

he and members of his family were frequently found operating in the West of Europe during the fifteenth century.

The publication of Girolamo Zorzi's letters offers scholars exceptional historical documentation that touches the whole of Europe; there is no doubt that these texts will form the basis of important new research.

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Albrecht Dürer and the Embodiment of Genius: Decorating Museums in the Nineteenth Century. Jeffrey Chipps Smith.

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The author investigates the fame of Albrecht Dürer and the impact of his art in the context of the rise of nation-states in Europe. The analysis focuses on the special value assigned to the Genius of Nuremberg as the ideal point of reference for artists and museum audiences. Smith's long-standing study of Northern Renaissance art, particularly Dürer's work, and his attendance at various European museums enabled him to observe how the decorative programs of princely collections, towns, and regional institutions have accorded special importance to the exposition of Dürer's paintings. He also considers Dürer's symbolic presence in buildings, immortalized on walls and ceilings, in facades, and upon balustrades and staircases.

Why Dürer? In his extensive research on the topic, Smith shows by almost thirty consistent examples that Dürer "appeared more often than any other Northern European artist as he came to embody the artistic heritage of the German nations" (2). This book attempts "to answer this question by delving into the complex artistic, cultural, and political histories of this era" and "to understand the period's mindset in microcosm" (189). Smith also explores why Dürer met so often with Raphael, who was regarded as "the divine" artist par excellence of the Italian Renaissance, and why Hans Holbein often replaced Dürer in the ascent of German nationalism. Dürer epitomized artistic greatness, and a stimulus for contemporary artists to restore an extraordinary art after centuries of decline, at a time when new museums were being constructed across German-speaking lands. The present study sheds new light on the erection of many museums in the nineteenth century, and on the upturn of art history as a discipline. The text is richly illustrated, with over 140 images, including photographs and drawings depicting museum decorations destroyed during World War II.

This book is aimed at experts in modern art history, the history of museum collections, and the history of art; nevertheless, it offers the art lover a basic key to comprehend why Dürer played an essential role in the nineteenth-century imagination. Without sacrificing depth or accuracy, the analysis proves agile and engaging; it is

published in English, thus allowing a broader audience to reflect on important issues that, until now, mostly concerned the scientific community.

The main focus of this volume is not on Dürer's art but on his symbolic role as the German Renaissance artist most celebrated by nineteenth-century German nationalism and on his posthumous reception in the decorative programs of many art museums founded from the 1820s until the end of the nineteenth century, starting with the pioneering design of the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. Visitors look now at those spectacular art historical lessons on the museums' walls and mostly do not realize the aims of such narrative scenes. But these decorations say something remarkable about an institution and its aspirations. Iconographic programs, with strong didactic goals intended to dignify museum interiors and facades in German-speaking areas, are accurately described in five chapters, with ample consideration of their connections to contemporary political and cultural currents. Some cases outside Germany have also been illustrated, such as the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. They are, after all, interesting but not essential for the arguments discussed in this book. The crucial question regards what it meant to be German in the age of Dürer and, more significantly, in the Napoleonic era and the ensuing decades.

Chapter 1 is expended to quickly describe the process of constructing the artist's self-image and public persona according to the cultural standards of the Renaissance era. Dürer's intention was reflected in his own portraits, but also in the literature of his time. Beginning in the 1790s, Dürer surfaces as the embodiment of the German tradition to which art and literature aspire. Central in the process of nationalizing Dürer were the celebrations of 1828, the three hundredth anniversary of his death: the Nuremberger Master "became a vessel holding the diverse aspirations of the age . . . to represent national integration and common national ideals of genius and character" (36). "The translation of patriotic expressions about Dürer from text to image occurred, above all, in his native city of Nuremberg" (43). Rauch's bronze monument—the oldest freestanding memorial honoring an artist in all Europe—set a significant example.

In this important study the reader will, unfortunately, miss a consideration of two themes: the academic debate at the end of the nineteenth century about the proper characteristics of German art (*das Nationale, das Charakteristische*) and, more broadly, the question of whether one can even conceive of a German Renaissance in the arts and culture at all. Chapter 2 and especially chapter 9, as well as the book's argument in general, would profit from their inclusion. Tacitus's "Germania," first edited by Celtis in Nuremberg, was the catalyst for the first instance of definitive German national consciousness on record.

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