

Winners and Losers: The Impact of the Reformation on the Art Market

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If, in reference to the visual arts, you inquire into the possible negative implications of the Reformation, you quickly realize that this is indeed a quite justified line of questioning. Alone the far and wide flare-up of Iconoclasm offers enough material for an occupation with this theme or with the fate of individual artists during the Peasants' War of 1525. Such as that of Tilman Riemenschneider (ca. 1460–1531) who, in the summer of 1525, was caught up in the vortex of the peasant revolt in Würzburg and, from then on, never received any notable commissions from this diocesan town. In the last years of his life, he paid for his (alleged) alignment on the side of the peasants with the economic decline of his previously flourishing enterprise.¹ Or the painter Jörg Ratgeb (1470/80–1526) who, because of his source-documented active participation in the Peasants' Revolt, paid a fatal price. He was charged with high treason and executed in 1526.²

However, despite the drama of these individual destinies and of historical Iconoclasm itself, nothing is comparable to the long-term structural changes that were to follow. At the end of this development a church had arisen — for example in Calvinist Switzerland — devoid of pictures, not to mention one with a deep-seated hostility to images similar to the northern Netherland provinces. From the perspective of those who promoted this development, the result was not seen as a debit to art, but as a plus. Also from an art-historical perspective it all comes down to who is keeping the books on the pros and cons. For in Holland, the art market was formed anew under anti-Catholic auspices and, in the end, the visual arts flourished in such a way that we speak of the seventeenth century as Holland's "Golden Age". In the southern Catholic provinces of the Netherlands, roughly present-day Belgium, as well as in the German regions that remained Catholic, the arts during the so-called Counter Reformation developed a splendor that outshone anything seen up to then.

We must therefore consider everything from the perspective of the art and of the artist in our inquiry into the possible negative implications of the Reformation and differentiate according to the place and the time. With a view to the theme of the conference, I will concentrate on the first decades of the Reformation as well as mostly on the central region of Germany.

The response is a differentiated one for this time and this place, for it is dependent on whether I shine a light on an artist who stood on the winning or the losing side. In 1525 the Nuremberg sculptor Veit Stoss (ca. 1447–1533) would have assumedly answered the question as to how his workshop was doing with "not very well", while Lucas Cranach the Elder (ca. 1472–1553) would have beamed with satisfaction since business was better than ever before in Wittenberg.

Before evidence of this is presented it needs to be generally observed that there has been but little research into artists' grievances,³ as well as the fact that the question of the negative implications of the Reformation have been subject to astonishingly little



Fig. 1 Hans Sebald Beham and Hans Sachs, *Ein neuer Spruch, wie die Geystlichkeit und etlich handwerker uber den Luther clagen* [A new maxim on how the clergy and many handicraftsmen reproach Luther], ca. 1524, woodcut (broadsheet), 26.1 x 15 cm.

consideration, apart from the polarizing portrayal of the way nation states came into being. Whereby artists' grievances that are individual and local (such as “grumbling comes with the territory”)⁴ must be distinguished from complaints in the wake of profound events — like the Reformation — i.e., veritable paradigm shifts.⁵

The Nuremberg sculptor Veit Stoss had objective reasons for complaint, namely, when a large-scale carved altarpiece remained largely unpaid as a result of the transition from the old to the new doctrine. On 13 July 1520 he signed a contract with the Carmelite monastery in Nuremberg that specified the production of a large carved altarpiece for its church.⁶ (It is now called the “Bamberg Altar” after its present-day location.) The carver immediately began work on the commissioned Marian retable that same year. The wage agreed on was 400 Rhenish guilders; payment was to be made in annual installments of 50 guilders until the entire sum was settled. After three years, the works were finished on schedule in 1523 and the retable was installed in the Carmelite church. Two years later the situation in Nuremberg had changed owing to the spread of the Reformation, the details of which go beyond the scope of this study. What is important is that the Nuremberg Council dissolved the Carmelite monastery on May 19, 1525. But at this point, 242 guilders of the negotiated price were still outstanding. Protracted contestations followed in which Veit Stoss attempted reimbursement. He turned to the City Council of Nuremberg for help, who surprisingly suggested that

he renounce the sum already paid him, i.e., refund and repossess his work and sell it elsewhere. An imposition the artist rejected. It goes without saying that the chances of selling a large-scale Marian altar — standing 3.5 meters high and, when open, over 5 meters wide — was zero at the start of such ‘interesting times’. When the sculptor died in 1533, no settlement of the remaining sum had yet been agreed on. It was not till 1543 that a solution was arranged when his heirs sold the altar to Bamberg, where it can be admired in the present-day cathedral. Thus the altar moved from a city that had become Lutheran to one that had remained Catholic. The sources do not reveal the amount of the proceeds the heirs were able to attain.

Thus the famous Nuremberg sculptor Veit Stoss had every reason to complain that the impact of the Reformation had severely harmed him financially. He was not the only one. The grievances of the artists, documented by petitions to the authorities, were publicized via the modern mass medium of the broadsheet.

The Nuremberg painter Hans Sebald Beham (1500–1550) and Hans Sachs (1494–1576) printed a broadsheet in 1524 (fig. 1): *Ein neuwer Spruch, wie die Geystlichkeit und etlich handwercker uber den Luther clagen* [A new maxim on the way the clergy and many handicraftsmen reproach Luther].⁷ In both picture and word the negative implications of the Reformation are expressed: the losers of the Reformation — clerics, artists and artisans — go before the court of Christ to accuse Luther. In their opinion, his new doctrine reduced their income. Under the direction of a prelate holding a scroll, those protesting are a priest with a chalice, a painter with a mahlstick and painter’s coat of arms, a bell founder, etc., as well as those mentioned in the text: organists, goldbeaters, illuminators, goldsmiths, picture carvers, glass painters, parament embroiderers, makers of rosaries and candles. Luther appears with a scholar as well as with Karsthans. The latter, depicted with a threshing flail, is the embodiment of the common man and simple folk.⁸ The reformer accuses the complainants of “Giesserei” or hypocrisy. Christ renders a verdict that favors Luther and wants the gospel read “rain und pur” [clear and pure].

In the same year that Veit Stoss in Nuremberg started to notice that the effects of the Reformation threatened his profession, artists in Strasbourg also protested for like reason.

On February 3, 1525, painters and sculptors addressed the City Council with a jointly written petition. Because of the ban on images, there was a decline in commissions. In this supplication, the artists fundamentally welcome the introduction of the Reformation, but at the same time express their fear that because of the lack of commissions, they will be subjected to “dann entlichs verderbens und des bettelstabs” [final ruin and beggary].⁹ Since they have learned no other handiwork, they ask the Council if it might “mit emptern, zu denen wir toglich sein möchten, versehen” [award us offices where we could daily be]. The Council holds out this prospect of the desired welfare provisions, as we would put it today.

Hans Sachs, this time together with the Nuremberg painter Georg Pencz (ca. 1500–1550), captions the situation in this broadsheet (fig. 2): *Clagred der Neün Muse oder künst vber Teütschlandt* [The nine muses’ lamentations regarding Germany] from 1535.¹⁰ Sachs, as he recounts in a poem printed below, lost his way during a deer hunt deep in the woods of a frosty winter. There he encountered nine pale and noble female figures dressed in a heathen (that is, ancient) style. They were very emaciated and their silken robes torn and dirty. He learns from them that they are the nine muses. They want to leave Germany since the arts are no longer appreciated there, but instead



Fig. 3 Peter Flötner, *Lament of the Impoverished*
 Artist, woodcut (broadsheet), 27.4 x 19 cm.



Fig. 4 Peter Flötner, *Steffan Goldschmidt*, woodcut
 (broadsheet), 31.9 x 18 cm.

the German or Gothic style. But since he can no longer find a market, he has had to change his profession and now serves his prince as a soldier. We can undoubtedly speak here of the negative effects of the Reformation when artists are left — like Veit Stoss — with unpaid commissions, when projects are lacking and the city authorities are asked to provide artists with jobs — as in Strasbourg — or when they have to change professions in order to earn their livelihood, like Veit Pildhauer. Besides individuals, there were, above all, the reproaches of artist collectives presented in petitions or broadsheets. Statistics are also used to demonstrate the negative impact on the art market, as two art-historical dissertation projects show us in Mainz¹³ and in Augsburg.¹⁴ Because of the wider regional significance of Augsburg as an art center, the results for this city are of major importance. I must first make it clear that it is possible to garner statistical material on this subject because artists in the old Reich¹⁵ as a rule subjected to guilds or guild-like regulations. This means that, for example, the founding of one's own workshop as well as the enrollment of apprentices or journeymen were supervised by the guilds or other authorities. The surviving records on handicraftsmen allow us to conclude that, during these transitional times, the artists in Augsburg — during that city's Reformation in the 1520s and early 1530s — applied for fewer master's positions, while the already established artists' workshops took on fewer apprentices than was previously the case. In other words less confidence existed in the possibility of earning a living. This was a direct consequence of the historical developments around 1520 and their impact on the Augsburg art market. With the



Fig. 5 Cranach workshop, *Martin Luther*, 1525, oil on wood, diameter ca. 10 cm, Stadtmuseum, Nördlingen.

death of Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519) and the Augsburg populace's preference for the teachings of Martin Luther (fig. 5), the number of commissions for visual artists, as of 1520, were greatly reduced. In 1522 the Augsburg City Council decided to follow the Lutheran articles of faith. The general mood became increasingly antagonistic to images; in 1524, 1531 and 1533 there were verifiable iconoclastic confrontations.¹⁶ The return to the old beliefs that Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) ordered in 1530 was rejected by the Augsburg City Council. The result was that all pictorial works were removed from churches and many places of worship closed, followed by the massive emigration of the Catholic clergy. Inclusion and exclusion for artists now became a reality. Anyone who could no longer assure his livelihood locally and did not want to give up his artistic profession like "Veit the Sculptor" had to leave town and try his fortune in other art markets in order to escape the Reformation's negative effects. In this way, the noted Hans Sebald Beham left his native city of Nuremberg in 1525 and at first worked for Albert of Brandenburg (1490–1545) before moving on to Frankfurt on the Main. Sebald — and his brother Barthel (ca. 1502–1540) — are among the so-called godless painters of Nuremberg who had to leave the city because of their radical disposition. What is remarkable is that this radical follower of the new doctrine should find work with Cardinal Albert. For him Sebald painted an ornamental tabletop, which is now in the Louvre, and illuminated a liturgical manuscript.¹⁷ That the artist, independently from his own belief system, could work for the most diverse patrons in this time of upheaval is not an isolated case; other examples will follow. In Frankfurt Hans Sebald Beham produced very small-scale prints that time and again attracted the attention of the authorities. If you so will, the artist with his miniatures had discovered a niche in the market. At a closer perusal, namely, his mythological, biblical or genre-

like scenes are erotically charged, if not downright pornographic.¹⁸ Over 500 years ago the borderline between art and pornography was here being tested.¹⁹

Hans Sebald Beham is the poster boy for an artist working non-confessionally, as well as for a painter who sought to conquer new markets after the lapse in church commissions.

His brother, Barthel Beham, likewise had to leave the imperial city of Nuremberg in 1525 because of his radical beliefs. He moved to Munich and there, very remarkably, worked mainly for William IV, Duke of Bavaria (1493–1550), who had a reputation in his dukedom for standing up to reformational movements. Both Beham brothers thus worked for representatives visibly attached to the old beliefs. And Barthel would not be limited solely to court portraits. William IV, the Steadfast, also commissioned him to do large-scale paintings that thematized the legend of the search for the Holy Cross.²⁰ More precisely, the moment is depicted in which, in the presence of the Empress Helena, the genuineness of the newly found cross is being tested. On the occasion of countless relics of the cross, the theme of the painting is the legitimation of the cult of saints and of relics. William IV himself was an adherent of both and had his wife — Jacobäa of Baden (1507–1580) — portrayed in the role of Saint Helena. To her right are pictured Saint Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, as well as the benefactor Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg, he too a great proponent of the cult of saints and relics.

Apelles was here not faced with choosing which road to go down. Namely, the artists of the Reformation Age, irrespective of their own religious beliefs, worked impartially for patrons devoted to the old or to the new creed. This can be subsumed under today's euphemism of "job-market flexibility", a projection from a modern perspective that tends to see religiously-based problems for the artist on the cusp of a new age.²¹

The Reformation had a surprisingly swift impact on the art market, with an effect on the fate of single artists and on single works, even on entire professional groups such as sculptors or painters. The examples up to now have already shown that the picture here is a very colorful one, like the map of the old empire. We can only come to conclusions microhistorically, for the artists' status was dependent on the religious alignment of the town or the religious preference of the territorial lord as to whether, according to the one or the other constellation, there were potential "niches" for profitable artistic activity.

Nikolaus Hagenauer became a citizen of Strasbourg in 1493 and died there before 1538. He was able to produce the sculptural works for the so-called Isenheim Altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald (ca. 1475/80–1528), a privilege not extended to his son Friedrich (ca. 1499–after 1546). Friedrich had learned the craft of sculpture from his father. But since there was no longer any market for altars, he specialized in small-scale carved and cast medallion portraits. Since the 1518 Augsburg Reichstag, this genre had become fashionable with princes and patricians as well as with rich burghers and merchants.

Friedrich Hagenauer left Strasbourg and travelled at first to Nuremberg, then Passau, Regensburg, Salzburg, Augsburg, Baden and, finally, Cologne. Why so many changes of location? They are explained by his specialization in the carving and casting of medallion portraits. When, after several years, his activity in one town had, as we would say today, 'saturated the market', he moved on to another town where he could again solicit new commissions. That is, he had to accept mobility as a condition of his specialized choice of a livelihood.

Something also demanded of the famed Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98–1543). When commissions in Basel diminished even more, the painter first sought his fortune in 1523/24 at the court of Francis I of France (1494–1547). When that didn't succeed, he moved from Basel to London 1526 to 1528 and, finally from 1532 on, taking up service under the English King, Henry VIII (1491–1547). He was so successful there that English art history takes his appearance on the scene as the beginning of early modernism. Holbein the Younger had left his wife and children behind in Basel.

On the other hand, the success-habituated sculptor Daniel Mauch (ca. 1477–1540) emigrated together with his wife. After commissions in Ulm became scarce as a result of the Reformation, from 1529 Mauch sought out cities or residences that had remained Catholic and finally moved with his wife to Liège. He was one of the very successful sculptors there and, in addition, contributed significantly to the style change in Liège from late Gothic to the Renaissance. Thanks also to Prince-Bishop Érard de La Marck (1472–1538), the town became a center for the arts, and Daniel Mauch was one of its outstanding representatives.

The couple died in the same year of 1540, only slightly apart, and for this reason the Latin epitaph honors them both. The text has only been handed down in writing, since but a few fragments exist of the original panel. There you can read that the couple Mauch, after being driven out of their paternal city of Ulm by the party of unbelievers, had gone into voluntary exile in the city of Liège (“Eburonen”).²²

Their son, who signed on to serve Catholic princes, wrote these words that are remarkable not only in our context. As a negative implication of the Reformation, they speak clearly of the expulsion of the artist Daniel Mauch as a result of Ulm's introduction of the new doctrine.

A provisional stocktaking: Undoubtedly the Reformation had a grave impact on the art market and on the lives of individual artists. The bandwidth of possible implications was enormous. Individual as well as collective artists' grievances were testified to in written form. The artists lamented their reduced commissions, which itself became a theme worthy of depiction that was passed on to the public in the form of broadsheets. There is evidence of a number of migrants seeking a new job market. The most drastic form of the Reformation's negative implications is the case of the sculptor who changed his profession to that of the soldier. This needs to be viewed in a very differentiated way as regards time and place. I must warn against any hasty conclusions on a subject that has not yet been subjected to adequate art-history research. There is no doubt that the artist was forced to adapt, to try out new pictorial themes or art techniques; formerly sedentary artists now had to travel in pursuit of commissions. Which did not stop at national borders. It not only required artists to learn a foreign language, but also to accept differences in culture and mindset.

How did all this turn out in the case of Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553)? Born in the Franconian town of Kronach, he first comes to the attention of art history as a thirty-year-old. Seemingly from out of the blue, he emerges in Vienna around 1500. His schooling, as well as his early works, lies in the darkness of history. Paintings and graphic prints produced in Vienna are what art historians call his 'early work' and are considered to be among the best that German art at the time had to offer, namely

on a par with an Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528). In 1504/05 he moved from Vienna to Wittenberg to take up a post as Saxonian court painter. Up to his death he would serve three territorial princes, Frederick the Wise (1463–1525), John the Constant (1468–1532) and John Frederick the Magnanimous (1503–1554). Thus he lived and worked at the center of the reformational movement. What effects did the Reformation have on him and his works? How did Cranach's order book look as of 1517 or, more precisely, starting in the 1520s?

His possession of real estate and property as well as his tax revenue show that he steadily increased his financial means.²³ According to the records, Lucas Cranach the Elder was active in many different kinds of business. Our question is which share of this was founded on his art, more explicitly on his painting. We need to consult the statistics to be able to answer this. The question to be asked is how his painting production developed quantitatively following the first works from his time in Vienna. His stylistic development is not of interest here, that is, the difference between his so-called Viennese early period and his late work. What this quantitative method also ignores is the different amount of time Cranach needed to finish a small painting vs. a large winged altarpiece. Also not under consideration is the difference between a routine portrait and a demanding innovative depiction, such as a life-size Venus by which Cranach entered into a rivalry with Dürer. Neither should the question concern us as to the artist's actual hands-on involvement vs. his workshop's share.

For all the paintings are to be included in a statistical summation that is not meant for an auditor's watertight examination but simply inquires into whether, by means of the volume of the older Lucas Cranach's commissions, we can surmise what influence the Reformation had on his painting output.

The chosen years under examination are those from around 1500 to 1537, that is, the period in time in which we are certain of his first paintings and subsequently up to the year where we register the change in his (workshop) signature. By choosing this time span, we avoid a date-setting problem that has to do with the death of his son Hans (ca. 1513–1537) in far-off Bologna. It was namely at this point that Hans' brother, Lucas Cranach the Younger (1515–1586), began to play an ever more important role in the painting workshop, which is expressed by way of a change in the signature of the Cranach workshop. Cranach the Elder's signature was a winged serpent from a heritable coat of arms granted to him in 1508 by Frederick the Wise: a serpent with bat-like webbed wings, with a crown on its head and a ruby set in a gold ring in its mouth. As of 1508, this signature of a serpent had stood for Cranach the Elder and his workshop. From 1508 with few exceptions, all signed paintings before 1537 show this serpent, presented by the Cranachs or their workshop members as their signature. After the death of the son, Hans, the serpent signet changes. The wings are now no longer similar to a bat, but to a bird. These are also no longer held upright but lie along the serpent's body.

Research on Cranach has tried to differentiate the exact dating of Cranach's work before 1537. The paintings that were done after 1537 and show the Cranach serpent with lowered wings are dated across-the-board as "post 1537".

If this were continued in this vein, the imagined statistics would lead to imprecision, since the immense production of paintings after 1537 no longer allows a categorization according to single years of origin. It is for this reason that I have not considered the years 1537 up to Cranach's death in 1553, since these — as will be shown — do not have any significance for our line of inquiry.

The issue here is namely to compare Cranach's situation with that of his colleagues from the same period, noted above. How did Cranach's business fare in the 1520s and 30s?

To find this out, we took the target month of April 2014 from an inventory of exactly 2,347 paintings that were uploaded on the Net by the research project "cranach.net"²⁴ and filtered those out that were dated by the artist's or his workshop's label. Out of the 2,347 paintings, there were 649 that all bear the year applied in paint. The paintings are classified according to their year of production (fig. 6).

In a second step the paintings that can be identified according to the standard monograph were established (fig. 7). In 1932 two German art historians, Max Jakob Friedländer and Jakob Rosenberg, submitted an oeuvre catalogue of the paintings by Lucas Cranach the Elder and his workshop.²⁵ The statistics include 588 paintings that Friedländer/Rosenberg were able to classify according to the specific year of their fabrication. The Friedländer/Rosenberg list confirms the entire state of affairs described by cranach.net.

In conclusion there is yet a third list (fig. 8). It includes those paintings that are authenticated by written sources although they no longer exist. The existing paintings are indicated in the statistics of fig. 6 and 7. This third list shows that, despite the ca. 2,400 surviving Cranach paintings, the loss of Cranach works has been anything but insignificant.

The list based on these sources envisages a three times increase in Cranach's painting production. Firstly and approximately the period between 1520 to 1525. Then a very high increase in the two years 1532/33 and the third increase from approximately 1533 to 1538 (not so significantly visible since the period of investigation ends in 1537).

If all three findings are placed one above the other (fig. 9), a clear-cut picture emerges. It becomes plain how belatedly (not till 1500) it is before we become aware of Cranach as an artist. In the preceding years there is no painting, in fact no artwork at all, that we can categorize as his. From around 1500 we see, though with some fluctuation, a continual rise in his production up to the end of the period under investigation: 1537.

Which paintings were the result of this clear upsurge in production during the first two decades of the Reformation? After all, the curve continues past Luther's 'fateful year' of 1517, as well as the year 1522, that of Wittenberg's iconoclastic turmoil when the question of the role of depictions was radically invoked.

Cranach has no one lesser than Albert of Brandenburg to thank for this significant rise, the ruler who awarded Cranach and his workshop a large commission from ca. 1520 to ca. 1525. That is, in those years when other artists were left sitting on finished religious works, could not get paid for them or received no new church commissions, Cranach was enjoying a commission to furnish a complete altar cycle for Albert of Brandenburg's abbey church in Halle.²⁶ The "Stiftskirche", today colloquially called a cathedral, was at one blow provided with 16 new altars between ca. 1520 and 1525, all of which were designed by Cranach. Exactly 142 paintings with, in part, over-life-sized portrayals were ordered and accomplished, an artistic as well as a logistic feat that has no rival in the old empire. With this giant order, Cranach was able to compensate for the reduction in other church commissions during the first stormy years of the Reformation.²⁷

This large contract was flanked by other orders that Cardinal Albert placed with Lucas Cranach. We have consciously neglected the art of engraving as well as letterpress printing in order to concentrate solely on painting. Along with portraits, there were, above all, role-playing depictions showing Albert as Saint Hieronymus, Saint Erasmus or Saint Martin. To put it quite bluntly, in the 1520s it couldn't get more Catholic than that. When Iconoclasm was dominant everywhere else, the Cranach workshops in Wittenberg were establishing the groundwork for the German representative of the papal church.

The second large rise in Cranach's turnover was entered in the books for the years 1532/33. A narrow column, concentrated in these two years, towers to a sharp rise. It results from the commission of 120 paintings for the Wittenberg court. A receipt vouches for the fact that Cranach had an order to paint 60 duo portraits, such as Frederick the Wise on the left panel and his brother John the Constant on the right. Under each of the pictures there is a pasted text printed on paper.²⁸

Of these onetime 120 paintings, many have survived; the rest are vouched for by the cited source. Occasionally collectors had the lower part with the text sawn off. It is quite evident that the production of 120 portraits in two years requires a well-organized workshop, since this large contract for paintings would have been accomplished alongside of other routine business.

The third rise in turnover in 1533 to 1538 is vouched for by surviving drawings and paintings. Albert's nephew, Prince-electors Joachim II of Brandenburg (1505–1571), for his Berlin-Cölln abbey church also ordered a cycle of saints and a cycle of the passion, as had his uncle in Halle.²⁹ The description of the reformation situation in Berlin is here not clear-cut, for this royal patron professed his allegiance to Luther by outwardly ingesting the Eucharist both as wine and bread. The fact is, however, that in an early church in Berlin a saint and passion cycle was found for which Cranach provided 117 paintings sent from Wittenberg to Berlin. To make this perfectly clear, these were not relatively small-scale paintings as in the formerly listed example (120 portraits), but again large-scale altar panels. As was the fate of Cranach's huge contract for Halle/Saale, a large number of these paintings disappeared over the course of hundreds of years.

The historical irony is that two of the three distinct increases in contracts presented here were ordered by Catholic patrons in the 1520s and 1530s.

Whereby the first large contract will have been the more significant one. Cranach not only defied the iconoclast crisis but his output dwarfed everything seen up to then.

Once the commission in Halle was completed in 1525, the number of Cranach's orders also plummeted. In addition, Frederick the Wise died the same year; Cranach was tacitly kept on as court artist by John the Constant. The artist must have realistically supposed that there would be no more Catholic commissions for paintings of the former magnitude. That the huge Berlin commission was about to materialize is something no one could have then foreseen. The new Lutheran doctrine had not yet developed any pictorial program for altars. The few later commissions — such as the Wittenberg last-supper altar — never attained the volume of pre-reformation retable productions.

Around 1525 the question posed for Cranach — as for many of his artist colleagues hit by the Reformation — was how things could proceed if, on the one hand, there would be a decline in orders for religious art from the church and on the other

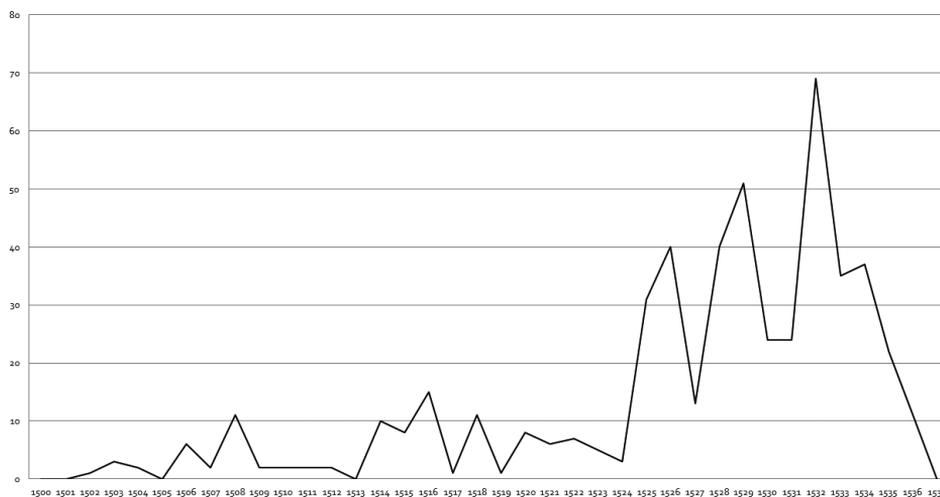


Fig. 6 649 of the Cranach-workshop paintings that according to cranach.net (stand: IV/2014) can be classified as originating between ca. 1500 and 1537.

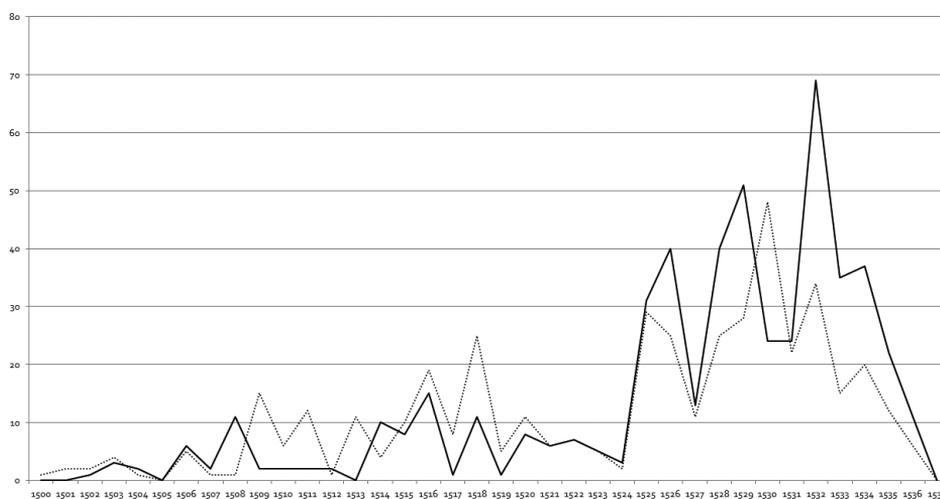


Fig. 7 588 of the Cranach-workshop signed or attributed paintings that Friedländer/Rosenberg (1932) originated in the period around 1500 to 1537.

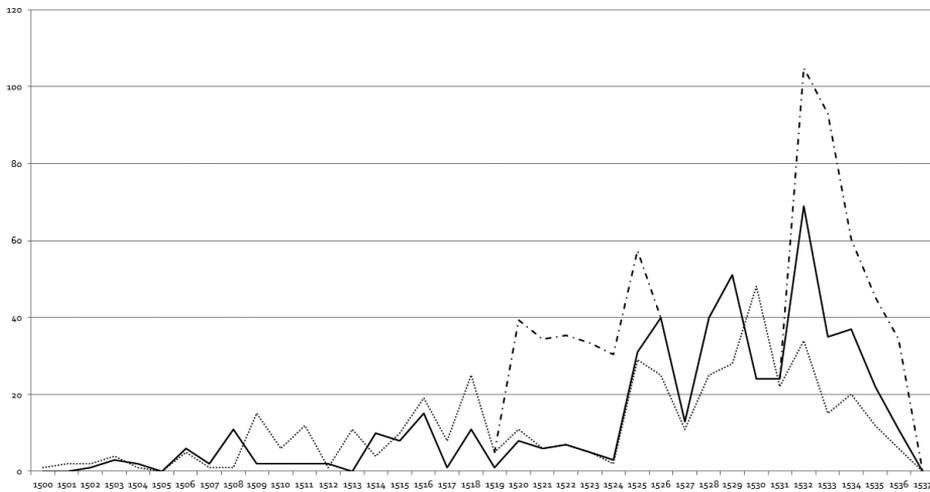


Fig. 8 376 Cranach-workshop authenticated paintings (only in part still extant) whose year of origin can be classified as around 1500 to 1537.

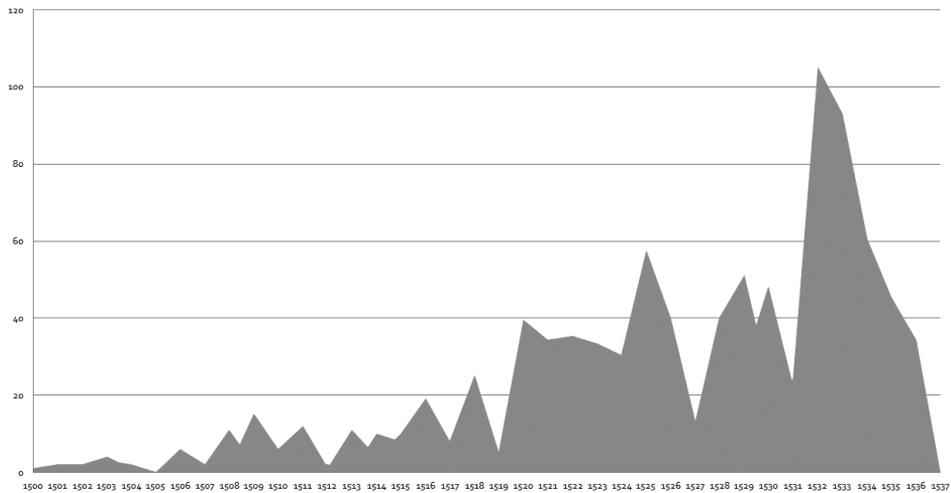


Fig. 9 Summary statistics of the Cranach-workshop's entire painting production of the years around 1500 to 1537.

from private clients, such as for devotional pictures or house altars. The situation did not threaten Cranach's existence since he was assured of court contracts. But he must have thought long and hard about a new orientation of his repertoire so as to be able to retain his rank in the art market outside of Wittenberg.

Portrait painting became an important mainstay. And in the second half of the 1520s Cranach began testing new picture themes and formats. He thought up new concepts one after the other and made them marketable, as it were.

Thus, for the first time, he introduced a new picture format to the market: the small tondo.³⁰ This took up the fashion of the portrait medallion that we've already seen with Friedrich Hagenauer. The carved or cast round picture came into fashion at the 1518 Augsburg Reichstag. With his sure instinct, Cranach appropriated this trend and a few years later brought his small round paintings — with religious or mythological subject matter or as portraits (see fig. 5) — onto the market. These round paintings have a somewhat artificial effect and were oriented towards a newly forming art market, about which one could as a rule say that it followed different criteria from the religious art that preceded it. We are increasingly dealing here with collector items.

For this newly evolving art market that, among other things, inquired into profane themes or desired religious depictions that could be experienced within an art collection, Cranach developed new formulas of portrayal.

What is striking is that he began to do so in the first half of the 1520s when his workshop was working on a large order from Albert of Brandenburg. That is, he used the years of his workshop's peak occupation in order to reflect on an artistic reorientation. When Cranach received encouragement for these new themes, he brought them increasingly — in part, en masse — to market in the second half of the 1520s.³¹ With these paintings — and along with an increased production in portraits — he was then able to compensate for the reduction in church or religious commissions and even increase his output.

The new paintings appeared in many variations, a practice up to then unknown. This new theme was lent a hand by a transformed style of figuration, which was just as appealing as it was unencumbered by the study of nature or of antiquity. The struggle with a theory of human proportions is a study he left to Albrecht Dürer.³² Besides supervising the commission for Halle with its innumerable depictions of saints and of Christ's passion, this leading artist was quite obviously engaged in experimenting with the "nude" figure. The latter, stripped of all classical reminiscences, became an unmistakable feature of the Cranach nude, which now left the workshop in great numbers ("sex sells"). He had found a way in which he was able to thrive in a time that was increasingly difficult for painting (and for art in general) and did so by developing a ready-made kind of painting that is strikingly quick to master and became unmistakably linked to his workshop. Over the course of the 1520s his figures had become so conditioned that as a whole or in part they appeared to be a preset formula, almost a template. Also if some subjects, such as the depictions of Venus and the thematically related judgment of Paris,³³ go back to the pre-reformation era, the main profane-mythological themes³⁴ offered by Cranach the Elder's workshop did not gradually materialize after the conclusion of the large Halle commission but arrived full-fledged on the scene.

Cranach painted countless variations on the theme "Hercules and Omphale". In the 1530s, at least 26 mostly large-scale paintings were produced showing Hercules at



Fig. 10 Screenshot from *cranach.net* (stand XI/2014) with paintings by the Cranach-workshop that depict "Hercules at the Court of Omphale".

the court of Omphale (fig. 10).³⁵ Whereby these are not replicas of a once accomplished composition but, according to the praxis of the Cranach workshop, are variations on a successful iconographic type.

The period in his life when Hercules was a slave to Omphale is part of the ambivalent side of this hero, just as much as is the blindly enraged or drunken Hercules. It is difficult to reconcile this latter with the idea of his unbroken virtue, his invincible strength and his ascent to Mt. Olympus. And yet this episode of his subjection became an extremely popular subject in the visual arts.

Only seldom do we know who was the first to own a Cranach work. The Hercules and Omphale painting from 1535, now in Copenhagen, belonged to Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg; his coat of arms can be seen on the left.³⁶ ›So beherrscht verderbliche Wollust mächtige Geister‹. [So does ruinous lust dominate powerful minds.] The particulars cannot be established of whether this was a work commissioned from the Cranach workshop by Albert or bought by him on the art market. In any case Albert's coat of arms looks as though it was applied later, which means it was probably not ordered beforehand but bought shortly after completion.

This is true for most of the examples brought forward here to illustrate the changing thematic range of the Cranach workshop. For instance for 22 paintings of "The Judgment of Paris". Paris had been given the task of choosing the most beautiful among three goddesses. His misjudgment triggered the Trojan War. Or for 76 examples of "Venus", the goddess of love (fig. 11), sometimes with, sometimes without cupid. These depictions, for example also "The Nymph of the Spring", have nudity or sexuality as their sub-theme. If you so will, art had become more erotic. With Cranach, Latin



Fig. 11 Screenshot from cranach.net (stand XI/2014) with paintings by the Cranach-workshop that depict "Venus".



Fig. 12 Screenshot from cranach.net (stand XI/2014) with paintings by the Cranach-workshop that depict "Unequal Couples".

inscriptions warn of Venus' seductive arts and her enthrallment with fleshly lust. The Cranach workshop also painted the theme of "The Nymph of the Spring" 24 times.³⁷ In this form it is an iconographic innovation of Cranach's. Also in these paintings the Latin inscription plays a game with the viewer, more exactly the male viewer of the beautiful sleeping nude, and warns him not to disturb the slumber of this nymph of the holy spring. There are 80 "genre" paintings with the theme of "Unequal Couples"³⁸ (fig. 12), by which a lovely young woman is usually combined with an ugly old man, or vice versa — but rarer — a handsome young man with an ugly old woman. The two themes are portrayed in very different formats.

Besides these depictions with secular contents, Cranach also created religious themes that can be hung independently of a churchly context. Quasi the religious painting as a showpiece or cabinet piece. In art theory, a 'cabinet painting' is understood as one that, independently of its subject matter, has been created for a collection, which can also be understood more generally as serving to ornament a room. The definition of cabinet painting implies that it has been painted without being commissioned by a patron. Thus, for example, it was usual for artists to paint ahead for the Dutch art market of the seventeenth century. This often resulted in a lack of experimentation, as proven themes and compositions were more reliably sales-worthy.

When you look at the output of the Cranach workshop in the first decade of the Reformation you are reminded of the 'mechanisms' of the differentiated art market of Holland's "Golden Age". I have singled out as examples 36 similar paintings of "Salome with the Head of John the Baptist", 36 paintings of "Christ Blessing the Children" and 25 paintings of "Christ and the Adulteress". During the consolidation of Luther's Reformation, the Cranach workshop replaced the discredited altar paintings of old creed with its own conception of 'religious genre painting'. It is amazing how many of these quite large-scale paintings left the workshop.

And their composition must have been seen in central Germany as highly modern, for it adopted the half-figure portrait that had been introduced in Venice at the end of the fifteenth century when it helped define the Italian Renaissance.

Nonetheless, no matter what inspiration Cranach took from others, his artistic skill allowed him to transform these antecedents into a work all his own. His style became a trademark (in the sense of an artisanal fabrication) across those decades when he hired many apprentices, journeymen and collaborators — among whom his sons Hans and, especially, Lucas — to join his workshop ranks. Under his artistic direction, they all created works that became a firm part of the art-historical canon.

It was Lucas Cranach the Elder who invented many new formulas for depicting the themes that are linked to his name. Let's just take portrait painting as an example. Our image of the religious reformer is insolubly linked to the name of the artist — as was also the case with Frederick the Wise — for Cranach had found a formula for portraiture that has endured over the centuries. And though he accomplished the portraits in such great numbers, each single one can claim to be an original Cranach (see fig. 5). Cranach's concept for Luther's portrait was so authoritative that copies and reproductions are still today in massive circulation.

Along with the quality of the works, it is above all the quantity that is impressive. Whereby we have concentrated only on the painting; added to this are the prints as well as the book printings, the miniature paintings for manuscripts and, quite generally, the works for the court of Saxony. All of which will contribute to a

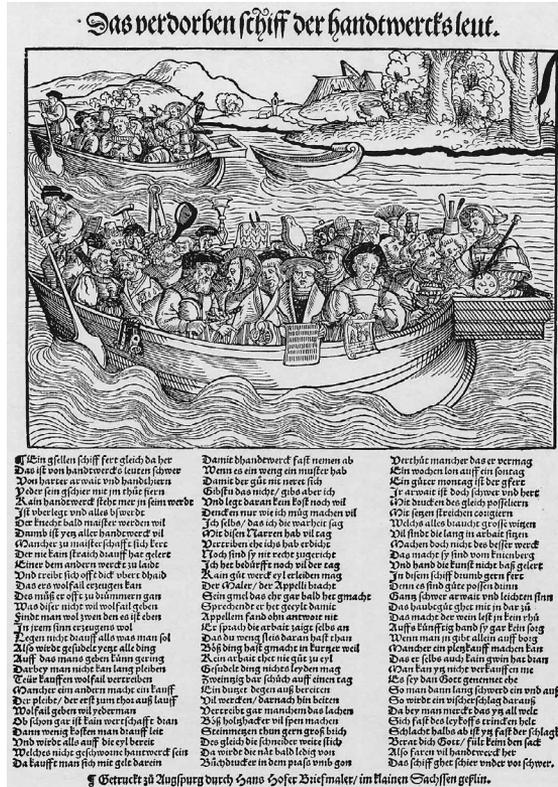


Fig. 13 Master of The Hederlein, *Das verdorben schiff der handwercksleut* [The ship for artisans no longer of use], woodcut (broadsheet), 44.8 x 32.1 cm.

concentration of statistical material, perhaps explaining the one or other decline in the turnover of painting productions. Thus in 1513 he was engaged with his workshop in Schloss Torgau for two weeks — his bill names 10 (!) journeymen — in order to prepare for John the Constant's second wedding. Or in 1541 in order to label Saxony's field accouterments, he and his workshop must have been fully occupied printing and coloring 590 coats of arms on paper. In general, his paintings for inside and outside Saxony's castles and his ephemeral works for all kinds of court festivities will have monopolized him, his craftsmen and apprentices for weeks, even months. All this has not been included in the statistics.

Cranach had no need to board "Das verdorben schiff der handwercksleut"³⁹ [the ship for artisans no longer of use] nor to take the place underscored on the stern's right side like the painters on the broadsheet of the artists' lament (fig. 13). For Lucas Cranach the Elder, the Reformation was a win-win situation. Different from many of his artist colleagues he had no reason to lament, also did not have to move elsewhere so as, post 1517, to continue to practice his artist's profession in a strange town. Because in his workshop the adherents of the old and the new church passed in and out; he supplied both sides with paintings.⁴⁰ In fact you are given the impression that, quite generally, a proper hunger for pictures had set in, something Cranach helped to fuel and, from the second half of the 1520s, sought to satisfy with new pictorial themes.

The picture formats were standardized for this purpose and his countless workshop associates were sworn to a standard painting style so that each individual buyer was able to hold a genuine Cranach painting in his hands.

From the perspective of Lucas Cranach the Elder, the question as to any negative implications of the Reformation is answered with a clear no.

Notes

1 In summary see: Lucas Dembinsky, "Tilman Riemenschneider im Bauernkrieg: Langer Aufstieg und schneller Fall in Würzburg; Legende und Wirklichkeit" in: Andreas Tacke and Franz Irsigler (ed.), *Der Künstler in der Gesellschaft: Einführungen zur Künstlersozialgeschichte des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, Darmstadt, 2011, pp. 303–321.

2 In summary see: Luise M. Stoppel, "Jörg Ratgeb: Hintersasse in Heilbronn (...)" in: Tacke and Irsigler (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 105–118.

3 See Georg Stuhlfauth, "Künstlerstimmen und Künstlernote aus der Reformationsbewegung" in: *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 56, 1937, pp. 408–514; Franz-Josef Sladeczek, "'das wir entlich's verderbens und des bettelstabs sind.' Künstlerschicksale zur Zeit der Reformation" in: Peter Blickle et al. (ed.), *Macht und Ohnmacht der Bilder: Reformatorischer Bildersturm im Kontext der europäischen Geschichte*, Munich, 2002, pp. 273–304; Christof Metzger, "Fallbeispiel Nördlingen oder: 'geschnitzte pild und götzen, so jetz nichts mehr sein noch gelten'" in: Bodo Brinkmann and Wolfgang Schmid (ed.), *Hans Holbein und der Wandel in der Kunst des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts*, Turnhout, 2005, pp. 147–159.

4 Peter Strieder, "'Schri.kunst.schri.vnd.klag.dich.ser.' Kunst und Künstler an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Renaissance" in: *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums*, 1983, pp. 19–26.

5 See Birgit Ulrike Münch, Andreas Tacke, Markwart Herzog, Sylvia Heudecker (ed.), *Die Klage des Künstlers: Krise und Umbruch von der Reformation bis um 1800 (Kunsthistorisches Forum Irsee, vol. 2)*, Petersberg, 2015.

6 In summary see: Danica Brenner, "Veit Stoß, Schöpfer des Bamberger Altares: Vertragsabschluss, Visierung und Endprodukt" in: Tacke and Irsigler (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 138–158.

7 See Jürgen Müller and Thomas Schauerte (ed.), exh. cat. *Die gottlosen Maler von Nürnberg: Konvention und Subversion in der Druckgraphik der Beham-Brüder*, Albrecht-Dürer-Haus, Nuremberg, 2011, pp. 196–197, cat. no. 37.

8 Thomas Neukirchen (ed.), *Karsthans: Thomas Murners "Hans Karst" und seine Wirkung in sechs Texten der Reformationszeit (...)*, Heidelberg, 2011.

9 Hans Rott, *Quellen und Forschungen zur südwestdeutschen und schweizerischen Kunstgeschichte im XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3: *Der Oberrhein*, vol. 1: *Quellen (Baden, Pfalz, Elsass)*, Stuttgart, 1936, pp. 304–305.

10 See Herbert Zschelletschky, *Die "drei gottlosen Maler" von Nürnberg: Sebald Beham, Barthel Beham und Georg Pencz; Historische Grundlagen und ikonologische Probleme ihrer Graphik zu Reformations- und Bauernkriegszeit*, Leipzig, 1975, pp. 100–102.

11 Barbara Dienst, *Der Kosmos des Peter Flötner: Eine Bildwelt der Renaissance in Deutschland*, Berlin and Munich, 2002, pp. 312–317.

12 Thomas Schauerte and Manuel Teget-Welz (ed.), exh. cat. *Peter Flötner: Renaissance in Nürnberg*, Albrecht-Dürer-Haus et al., Nuremberg, 2014–2015, pp. 152–153, cat. no. 48.

13 Benjamin Spira, *Mainzer Maler – Maler in Mainz: Lebenswelten zwischen Stadt und Hof; Untersuchungen zu Bedingungen, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Ansiedlung und Beschäftigung zünftiger und höfischer Maler in einer kurfürstlichen Residenzstadt der Frühen Neuzeit*, (in press).

14 Danica Brenner, *Künstlersozialgeschichte der Augsburger Renaissance: Ausbildung und Werkstattpraxis, Demographie, Netzwerke und soziale Topographie der Augsburger Malerzunft*, (in press).

15 See Andreas Tacke (ed.), *“Der Mahler Ordnung und Gebräuch in Nürnberg”: Die Nürnberger Maler(zunft)bücher ergänzt durch weitere Quellen, Genealogien und Viten des 16., 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 2001.

16 In summary see: Stefanie Herberg, “Der verfluchte Maler? Jörg Breu der Ältere und der Bildersturm in Augsburg” in: Tacke and Irsigler (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 288–302.

17 Michael Wiemers, “Der Kardinal und die Weibermacht: Sebald Beham bemalt eine Tischplatte für Albrecht von Brandenburg” in: *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, 63, 2002, pp. 217–236; Michael Wiemers, “Sebald Behams Beicht- und Meßgebetbuch für Albrecht von Brandenburg” in: Andreas Tacke (ed.), *Kontinuität und Zäsur: Ernst von Wettin und Albrecht von Brandenburg*, Göttingen, 2005, pp. 380–390.

18 Birgit Ulrike Münch, “Der Körper des Narren zwischen Triebhaftigkeit und Entgrenzung: Konzepte von Verkehrung, skatologischer Sexualität und Vulgarität zur Zeit der Behams” in: Müller and Schauerte (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 7), pp. 64–76.

19 See Wolf Seiter, “Geschick und Schicklichkeit: Sebald Beham in den Quellen und kunstgeschichtlichen Werken vor 1900” in: Jürgen Müller, Thomas Schauerte and Bertram Kaschek (ed.), *Von der Freiheit der Bilder: Spott, Kritik und Subversion in der Kunst der Dürerzeit*, Petersberg, 2013, pp. 232–246.

20 Volkmar Greiselmayer, *Kunst und Geschichte: Die Historienbilder Herzog Wilhelms IV. von Bayern und seiner Gemahlin Jacobäa; Versuch einer Interpretation*, Berlin, 1996, pp. 131–156.

21 Thomas Packeiser, “Zum Austausch von Konfessionalisierungsforschung und Kunstgeschichte” in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 93, 2002, pp. 317–338; Birgit Ulrike Münch, “Apelles am Scheideweg? Der frühneuzeitliche Künstler zwischen Konfession und Ökonomie” in: Andreas Tacke (ed.), exh. cat. *Der Kardinal: Albrecht von Brandenburg, Renaissancefürst und Mäzen*, Regensburg, 2006, vol. 2: *Essays*, Cathedral et al., Halle, 2006, pp. 379–385.

22 Susanne Wagini, *Der Ulmer Bildschnitzer Daniel Mauch (1477–1540)*, Ulm, 1995, note 2.

23 See (in press): *Das ernestinische Wittenberg: Spuren Cranachs in Schloss und Stadt, (...)*, Petersberg, 2015.

24 Michael Hofbauer at Heidelberg University that is hosting the Research Database “cranach.net” (<http://corpus-cranach.de>), which takes international Cranach research to a whole new level of source material.

25 Max J. Friedländer and Jakob Rosenberg, *Die Gemälde von Lucas Cranach*, Berlin, 1932.

26 Andreas Tacke, “Cranachs Altargemälde für Albrechts Stiftskirche: Zu einem Bilderzyklus von europäischem Rang” in: Tacke (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 21), pp. 193–211.

27 Although the overall trend in the decline in church orders is a fact, it must be studied more closely, because after 1517 Cranach also worked for the diocese of Eichstätt, Naumburg, for Meissen and for the Prague cathedral, for example. See Andreas Tacke, “‘ich het euch vil zuschreiben, hab aber vil zuschaffen.’ Cranach der Ältere als ‘Parallel Entrepreneur’, Auftragslage und Marktstrategien im Kontext des Schneeberger Altares von 1539” in: Thomas Pöpper and Susanne Wegmann (ed.), *Das Bild des neuen Glaubens: Das Cranach-Retabel in der Schneeberger St. Wolfgangskirche*, Regensburg, 2011, pp. 71–84.

28 Andreas Tacke, “Marketing Frederick: Friedrich der Weise in der Bildenden Kunst seiner Zeit” in: Dirk Syndram, Yvonne Fritz and Doreen Zerbe (ed.), *Kurfürst Friedrich der Weise von Sachsen, 1463–1525*, Dresden, 2014, pp. 104–114.

29 Andreas Tacke, *Der katholische Cranach: Zu zwei Großaufträgen von Lucas Cranach d. Ä., Simon Franck und der Cranach-Werkstatt 1520–1540*, Mainz, 1992, pp. 170–267. Without any new information, see the exhibition catalogue: *Cranach und die Kunst der Renaissance unter den Hohenzollern. Kirche, Hof und Stadtkultur*, Berlin, 2009; editorial trials and tribulations are the responsibility of Gerd Bartoschek.

30 Sabine Schwarz-Hermanns, “Die Rundbildnisse Lucas Cranachs des Älteren: Mediale Innovation im Spannungsfeld unternehmerischer Strategie” in: Andreas Tacke (ed.), *Lucas Cranach 1553/2003*, Leipzig, 2007, pp. 121–133.

31 The following considerations owe much to the exciting work of Berthold Hinz; see Berthold Hinz, *Lucas Cranach d. Ä.*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1993 (Rowohlts Monographien, 1090); Berthold Hinz, “Lucas Cranach d. Ä.: Profanisierung der Bildthemen und Wandel des Figurenstils nach Beginn der Reformation” in: Brinkmann and Schmid (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 57–72 and p. 304; Berthold Hinz, “Stil- und Themenwandel im Zuge der reformatorischen Bilderkrise” in: Tacke (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 30), pp. 217–232.

32 Berthold Hinz, “Dürer: ‘Natürlicher’ Akt versus Mensch ‘aus der Maß’” in: Andreas Tacke et al. (ed.), *Menschenbilder: Beiträge zur Altdeutschen Kunst*, Petersberg, 2010, pp. 17–31.

33 For the variety of new topics, see Dieter Koepplin, “Ein Cranach-Prinzip” in: Werner Schade, exh. cat. *Lucas Cranach: Glaube, Mythologie und Moderne*, Bucerius Kunst Forum, Hamburg, 2003, pp. 144–165; however, the hierarchy of genres (“Nobilitierung von Bildformen und Themen”) places painting at the top, which is ahistorical.

34 Even if I do not follow all his considerations, see the exciting study by Edgar Bierende, *Lucas Cranach d. Ä. und der deutsche Humanismus: Tafelmalerei im Kontext von Rhetorik, Chroniken und Fürstenspiegeln*, Munich and Berlin, 2002.

35 This and the following quantities are from the research database “cranach.net” from April 2014.

36 Gabriele Baumbach, “‘SIC ECIAM INGENTES ANIMOS INSANA VOLVPTAS.’ Die Herkules- und Omphale-Darstellungen der Cranach-Werkstatt und ein Gemälde Lucas Cranachs d. J. für Kardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg” in: Andreas Tacke (ed.), *„...wir wollen der Liebe Raum geben.“ Konkubinate geistlicher und weltlicher Fürsten um 1500*, Göttingen, 2006, pp. 369–392.

37 Franz Matsche, “‘Nympha super ripam Danubii.’ Cranachs Quellnymphen und ihr Vorbild” in: Tacke (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 30), pp. 159–203.

38 Alison G. Stewart, *Unequal Lovers: A Study of Unequal Couples in Northern Art*, New York 1977.

39 Exh. cat. *Kunst der Reformationszeit*, Berlin (East), 1983, p. 227, cat. no. C 55.

40 Andreas Tacke, "Aus einem Stamm: Zum Ende einer Kontroverse über die konfessionelle Ausrichtung der Cranach-d. Ä.-Werkstatt nach 1517" in: Werner Greiling, Uwe Schirmer and Ronny Schwalbe (ed.), *Der Altar von Lucas Cranach d. Ä. in Neustadt an der Orla und die Kirchenverhältnisse im Zeitalter der Reformation*, Cologne et al., 2014, pp. 417–425.

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