

Johannes Taubert, *Farbige Skulpturen; Bedeutung, Fassung, Restaurierung*. Munich, Callwey, 1978. 208 pp., 229 illus., 35 colour pl., DM 120

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Volume 8, Number 1, 1981

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1075374ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1075374ar>

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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

Bergmann, R. (1981). Review of [Johannes Taubert, *Farbige Skulpturen; Bedeutung, Fassung, Restaurierung*. Munich, Callwey, 1978. 208 pp., 229 illus., 35 colour pl., DM 120]. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 8(1), 90–91. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1075374ar>

étendu, qui nous est connu uniquement à travers les textes descriptifs et la gravure. Il y eut à Rome et à Naples un nombre très considérable de décors éphémères de fêtes, d'arcs triomphaux, de feux d'artifices, de catafalques et de représentations théâtrales de toutes espèces. Ces spectacles, offerts par les ambassadeurs d'Espagne, de France, de Naples et d'autres seigneurs, sont toujours liés à une propagande politique. La carrière de Michetti comprend l'activité pour le cardinal Ottoboni, pour qui il dessine en 1729 les *macchine* du spectacle *Carlo Magno* donné à l'occasion de la naissance du Dauphin. Après un séjour russe, il est au service du Contestabile Colonna et lui met en scène trois décors de fêtes. Ces machines et décorations pouvaient atteindre des dimensions colossales; l'ensemble de cette architecture temporaire revêt un caractère international.

La dernière contribution consiste dans le texte original anglais du regretté Anthony Clark sur Batoni, déjà publié en italien dans l'introduction du catalogue de l'exposition Batoni, Lucca, 1967.

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JOHANNES TAUBERT *Farbige Skulpturen; Bedeutung, Fassung, Restaurierung*. Munich, Callwey, 1978. 208 pp., 229 illus., 35 colour pl. DM 120.

Within two years this book on polychromed sculpture saw a second edition which is not surprising, for it is extraordinary in content and scope. It consists of seventeen studies by the late Johannes Taubert, formerly director of the Conservation Institute of the Bayrisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege. Several articles are written in collaboration with colleagues and his wife who deserves praise for her meticulous editorial work, including an extensive bibliography. In his foreword, Paul Philippot sympathetically outlines Taubert's contributions to the field in his capacity as conservator, art historian and teacher. This rare combination of competencies determines the organization of the book, the first part of which addresses a variety of art-historical problems from the vantage point of the practitioner

while the shorter second part deals with specific problems in the conservation of polychromed sculpture. They are, however, most instructive for the non-practicing reader and often linked with the theoretical considerations of the first part. For instance, the fascinating account of the restoration of the *Forstenried Crucifixus* of c. 1200 (1, 3) demonstrates the 'irrational' relationship between colour and form, whereas the aesthetic implications are developed in 'Studien zur Fassung romantischer Skulpturen' (1, 2). Here the author argues the point that colour was not applied to sculpture for enhancement of its plasticity or representational reality but for emphasizing its numinous character, its super-reality. The invariably green tree crosses, signifying the *lignum vitae*, are an obvious expression of this medieval attitude.

In a subsequent article on the artistic unity of form and colour in Gothic sculpture Taubert points out many of the devices artists employed to humanize their images beyond the increasing formal realism of the time. The important function of colour and texture-enhancing materials such as glass, linen and leather in the polychroming process has yet to be fully recognized. Studies of surface treatment including that of chalk ground applications, ornamented by punches and pressed-in brocades, are still in their infancy. Chapters 6 and 9 address some of these techniques and practices in detail and give evidence of the growing ingenuity of fifteenth and sixteenth century artisans to integrate the sculpted image into a wider spatial context. As is well known, the highest degree of material imitation was reached in the 18th century. Chapter 10 on finishes of South German Rococo figures examines, with the aid of contemporary recipes, an immense variety of techniques and their effects that made the wonderful theatrical illusionism of an Ignaz Guenther possible.

Chapter 8 is a particularly revealing study for the art historian. Dealing with non-polychromed altarpieces which suddenly appear around 1500, Taubert takes issue with the explanations recently offered by Paatz (*Süddeutsche Schnitzaltäre der Spätgotik*,

Heidelberg, 1963, 63 ff.) for this puzzling phenomenon. The oft-heard contention that sculptors had intended to emphasize the natural beauty of the wood is refuted by the author's observations that a) Leinberger, Dovermann *et al.* heavily worked the surfaces with punches and other tools, b) so-called non-polychromed sculpture frequently was covered with brownish glazes (for instance, Riemenschneider's Heiligblut and Dettwang altarpieces), c) there is a sizeable group of carved ensembles that were *originally* polychromed except for all incarnate parts (Breisach and Alpirsbach). Taubert concludes that this tendency towards the monochrome, paralleled in contemporary painting, expresses a changing conception of the function of the altarpiece, a transition from the transforming type to the fixed, unified retable (Schauwand).

A paper on Veit Stoss' *Englischer Gruss* in the church of St. Lawrence, Nuremberg is a representative example of Taubert's broad and flexible methodical approach to the works entrusted to him for restoration which is not begun before he is completely familiar with the iconography, history, sources and conservation accounts of the object at hand. His interdisciplinary thinking is further reflected in the study (1, 3) that endeavours to clear up some misconceptions of the distinctly different functions of sculpted relic repositories and devotional images containing relics. A thematically related paper on late medieval crucifixes with moveable arms (1, 5) is concerned with questions of origin (fourteenth century, Toscana), distribution (he provides a full catalogue of objects) and use of this relatively rare type of crucifix. Taubert establishes that they were first exposed with extended arms at the *adoratio crucis* in the liturgy of Good Friday. Later, the *corpus* was taken down from its cross, arms folded alongside the body, for the deposition and entombment at the *depositio crucis*. The written sources, collected and studied by Mrs. Taubert, confirm that these mechanized crucifixes were created with the timely aim to concretize the liturgical action for the devout.

The second part of the book deals largely with technical studies on the conservation of polychromed sculpture. 'Zur Restaurie-



Veit Stoss, *Annunciation*, detail. In Taubert, pl. xv.

rung von Skulpturen' (II, 2) is a position paper, outlining the philosophies and responsibilities of the modern practitioner. While revealing the technical problems of F. Herlin's Rothenburg altarpiece in chapter 4, Taubert urgently advocates full collaboration of specialists under art-historical guidance in order to achieve the optimal restoration of such complex *Gesamtkunstwerk* as the Gothic carved altar. Two further studies (II, 5 and 6) are also devoted to sculpted shrines of Herlin (Rothenburg and Nördlingen). Both are models of precise and systematic documentation which established Taubert's international reputation as conservator and teacher.

In the issue of *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* dedicated to the memory of Dr. Taubert the editor calls him 'the pioneer of the art-historical interpretation of the scientific examination of paintings' (v. 26, 1975, x). After reading the present volume, one would want to have the statement extended to include sculpture. It deserves to be studied with great attention by all concerned with furthering our still limited knowledge of polychromed sculpture.

The book is meticulously and beautifully produced and almost free of printing errors. The generous number of well-documented illustrations merits special mention. They are of excellent quality

throughout and include many superb details of monuments, photographed at close range in the laboratory.

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FELICE STAMPFLE *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: Drawings in the Pierpont Morgan Library*. New York, Dover Publications, in association with The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1978. 121 pp., illus.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi was born in Mogliano, near Venice, in 1720. By this time Tiepolo, his senior by twenty-four years, had already established his workshop in the northern city, and in the normal course of events the young Piranesi would probably have come under the influence of the older master had he not decided, in 1740, to move to Rome. Part of his early training had included architecture and like many others in the wake of the Herculaneum excavations in 1738, he was intensely interested in archaeology. Whether or not he envisaged a career as architect in which, like Brunelleschi, he could apply ancient Roman building principles to the design of new buildings, this did not materialize. At that time the building programme in Rome was sadly curtailed by lack of funds and only the remodelled Church of Santa Maria del Priorato and a small piazza remain as a monument to his work as an architect.

His early training had also included stage design, and it seems as though development of this more fanciful side of his nature occurred during the period of three years when he returned to the more relaxed atmosphere of Venice in 1740. He spent the remaining thirty-five years of his life in Rome, however, to become one of the few eighteenth-century artists in that city who still enjoys a certain popularity. Even in his own day he became well-known, partly because he published many of his engravings in book form, and these were eagerly sought after by art enthusiasts throughout Europe. In this respect he was more fortunate than many of his fellow artists who used the brush; nevertheless, there was more to his pictures than the happy accident that they could be mass-produced.

His work is interesting because we frequently find evidence of the two contrasting aspects of his character. As an architect and draftsman, with a keen knowledge of archaeology, he was motivated to extreme accuracy in the drawings he made of ancient ruins, and yet, in these *veduti* we also find an imaginative romanticism – due perhaps to his exposure to the Italian 'rococo' during his stay in Venice. On the other hand, his celebrated *Carceri* series presented with a convincing validity are, of course, completely imaginary in concept.

Even the casual reader may sense something of this ambivalence as he thumbs through the pages of Felice Stampfle's *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: Drawings in the Pierpont Morgan Library*. But this is not all. It is as though he had been invited into an artist's studio and now finds himself involved vicariously in the creation of a work of art. Here is something of the glamour of looking through a Beethoven 'sketch book'. He will feel much closer contact with the artist as he sees the inevitable ink stains, the mistakes, the scribbled notes, the sketch on the back of a letter – and, although Piranesi bought his printing paper free of tax, he was practical enough to make use of the reverse sides of spoiled sheets.

How surprised (and probably shocked) this perfectionist would have been had he known that these personal memoranda would one day be published; to him they would only have been a means to an end – the finished picture. He would not have realized that present-day taste inclines towards the impressionistic, and that we are more in sympathy with the rapidly executed calligraphy of a preliminary sketch, which we see as closer to the artist's original intention. The strength of these exploratory drawings is mentioned by Miss Stampfle who notes that the sketch for a prison includes some figures which are 'brushed in with an authority and suggestiveness akin to Rembrandt.'

These sketches afford us an insight into Piranesi's character and ability as an artist – we have never questioned his draftmanship. Even in the preliminary work for the *veduti* it is easy to detect the influence of the Italian 'North.' For all the sober classical tone of the pic-