

Der Bildhauer Hans Juncker: Wunderkind zwischen Spätrenaissance und Barock.
Thomas Richter, ed.

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Art exhibitions are often tied to meaningful dates, such as the 400th anniversary of Rembrandt's birth in 2006 or the forthcoming 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his ninety-five theses in 2017. These celebrations prompt scholarly and institutional collaboration plus, hopefully, adequate financial support from public or private sources. In 2014 Aschaffenburg commemorated the 400th anniversary of the dedication of the rebuilding of Schloss Johannisburg, the monumental residence of the archbishops of Mainz, and the 200th anniversary of the political transfer of the city to the new kingdom of Bavaria in 1814. Schloss Johannisburg, badly damaged in the Second Margrave's War in 1552, remained a ruin until Archbishop Johann Schweikard von Kronberg (r. 1604–26) commissioned architect Georg Ridinger to construct the imposing new palace. Although Ridinger is discussed, the exhibition focuses instead on Hans Juncker (1582–after 1624), the talented artist who sculpted the altar (1609–13), pulpit (1614–19), and portal (1618) of the palace chapel. Juncker was one of the many skilled sculptors active in the German-speaking lands in the decades around 1600. Thomas Richter and his colleagues used this anniversary to reassess Juncker's oeuvre. Since he authored stone altars, tombs and epitaphs, and pulpits, among other items that are difficult or impossible to move, many of the works discussed in the catalogue could not be exhibited. To include as many examples as possible, the organizers staged the show in three locations: the Schlossmuseum and Schlosskapelle (both in the palace), as well as the nearby Stiftskirche St. Peter and Paul.

In 1923 Leo Bruhns, the great scholar of Main River region sculpture, referred to Juncker as a wunderkind since the six-and-a-half-meter-tall high altarpiece (1598) for the parish church in Darstadt, today part of Ochsenfurt, is inscribed with his name and age. He was just sixteen years old. Juncker came from a family of stone sculptors. His father, Michael the Elder (d. 1625), and elder brother, Zacharias the Elder (ca. 1578–1665), were active throughout the bishopric of Würzburg. The novelty of such a youthful work

is just one of the many challenges scholars face when studying Hans Juncker. This is his only signed sculpture. Just a few others are documented. Stylistic development is hard to chart as his sandstone and alabaster sculptures can be spectacularly moving, such as the *Penitent Mary Magdalen Altar* (1617–20; cat. no. 20) in the Stiftskirche, to the intentionally historicizing, to merely workmanlike, perhaps due to shop assistants.

This beautifully produced and illustrated volume includes six essays, a catalogue, historical photographs, and appendixes with documents and other relevant texts. The use of older photographs is especially necessary since Aschaffenburg was badly damaged in 1944–45. The exhibition prompted the cleaning of many of Juncker's sculptures or, in other cases, the reassembling of fragments that had languished in the palace depot since 1946. Sabine Denecke briefly discusses some of the restoration efforts. Thomas Richter's opening essay provides a solid introduction to Juncker as well as the goals of this exhibition. Hans-Bernd Spies addresses Aschaffenburg as the Mainz archbishops' residential seat during the years from 1552 until 1618. Cornelius Lange, who is presently writing his dissertation on Juncker at the University of Würzburg, presents a very thoughtful chronological survey of the sculptor's career. He tackles some of the thorny questions of attribution, notably of epitaphs and altars in Mainz and Würzburg cathedrals. Beatrice Söding asks "who is Hans Juncker?" She examines his artistic sources, which range from woodcuts by Dürer and Andrea Andreani (after Giambologna) to the sculptures by Hubert Gerhard and Hans Reichle, active in Munich and Augsburg. Thomas Richter's second essay considers Juncker's use of an intentionally archaizing style when replacing several sculptures in the Stiftskirche that were damaged or destroyed in 1552. These include Juncker's tomb plate of Duke Otto of Bavaria and Swabia (954–82; cat. no. 12), done in 1606–08 to replace an earlier memorial dating to the 1250s. Juncker proved perfectly capable of mimicking a Gothic source or, as seen on the portal of the palace chapel, the Belvedere Torso (figs. 92–93).

Hans Juncker richly deserves the renewed attention provided by this exhibition and excellent catalogue. The high quality of his best sculptures, which range from life-size statues to small reliefs, rivals almost anything being done in Germany at this time. Juncker's career also demonstrates that a sculptor could thrive even in a small town like Aschaffenburg, which then had only about 2,000 residents, if there was adequate patronage.

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