

John W. O'Malley, S.J., and Gauvin Alexander Bailey, eds. *The Jesuits and the Arts (1540–1773)*.

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This book is a translation and expansion of a 2003 compendium entitled *Ignazio e l'Arte dei Gesuiti*. The editors of the new volume have improved on the

original by adding copious illustrations and a section on Jesuit activity in North America. Yet they have impoverished it by substituting bibliographies for footnotes. The editors explain that this is for consistency, as not all the essays had footnotes in their original versions. Conforming to the weakness of a few, the product is less satisfying and less useful than it might have been.

In the lead essay John O'Malley, S.J., gives an incisive summary of the central issues, connecting the educational mission of the Jesuit Order to its involvement with theater, dance, art, and architecture. Dealing with the vexed question of "Jesuit style," O'Malley proposes a "rich variety of 'Jesuit styles'" (18), citing, among the determining factors, the nonspecific nature of early Jesuit decrees on art and the willfulness of individual patrons. Giovanni Sale seconds this in his essay on architecture, emphasizing that Jesuit norms were practical, functional, and financial rather than artistic or stylistic. He tracks the Jesuits' evolution from an initial austerity toward increasing embellishment, laying out some key distinctions to help explain the apparent paradox.

In a separate essay on the design of the Roman Gesù, Sale asserts, oddly, that while art historians generally understand the relationship between patrons and architects, they "have been less concerned with the exchange between the donor-financier and the direct beneficiaries of a building" (47). While the claim to methodological novelty is either disingenuous or naïve, Sale's examination of the patron-architect-user triangle is solid and explains the building as a nexus of productive tensions. Richard Bösel's essay broadens consideration to architecture across Europe, presenting a region-by-region survey of monuments. Bösel risks numbing the reader by cramming hundreds of examples into his text. Yet (and though Bösel never states so explicitly), the sheer preponderance of descriptive detail renders explicit the principle of capillary diversity, a model that stands to replace the rejected notion of a unified style.

The first of several essays by Gauvin Bailey shifts the book's focus to the figural arts, examining them in a light of letters, directives, and treatises and emphasizes the connection between Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*. Joining the others in rejecting "Jesuit style," he incisively indicates that the Order's leadership was more concerned with what artists should paint than with how. Yet Bailey backpedals by insisting that certain stylistic qualities consistently recur and are identifiably Jesuit. One cannot have it both ways, and the position that emphasizes eclecticism seems the wiser. Bailey's survey is further undercut by a boosterist tendency to render his material heroic at any cost. The idea, for instance, that the emotionlessness of Niccolò Circignani's paintings actually provided an emotional stimulus to the viewer reads as a convoluted apology for this flaccid late mannerist. Elsewhere, Bailey states that "the Gesu frescoes pioneered a conception of space" (154), a formulation that overvalues anteriority even as it ignores precedents. Strikingly, many of the points he cites as evidence of Jesuit exceptionalism actually apply equally well to contemporary non-Jesuit art: Bailey's history is, in the end, the familiar master narrative, only illustrated with Jesuit examples. The idea that the Jesuits were men of their times is perhaps the real story.

The case for Jesuit exceptionalism may be more convincingly made on the basis of iconography, the subject of Heinrich Pfeiffer's essay. Interest in particular themes, the global repetition of altar dedication patterns, the influence of print cycles, and the proliferation of the image of St. Ignatius are all trends that reveal much about the order and its art. Yet while their subject matter was distinct, the Jesuits' approach to it was in keeping with contemporary practice. As Marcello Fagiolo perceptively indicates in his essay on theater and its ephemeral art and architecture, "the religious dramas of the Jesuits moved in tandem with the tragedies staged in the secular theater" (231). After surveying common motifs and contexts, Fagiolo's essay turns to a single but rich source, the recently published Sopron-Oedenburg album of Jesuit baroque stage designs.

The second half of the book looks beyond Europe, with Philippe Lécivain's broad treatment of the missions and attendant systems, Ramón Gutiérrez and Graciela María Viñuales's general but useful treatment of the Jesuit "legacy" in Latin America, and Gauvin Bailey's surveys of Jesuit art and architecture in Asia and North America. Gutiérrez and Viñuales examine art production systems more than the visual qualities of art itself, and raise the important question of "whether assessment of these [Latin American] paintings should be based on their aesthetic or their functional value" (299). Wisely, they choose not to force Latin American art production into a canon-based history of style, but concentrate on elucidating the issues that are most relevant to the society's activity. Bailey's survey of Jesuit art production in Asia, where European missionaries trained entire schools of local artists, deals with similar issues, though it suffers at points from the author's overenthusiasm. While many of the illustrated objects are exquisite, one looks in vain for the "brilliant" aspects or "expert draftsmanship" in Sacam Jacobus's *Salvator Mundi* or the "delicate" qualities and "high level of artistic activity" in the clunky Nagasaki *Madonna of the Snows* (319–20). Such paintings are interesting for different reasons, and hollow praise given according to the wrong criteria diminishes them and their makers. Bailey's chapter on North America is more straightforward: showing the Jesuits erecting grand edifices in Montreal, rustic longhouses among the Hurons, and deliberately unobtrusive establishments in the English colonies, Bailey poses this variety of activity as "a microcosm of [the Jesuits'] world ministry" (412). Finally, the volume closes with Frank Kennedy's chapter on music.

Despite certain weaknesses, this volume is a great resource. Strung together, the essays constitute a comprehensive survey of the topic. The publisher was generous with the number of illustrations, giving researchers, teachers, and students a ready visual corpus with which to work. On the whole, *The Jesuits and the Arts* is an excellent starting point for anyone interested in looking at the global activity of the Jesuits, the early modern period's greatest communicators.

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