

[Free] Painterly Enlightenment: The Art of Franz Anton Maulbertsch, 1724-1796 (Bettie Allison Rand Lectures in Art History)

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Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann

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Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann : Painterly Enlightenment: The Art of Franz Anton Maulbertsch, 1724-1796 (Bettie Allison Rand Lectures in Art History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Painterly Enlightenment: The Art of Franz Anton Maulbertsch, 1724-1796 (Bettie Allison Rand Lectures in Art History):

11 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Too much enlightenment ...By baroque-maniac Kaufmann acknowledges as one of his central aims to introduce Franz Anton Maulbertsch to art historians outside Central Europe, who are, he says, not yet sufficiently aware of his outstanding achievements. A good idea, he thinks, to make him palatable to newcomers is to disperse the aura of 'strangeness' surrounding him - "The present book", he says, "aims to make the apparently strange seem familiar." To me, this seems all wrong - who, e.g., would try to proselytize for Goya by playing down the sheer extravagance of his imagination and trying, so to speak, to domesticate him? And do believe me, Maulbertsch, in his most visionary moments is in his own peculiar way not far behind Goya, and thus the very thing to do to make his claims to the pantheon of art history truly convincing would be to celebrate Maulbertsch's strangeness and exuberant fancy. Kaufmann, sadly, has for most of the time a quite different agenda. He focuses on the way Maulbertsch was influenced by enlightenment, the rise of neo-classicism and all the concomitant theories; that is, he 'familiarizes' him by linking him to certain intellectual debates of his times. But unfortunately these were influences that on the whole forced Maulbertsch to rein in his more imaginative sallies and in many cases - especially in large-scale fresco painting - diluted his artistic capabilities. How a great painter of the 2nd half of the 18th century, trained in the school of late baroque extravagance, tried to come to terms with the emerging ideas of clarity, sobriety and dignity, makes of course a fascinating story, but as the focus of a beginner's guide to Maulbertsch is does not seem particularly suitable. Art historians conversant with the wider horizons of Central European painting might even point out that some of Maulbertsch's colleagues achieved better results when trying to strike a compromise between Baroque training and the neo-classicist demands of the day. The merits of later Maulbertsch have always been a point of some controversy; his dazzling virtuosity in the early stages of his career has never been seriously doubted by anyone looking into his oeuvre. To what extent Maulbertsch got involved in late 18th century debates is, by the way, a terrain well trodden over in German language Maulbertsch scholarship. Perhaps it is not surprising that so many scholars have set their hearts on it and that Mr Kaufmann has been eager to join their rank: You can fill quite a lot of pages by going lovingly over all those contemporary theories, programmes and reviews that make up the 'discourse' surrounding late Maulbertsch (or should I rather say the 'discursive haze?'), whereas it is much harder to untangle the various threads that have gone into creating the unique stylistic bravura of Maulbertsch in his heyday. Still, you might of course argue that it is good thing to bring Maulbertsch to the notice of the English speaking world at all; and after all there are lots of illustrations (covering all stages of Maulbertsch's career), some of which might indeed make the reader fall in love with Maulbertsch's strangeness in spite of Mr Kaufmann's attempt to tame and civilize him. Regrettably, quite a few of the pictures are of such staggeringly poor quality that it is hard to understand how they could possibly be compatible with the standards to be expected from a university press; pictures that look as if they had been printed in some East European backwater town of the 1960s.

Franz Anton Maulbertsch (1724-1796) was an Austrian fresco painter known for his bold use of color. Although he has been recognized in the Central European regions where he worked, Maulbertsch has remained outside the general canon of art history. With *Painterly Enlightenment*, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann recovers the story of Maulbertsch, offering the first comprehensive English-language study of the long-neglected artist. Kaufmann situates Maulbertsch as a fresco painter at a time of transition to easel painting, a colorist at a time when color was not fully appreciated by contemporary observers, and an interpreter of religious themes at a time when secular subjects were becoming more popular. In this analysis, he is shown caught between the intellectual forces of the Enlightenment and the waning power of the traditional church, thus helping to illuminate the relationship between the Enlightenment and the arts. Kaufmann provides a thorough foundation for the fresh recognition of one of the great painters of eighteenth-century Europe, a leading fresco painter who is a colorist worthy of comparison to the best of his contemporaries, including the celebrated Venetian artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo.

[*Painterly Enlightenment: The Art of Franz Anton Maulbertsch*] is an elegant and illuminating volume in which the author presents several possible ways of interpreting Maulbertsch as an Enlightenment painter.--H-GermanA splendidly lucid study that finally gives the great fresco painter his due. Scholars have never quite known how to fit the idiosyncrasies of Maulbertsch's corpus into the broader canon of art history. Kaufmann does just that and more, establishing Maulbertsch's artistic distinctiveness but also his complex relationship to the emergent Enlightenment culture of Habsburg Austria.--James Van Horn Melton, Emory University From the Inside Flap Kaufmann offers the most comprehensive study available of Austrian fresco painter Franz Anton Maulbertsch, one of the leading architectural painters of the 18th century and a colorist now often compared to his contemporary, the celebrated Venetian artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. Kaufmann's analysis of Maulbertsch also sheds light on the relationship between the Enlightenment and the arts. About the Author Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann is professor in the department of art and archaeology at Princeton University. He is author of many books, including the award-winning *The School of Prague: Painting at the Court of Rudolf II*; *Court, Cloister and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe*; and *Towards a Geography of Art*.