

Badeloch Noldus. *Trade in Good Taste: Relations in Architecture and Culture between the Dutch Republic and the Baltic World in the Seventeenth Century.*

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What, exactly, is *cultural exchange*? Borrowed from anthropology, the term is hardly as simple (or new) as art- and architectural historians often take it to be. In a series of publications, Thomas Kaufmann has shown that in Northern and Central Europe, for example, concepts like classicism were rarely understood as rigidly Italianate phenomena. More often they were regarded as supraregional concepts that flowed from place to place, trailing the paths of capital. Only under the essentialist doctrines of nineteenth-century *Kunstgeographie* did style in history become tied to specific sites and types. Badeloch Noldus's meticulous new study demonstrates an implicit scepticism toward unidirectional models of cultural influence. Interested instead in cultural "relations" within early modern Europe, she focuses upon the fascinating but little-studied Dutch-Baltic traffic in letters and ideas. What emerges from the book is something that looks like mini-globalization before the fact.

Noldus concentrates on the Dutch Republic and the Swedish Empire between 1620 and 1685. During this period Netherlandish trade routes webbed the Baltic while Protestant Sweden — rich from the lumber trade, at war with Denmark sporadically from 1618 — hosted an ascendant aristocracy, a sprawling landmass

(covering much of present day Finland), and a constant need for armaments and financing. Until the 1670s, the Dutch Republic retained a monopoly on toll traffic across the Baltic, and its agents built offices, residences, and gardens throughout Scandinavia. Noldus notes that this migration of architecture to Sweden was, throughout the period, rooted in shared economic interests, rather than in any shared Protestant amity, as some previous scholars have maintained.

The architectural story arising from this account is one of Vitruvianism transformed. We learn that Dutch Palladianism — the kind of style Vingboon's and Salomon De Bray's work ringed the Amsterdam canals with in the 1630s — was in Scandinavia almost entirely the purview of the nobility. At Uppsala, the architectural books studied by young Swedish aristocrats were often Dutch publications. The limitations of local building materials (wood) and weather (cold) in Sweden also ran up against theory developed in balmy Italy, where books like Serlio's (republished in Dutch editions from the 1540s) called for stone walls and numerous large windows — structures more amenable to sunny climes and nearby quarries. In Sweden, Serlian formal innovations gleaned from Dutch architects (rustication, the classical orders) appeared late, and once transmitted and redistributed through local writings (for example, Schering Rosenhane's unpublished *Oeconomia*, ca. 1661) became the grounds for vernacular innovation. As Noldus points out, in Sweden (unlike in the Dutch Republic) architectural education was largely closed to the middle class. One effect was to render building theory itself a kind of luxury good. Classicism remained the stylistic purview of the aristocracy. Vitruvianism in Sweden, as Noldus's title hints, was above all else a matter of taste; it was less about antique "strength and utility" than elegance and convenience.

The section of Noldus's book detailing the art collections of the Swedish nobles Carl Wrangel and Magnus de La Gardie is perhaps the strongest. It shows how architectural books were imported into Sweden and collected. Obtained from agents in Amsterdam en masse, texts trickled along the same trade routes as textiles, luxury goods, and building materials. De la Gardie (1622–86), particularly, was an avid collector of all kinds of printed work, not just architecture, and his original albums, which survive today in Stockholm, contain building elevations alongside engravings by Dürer and Beham. Noldus might have more effectively taken up the question of how de la Gardie's topographical and architectural works related to these other kinds of images in his print collection. Noldus does, however, give consideration to the Dutch paintings imported into certain Swedish collections. In a fascinating subsection, she transcribes several Swedish inventories to track precisely how conspicuous consumption in the Swedish court fueled demand for both art and buildings among the lower nobility.

Noldus judiciously backs off from generalizations about how Sweden and the Dutch Republic offer models for writing about classical architecture outside of Italy. She ultimately frames her work as a specific and carefully documented case study in Baltic history. Indeed, a chief contribution of *Trade in Good Taste* will be its exhaustive presentation of primary sources: its survey of correspondence, manifests, and travel diaries sheds light on material rarely published before, let alone

surveyed in English. Some art historians may chafe at the book's periodic lack of differentiation between the cultural forms under scrutiny: the many paintings, drawings, and books that Noldus examines often seem lashed together, serving as inert commodities that mirror classicism (or not). Surely the migrations of objects and people here examined portend more than a narrative of styles? Ultimately it is with lucidity and erudition that the book examines the material vectors of architectural theory's transmission throughout the Baltic. Is not to recount the variegated ways culture moved from place to place, from, say, Narva to Maastricht, from Haarlem to Uppsala, however, also to reconsider what exactly early modern culture was?

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