

Räume der Reform: Kunst und Lebenskunst der Jesuiten in Rom, 1580–1700.
Steffen Zierholz.

Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2019. 288 pp. €69.

The basic issue underlying the study, which Steffen Zierholz formulates in a dense, methodologically sophisticated introduction, is very stimulating: in the center of his interest are the devotional practices of self-exploration and constant perfection of the soul, which were cultivated in Jesuit prayer and meditation. With Foucault, Zierholz defines them as techniques through which the subject constitutes itself in a continuous process of self-formation leading to an art of living (*Lebenskunst*). For the Jesuits, these self-practices are then described as an aesthetic formation process, a conversion of the individual (novice) in the sense of a *regeneratio* and re-creation of the soul by devotion and invocation of inner images. As a devotional activity these are acted out bodily by the disciples and in interaction with images, artifacts, and specifically designed spaces. By taking this mindset of the intended audience as a vantage point, Zierholz is able to realign the interpretative focus on the most important sacred spaces of the Jesuits in Rome: Il Gesù, the novice church Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, and Sant'Ignazio. Zierholz assumes that “ways of seeing rehearsed and shaped by the prayer literature” (13) were taking place in a dialectic relation between the imaginative production of inner images and the actual visual perception. The approach of exploring Baroque spatial arrangements in relation to the mindset of the addressees and their devotional practices as well as the methodological considerations on practice and network theory promise an interesting and intellectually stimulating read.

The following three chapters largely fulfill this promise. First, an initial survey of the spatial, pictorial, and medial strategies at work in the initial decoration of Il Gesù, and, more specifically, in the Cappella della Natività—this chapter is devoted to tracing the *energeia* of Jesuit spaces. This is followed by a detailed evaluation of the decoration of the church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, in which Bernini, in particular, is presented as the inventor of a program aimed specifically at novices, recommending the apostle Andrew as a model for taking up the cross and following Christ. The last chapter is dedicated to the ceiling mural and choir decoration of Sant'Ignazio, in which the vocation and the worldwide mission of the Jesuits are plausibly elaborated as core themes of the program. All three sacred spaces belong to educational and residential buildings of the Jesuit order—they can therefore be assumed to have a programmatic message and an exemplary character for Jesuit image making. With this, Zierholz demonstrates a broad set of tools for the study of Jesuit life and devotional practice, and an enormous connoisseurship regarding Jesuit writings and their visual realizations in the prints of prayer literature. The wealth of material and the interpretations it allows will surely give many more researchers occasion for further study.

But unfortunately, there are also problematic aspects: the narrow focus on Rome in the seventeenth century and on the Jesuits results in the emergence of Jesuit innovation

for phenomena that go back to older or common devotional practices. For example, when Zierholz explicates the *energeia* of Jesuit spaces, he rightly cites the antique rhetorical technique of “putting before the eyes,” but he doesn’t seem to be aware that this has been a motor for many devotional images and meditation practices, at least since Francis Bacon and Giotto, resulting in complex devotional images and spatial furnishings that are decidedly designed to blur the aesthetic boundary and give way to a meditative merging of the inner and outer images. The author himself notes in passing that the Franciscans and Dominicans have been a model for Ignatius of Loyola, but when he touches on the idea of godly overshadowing, he doesn’t mention the strong Dominican tradition of the exegesis of light and shadow, whereas the Rubens engraving on the title page could have revealed much more about the specifics of Jesuit devotional practice and pictorial spatiality against the backdrop of Dominican rosary devotion.

Furthermore, in some places factual errors lead to wrong conclusions: Guido Reni’s *Adoration of the Cross of Saint Andrew* from San Gregorio al Celio, for example, cannot well be used as a “non-Jesuit” countermodel (133) to the altarpiece of Guillaume Courtois or its predecessor, since it must be read not frontally but laterally in the movement of the viewer approaching the altar along the picture. The alleged Jesuit invention of positioning the *crux decussata* close to the picture’s edge is widespread in manuscripts and altarpieces of the fifteenth and sixteenth century (e.g., Antonio Semino’s 1532 altarpiece for the Benedictine church Sant’Andrea, in Genoa). Regrettably, these and other irritations interrupt the otherwise stimulating and fruitful reading.

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The Power of Religious Societies in Shaping Early Modern Society and Identities.
Rose-Marie Peake.

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Amsterdam University Press, 2020. 246 pp. €99.

In this volume, Rose-Marie Peake addresses the role of religious societies in shaping early modern Catholic identity through a study of the French organization the Filles de la Charité, or Daughters of Charity. Founded in 1633 by Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul, the Daughters of Charity was an active, unenclosed society that established hospitals, orphanages, and schools for poor girls, among other charitable works. Peake’s interest is not in the institutional or administrative history of the company, but rather its ideology. Central to her methodology is the concept of moral management, which she defines as “the implementation, within the organization and its charitable activities, of a specific value system that is expressed in actions, behaviour, and mentalities” (16). Peake argues that this moral management (the ideal characteristics,