

Marcell Restle, *Reclams Kunstführer Istanbul, Bursa, Edirne, Iznik*. Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam Jr., 1977. 632 pp., 64 illus., DM. 42,80

George Galavaris

Volume 5, Number 1, 1978

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1077331ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1077331ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (print)

1918-4778 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Galavaris, G. (1978). Review of [Marcell Restle, *Reclams Kunstführer Istanbul, Bursa, Edirne, Iznik*. Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam Jr., 1977. 632 pp., 64 illus., DM. 42,80]. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 5(1), 75–76. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1077331ar>

illustrated by the author's own line drawings, which cannot be too highly praised (see Fig. 1).

A glossary, map, and index are included. The presence of the glossary and map, while very welcome, seems to indicate that the book is intended for the general reader and the undergraduate student; however, it is my opinion that the text itself is at a level of sophistication and complexity which makes the book more suitable for the scholar and the advanced student.

In conclusion, Coulton's work under review here, as well as his other books and numerous contributions to journals, have established him as a leading exponent of Greek architecture. The handling of sources, technical data, and illustrations are perfect, and the grasp of detail and intimate knowledge of the material are impressive. The lack of a complete and adequate consideration of aesthetic and intellectual dimensions in Greek architecture is a void which, I am sure, Coulton will soon fill.

GUY P.R. MÉTRAUX
York University
Toronto

MARCELL RESTLE *Reclams Kunstführer Istanbul, Bursa, Edirne, Iznik*. Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam Jr., 1977. 632 pp., 64 illus., DM. 42,80.

Anyone who attempts to write a book on the antiquities and art of Istanbul faces a formidable task. Not only is the bibliography extensive, but, more seriously, the actual state of various extant monuments is a source of problems. Civilizations have succeeded one another and centuries have piled layers of structures one upon another. Time, ignorance, and human malice have contributed to destruction. We must think of the history of Byzantium, the Greek colony by the sea of Marmora, and later the city of Constantine, Constantinople, the New Rome, for centuries the capital of the Byzantine empire whose splendour and refinement were the legend of the West. There was the magnitude of its palaces which dazzled the foreign ambassadors, the

Great Palace whose legendary magnificence filled so many mediaeval pages, the 'golden' halls, gilt domes, and terraces where pomp and imperial majesty were displayed. The churches, each a jewel of architecture and decoration, but also each a stone in the edifice of the history of mediaeval Hellenism, to this day constitute the richest remains of the city of Constantine. We must think of the city's silent enclosures, the famous walls, according to legend traced by the hand of an angel, the walls grassy and anemone-covered in the spring, from which one gets a breathtaking view of the blue sea; we must think of the walls' ruined turrets, marching up the hill, and of the minarets spread throughout Istanbul, marking another phase which started after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Constantinople became Istanbul. The churches were changed into mosques, while new Islamic sacred buildings were constructed, mosques whose splendour paralleled those of the churches and of the destroyed Byzantine palaces. Their minarets still satisfy the romantic tourist who persists in imagining Istanbul to be a piece from the *Arabian Nights*.

The author of the book under review faces this enormous task easily and brings it to a huge success. He is not only a most reliable guide but also a most imaginative one. Marcell Restle, one of the foremost Byzantinists of today, is fully at home with Islamic art and moves freely through the labyrinth of Byzantine and Turkish bricks, sites, and crowded museums. For many years, while preparing his monumental book, *Byzantine Wall Paintings in Asia Minor*, he explored Turkey and, as he tells us in his preface, had the chance to conduct seminars for his students in Constantinople. His knowledge and experiences are distilled in this excellent volume.

A dense introduction to the history and city planning of Byzantium. Constantinoupolis, Istanbul, and its boroughs, opens the book. It is followed by a useful table of dates and historical events down to 1923, when a republic was declared and Ankara became the capital of Turkey. The visitor is guided through all of the sites I have already referred to above, but in reverse order, which is in fact proper: city walls,

sacred buildings, churches and mosques, palaces, Seraglios with gardens and pavilions, hippodrome, water systems, and finally museums. Each category and monument is introduced with a short, factual history. These are exemplary essays in scholarship and accuracy. The unique features of each monument are pointed out and in most cases there are plans which have been checked *in situ* by the author; they are complemented with illustrations.

The most important collections of the four large museums are presented in the same manner: the archaeological museum, that of the oriental cultures, the collection of the Topkapi-Saray, and the Turkish-Islamic Museum. There is an overall introduction to each collection and the most important works of art are represented with brief but seminal remarks. For example, in presenting the beautiful head of the emperor Arcadius (no. 5028), Restle writes: 'One of the powerful works of the Theodosian style at the turn of the fourth to the fifth century. It must be compared to the head of Valentinian II on the one hand and to the new stylistic trends apparent in the statues of the civil servants from Aphrodisias, on the other – all in the same hall.'

This is not a book for the general tourist, but a reference book for the art student and scholar. Suffice it to mention the superb presentation of Aya Sofya, Hagia Sophia (Restle always gives Greek and Turkish names and spellings, side by side). In thirty pages, Restle has been able to include everything about this unique building, unsurpassed in the history of world architecture. The section dealing with the system of fenestration and lighting illustrates the author's mastery of accurate condensation of scholarly knowledge. In the Topkapi-Saray Museum, he points to the poetic-lyric compositions of a painter by the name of Ahmet Musa (1316-36). Known as the artist who renewed Persian painting, Musa's style is close to the so-called Bagdad school of painting and his works are concerned with a mystical, formal eclecticism. These artistic jewels are miniatures illustrating the Ascension of Mohamed, shown pulled by an angel to heaven – a theme which echoes the Christian Ascen-

sion on the one hand, and that of Alexander the Great on the other. These illustrations, Restle informs us, seem to be in accordance with a text which has come down to us only in a Latin and an old French version (1264) and which was utilized by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*.

There is a good bibliography and an appendix which includes a well-conceived glossary of technical terms abundantly illustrated with drawings. These give special value to the book. Dispersed throughout the text are beautiful lithographs and engravings taken from early nineteenth-century publications of western travellers to the East. They recall Byron's *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*, Lamartine's *Voyage en Orient*, and the later writings of Loti. Reading the book and pondering on the engravings, we become aware that there is always room for mystery in the old sites of the East. The author deserves our admiration and the publishers our praise for producing a book unique among its kind. It will, one hopes, be widely translated.

GEORGE GALAVARIS
McGill University
Montreal

Images of Love and Death in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art. The University of Michigan Museum of Art. 21 Nov. 1975–24 Jan. 1976 Essays by Clifton C. Olds and Ralph G. Williams; Catalogue by William R. Levin. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1976. 132 pp., 68 illus.

Voici un catalogue d'exposition admirablement exécuté et présenté, sur quelques-uns des thèmes fondamentaux de la fin du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance, ceux qui tournent autour de l'Amour et de la Mort. L'illustration est abondante et elle met en valeur des œuvres nombreuses conservées dans plusieurs musées américains. On passe des manuscrits, aux premières gravures, aux dessins et peintures, aux tapisseries et tissus, aux ivoires, aux objets de métal, aux bijoux et coffrets. Plusieurs maîtres italiens y

sont représentés à côté des artistes de l'Europe du Nord depuis le début du XIV^e siècle jusqu'au XVI^e siècle avancé. Le catalogue de William R. Levin est particulièrement riche: il fait chaque fois le point sur la provenance et le style des œuvres, sur les thèmes représentés et leurs sources historiques ou artistiques. Le texte est toujours dense et très pertinent. Il renvoie à une copieuse bibliographie dressée à la fin.

Deux textes, auparavant, introduisent globalement les thèmes de l'Amour et de la Mort dans l'art (Clifton C. Olds) et dans la littérature (Ralph G. Williams). Le texte sur la littérature est particulièrement intéressant. L'auteur nous fait faire un parcours rapide, mais très clair depuis Hésiode et Platon jusqu'à Dante, Boccace et le néoplatonisme de la Renaissance en passant par Rome et par l'amour courtois médiéval. Fort habilement, l'auteur apporte d'assez longues citations de divers auteurs pour appuyer les diverses conceptions de l'Amour et de la Mort et pour nous faire entrer d'emblée dans l'ambiance même du Moyen Âge et au cœur des théories nombreuses qu'ont élaborées les spécialistes sur tous ces sujets.

Le texte de Clifton C. Olds est plus court et quelque peu décevant. Il était d'ailleurs difficile de faire le bilan d'œuvres très variées et même disparates de style (ivoire du début du XIV^e siècle, gravure de Dürer, dessins italiens), déjà étudiés ailleurs dans leur contexte respectif et rassemblées ici pour leur seule affinité iconographique. C'est vraiment l'inconvénient de ce genre d'exposition de déboucher sur des considérations globales de portée éventuellement plus historique que proprement artistique. Dans cette veine, l'auteur aurait pu évoquer davantage certains aspects de la vie au Moyen Âge autres que la peste noire de 1348, présenter quelques-unes des œuvres si nombreuses conservées dans divers monuments d'Europe comme la sculpture funéraire, les fresques, etc. Mais dans l'ordre des idées générales, l'auteur va certainement à l'essentiel lorsqu'il affirme que les regards et gestes des amoureux des XV^e et XVI^e siècles expriment la promesse de félicités à venir plutôt que l'emportement de la passion. L'homme occidental aurait-il toujours été en

quête d'un paradis toujours lointain? Chacun pourra comparer les images offertes par ce répertoire avec l'art amoureux des Indes ou du Japon pour s'en convaincre un peu.

ROLAND SANFAÇON
Université Laval
Québec

ANNE MARKHAM SCHULZ *The Sculpture of Bernardo Rossellino and his Workshop*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977. 176 + xxiii pp., 225 illus., \$35.00.

Bernardo Rossellino has not yet had the kind of critical monograph that has been accorded most of his contemporary Florentine artists. Active as both architect and sculptor, and in both spheres overshadowed by more attractive and more charismatic personalities – Alberti in the field of architecture, Donatello and Ghiberti in sculpture – it has been difficult to sort out the exact nature of his contribution to the early Renaissance. The most comprehensive work on Bernardo to date – a work that gives equal consideration to both his architecture and his sculpture – is Maryla Tyszkiewicz's *Bernardo Rossellino* (Florence, 1928), written in Polish and published in an edition of about one hundred copies. (An English translation of Tyszkiewicz's text, prepared under the direction of Schulz, is to be found in the *Kunsthistorisches Institut*, Florence.) It is a rather reverential study, elegantly produced on laid paper with tipped-in photographs, extremely useful for its compendium of documents but not a work that places Bernardo in a well-defined critical niche. More recent scholarship tends to divide Bernardo into his architectural and sculptural personae: e.g., Leo Planiscig's *Bernardo und Antonio Rossellino* (Vienna, 1942), which concentrates on the sculpture of both Bernardo and his extremely gifted younger brother; and now Schulz's monograph, a rigorous attempt to see Bernardo's sculptural production with clarity and historical perspective.