

Zitierhinweis

Andrea Gáldy: Rezension von: Lubomir Konečný / Štěpán Vácha (Hgg.): Hans von Aachen in Context. Proceedings of the International Conference, Prague 22-25 September 2010, Prag: Artefactum 2012, in sehepunkte 15 (2015), Nr. 3 [15.03.2015], URL:<http://www.sehepunkte.de/2015/03/23177.html>



copyright

Dieser Beitrag kann vom Nutzer zu eigenen nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken heruntergeladen und/oder ausgedruckt werden. Darüber hinausgehende Nutzungen sind ohne weitere Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber nur im Rahmen der gesetzlichen Schrankenbestimmungen (§§ 44a-63a UrhG) zulässig.

Lubomir Konečný / Štěpán Vácha (Hgg.): Hans von Aachen in Context

The present volume publishes the proceedings of an international conference, which took place in Prague in September 2010. The chapters are composed by a very cosmopolitan cast of scholars and reflect the papers given at the close of the Prague leg of a major exhibition on Hans von Aachen as court artist which travelled from Aachen to the Czech Republic and then on to Vienna in 2010/2011. Exhibition, conference and, finally, the published volume traced the career of the artist who eventually became the main artistic impresario at the court of Rudolf II at Prague. Trained in Cologne and Italy (in particular Venice and the Veneto), Hans von Aachen worked for the Wittelsbach family in Munich before gaining a role at the imperial court that was compared to the relationship of Apelles and Alexander and may be compared to that of Vasari and the Medici. Highly popular during his life-time, Hans von Aachen was well inserted in the main networks of agents and court artists; his biography was discussed in the major art-historical literature of van Mander, Sandrart und Baldinucci. By the nineteenth century, however, the enthusiasm had calmed down considerably and his portraits and artistic jokes lost most of their former appeal. The recent preoccupation with the history of collections in general and the interest in Emperor Rudolf II in particular mainly seems to have retrained our focus on von Aachen's art and entrepreneurship.

The chapters are organised under three main headings: Hans von Aachen's time in Italy at the end of the mannerist period, an interpretation of some of Hans von Aachen's main paintings and their reception, and the study of patronage and artists' networks as part of European court culture during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. These 23 chapters are followed by a group of five essays based on dissertations still in progress in 2010/11 and an epilogue by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann whose path-breaking work on Central European art and culture of the early modern period is of course very well known in the English- as well as the German-speaking world (DaCosta Kaufmann: *Adsit*, 245-251).

What may at first glance look like yet another old-fashioned attempt to find the reasons for von Aachen's qualities and the appreciation of his art in the training he received in Italy, the first group of chapters very interestingly connects his life and work to diverse groups of artists and managers of chequered provenance (Aikema: Hans von Aachen in Italy, 17-27; di Lenardo: The *oltramontani* Network, 28-37): refugees from Antwerp working in Cologne, northern-European entrepreneurs in Venice, Florence and Rome, well-known Italian artists running workshops at home as well as being hired by patrons at the most important courts of Europe. Hans von Aachen watched and learned from them all and created his own genres of painting, in particular as regards portraiture, which owed as much to Italian models as to the draughtsmanship von Aachen acquired from his teacher Hans Speckaert (Fučíková: Hans Speckaert, 38-44; Šíroká: Hans Speckaert's *Assumption*, 45-54). Indeed, it is difficult (and perhaps also futile) to try to distinguish between Italian and northern influences, given the international career and multi-disciplinary work of many of the leading artists of von Aachen's time. The cause for von Aachen's artistic and commercial success was most likely the result of his networks joining forces and launching his career. Allegedly, it was his portrait of Giambologna (Jean de Boulogne) from Douai, Flanders which came to Emperor Rudolf's attention and made him wish for the services of the painter who, meanwhile, had also absorbed the influences of sculpture produced by Giambologna and his Italian and Flemish colleagues, displayed in late-Cinquecento Florence and sent as diplomatic gifts across Europe for decades to come (Lein: *Italienische Skulptur*, 55-61).

By the time von Aachen reached the imperial court via Munich, Rudolf II had created him official court painter in 1592. Prague had become the capital in 1583 and Rudolf was going to

make it the seat of a court renowned for its cultural achievements, rich collections and scientific endeavours and well able to attract the best artists and scholars. The Rudolfine collections included *artificialia*, *naturalia* and *scientifica*; as far as the figurative and decorative arts were concerned, the emperor's taste leaned towards mythological and allegorical scenes as well as towards portraiture. Accordingly, the next 12 chapters investigate part of von Aachen's *œuvre* and its reception, for example by Sadeler (Irmscher: *Iterum iterumque*, 82-92), or try to identify *kunstammer* objects and architectural models in specific paintings (Bukovinská: *Aachens Stuttgarter Allegorie*, 144-149; Muchka: *Was für ein Palast*, 150-158).

Rudolf II's taste had been formed by the best education then available and by a set of networks; it continued to develop through the agency of family role models, peer pressure and expert advisors. Thus, the next six chapters explore questions of patronage as well as the exchange of objects, knowledge, ideas and fashions among early modern princes, scholars and artists. Works of art and other commodities carried commercial and political currency through the role they played in the art of diplomacy and court culture. Scientific innovation and increasing amounts of information at the disposal of scholars and princes might be turned into monetary value in the long run. By studying Hans von Aachen's art and its context, the cultural transfer which in the past has frequently been presented as a one-way street running from Italy to the North of Europe, can be shown to be truly cosmopolitan and serendipitous: although at some point all roads seem to be leading to Prague, they tended to take the scenic route via the courts of Habsburg relatives and allies distributed over the whole of Europe. Since not all of the princes interested in the latest trends and fashions were able to travel to the most exciting places, at which avant-garde developments were first adopted, they had to rely on prints and plans, on (art) experts and on diplomats who during the course of their careers acquired additional skills and also worked as art scouts as well as art dealers. Agents such as Jacopo Strada (Jansen: *Taste and Thought*, 171-178) became influential at princely courts through their collections, networking skills as well as through the effect they were able to take on the next generation by dint of teaching up-to-date scholarship. The artists' workshop produced for such well-informed princes, whilst being inspired by princely collections, the composition of which in turn was guided by the works of art produced (Zimmer: *Hans von Aachens Werkstatt*, 189-196; Martin: *Kaiser, Kaufmann, Kammermaler*, 197-202). Apprentices, colleagues and rivals of the workshop disseminated artistic innovation and helped create new traditions (Vignau-Wilberg: *Triumph für Rudolf II*, 203-209; Dülberg: *Hans Christoph Schürer*, 210-219) within their own networks and beyond.

Interestingly as well as importantly, the volume of proceedings also gives room to five short contributions by younger scholars engaging in research on Rudolfine court culture. Acquisition strategies, diplomatic and propagandistic uses of gifts of *artificialia* and *naturalia* as well as the people for whom these objects were intended - the collectors, agents and audiences - are some of the topics discussed here in substantial abstracts. In due course these ideas will be presented in a number of theses taking a fresh look, for example, at the history of collections such as that of the Granvelle family, bought by Rudolf and dispersed in part after the emperor's death.

Such new and future research is still much needed as regards our view of "The Renaissance" and definitions of artistic labels of "(high) renaissance", "mannerist" or "baroque" to define the production of artists north and south of the Alps over the course of a long sixteenth century. As the present volume shows, much work has been done since the 1970s with the result that scholars today tend to take a much more nuanced and interdisciplinary view of artists' creations as well as of the context in which they operated. Recent theories concerning cultural transfer in an early modern Europe of the courts, including "Actor Network Theory" and cluster theory, have been able to show that there was more than one donor or creator country in Europe and that globalisation is not a phenomenon of our days. As long as "mannerism" carries the negative connotations of a Renaissance gone wrong and "Northern

Renaissance" seems to denote a second class Renaissance, there is still much scope for future research and a more diversified understanding of the networks of artists, patrons and agents who may have thought locally at times but were more often than not acting as globally as logistics permitted. Both the Prague conference as well as the published volume contributed not only to the undertaking of more daring directions in research but also to the exchange between scholars from different, often parallel universes; scholarship can only benefit from such an approach.