

Gregory Jecmen and Freyda Spira, eds. *Imperial Augsburg: Renaissance Prints and Drawings, 1475–1540*.

Exh. Cat. Washington, National Gallery of Art. Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2012. 120 pp. \$30. ISBN: 978–1–84822–122–2.

Imperial Augsburg provides a broad introduction to a rich era of German Renaissance printmaking and draftsmanship. This intriguing exhibition marks a collaboration between curators from the National Gallery of Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The accompanying book of essays divides evenly

between its two authors, with a checklist and a bibliography. The project both capitalizes on and celebrates the National Gallery's Lessing J. Rosenwald collection of early Northern prints (and some of his books, held at the Library of Congress), with additional purchases made by Andrew Robison. Just over a dozen prints and drawings came from outside Washington, DC, making for an exemplary permanent collection show.

The book's coauthored introduction to the city of Augsburg over nearly a century of religious and artistic flux is very readable. It is a good place for art history students to start learning about early modern Germany, especially in conjunction with Jeffrey Chipps Smith's work on Nuremberg and Albrecht Dürer (this fundamental artist lies just outside the Augsburg canon). Freyda Spira's main essay is a similarly good, wide-ranging treatment of the political and humanistic aspirations for prints being made in and for a city infatuated with classical and modern Italianate influences. Gregory Jecmen's essay on color printing and tonal etching includes more detailed visual analysis, with an emphasis on technique. The innovative color printing book projects of Erhard Ratdolt, likely an influence on a young Hans Burgkmair, pair well as a case study with the chiaroscuro-like effects of multiple bitings of the Hopfers' equally daring etchings.

Handsomely produced with Lund Humphries, the book includes a lovely embossed Hopfer ornament detail on the front book board. Yet its unusually small format for an exhibition catalogue introduces some curious design decisions, particularly the emphasis on full-page bleed details and endpapers (with twelve double and ten single pages). Many of these images are not shown in full elsewhere in the volume. The specialist will be familiar with a number of these prints (the Hopfers and Burgkmair abound), but there are lesser-known artists only included in these details, about whom readers might benefit from learning more (such as Christoph Bockstorfer). The stunning Burgkmair drawing of a knight battling a wildman, which was used as a banner at the National Gallery of Art, appears nearly intact here, but others give less of a sense of the full composition. The book's illustrations could also have offered a stronger sense of the range of objects, including numerous books (generally shown as single pages), a medal, a woodblock, a newly acquired Hopfer etching plate, and a magnificent piece of armor in the Washington exhibition. Indeed, this breastplate and backplate with etchings attributed to Hopfer stole the last room of the show. Including a second view in the book might have offered a fuller sense of its three-dimensionality, as well as satisfying the Augsburg knight's apparent need to surround his entire body with etched ornament.

While more ephemeral than etched armor, Emperor Maximilian's paper legacy has been much exhibited and published of late. The most recent examples include the massive Albertina exhibition, *Kaiser Maximilian I. und die Kunst der Dürerzeit* (*Emperor Maximilian I and the Age of Dürer*) (2012), and two books long in the works: Larry Silver's *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (2008) and Christopher Wood's *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* (2008). Maximilian's imperial legacy formed a separate section in the exhibition, but wisely becomes a more seamless component of the book.

This introductory visit to *Imperial Augsburg* is a needed addition to the English literature on German art; it evokes a precious, distinctive legacy, with intentionally fleeting reference to Albrecht Dürer. Yet the fine impressions of the prints themselves tell the story even more eloquently. For those lucky enough to catch the exhibition at one of its two remaining venues, it travels to the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin (5 October 2013–5 January 2014), and the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College (19 September–14 December 2014).

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