. In the introductory comments to his monumental monograph on the architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (*Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach*, 2 rev. ed., Vienna, 1976, 7), Hans Sedlmayr speaks in the following way about Andreas Schlüter, who was born in Gdańsk (Danzig), which was at the time under Polish sovereignty, and about von Erlach, who was born in Graz, Styria, then ruled by the House of Austria: “Die ersten grossen Künstler nach dem Ereignis, das Wilhelm Pinder den ‘Untergang der altdeutschen Kunst’ genannt hat—nach dem Tode Dürers, Altdorfers und Holbeins, nach hundertfünfzig Jahren italienischer und niederländischer Vorherrschaft in der deutschen Kunst—, sind Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach und Andreas Schlüter”—and this of artists who were manifest admirers of (and deeply schooled in) Italian art.

The introduction developed a different framework to replace this historiographic and ideological bias and to allow a consideration of artists who had been active in Central Europe without prejudice as to their place of origin or training. An alternative context was proposed that could offer some sensitivity to the international trends and stylistic diversity of the age. In line with some other recent work in art history, the title "Holy Roman Empire" was chosen for its supranational, universalistic overtones, and its echoes of both the classical and Christian traditions that bind Central Europe to other areas.⁴ A historical picture reflecting the delicate balance that was created between the universalism of the Empire and the particularism represented within it was proposed as being more accurate and appropriate for Central European art in the early modern period.

But the choice of such a broad organizing conception to cover works of art created during a 140-year period did not answer all the problems that previous art historical research had left open. In part as a result of the general neglect and prejudices about the period, an adequate terminology has also been lacking for dealing with the complex issues of style. Only the misleading and well-worn designations Mannerism and Baroque have in general been used, and they neither fit very well nor solve many problems. Instead of this traditional language of art history, other conceptualizations were proposed that are related more to notions gained from the literary and intellectual history of the period. Contemporary rhetoric and poetics helped to provide a theoretical framework for dealing with stylistic questions, hence gaining an appreciation of Central European art between 1540 and 1680.

It should be clear that this effort at historiographic and methodological reevaluation was obviously not limited in scope to the conventional boundaries of the discipline of art history. Although the study of drawings has often been considered in isolation, "Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire" raised questions pertaining to the literary, intellectual, and cultural history of Central Europe. These issues turn out to be significantly, if not surprisingly, similar in several respects to the problems facing historians in other fields.

As R. J. W. Evans suggests in his paper, the general cultural history of the period 1540–1680 has also seemed to lack distinctive "national

4. A somewhat similar approach has been taken by Wolfgang Braunfels, ed., *Die Kunst in Heiligen Römischen Reich* (Munich, 1979ff.); Braunfels explains this approach in vol. 1 (Munich, 1979), 12–14.

features” when compared with the preceeding and succeeding epochs. An earlier historiography that had sought for national characteristics could not deal adequately with the manifestations of an era of Central European culture which was so international in its tendencies. Latinity, religion, publishing, humanism—all tended to bind the Central European lands to the rest of Europe. At the same time the world of the *Kleinstaat* worked against centripetal influences, suggesting that cosmopolitan rather than nationally imposed concerns are what affect the history of Central European culture in this era. Thus the apparent political anarchy of the era, which has led many historians to label it a period of “decline,” in fact contributed to the strength of its culture.

Anthony Grafton’s paper responds to similar problems that beset the study of intellectual history. After the age of Luther, in which Central Europe clearly had assumed a central position in the debates of the day and the production of ideas, the German and other Central European lands seem to lose interest for the intellectual historian. The traditions of humanism and encyclopedism with which Professor Grafton deals do not fit the broader picture that historians usually like to draw of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With the partial exception of a figure such as Kepler, whose mystical and astrological concerns generally do not receive the attention that his contributions to astronomy and hence physics do, Central European intellectual history in this era does not correspond to the view of a Europe tending to modernity, advancing from the Renaissance through the age of scientific revolution to the Enlightenment. Instead in Central Europe traditional ideas often predominate, ideas which do not attract historians concerned with progress or innovation. After the apparent “heroism” of Luther the Latinate cosmopolitanism of succeeding generations may seem a paltry if not risible matter. Hence although efforts generated largely from Wolfenbüttel have lately been attempting to rectify matters, there is a widespread neglect of the biography even of major figures of the period, and a lack of sources for their bibliography.⁵

5. I am referring here of course to work associated first of all with the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, which has established itself as a center for research in various aspects of Central European culture of the Renaissance and “Baroque” eras. The catalogues of the library’s own collections of manuscripts and printed books help fill in some of the bibliographic lacunae. Efforts are also now under way to create an even fuller version of the Short Title Catalogue of the British Library, London, for books published in the German-speaking lands in the seventeenth century.



Habsburg (Bohemian?) Court Artist, *Allegory on the Battle of White Mountain*,
Fogg Art Museum (Harvard University Art Museums). Gift of Mrs. John H. Steiner, 1978.494.

In literary history the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have also not found a secure place in the broader European canon, as James A. Parente, Jr., suggests. Scholarship on Germany has at times experienced waves of favorable reception for “Baroque” literature, so that the era has periodically found its enthusiasts. Yet just as in the use of the terms “Baroque” and “Mannerism” literary scholarship has drawn from art history, so the evaluation of the period has undergone similar vicissitudes. It still remains a relatively unfavored period between the age of Luther and the *Goethezeit*.⁶ Even when German Baroque literature has been studied, an important part of the literary production of the period, its extensive Neo-Latin literature, has been neglected until quite recently.⁷ This neglect again results from the development of post-Romanticist historiography, in which misstated nationalist ideas have extolled literature in the vernacular and ignored that in Latin. The resulting ignorance of Neo-Latin, and correspondingly of the heavily Latinate culture which provided assumptions for work in the vernacular, Professor Parente suggests has impeded an appreciation of creative efforts in major literary genres.

It was to address such general problems of historical interpretation that the scholars whose papers appear in this issue of *Central European History* were invited to participate in a symposium on “The Culture of the Holy Roman Empire.” With the aid of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities this symposium was held at the time of the opening of “Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire” at Princeton University on October 3, 1982. Just as the exhibition was intended to open the area for art historical consideration, it is hoped that the papers on cultural, intellectual, and literary history delivered by R. J. W. Evans, Anthony Grafton, and James A. Parente, Jr. may provoke some recon-

For German literature there is also available Gerhard Dünnhaupt, *Bibliographisches Handbuch der Barockliteratur*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1981).

6. For the question of the history of the reception and valuation of German “Baroque” literature, see Herbert Jaumann, *Die deutsche Barockliteratur: Wertung—Umwertung: Eine wertungsgeschichtliche Studie in systematischer Absicht*, Abhandlungen zur Kunst- Musik- und Literaturwissenschaft, 181 (Bonn, 1975). Jaumann also considers the relationship of the history of the reception of the Baroque in literary history to its treatment by historians, *passim*.

7. A good recent overview of this problem is provided by Leonard Forster, “Die Bedeutung des Neulateinischen in der deutschen Barockliteratur,” in *Deutsche Barockliteratur und europäische Kultur (Zweites Jahrestreffen des Internationalen Arbeitskreises für deutsche Barockliteratur [Dokumente des Internationalen Arbeitskreises für Deutsche Barockliteratur])* (Hamburg, 1977), 53–71.

sideration of problems in their fields of history. Their papers are published here as revised and annotated versions of the lectures delivered at the symposium.

The final contribution to this issue, the "Census of Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire 1540–1680 in North American Collections," replaces two longer papers that were delivered at the symposium but that could not be submitted for publication.⁸ This checklist also serves as a reminder of the circumstances in which the other papers originated, in connection with the exhibition. It includes reference to all objects in the show (they are marked with an asterisk) at the same time that it attempts to represent the full holdings of North American collections from which a selection was made. It also completes the exhibition catalogue, in which it was mentioned, but where, for various reasons, it could not be published.⁹

The publication of the census of drawings here should also suggest some additional ways in which art history can contribute to a broader knowledge of history. Not only do issues of art history lead into larger considerations of cultural history, but as R. J. W. Evans's response to the exhibition suggests, intellectual concerns can be seen to parallel artistic ones. Art history does more, however, than illustrate historical trends. The drawings published in the census, and considered at greater length in the catalogue, constitute the raw data of history. Documents for the art historian, they can also be employed for many of the same issues that historians consider in other aspects of their work. For instance, even the mere listing of artists and subjects can suggest something about patterns of patronage, or the dissemination of classically inspired, or religious, ideas, or the relation of Central Europe to other European cultures and their literatures, or the relative significance of various genres, and other intellectual interests that correspond to them.

But there is an even more basic, if not widely acknowledged way in which the consideration of drawings is inextricably linked with broader historical concerns. Although it might seem to belabor the obvious to stress the intimate connection of drawings both with other art historical

8. Besides an introduction by the present author, lectures were delivered at the symposium by Professor Theodore K. Rabb (Princeton University) on "Neglected Issues in the Social History of the Empire 1550–1650: Some Implications of Amman's *Ständebuch*," and by Professor Konrad Oberhuber (Fogg Art Museum and Harvard University) on "Central European Drawings of the 16th Century between South and West (or German Drawings of the 16th Century and their Relationship to Italy and the Netherlands)."

9. See *Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire*, e.g., 27.

media and with other, larger issues of historical interpretation, many art historians have, as noted above, treated drawings in isolation. Some of the most powerful theorists of art history have argued that considerations such as those involved in the checklist are not bound up with such larger issues. For them such matters as the localization and dating of works, traditionally the province of connoisseurship, characterize a mere "Dingwissenschaft." The attribution of drawings and the identification of their subjects is thought at best to establish only the foundation on which other interpretations, which belong to a true "Kunstwissenschaft," can be based. By implication, historical interpretation is excluded from this "lower" science.¹⁰ I would, however, argue on the contrary that when we attribute a work of art, we not only measure it against the whole of the artist's oeuvre, or the corpus of drawings done at a particular time, but we also necessarily make assumptions about a larger cultural context. The interpretation of the content of a work of art, often reserved for a supposedly higher study, and based on a knowledge of political or cultural or social history, may help us to understand what is possible in a given time and place. Considerations of cultural and political history can even allow us to localize and date works on the basis of their subject matter, just as the iconography of drawings can illuminate other aspects of history.

One brief example from the exhibition and accompanying catalogue may demonstrate how questions of attribution can involve other issues of historical interpretation. Earlier efforts at attribution, based on tradi-

10. Such are the implications of Erwin Panofsky, "Über das Verhältnis der Kunstgeschichte zur Kunsttheorie: Ein Beitrag zu der Erörterung über die Möglichkeit 'Kunstwissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe,'" reprinted in Hariolf Oberer and Egon Verhagen, eds., *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, 2d ed. (Berlin, 1974), 49–76; Panofsky distinguishes between what he defines as *Kunsttheorie*, "rein empirischen Kunstgeschichte," and "Kunstgeschichte als Interpretationswissenschaft" (p. 68), which builds on both of them. Note also the discussion of two kinds of "Kunstwissenschaft" in Hans Sedlmayr, "Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft," reprinted as "Kunstgeschichte als Kunstgeschichte" in *Kunst und Wahrheit: Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, rev. ed. (Mittenwald, 1978), 49–80.

An interesting critique of Panofsky and Sedlmayr, and a newer approach to problems of art historical interpretation, is offered by Oskar Bätschmann, *Einführung in die kunstgeschichtliche Hermeneutik: Die Auslegung von Bildern* (Darmstadt, 1984). Eberhard König, "Gesellschaft, Material, Kunst: Neue Bücher zur deutschen Skulptur um 1500," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 47, no. 4 (1984): 550–51, has also recently pointed to the interconnected nature of approaches to problems of connoisseurship and efforts at social or cultural history of art, in the context of a trenchant review of Michael Baxandall's *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven and London, 1980).

tional art historical methods of visual comparison to other works of art, had led only part of the way to the attribution of a drawing listed in the census as being by a Habsburg court artist of the 1620s.¹¹ Once, however, certain topographic features in the drawing could be located as indicating the environs of the city of Prague, a battle shown in the drawing could be identified as the White Mountain of 1620, a decisive event for the Thirty Years' War and for Czech history. From this knowledge the allegorical figures in the foreground could be identified as referring to the virtues of the Habsburgs' rule over Bohemia, and perhaps also to the Renewed Constitution of Bohemia of 1627. Because of the specific symbolism of praise for the Habsburgs and the intimate knowledge of local topography the drawing displays, its author could most likely be situated in court circles in Bohemia. It is interesting to note that even attempts at art historical connoisseurship using standard methods have not yet advanced a more convincing attribution.¹²

On the other hand the identification of the drawing provides some additional documentation that can support further efforts at historical interpretation. It indicates for instance that more than "popular" forms of visual communication such as *Flugblätter* played their part as forms of propaganda for the imperial cause. It suggests that, as more famously elsewhere in the paintings of Velázquez and Rubens, the visual arts in Central Europe were also invoked in the Habsburgs' cause.¹³

Drawings can thus be linked not only with other genres and aspects of the history of art, such as painting, but with a larger circle of inter-

11. *Allegory on the Battle of White Mountain*, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1978.494; discussed in *Drawings from the Holy Roman Empire*, cat. nr. 68, pp. 180–81. See below, p. 86, and illustration.

12. Eliška Fučíková, "Veduta v rudolfinském Krajinářství," *Umění* 31, no. 5, (1983): 397, 399, has attempted to make a more precise attribution of this drawing to Egidius Sadeler and to date it 1621. Her attempt is based on rather unconvincing formal comparisons to details in a print by Sadeler, and can be refuted by using the same method of comparison to better *comparanda*, namely signed drawings by Sadeler dating from 1618 (e.g., in the Kitto Bible, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; see the "Census" *infra*) and from following years. This attribution was already considered and rejected by the compiler in writing the catalogue, but the problem of Sadeler's drawings awaits thorough treatment in a forthcoming dissertation by Dorothy Limouze, Princeton University.

13. The investigation of the history of art in Central Europe in relationship to the Thirty Years' War is a subject that merits much further study. Because of assumptions about the widespread destruction and disruption caused by the war, only a few selected aspects of the art of the time have received any attention. Herbert Langer, *The Thirty Years' War* (Poole, 1980; 1st ed. Leipzig, 1978), 226–34, can be taken as characteristic of the kind of attention the art of that time receives.

pretation that encompasses cultural, social, and even political history. Just as the study of individual drawings is inextricably connected with the culture of their time in a way that takes in more than issues of the history of art, so can works of art serve more general considerations, that in their turn bear on our understanding of drawings. The papers in this issue may therefore be considered not only as efforts to increase familiarity with aspects of the history of Central Europe in the early modern period, and to deal with some of the problems involved in its study. They also offer a demonstration of how varied approaches to European culture are all interrelated in the way they can contribute to a broader and deeper understanding of the historical process.