

Die Repräsentation der Habsburger (1493–1806). By Friedrich Polleroß.

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This volume is the kind of book that completes or crowns a scholar's lifework. It covers the centuries-long history of the *par excellence* European ruling dynasty, the Habsburgs, from the perspective of artistic representation. Friedrich Polleroß aimed at completeness: he included every possible artistic product from buildings to coins and engravings. In line with this objective, the volume contains more than 600, high-quality color images. The visual material arranged in a carefully structure certainly offers much more than just mere illustration: the image and the text that interprets it constitute an inseparable whole. The reviewer is in a difficult position to overview a volume that works with such comprehensive visual material, since the pictures almost speak for themselves. Taking the history-shaping power of art seriously, the book recalls Paul Zanker's 1988 classic of ancient history, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*.

Friedrich Polleroß is an outstanding researcher of Austrian art and cultural history, who has been predestined to write this book practically since the start of his scholarly career. His PhD dissertation dealt with religiously inspired court portrait painting, which in 1988 he published as a book titled *Das sakrale Identifikationsporträt*. The approach and theme of the 1992 book co-authored with Andrea Sommer-Mathis and Christopher F. Laferl on the artistic representation of New World colonies also resonates in the present volume. His 2010 monograph connected to the current volume focuses on the intersection of art and the achieving of specific political goals of the imperial diplomat Leopold Joseph Graf von Lamberg (1653–1706) operating in the Papal State. In addition to his academic publications, Polleroß has had numerous institutional assignments. He was head of the Slide Collection at the University of Vienna from 1993 to 2011, is the vice-president of the Vienna-based early modern historical society, and is an expert on the history of the *Waldviertel* region of Lower Austria.

Perhaps the most obvious way to capture the essence of this impressive book is to present its structure. In a longer introduction, Polleroß presents the state of the art research and explains his main views and questions regarding the overall issue. Speaking about the research historical context surrounding the work, we can make two fundamental statements following the author (pp. 9–11). On the one hand, Polleroß speaks about the change in the cultural, interdisciplinary, and international perspective that the humanities have taken in recent decades, focusing on the courts, their networks, their spaces, and their ceremonies, as well as their ‘symbolic capital.’ The renewed interest in the broader topic is also illustrated by the fact that three quarters of the literature he cites dates from the twenty-first century. The second important factor, according to Polleroß, is that in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in its last quarter, there were momentous political events in both Spain and Austria that enhanced the value of their monarchical past. Starting from this period, several comprehensive initiatives aimed at researching early modern European courts and court culture have emerged in Western Europe. Polleroß himself participated in two relevant international projects. He was a member of the Iconography, Propaganda and Legitimation working group of the research project *The origins of the Modern State in Europe, Thirteenth–Eighteenth Century* (1989–1993), and took part in the project *Lieux de pouvoir. Des résidences aux capitales dans l’Europe monarchique, XVème–XVIIIèmes siècles* (1994–1996).

The introductory section shows that Polleroß views the unity between the two main parts of the family empire, Spain and Austria, as a fundamental aspect of their representation. In the light of recent results, this provides increasingly important recognition for Hungarian research. According to the author, the ideology linking the two dynasties is primarily rooted in the family’s particular devotion to the Catholic religion, i.e., in the concept of *Pietas Austriaca*. In addition, he also tries to identify a specific common imperial style.

The thematic chapters highlight the 400 years of Habsburg representation based on the considerations introduced above. The first chapter focuses on the imperial myth inherited from Rome. Individual Habsburg rulers—from Maximilian I to Joseph II—are presented in accordance with this perspective in the light of artworks inspired by the style of antiquity, containing abundant mythological references. The largest part of this chapter is devoted to Leopold I and Charles VI, for whom the imperial heritage was of particular importance in the struggle with Louis XIV for supremacy over Europe, i.e., the Holy Roman Empire, and the Spanish legacy.

Perhaps the most significant part of the volume is the second and longest chapter, entitled *Pietas Austriaca*. From the cult of Three Kings through the veneration of the cross to rulers as intercessors with God, it reviews examples of religious self-identification and representation. We can say that at the center of the book,

both literally and figuratively (p. 276), there is the painting depicting Rudolph I. Created in 1620 by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Wildens, both Netherlandish painters, and exhibited in the Prado in Madrid, constitutes a specific focal point. It depicts a particularly significant family anecdote. The king, who established the family's multinational rule, encounters a priest carrying the Eucharist to a sick person. Out of respect for the sacrament, he dismounts from his horse, hands it to the priest, and accompanies the priest and the Eucharist on foot, leading the horse by the bridle.

The third chapter focuses on genealogical representation and on portrait series. It also includes equestrian portraits of monarchs, starting with Titian's famous 1548 painting of Charles V (p. 392). This chapter includes the representations of some of the smaller—in the context of the book—provinces and countries held by the Habsburg monarchs: Bohemia, Moravia, Tyrol, and Hungary. Although more recent research emphasizes Hungary's importance within the Habsburg dynastic conglomerate, the section introducing it is no more than two or three pages long (pp. 416–418). In any case, the findings of Hungarian historical and art historical research are well considered, as testified by the rich bibliography. Polleroß acknowledges by name Géza Galavics, Géza Pálffy, Borbála Gulyás, Bálint Ugry, and Szabolcs Serfőző (p. 7), researchers dealing with the topics at hand from a Hungarian perspective.

The fourth, concluding chapter can practically be seen as parallel to the first. The thought behind the artistic manifestations presented here is in contrast with the fairly abstract (yet powerful) idea of the legacy of the Roman Empire, rooted in the past and the world of myths. This modern imperial mission had a more concrete factual basis, rooted in geography and the manifest works of Providence. The Habsburg Empire was the first to truly span the entire world, on which the sun really never set, and this is what the artistic depictions are consistent with.

Apart from a few slips and insignificant typos, the reviewer can identify no shortcomings. Summing up, the book will make a huge contribution to European scholarship and will certainly be an indispensable reference work for any art historical research related to the Habsburg dynasty.

