

**Zeitschrift:** Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte =  
Revue suisse d'art et d'archéologie = Rivista svizzera d'arte e  
d'archeologia = Journal of Swiss archeology and art history

**Band:** 55 (1998)

**Heft:** 2-4: Hans Holbein der Jüngere

**Artikel:** Holbein and the paradigms of art-historical interpretation

**Autor:** Griener, Pascal

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-169545>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 07.10.2024

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

# Holbein and the Paradigms of Art-Historical Interpretation

by PASCAL GRIENER

For Georg Germann

Unlike some painters such as Vermeer, Holbein remained a well-known artist. However, his image underwent a great deal of transformations over the centuries. I should like to recall some important steps in the history of art, which allowed for the formation of Holbein's interpretation. An historiographer's task is to identify and analyze those intellectual patterns which have been established in the past, and which still haunt our studies even today. I shall confine my survey to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Holbein's reception during those periods is not well-known, although some features of the present image of the artist still owe much to it. The material presented here was elaborated together with Oskar Bätschmann, and will form part of our forthcoming book devoted to the "Holbein dispute".<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The first narrative

Strange as it may seem, Holbein owes his place in history to Vasari and his "Vite", although his biography is nowhere to be found in a book which could be seen as a snub to German artists. In effect, when the Flemish artist Karel van Mander undertook to write the biographies of Northern artists, he quickly discovered that there was a great dearth of historiographical models available. Vasari's biographies were well constructed: they offered practical and moral advice to young artists, and they ensured that each artist of the past was remembered through a literary monument. But as a model of historical writing, Vasari's narrative was not neutral: it was directed towards one conclusion, that the city-state of Florence had been chosen by God to develop the arts to their perfection. Finally, that model implied an elevated representation of the artist, not as a mere craftsman, but as a humanist, a worthy friend to the rich and powerful. Van Mander was aware that he would have to use, but also to subvert Vasari in order to pay justice to Northern artists. At a time when painters were still regarded as mere craftsmen in the North of Europe, van Mander hoped to give them a new status. At a very young age, he had travelled through Italy for four years, from 1573 to 1577. And he could remember that in Florence, he had been able to catch a glimpse of an old, bearded man overseeing some work in the Duomo: Giorgio Vasari himself. The author of the "Lives" was to die only a few months later.<sup>2</sup> The young painter must have looked up first with

awe, and then with jealousy at the pupil of Michelangelo, the favourite painter of the popes, and the main architect of the Uffizi. Van Mander became increasingly resentful of Vasari's geocentrism, and his "Lives of the most illustrious Netherlandish and German painters" (1603–4)<sup>3</sup> claim that the artists of the North were not inferior to their Latin counterparts (fig. 1). He managed to increase the grandeur of



Fig. 1 Title-page of Carel van Mander, "Het Leven der Doorluchtighe Nederlandtsche en Hooghduytsche Schilders", Alckmaer 1604.

his fellow artists by subtly demeaning the achievements of their Italian rivals.<sup>4</sup> Besides, some key-concepts of Vasari's historiography underwent a drastic change. Van Mander showed that in some fields, Northern artists had acquired

greater skills than their Italian counterparts, especially in the depiction of flowers, of animals and of landscapes. If van Mander accepted the Italian theory of the genres, he did however stress that above all, it was the mode of representation, more than the object represented, which ensured the prestige of a work of art.<sup>5</sup> Carel van Mander is the first important historian of Hans Holbein. That he knew very few paintings by the master is clear. Since the catalogue of an artist's work was not yet an integral element of his biography, this shortcoming did not harm his project. His main aim was still to characterize a painter through a narrative of his life.

Holbein was, for van Mander, an almost perfect *exemplum* of the Northern artist. First, he was an adept of the "neat" manner, as opposed to the "rough" brushstroke characteristic of the Venetian masters. His technique allowed him to obtain maximum illusory effect, and to become what van Mander called with admiration a "bold liar". Secondly, Holbein illustrated van Mander's theory of genius to perfection. Vasari had made it clear that Florence seemed to be the "natural" centre of artistic excellence, blessed by God. Van Mander quoted Holbein as a major piece of evidence in the case against this Florentine "geocentrism": he was the *exemplum* of the genius born out of nowhere. Van Mander insisted that genius is bound neither to family, nor to country. He knew that, according to an established tradition, Holbein was born in Germany, but he could not resist the temptation of declaring him to have been a Swiss citizen. This fact he then used to show that a genius could develop in one of the least artistic areas of Europe, a country which he described as a "rocky, desolate" wasteland. Thus: "One finds, however, that it has happened more than once that a remarkable and great person in our art emerges somewhere and appears in a country where none had risen up previously or before them; as proof that spirit and genius are not bound to locality or family."<sup>6</sup> But van Mander went further, and in order to deny the importance of an Italian *Grand Tour* for an artist, he stated boldly that Holbein had never travelled to the paeninsula. His wonderful neatness, the realism of his portraits were the work of a man from the North.

Van Mander inaugurated two important trends in Holbein's historiography. He padded out his life with some anecdotes which were to colour the artist's biography for a long time, especially during the romantic period. He also paved the way for a parallel between Holbein and Dürer, which was to become paramount for all historical research on the two artists in the nineteenth century. Both artists' biographies stress the privileged relationship between, in the one case, Henry VIII and Holbein and, in the other, Dürer and the Emperor Maximilian. One day, van Mander tells us, an aristocrat expressed the wish to see Holbein in his studio. The artist declined to open his door to him, engaged as he was "painting something from life or doing something private".<sup>7</sup> His Lordship insisted with such a lack of tact that the painter threw him down the stairs. When the courtier complained to the king, Henry VIII rebuked him

with a simple calculation: out of seven peasants he could fashion as many lords, but not a single Holbein out of seven earls. That such anecdotes were narrative devices of van Mander's own invention, is obvious upon reading his account of Dürer's life. He writes that one day the Emperor Maximilian was watching Dürer who was completing a large-scale mural. Dürer expressed the wish to find a ladder, whereupon the Emperor requested that one of his noblemen should lend his back to the artist. Aware of their reluctance to cooperate, Maximilian presented them with a similar line.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Classicism and Philology

Seventy years later, the second important text on Holbein was produced in drastically different circumstances: it was written by Charles Patin, as an introduction to an edition of Erasmus' *Laus stultitiae* (1676), a new edition of Erasmus' text illustrated after the Basle copy of 1515.<sup>9</sup> By then, Holbein had ascended to the rank of an old master. He was equally a figure of the past, that a historian had to rescue from oblivion. If van Mander lived in what was still essentially the same world as Holbein, Charles Patin did not. He was thus conscious of the fact that he was interpreting a historical figure. More important, in a great age of classical scholarship, it was a scholar, and not an artist, who was undertaking to write on Holbein. Charles Patin took full advantage of his position as a philologist: after all, Holbein's biography was just part of a scholarly commentary to Erasmus' text. The first outcome of this position is clear: beyond Holbein, Patin was interested in Erasmus. Charles Patin was a somewhat nostalgic admirer of the great Dutch scholar.<sup>10</sup> His father, Gui Patin, belonged to a circle of libertines who hated the Jesuits as well as all religious excesses, and who defended the right of Reason to examine matters of religion and authority. Guy Patin vowed a cult to Erasmus, whose portrait adorned his house, together with those of Montaigne and of de Thou. The council of Trent had branded Erasmus an heretic; over the seventeenth century, the humanist became the apostle of tolerance in enlightened circles. Charles Patin was embroiled himself in an obscure affair related to forbidden tracts; he had to leave France without delay. Wandering through Europe with his precious collection of medals, he settled in Basle in 1671 and 1674/75. Better to appreciate Patin's interest in Holbein, we need to consider a beautiful publication made by one of his daughters, Carla Catherina. The "Pitture scelte e dichiarate" of 1691 reproduce, amongst others, a painting by Noël Jouvenet which represents the Patin family.<sup>11</sup> Carla is at pains to excuse what may be seen as a lack of modesty: did Holbein not paint families, like that of Meyer and his wife, and even his own in Basel? However, when sitting for the painter the Patins adopted a pose which recalls, unmistakably, Holbein's group portrait of the More family. In the university collection, Patin had been able to admire the preparatory drawing for the now lost

picture. He had it copied; it was published in Carla Patin's "Pitture".<sup>12</sup> The exiled Patin was draping himself in Thomas More's robe; he too was the father of very erudite daughters, and he had been persecuted for his freedom of thought, as well as for his advocacy of religious tolerance. On the painting, even Carla herself – a very gifted lady, who was well acquainted with astronomy – wished to be represented studying a sphere; she recalled "nelle lettere, che Tommaso Moro scriveva a sua figliola Marghareta, la raccomandazione di questo studio, di cui io mi sono sempre diletтата."<sup>13</sup> Holbein's portraits of Thomas More, of Thomas Warham, with their intensity and their utmost precision, worked a miracle for Patin: they made visible, they almost revived these great apostles of tolerance, in the nostalgic dreams of a *libertin érudit*.

The second outcome of Patin's philological approach was more ground-breaking: the "Encomium moriae" of 1676 offered to the reader the first catalogue raisonné of Holbein's works, and probably the first of any modern artist. Patin, a numismatist at ease with scientific catalogues, had drawn his inspiration from Franciscus Junius' "Catalogus", published in 1694, but completed in 1670 and well-known at the time in erudite circles (fig. 2).<sup>14</sup> Patin, who kept an extensive correspondence with other European scholars, knew that Junius had been a secretary to the Earl of Arundel, the greatest Holbein collector of all times. Junius thus provided the model that would allow for the first catalogue of Holbein's work. For the first time, the idea was put forward that the corpus of an artist could become a major instrument of research, allowing us to circumscribe a stylistic approach to an artist. But how? Patin was facing a problem which Junius could leave aside – the critical, almost philological examination of the works listed. Junius listed paintings and sculptures of the Ancients, lost works only known through descriptive texts. If Patin managed to acquire a first-hand knowledge of some works by Holbein, he could not possibly see them all. Besides, he could not yet differentiate between authentic Holbeins and other paintings of the Oberrhein school. Even though his attempt was doomed to failure, Patin met for the first time with a new critical task, that of the connoisseur. He merely noted down the paintings which bore Holbein's signature, or which were attributed to him by scholars or by tradition. Not being able to describe Holbein's style through the catalogue, Patin reverted to an old device, that of the biography. His own sketch attempts to underline Holbein's realism, which he praised, but which was probably too acute for a man used to Lebrun and Vouet's productions. Patin thus developed an image of the artist as a rude and lazy painter, keener to take a drink in a tavern than to devote time to his own family. Van Mander had already made some passing comment on the harsh character of Holbein's wife – a device designed to parallel Dürer's biography. Patin noticed that on fol. S4 of Myconius' copy of Erasmus' *Praise of folly*, Holbein had designed a "plump porker", drinking while exploring the bosom of his female companion. A later, unknown hand had added the word "Holbein"

above the figure. The two scholars read it as a comment, made by Erasmus himself, on Holbein's sinful life. That new reputation of the artist as a dissolute and hedonistic painter, was to remain a feature of most of Holbein's biographies until the end of the XIXth century.<sup>15</sup> By

FRANCISCI JUNII F.F.  
**CATALOGUS**  
 ARCHITECTORUM,  
 MECHANICORUM,  
*sed præcipue*  
 P I C T O R U M,  
 STATUARIORUM,  
 CÆLATORUM,  
 TORNATORUM,  
 aliorumque  
 A R T I F I C U M,  
 & Operum quæ fecerunt, quorum Index separatim præmittitur,  
*Secundum seriem litterarum digestus,*  
*nunquam antebac editus.*



ROTTERDAMI,  
 Typis REGNERI LEERS,  
 MDCXCIV.

Fig. 2 Title-page of the *Catalogus*, published in: Franciscus Junius, "De Pictura veterum libri tres", Rotterdam 1694, Part II.

emphasizing the features of Holbein's character, Patin could compensate for the fact that a stylistic model allowing for the characterisation of Holbein's manner was out of his reach. And the classicist could explain Holbein's realism through a biographical device – the artist was a good

realist, because he was down-to-earth. In effect, Patin found himself depreciating the artist while praising his works. On one side, Holbein was an idle porker, but on the other side, Patin marvelled at the quantity of works executed by such a lazy hedonist.

### 3. History of taste/history of art

The third important moment in Holbein's historiography is the publication of the "Teutsche Akademie" by Joachim von Sandrart (fig. 3). Sandrart, an artist and art theorist, had a great advantage over Patin: his first-hand knowledge of many masterpieces left by Holbein. In England, he had been welcomed by the Earl of Arundel, who had shown him his treasures in person; the architect Inigo Jones had even made sure that he could see the Holbein drawings in the royal collection. Yet if Sandrart managed to provide a good description of some works seen during his trips to Holland and to England, he borrowed most of his details on the master from van Mander. What is new in his biographical sketch is the insistence on the price of Holbein's pictures; his Holbein biography depicts a city of Basel almost besieged by amateurs wanting, in vain, to buy the pictures kept in the city.

Sandrart documented a fact that was to become of paramount importance for the history of Holbein's representation: if there was unanimity among connoisseurs on the value of Holbein's works, their reasons for praising them were very different. His works were being copied, and accounted for a complex moment in the history of taste. Without the knowledge of such history, historiography remains on shaky ground. The world of connoisseurs hinted at by Sandrart is composed of rich collectors, of princes, but also of picture dealers. The extraordinary activity of international picture-dealers in Holland, went hand in hand with the craze for old masters which developed steadily in England in the sixteen twenties, and which led to interesting picture exchanges between the North and the South of Europe.<sup>16</sup> If King Charles I and his *favori* Georges Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham were less eager to buy German than Italian or Flemish pictures,<sup>17</sup> a strong sense of nostalgia for the Tudor period drove a collector like the Earl of Arundel to purchase Holbeins at almost any cost.<sup>18</sup> Arundel was a man of outstanding taste and great culture. He was Sir Anthony van Dyck's first acquaintance in England, and Rubens called him "one of the evangelists of our art".<sup>19</sup> By descent, he belonged to the family of the Dukes of Norfolk, and could recall with pride that Thomas Howard had been one of Holbein's best patrons.<sup>20</sup> In a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, Arundel acknowledges almost like a sickness his "foolish curiosity in enquiring for the pieces of Holbein."<sup>21</sup> In Italy, the clean manner characteristic of the Northern masters was stimulating the taste of Cosimo de Medici for works by Holbein – it was a refreshing change to look at one in a gallery full of Florentine paintings. But instead of hunting for a rare piece on the

market, the Grand Duke wrote to Arundel, and begged him to part with a jewel from his own stock, "because I have become passionately set upon having a work by this artist".<sup>22</sup> Arundel duly behaved as a perfect courtier, surrendering the only Holbein portrait which he could not



Fig. 3 Hans Holbein the Younger. Illustration from Joachim Von Sandrart, "L'Accademia Todeasca della Architettura, Scultura et Pittura, oder Teutsche Academie der Edlen Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste", 2 vols., Nuremberg and Frankfurt 1675–1679, I,2 p. 249.

keep in his house: that of Sir Richard Southwell, an enemy of his beloved ancestor Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Arundel was duly thanked by the Grand Duke: a splendid triptych by Adam Elsheimer, and bearing the Medici arms, was sent to Arundel, to his greatest delight.

From the King of England to the Arundels and Buckinghams, all collectors of good-quality paintings were bound to deal with Dutch picture-merchants. One of the most prominent among them, Michel Le Blon, turned out to be a

great Holbein connoisseur. He owned a few pictures by the master, copies or originals.<sup>23</sup> He was also a great opportunist. An engraver as well as a picture-dealer, he soon owed to his connections in higher social circles the title of envoy of the court of Sweden in the United Kingdom. Like his fellow-agent Balthazar Gerbier, he knew all the major British collectors of the time, whose new passion allowed for lucrative business deals.

In Holland also, pictures by Holbein were very much in fashion, but for different reasons. In about 1632/33, Le Blon travelled to Lyons in order to purchase a Holbein for the Duke of Buckingham; on his way back, he stopped in Basle, and bought the “Meyer madonna” from Johann Lucas Iselin for the very high price of 1000 *Imperiales*.<sup>24</sup>

The destiny of this famous picture illustrates, more than any other painting, the appreciation of Holbein in seventeenth-century Europe.<sup>25</sup> At a time when the Dutch *Fijnschilders* took pride in polishing their paintings to increase their aesthetic and financial value, such a picture could be seen as a rare pearl: here was a very finished masterpiece, a real collector’s item. Le Blon lauded such finished panels to his clients, like the Swedish chancellor Axel Oxenstjerna: did they not fall for such pictures – religious or, preferably, with erotic subjects, but where “one does not see any uneaven part, any beginning or any end in the colour, more, it seems to have been washed, or made with a cloud or with steam”?<sup>26</sup> If Holbein’s pictures were not always completely in fashion in England, in Holland they fitted perfectly the artistic ideal of Gerard Dou and of his clients. In due course, Le Blon sold the “Meyer madonna” in 1638 to a Dutch collector, Johannes Lössert.<sup>27</sup> In a country where all the churches had been deprived of their religious ornaments, the “Madonna” was proudly displayed in a private apartment. A highly-finished fake was even made after the original. Such a practice was common among unscrupulous dealers, and Le Blon may have been tempted to try to reap a double reward for his discovery of a Holbein masterpiece. He may have wanted to keep that fake for a while; his own collection, as we have seen, included some copies after Holbein.<sup>28</sup> A friend, the German painter Bartholomeus Sarburgh, undertook the thankless task with great skill, correcting here and there, and translating Holbein’s style into an Italian idiom – most probably for an international clientele, keen to purchase two paintings, one of the Northern and the other of the Italian school, combined in one. Such a transformation betrays all too clearly the change of taste which separated the generation of van Mander from that of Le Blon: in Sarburgh’s hands, the “Meyer Madonna” was becoming a perfect mix of Northern precision and Italian, classical fashion. Sarburgh was an ideal copyist: he knew Switzerland very well since he had worked in Bern and more particularly in Basle (1621–1628), before returning to The Hague. His apprentice, Johannes Lüdin, was from Muttentz near Basle.<sup>29</sup> From Swiss collectors as well, the madonna was no less in demand. Soon after his task was completed, Sarburgh received a request from Basle: Remigius Faesch II wanted

two copies of the figures of the son and daughter of Jakob Meyer. Faesch was a keen collector, who regretted the loss of a painting that had once belonged to his family. But he owned the two 1516 portraits of Jakob Meyer and of his wife, and thought that all that he now needed were the heads of the children. The figures of the youngsters were copied by Lüdin, not after the original, but after Sarburgh’s copy, which must have been in Le Blon’s hands.<sup>30</sup> As the picture had long vanished from Basle, Faesch tried to imagine it with the help of some of the oral tradition linked to the work. In his hypothetical description of the picture, this staunch protestant and antiquarian reduced the painting to his own fancy. The panel, he thought, showed the family “kneeling in front of an altar”, and there was simply no place for a madonna in his description.<sup>31</sup> In Switzerland, it was the secular works which were readapted in order to carry a moral message. A Swiss miniaturist of the seventeenth century – probably Wilhelm Stettler – could copy side by side the family portrait of 1528 and the *Lais Corinthiaca*, as if they both belonged to the same picture: motherly love was opposed to love for sale – a perfect antithesis befitting a moral *oratio*.<sup>32</sup>

The well-knit community of dealers and collectors we have described allowed for a new historical approach befitting their needs. New perspectives emerge when one reads the “Notizie dei professori del disegno” or the “Entretiens”. Filippo Baldinucci for example, in his “Notizie”, focused his attention on the only two portraits by Holbein available to him, especially that of Richard Southwell, and attempted to reconstruct the artist’s technique.<sup>33</sup> The almost experimental dimension of his perception, the bold attempt to encapsulate an artist’s manner with words, were very new. Félibien went further, and pretended that it was possible to deduce some elements of Holbein’s career from the sheer appreciation of his technique: “Sa manière de peindre toute particulière fait conjecturer, que ce fut par son travail et par son propre jugement, qu’il se perfectionna lui seul dans cet Art [...]”.<sup>34</sup> The direct perception of pictures was bearing, at last, an effect on the very narrative of the artist’s life. The outcome of this close observation was a new discussion of the parallel, made by Federico Zuccari according to van Mander, between Raphael and Holbein. This parallel, Félibien, Baldinucci and later Jean-Baptiste Descamps or Dezallier d’Argenville saw it as a comparison very limited in scope: portraits by the two artists were compared, and their excellence paralleled exclusively in that field. The portrait allowed the painter to devote all his attention to technique. Besides, in the art-historical publications of the time, Holbein’s biography was still placed within the Dutch school, famous for its “effets de matière” at the expense of the subject. Gradually, collectors subscribed to such representation. The Duke of Orleans was proud of displaying the portrait of Georg Gisze in his gallery, which reminded him of the best Dutch masters of his time; but his attempt to purchase the Meyer madonna (that is, the Dresden copy) from the Delfino family in Venice betrayed another vision of the master. This

trend intensified even during the neo-classical period: the count Schönborn bought the portrait of Hermann Wedigh, while August of Poland secured both Raphael's "Sixtine Madonna" and Holbein's "Dresden madonna" (1743), he got rid of his rococo masters such as the "Banquet of Cleopatra" by Tiepolo. Unexpectedly, the new fame of the "Dresden madonna", after its purchase and display, did not inspire immediately the curators of the Royal collection to put Raphael's "Sixtine madonna" and Holbein's "Meyer madonna" side by side. And if Mariette explained that "Le goût d'Holbein est plus épuré que celui d'Albert; sa manière tient davantage de celle de l'Italie"<sup>35</sup>, his comments were merely related to Holbein's achievement as a portrait painter. Nevertheless, the seeds were planted, which would bear their fruits forty years later or so.

#### 4. Preromantic sensibility: Lavater and Walpole

In effect, it is no small paradox to see that such classical interpretation could only reach its full bloom thanks to the Romantic vision of art, and of German art in particular. The romantic sensibility is epitomized, already in the eighteenth century, by Horace Walpole and Johann Kaspar Lavater.

Walpole, a great art-collector, was the son of a great amateur, Sir Robert Walpole. He had spent his youth at Houghton Hall, where one of the best private art collections in Europe was to be seen. One of the first intellectual undertakings of the young Horace was to produce a descriptive catalogue of these holdings.<sup>36</sup> Walpole learned at an early age the art of intertwining biographical data and descriptions of pictures. The "Anecdotes of Painting in England" (1762–1780) play on the rhetorical devices dear to all art historians;<sup>37</sup> his biographical entries are full of striking antitheses and *jeux de mots*, and Holbein's biography is no exception to this rule. Later in the century, William Beckford was to go further, and denounce those platitudes used by most cicerones operating in country houses; both he and Walpole were speaking from experience. In his satire "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters" (1780) Beckford discusses the unknown works of "Sucrewasser of Vienna", "Watersouchy", "Og of Basan" and "Blunderbussiana". All the biographical sketches are imaginary, but they assemble the most time-worn clichés about artists' lives.<sup>38</sup> Walpole's conscious use of such rhetoric is more complex. His reader is expected to marvel at the difference between the platitude of Vertue's notes and the beauty of Walpole's own prose. His tone is nothing short of patronizing towards the painstaking engraver. For Walpole historical discourse is designed to nourish polite conversation, and to allow for the free exercise of wit. He collected all the data available on Holbein's works known in England, and made good use of Patin and of Vertue. Far from dispelling fanciful narratives about the painter, Walpole did not hesitate to create new and totally imaginary anecdotes related to Holbein's life: "He had still at his

house a portrait that he had just finished for one of his patrons – on the forehead he painted a fly, and sent the picture to the person for whom it was designed. The gentleman struck with the beauty of the piece, went eagerly to brush off the fly – and found the deceit."<sup>39</sup> Much more important was the outlook that Walpole cast on Holbein's

Tab. III.



Fig. 4 Judas, as painted by Holbein in the Basle Last Supper. Illustration from Johann Kaspar Lavater, "Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe", Leipzig/Winterthur 1775–1778, 4 vols.

works. To him, contrary to Mariette and Dezallier d'Argenville, they were *gothic*. His own country house, near Twickenham, marked the birth of the Gothic revival. It had been designed for a man who thought that the Greek style was not the quintessence of architecture, and that private lodgings required a more fanciful style: "one only wants passion to feel gothic".<sup>40</sup> And Strawberry Hill had a Holbein room.<sup>41</sup> Its decoration was neo-gothic; the light was filtered by antique stained-glass windows and the Holbein portraits, copied after the famous drawings in the royal collections, were framed in black and gold borders. The chimney piece was "chiefly taken from the tomb of Archbishop

Warham at Canterbury”, while the pierced arches of the screen tried to evoke the choir of Rouen cathedral.<sup>42</sup> In 1765, Walpole had already written one of the first gothic novels, “The Castle of Otranto”, where he recorded a strange dream. One night, he found himself wandering in an old castle. A large staircase appeared in front of him,

ifies those new conditions of perception: “If I have ever seen, felt, breathed in myself Inspiration in human productions, in the strictest sense of the word, it was when I saw three or four pieces by Holbein which, to my judgment, pass everything I have seen in Mannheim, Schleissheim and Düsseldorf – as far as colour, drawing and poetry are

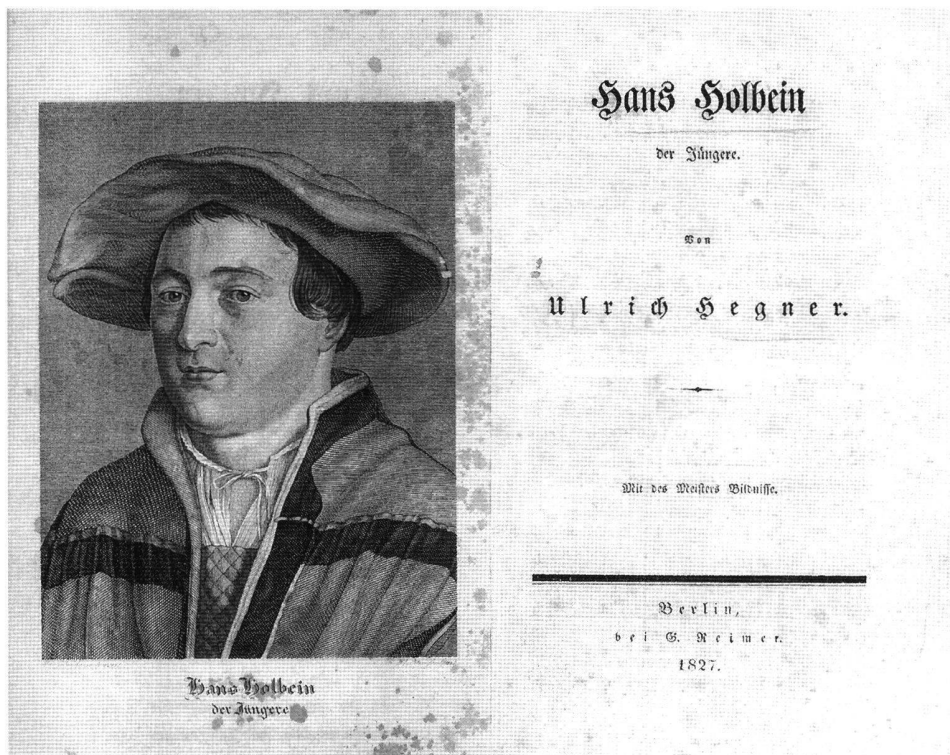


Fig. 5 Frontispiece of Ulrich Hegner, “Hans Holbein der Jüngere”, Berlin 1827.

and a gigantic hand in a iron gauntlet touched the bannister.<sup>43</sup> In the higher circles of society, it had become fashionable to feel the *frisson* of the Tudor period.<sup>44</sup> A true pre-romantic spirit, Walpole focused on expression. He never ceased to subscribe to the most traditional, classic aesthetic standards, and he never subscribed to the nationalism of a Bainbrigge Buckridge, who had attempted to rank the English school on a par with that of Italy and of France.<sup>45</sup> Yet Walpole was dissociating in himself the man of taste and the sensitive man, eager to sharpen his aesthetic perceptions at all costs. His sense of irony is evident for those who recognize his Gothic version of the *Tribuna*, a true counterpart to that of Florence, and which housed the best part of his collection of curiosities.

Without knowing it, Walpole was paving the way for a pre-romantic perception of Holbein, whose first exponent was the celebrated Swiss physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater. In a letter dated 1780 to Goethe, Lavater exempli-

concerned. His Last Supper, particularly – and the Laïs Corinthiaca surpass everything.<sup>46</sup> Holbein was a perfect painter, because through his pathos, a soul was communicating with a soul (fig. 4). To the analytical, detached admiration characteristic of a Le Blon, Lavater opposed the powerful spell of enthusiasm (“Schwärmerei”), a new sensibility to the atmosphere, the surroundings in which an aesthetic judgment took place. A new cult of the work of art was developing, in which pseudo-religious feelings mixed with the snobbish cult of originality. Lavater warned Goethe that no print could convey the powerful effect of the original. And he begged his correspondent to kneel in front of these masterpieces in silent, respectful awe. Lavater was inaugurating a new sensitivity, for which it became fashionable to worship a masterpiece, and to bemoan the irreconcilable difference between the power of the masterpiece, in the *hic et nunc* of its apparition, and the pale shadows of its engraved reproduction.<sup>47</sup>



## Conclusion

When Ulrich Hegner decided to write a new biography of Hans Holbein, the study of German art had, thanks to Fiorillo, become a subject in its own right, distinct from Flemish painting.<sup>48</sup> However, Hegner, like most art historians of the first half of the nineteenth century, failed to build a new, more accurate representation of Holbein's corpus. His only tool was Lavater's "Charakteristik".<sup>49</sup> It allowed for a nationalist appropriation of an artist. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Dürer was glorified as the true genius of his native country; the comparison was not confined to the aesthetic sphere any more, but pertained to artistic mythology. The Nazarenes, far from depreciating his "Gothic" manner, enthused about the mystical atmosphere pervading Dürer's works. Holbein's image followed in his wake. As for the "Dresden Madonna", like Raphael's "Sixtine Madonna", it became the very paradigm of the pseudo-religious nature of aesthetic contemplation: both of them offered the same "Offenbarung" to

the beholder. Finally, in the eighteen forties, a new Holbein emerged, who was opposed to Dürer – no mystic, but a down-to-earth, more secular painter, the hero of modern Prussia. This new figure was ready to assume the identity of a Raphael of the North. The comparison initiated in the late sixteenth century was now generalized by the German patriots, and turned a painter into a national asset. Like Raphael, idealized by a Passavant – the master of the beautiful had to be handsome himself – the new Holbein received a new, beautiful face, based upon that of the Basle portrait of an unknown man, which had previously been "identified" as the artist himself (fig. 5).<sup>50</sup> The "Dresden Madonna", a italianized copy mistaken for an original, played a great role in that respect. Thanks to the "Dresden Madonna", a Romantic paradigm of aesthetic perception could be combined with a "Raphaelesque" artistic mythology. It is that image that the Holbein congress of 1871 undertook to pull down. Today we are facing a similar challenge. It would prove difficult to produce a new assessment of Holbein's work without running a critical eye over the scientific literature written between 1871 and 1960.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> OSKAR BÄTSCHMANN / PASCAL GRIENER, *The Holbein Dispute, 1825–1871. The most important art-historical controversy of the XIXth Century* (forthcoming). For further references, see OSKAR BÄTSCHMANN / PASCAL GRIENER, *Hans Holbein*, London 1997 (German version: Cologne 1997).
- <sup>2</sup> GIORGIO VASARI, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti Architetti, Pittori, et Scultori italiani da Cimabue insino a' Tempi nostri*, (1550) (LUCIANO BELLOSI / ALDO ROSSI eds.), Turin 1986. – KAREL VAN MANDER, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters from the first edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603–1604)*. With an introduction and translation, ed. by HESSEL MIEDEMA, Dornspijk 1994, vol. II, p. 50–51.
- <sup>3</sup> WALTER S. MELION, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon. Karel van Mander's "Schilder-Boeck"*, Chicago/London 1991. – JÜRGEN MÜLLER, *Concordia Pragensis. Karel van Manders Kunsttheorie im Schilder-Boeck. Ein Beitrag zur Rhetorisierung von Kunst und Leben am Beispiel der rudolfinischen Hofkünstler*, Munich 1993.
- <sup>4</sup> WALTER S. MELION (see note 3), p. 111; van Mander did include only the Italian painters' lives, leaving out all the sculptures by Michelangelo.
- <sup>5</sup> WALTER S. MELION (see note 3), p. 39, 72. – JÜRGEN MÜLLER (see note 3).
- <sup>6</sup> KAREL VAN MANDER (see note 2), vol. I, fol. 220v.
- <sup>7</sup> KAREL VAN MANDER (see note 2), vol. I, fol. 221v.
- <sup>8</sup> KAREL VAN MANDER (see note 2), vol. I, fol. 208v.
- <sup>9</sup> DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, *Encomium moriae. Stultitiae Laus*, Basle 1676, fols. 32v–34. – SEBASTIAN FAESCH, *Iter per Galliam, Angliam, Belgicam, et Tractum Rheni*, MS. 1667–1669, Universitätsbibliothek Basle, AN VI 15, fol. 6a. S. Faesch did collaborate actively to the making of the *Encomium Moriae*, see Uni-

- versitätsbibliothek Basle Ms G2 I 32 document no. 124, the memorandum written by Patin for Faesch, for this purpose.
- <sup>10</sup> FRANCIS HASKELL, *History and its images*, New Haven 1993, pp. 13–25. – FRANÇOISE WAQUET, *Guy et Charles Patin père et fils, et la contrebande du livre à Paris au XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, in: *Journal des Savants*, 1979, pp. 125–148. – FRANÇOISE WAQUET, *Charles Patin (1633–1693) et la République des lettres: étude d'un réseau intellectuel dans l'Europe du XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, in: *Lias* 12, 1985, pp. 15–136. – FRANÇOISE WAQUET, *Collections et érudition au XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle: l'exemple de Charles Patin*, in: *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, N.S. III, 19, 1989, pp. 979–1000. – GIOVANNI GORINI, *Der Arzt und Numismatiker Charles Patin in Padua*, in: *Numismatische Literatur 1500–1864. Die Entwicklung der Methoden einer Wissenschaft*, ed. by PETER BERGHAUS (= Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, vol. 64), 1995, pp. 39–45. – HERBERT CAHN, *Charles Patin in Basel*, in: *Die Entwicklung der Methoden einer Wissenschaft* (see above), pp. 37 (simple note without references or material). – C. DEKESEL, *Charles Patin a man without a country*, Gand 1990. – CHARLES PATIN, *Relation historique en forme de Lettre de Mr. Charles Patin Medecin de Paris*, Strasbourg 1670, see his description of the imperial collection in Vienna, pp. 68–69, and his taste for Holbeins.
- <sup>11</sup> CARLA CATERINA PATIN, *Pitture scelte e dichiarate da Carla Catherina Patina Parigina, Accademica*, Venice 1691, p. 221. – BRUCE MANSFIELD, *Phoenix of his Age. Interpretations of Erasmus c. 1550–1750*, Toronto 1979. – ANDREAS FLITNER, *Erasmus im Urteil seiner Nachwelt. Das literarische Erasmus-Bild von Beatus Rhenanus bis zu Jean le Clerc*, Tübingen 1952. – RENÉ PINTARD, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle* [1943], Genève 1983. – RENÉ PINTARD, *La Mothe*

- le Vayer, *Gassendi, Guy Patin*, Paris 1943. – JEAN-CLAUDE MARGOLIN, *Guy Patin lecteur d'Erasmus*, in: *Colloquia Erasmi Turonensis*, Toronto 1972, pp. 1323–1358.
- 12 CARLA CATHERINA PATIN (see note 11), “Familia Thomae Mori”, p. 211.
- 13 CARLA CATHERINA PATIN (see note 11), p. 221.
- 14 FRANCISCUS JUNIUS, *De Pictura veterum libri tres*, Rotterdam 1694. – FRANCISCUS JUNIUS, *De Pictura veterum libri tres*, eds. PHILIP & RAINA FEHL / KEITH ALDRICH, Berkeley 1991, 2 vols. – On the form of the catalogue, ANTOINE SCHNAPPER, *Raphaël, Vasari, Pierre Daret: à l'aube des catalogues*, in: *Il se rendit en Italie. Etudes offertes à André Chastel*, Rome 1987, pp. 235–241. – COLETTE NATIVEL, *Franciscus Junius et le “Depictura Veterum”*, XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle 1983, no. 138, pp. 8–30.
- 15 The famous book collector Francis Douce must have compared his own copy of the *Moriae Encomium* to the Basle copy, because he added Holbein’s name above the engraving which reproduced that drawing, see his copy, Douce E 155, Bodleian Library, Oxford; *The Douce Legacy. An exhibition to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the bequest of Francis Douce 1757–1834*, exhibition catalogue, Bodleian Library, Oxford 1984. – ERIKA MICHAEL, *The Drawings by Hans Holbein the Younger for Erasmus’ “Praise of Folly”* (Outstanding Doctoral Theses in the Fine Arts), New York/London 1986, drawing no. 66.
- 16 FRANCIS HASKELL, *Charles I’s Collection of Pictures*, in: *The Late King’s Goods. Collections, Possessions and Patronage of Charles I in the light of the Commonwealth Inventories*, ed. by ARTHUR MCGREGOR, London/Oxford 1989, pp. 203–231, esp. pp. 216–218. – *Art and Patronage in the Caroline Courts. Essays in Honour of Sir Oliver Millar*, ed. by DAVID HOWARTH, Cambridge 1993.
- 17 The Duke of Buckingham owned eight Holbeins, and Charles I about twenty; the latter was inclined to exchange a Holbein for an Italian picture, see L. BETCHERMAN, *The York House Collection and its keeper*, in: *Apollo* 92, 1970, pp. 250–259. – R. DAVIES, *An Inventory of the Duke of Buckingham’s pictures etc., at York house in 1635*, in: *Burlington Magazine* 10, 1907, pp. 376–382 (the Duke of Buckingham was murdered in 1628). – G. MARTIN, *Rubens and Buckingham’s Fayrie ile*, in: *Burlington Magazine* 108, 1966, pp. 613–618. – I. G. PHILIP, *Balthazar Gerbier and the Duke of Buckingham’s Pictures*, in: *Burlington Magazine* 99, 1957, pp. 155–156. – M. G. DE BOER, *Balthazar Gerbier*, in: *Oud Holland*, 1903, pp. 129–160. – About Holbein’s Italian style, as opposed to the “Gothic” Dürer, see PIERRE-JEAN MARIETTE, *Abecedario*, Paris 1851–1860, 6 vols., vol. II, p. 359: “Le goût d’Holbein est plus épuré que celui d’Albert; sa manière tient davantage de celle de l’Italie.” – JONATHAN BROWN, *Kings and Connoisseurs. Collecting Art in Seventeenth Century Europe*, Princeton 1995.
- 18 N. F. S. HERVEY, *The Life, Correspondence and Collections of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel*, Cambridge 1921. – DAVID HOWARTH, *Lord Arundel and his circle*, New Haven 1985. – On the Arundel Collection, see the issue of *Apollo*, August 1996.
- 19 DAVID HOWARTH (see note 18), p. 149.
- 20 PETER PAUL RUBENS, *Drawings after Hans Holbein’s Dance of Death*, I. Q. VAN REGTEREN ALTENA ed., Amsterdam 1977, 2 vols.
- 21 DAVID HOWARTH (see note 18), p. 69. – Letter by the Earl of Arundel to Sir Dudley Carleton, Arundel house, 17 sept 1619.
- 22 DAVID HOWARTH (see note 18), p. 69. Letter by Cosimo II to Arundel, 12 September 1620. Holbein had become a great name in Italy by then; see GIULIO MANCINI, *Considerazioni sulla Pittura* (written circa 1614–1630), vol. I, ed. by ADRIANA MARUCCHI, pref. by LIONELLO VENTURI, Roma 1956, p. 40.
- 23 H. DE LA FONTAINE VERWEY, *Michel Le Blon Graveur, Kunsthandelaar, Diplomaat*, in: *Amstelodanum*, 1969, pp. 103–123. – See Le Blond’s portrait by Sir Anthony van Dyck, ERIC LARSON, *The Paintings of Anthony van Dyck*, Freren 1988, 2 vols., vol. II, p. 219, cat. no. 542, painted 1632, Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario; engraved by Theodore Matham for van Dyck’s *Iconographia*, see F. WIRIBAL, *L’iconographie d’Antoine van Dyck*, Leipzig 1877, p. 145, Nr. 183. – NEIL DE MARCHI / HANS J. VAN MIGROET, *Art, value, and market practices in the Netherlands in the Seventeenth century*, in: *Art Bulletin* LXXVI/3, September 1994, pp. 451–464. – JOHN-MICHAEL MONTIAS, *Le marché de l’art aux Pays-Bas, XV<sup>ème</sup>–XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Paris 1996.
- 24 REMIGIUS FAESCH, *Humanae Industriae Monumenta Nova simul et antiqua* [around 1628 but corrected later], Universitätsbibliothek Basle shelfmark MS: AR I 12, fols. 35a–35b (Published in ALFRED WOLTMANN, *Holbein und seine Zeit. Des Künstlers Familie, Leben und Schaffen*, 2 vols., 2nd corrected edition, Leipzig 1874–1876, vol. II, pp. 48–50. A so-called portrait of Charles V by Holbein was bought by Le Blon in Lyon on behalf of the Duke of Buckingham.
- 25 His description is accurate: “eine stehende Maria auf eine Tafel gemahlt mit dem Kindlein auf dem Arm unter der ein Teppich worauf etliche vor ihr knien die nach dem Leben contrafähet seyn”, JOACHIM VON SANDRART, *L’Accademia Todesca della Architettura, Scultura et Pittura, oder Teutsche Academie der Edlen Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste*, 2 vols., Nuremberg/Frankfurt 1675–1679, vol. I,2, p. 249.
- 26 Letter by Michel Le Blon to the collectors Pierre Spiering and Axel Oxenstjerna, November 17, 1635, Staatsarchiv Stockholm. Quoted from W. MARTIN, *Gerard Dou Sa Vie et Son Œuvre*, trad. by LOUIS DIMIER, Paris 1911, p. 46–47; to paint in a “sauber” (clean) fashion was an ideal for Sandrart, see his remark on Le Blon’s cabinet of pictures, JOACHIM VON SANDRART (see note 25), vol. I,2, p. 249 “eine Venus mit dem Cupido uberaus sauber gemahlt (...).”; Le Blon was also purveyor of pictures to Queen Christina of Sweden, see MAX ROOSES / CH. RUELENS, *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires concernant sa vie et ses œuvres*, Anvers 1887–1909, 6 vols., vol. VI, pp. 13–14, p. 318. – PETER HECHT, *De Hollandse Fijnschilders*, Amsterdam 1989. – CHRISTOPHER WOOD, “Curious Pictures” and the art of description, in: *Word & Image*, vol. 11, no. 4, October–December 1995, pp. 332–352.
- 27 See OSKAR BÄTSCHMANN / PASCAL GRENER, *Die Darmstädter Madonna. Vom imperialen Schutzbild zum Epitaph*, Frankfurt 1998.
- 28 JOACHIM VON SANDRART (see note 25), vol. I,2, pp. 249–251
- 29 EMIL MAJOR, *Der mutmassliche Verfertiger des Dresdener Madonnenbildes*, in: *Anzeiger für Schweizerische Altertumskunde* N.F. XII, 1910, pp. 318–324; it is wrong to assume, as does Sandrart, that the Darmstadt picture was sold to Marie de Medici queen of France, while in exile. At that time, she was in financial disarray, and could not contemplate buying such pictures; on Maria’s collections of art, see M. N. BAUDOIN-MATUSZEK, *La succession de Marie de Médicis et l’emplacement des cabinets de peinture au palais du Luxembourg*, in: *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire de Paris et de l’Ile-de-France* 1990, pp. 285–293.
- 30 Faesch must have contacted Sarburgh, because Lüdin was only a assistant to the painter. See the correspondence between Sarburgh and Johann Rudolph Faesch published by Major, (see note 29); Sarburgh was too busy with making portraits to produce such copies; CARL BRUN, *Schweizerisches Künstler-Lexicon*, vol. II, Frauenfeld 1908, p. 284.
- 31 Patin, in his catalogue raisonné of Holbein’s works, only follows Faesch’s description – he did not see the original either.

- DESIDERIUS ERASMUS (see note 9), fols. 32v–34. – SEBASTIAN FAESCH (see note 9), fol. 6a; Faesch helped Patin to produce his edition of the *Encomium Moriae*, see Universitätsbibliothek Basle Ms G2 I 32 document no. 124, the memorandum written by Patin for Faesch for that purpose; see the very interesting letter by Bartolomeus Sarburgh to Johann Rudolf Faesch, The Hague, March 12, 1634, dans EMIL MAJOR (see note 29), esp. pp. 318–319: “Der M. Leblon von Amsterdam ist ietzt undt Secretarius beym Canzler Oxenstern [...]”.
- <sup>32</sup> VERONIKA BIRKE / JANINE KERTESZ, *Die Italienischen Zeichnungen der Albertina*, Vienna 1992–95, 3 vols. published, vol. III, pp. 1664–5, Inv. no. 3248; the authors should like to thank Mr Dominique Radrizzani (University of Lausanne) for having pointed out this important document. – OSKAR BÄTSCHMANN, *Gelehrte Maler in Bern. Josef Werner (1637–1710) und Wilhelm Stettler (1643–1708)*, in: *Im Schatten des Goldenen Zeitalters. Künstler und Auftraggeber im bernischen 17. Jahrhundert*, eds. GEORGES HERZOG / ELIZABETH RYTER / JOHANNA STRÜBIN RINDISBACHER, Bern 1995, vol. II, pp. 165–200.
- <sup>33</sup> FILIPPO BALDINUCCI, *Notizie dei Professori del Disegno*, crit. ed. by PAOLA BAROCCHI / ANTONIO BOSCHETTO, Florence 1974/75, 7 vols., vol. II, pp. 268–270.
- <sup>34</sup> ANDRE FELIBIEN, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes*, vol. II, Paris 1725, p. 351. – J. B. DESCAMPS, *La vie des peintres flamands*, Paris 1753–63, 4 vols., vol. I, p. 72, turns him into a self-taught artist.
- <sup>35</sup> PIERRE-JEAN MARIETTE (see note 17), vol. II, p. 359.
- <sup>36</sup> HORACE WALPOLE, *Aedes Walpolianae, or, A Description of the Collection of Pictures at Houghton Hall, Norfolk, the seat of the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford*, London 1747.
- <sup>37</sup> HORACE WALPOLE, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, 3rd edition, 5 vols., London 1782. – LAWRENCE LIPKING, *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth Century England*, Princeton 1970, pp. 127–163. – EDWARD EDWARDS, *Anecdotes of painters who have resided or been born in England; with critical remarks on their productions*, London 1808, preface pp. 1–3. Edwards helped Walpole with the making of his *Anecdotes*.
- <sup>38</sup> WILLIAM BECKFORD, *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters*, London 1780; Beckford boasted the possession of many “Holbeins”, see the six works attributed to him in the Fonthill Abbey sale, *The Pictures and Miniatures at Fonthill Abbey. Catalogue of ... Paintings, Miniatures and Drawings by Ancient and Modern Masters*, Sale, Phillips, Fonthill Abbey, 10 October, 14, 15 October 1823: nos. 58, 101, 116, 139, 154, 172.
- <sup>39</sup> HORACE WALPOLE, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, ed. by JAMES DALLAWAY, 5 vols., London 1826–28, vol. I, p. 119.
- <sup>40</sup> On the Neo-Gothic, see especially the magnificent monograph by GEORG GERMANN, *Gothic revival in Europe and Britain: Sources, Influences and Ideas*, London 1972, pp. 54–55. – MICHAEL MC CARTHY, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival*, New Haven 1987.
- <sup>41</sup> See, on the Holbein room, the description left by Thomas Gray, in a letter to Thomas Wharton, in *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, eds. PAGET TOYNBEE / LEONARD WHIBLEY / H. W. STARR, Oxford 1971, 3 vols., vol. II, pp. 641–642, no. 303. – Walpole owned the *Catalogue des Tableaux de la Galerie impériale de Vienne*, published by CHRISTIAN VON MECHEL; he noted carefully the presence of many Holbeins: HORACE WALPOLE, *Horace Walpole's Miscellany 1786–1795*, ed. by LARS E. TROIDE, New Haven 1978, pp. 137–138.
- <sup>42</sup> HORACE WALPOLE, *A Description of the Villa of Horace Walpole, Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford, at Strawberry Hill, near Twickenham. With an inventory of the furniture, pictures, curiosities, &c.* Strawberry Hill 1774. [Bodl. Oxford: Broxb.109.17]. – PAGET TOYNBEE, *Strawberry Hill Accounts. A record of expenditure in building furnishing etc kept by Mr Horace Walpole from 1747 to 1795*, Oxford 1927, pp. 102–103. The Holbein drawings had been rediscovered at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the Royal collection; they were not published at first, because Queen Caroline feared that the originals might be spoilt in the process; see the testimony of Viscount Percival, 7 August 1735: Visit of Richmond “I saw in the Queen's closet the famous collection of Holbein's heads of eminent persons in King Henry 8th reign. They are 63 in number, upon half sheets of paper, and seem the sketches made for his portraits in oil. The Queen found them neglected in a book, shut up in a common table drawer, saved out of the fire at Whitehall in King William's reign. It is a pity they are not graved by some good master.” *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont. Diary of Viscount Percival afterwards first earl of Egmont*, London 1920–23, 3 vols. (= Historical Manuscripts Commission 63), vol. II, p. 190, 210, 8 Dec. 1735, and p. 297, 6 Sept 1736; on the publication of these documents, see ANTHONY DYSON, *The engravings and printing of the “Holbein Heads”*, in: *The Library*, 6th ser., 5, no. 3, 1983, pp. 223–236. – KARL T. PARKER, *The Drawings of Hans Holbein in the Collection of His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle*, Oxford 1945. – HORACE WALPOLE (see note 39), vol. I, p. 145.
- <sup>43</sup> Letter of Horace Walpole to William Cole, 9 March 1765. SIR HORACE WALPOLE, *Walpole's correspondence with the Rev. William Cole*, eds. N.S. LEWIS / A. DAYLE WALLACE, New Haven 1970, 2 vols., Letter by H. W. to William Cole, 9 mars 1765.
- <sup>44</sup> *Reynolds*, Exhibition catalogue, London (Royal Academy) 1986, pp. 269 and 128, cat. no. 97, “Master Crewe as Henry VIII” (1776).
- <sup>45</sup> *The Art of Painting, with the Lives and Characters Of above 300 of the most Eminent Painters; Containing a Complete Treatise of Painting, Designing, and The use of Prints. With Reflexions on the Works of the most Celebrated Masters... To which is added An Essay towards an English School*, ed. by BAINBRIGGE BUCKERIDGE (1st ed. 1706), London 1754.
- <sup>46</sup> “Hab ich jemal Inspiration im eigenthlichsten Sinn, in Menschenwerken gesehen, gefühlt, in mich geathmet, so war's in Drey oder Vier Stücken Hohlbeins, die, meines Ermessens, alles übertreffen, was ich in Manheim Schleissheim, u. Düsseldorf sahe – in Ansehung der Zeichnung, des Colorites, und der Poesie. Sein Nachtmal besonders u. – die Lais Corinthiaca gehen über alles.” Letter from Lavater to Goethe, Zurich, 5 August 1780, in *Goethe und Lavater. Briefe und Tagebücher*, ed. by HEINRICH FUNCK, Weimar 1901 (= Schriften der Goethe-Gesellschaft 16), no. 18, pp. 128–129. – There are several references to Holbein in his famous publication, JOHANN KASPAR LAVATER, *Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, Leipzig/Winterthur 1775–1778, 4 vols., vol. I, pp. 79, 82 for example, where the facial expressions of Judas and Christ in the *Last Supper* at Basle, are thoroughly analyzed.
- <sup>47</sup> One of the best recent publications on Lavater and Germany: MARTIN BIRCHER / GISOLD LAMMEL, *Helvetien in Deutschland. Schweizer Kunst aus Residenzen deutscher Klassik 1770–1830.*, Zurich 1990. – *Retaining the Original. Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, Studies in the History of Art 20, 1989. – SUSAN LAMBERT, *The Image multiplied, Five centuries of printed reproductions of paintings and drawings*, London 1987.

<sup>48</sup> ULRICH HEGNER, *Hans Holbein der Jüngere*, Berlin 1827; on Ulrich Hegner, see F. O. PESTALOZZI, *David Hess, Ulrich Hegner, Mitteilungen aus ihrem Briefwechsel in den Jahren 1812–1839*, in: Zürcher Taschenbuch 12, Zurich 1889. – GEROLD MEYER VON KNONAU, *Aus dem Briefwechsel zwischen Ulrich Hegner und Ludwig Meyer von Knonau*, in: Zürcher Taschenbuch 2, Zurich 1879, pp. 162–228. – GEORG GEILFUS, *Ulrich Hegner zum Frieden im Hauskappchen*, in: Zürcher Taschenbuch 11, Zurich 1888, pp. 1–64. – ALBERT HAFNER, *Ulrich Hegner's Leben und Wirken. Nach dessen eigenhändigen Aufzeichnungen*, in: Neujahrsblatt von der Stadtbibliothek in Winterthur 223, 1886, pp. 1–22, and 224, 1887, pp. 1–26.

<sup>49</sup> ULRICH HEGNER (see note 48), p. 350, relies upon the “biographische Charakteristik”; see SULPIZ BOISSERÉE’s comments on that method, in: Kunst-Blatt no. 41, 21 mai 1829 pp. 161–164, n° 42, 25 mai 1829, pp. 165–167, no. 43, 28 mai 1829, pp. 170–171.

<sup>50</sup> CHRISTIAN MÜLLER, *Hans Holbein d.J. Zeichnungen aus dem Kupferstichkabinett der Öffentlichen Kunstsammlung Basel*. Exhibition catalogue, Basle (Kunstmuseum), 1988, pp. 162 to 163, no. 48.

## PHOTO CREDITS

Fig. 1–5: Archives of the author.

## SUMMARY

Holbein always remained a well-known artist. However, his image underwent a great deal of transformations over the centuries. Karel van Mander claimed in his “Lives of the most illustrious Netherlandish and German painters” (1603/04) that the artists of the North were not inferior to their Latin counterparts, this against Vasari’s Florentine “geocentrism”. Van Mander padded out Holbein’s life with some anecdotes which were to colour the artist’s biography for a long time, especially during the romantic period, and he paved the way for a parallel between Holbein and Dürer, paramount for all historical research on the two artists in the XIXth century. The second important text on Holbein was written by Charles Patin, as an introduction to an edition of Erasmus’ “*Laus stultitiae*” (1676), in which he offered the first catalogue raisonné of Holbein’s works. Patin thus developed an image of the artist as a rude and lazy painter, which was to remain a feature of most of Holbein’s biographies until the end of the XIXth century. The third important moment in Holbein’s historiography is the publication of the “*Teutsche Akademie*” by Joachim von Sandrart (1675–1679). Insisting on the price of Holbein’s pictures, Sandrart documented the fact of the high reputation of the artist’s works among connoisseurs: His paintings were being copied, and accounted for a complex moment in the history of taste. The destiny of the “*Meyer madonna*” and its copy by B. Sarburgh illustrates, more than any other painting, the appreciation of Holbein in seventeenth-century Europe. Later on Horace Walpole was paving the way for a pre-romantic perception of Holbein, whose first exponent was the Swiss physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater. A new cult of the work of art was developing, in which pseudo-religious feelings mixed with the cult of originality. Finally, in the eighteen forties, a new Holbein emerged, who was opposed to Dürer – no mystic, but a down-to-earth, more secular painter, ready to assume the identity of a Raphael of the North.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Holbein geriet als Künstler nie in Vergessenheit, aber sein Bild veränderte sich im Laufe der Jahrhunderte erheblich. Karel van Mander führte 1603/04 in seiner Schrift «Das Leben der berühmtesten niederländischen und deutschen Maler» aus, dass die Künstler des Nordens denjenigen Italiens ebenbürtig seien. Er begründete zwei Traditionen in Holbeins Historiographie: Die von ihm erfundenen Anekdoten prägten die Maler-Biographie bis in die Zeit der Romantik, und er zog Parallelen zwischen Holbein und Dürer, die für alle kunsthistorischen Untersuchungen der beiden Künstler bis ins 19. Jahrhundert wegweisend bleiben sollten. Die zweite für die Holbein-Rezeption wichtige Schrift war Charles Patins Einleitung zu einer Neuedition von Erasmus’ «*Lob der Torheit*» (1676), die einen ersten Oeuvrekatalog enthielt. Patin entwarf jenes Bild Holbeins als eines grobschlächtigen, faulen Malers, das bis Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts in den meisten Biographien aufgenommen wurde. Joachim von Sandrart wies in seiner «*Teutschen Akademie*» (1675–1679) vor allem auf die Begehrtheit von Holbeins Gemälden in Kennerkreisen hin. Holbeins Bilder wurden häufig kopiert und beeinflussten den damaligen Zeitgeschmack. Das Schicksal der «*Darmstädter Madonna*» und ihrer Kopie durch B. Sarburgh ist ein beredtes Zeugnis für die hohe Wertschätzung des Malers in der europäischen Kunstszene des 17. Jahrhunderts. Später bereitete Horace Walpole den Weg für die frühromantische Auffassung von Holbein, deren erster Exponent der Schweizer Physiognomiker J. C. Lavater war. Daraus entwickelte sich eine neue Art von Kunstbetrachtung, bei der sich pseudoreligiöse Gefühle mit dem Originalitäts-Kult vermischten. Die 1840er Jahre schliesslich setzten Holbein in Gegensatz zu Dürer – er erscheint nicht mehr als Mystiker, sondern vielmehr als bodenständiger, weltlicher Künstler, gewürdigt als ein Raffael des Nordens.

Si Holbein a toujours maintenu sa renommée d'artiste, son image a néanmoins considérablement changé au fil des siècles. Dans son ouvrage «Vie des peintres allemands et hollandais les plus illustres» (1603/04), Karel van Mander affirmait que les artistes du Nord n'avaient absolument rien à envier à leurs homologues italiens. Van Mander devait créer deux traditions destinées à accompagner au fil du temps l'historiographie de Holbein: d'une part, il avait imaginé certaines anecdotes qui devaient marquer de leur empreinte la biographie de l'artiste jusqu'à l'époque romantique et, d'autre part, il avait établi des parallèles entre Holbein et Dürer, qui allaient déterminer toutes les recherches historiques autour de l'œuvre des deux artistes jusqu'au 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Le deuxième texte important concernant la réception accordée à Holbein fut l'introduction de Charles Patin à une édition de «L'éloge de la folie» d'Erasmus de Rotterdam (1676), contenant le premier catalogue des œuvres de Holbein. Patin décrivait Holbein comme un artiste grossier et paresseux, lui attribuant ainsi une image qui fut reprise par la plupart des biographies du peintre jusqu'à la fin du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Quant à Joachim von Sandrart, il évoquait dans sa «Teutsche Akademie» (1675-1679) surtout le grand succès dont les tableaux de Holbein jouissaient auprès des connaisseurs. Ses toiles furent souvent copiées, influençant ainsi les goûts de l'époque. La destinée de la «Vierge de Darmstadt» et de sa copie exécutée par B. Sarburg témoigne de façon éloquent de la grande estime dont jouissait Holbein parmi les milieux artistiques européens du XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Plus tard, Horace Walpole fraya la voie à la perception de l'œuvre de Holbein typique des débuts du romantisme, dont le premier représentant fut le physiognomoniste suisse Johann Kaspar Lavater. A partir de là se développa une nouvelle conception de l'art, qui mêlait des sentiments pseudo-religieux au culte de l'originalité. Autour de 1840, un nouvel Holbein devait enfin émerger par opposition à Dürer, un Holbein ayant perdu tout caractère mystique pour acquérir une dimension plus matérielle et séculière, qui fut élevé au rang de Raphaël du Nord.

La fama di Holbein quale artista non tramontò mai. Ciononostante, nel corso dei secoli la sua immagine conobbe una notevole evoluzione. Nel 1603/04 Karel van Mander affermò nel suo saggio «La vita dei pittori olandesi e tedeschi più famosi» che gli artisti del Nord equivalevano a quelli italiani. Egli introdusse due aspetti che caratterizzarono a lungo la storiografia di Holbein: Gli aneddoti da lui inventati accompagnarono la biografia del pittore sino all'epoca del Romanticismo. Inoltre, le analogie tra Holbein e Dürer da lui tracciate rimasero indicative per tutti gli esami storico-artistici dell'opera dei due pittori sino al XIX secolo. Il secondo testo importante a trattare il lavoro di Holbein fu l'introduzione di Charles Patin per una nuova edizione dell'«Elogio della follia» di Erasmo di Rotterdam (1676), la quale conteneva un primo catalogo delle sue opere. Patin creò l'immagine di un Holbein pittore rozzo e pigro, che fu ripresa sino alla fine del XIX secolo dalla maggior parte delle sue biografie. Joachim von Sandrart sottolineò nella sua «Teutsche Akademie» (1675-1679) soprattutto la richiesta a cui le opere di Holbein furono soggette da parte dei collezionisti. I dipinti di Holbein furono sovente copiati e influenzarono i gusti dell'epoca. Il destino della «Madonna di Darmstadt» e la copia fatta da B. Sarburgh testimoniano il notevole rispetto di cui l'artista godeva negli ambienti artistici europei del XVII secolo. Successivamente, Horace Walpole preparò la strada all'interpretazione preromantica dell'opera di Holbein, il cui primo esponente fu il fisionomista svizzero J.C. Lavater. Tale interpretazione portò a un nuovo modo di osservare l'arte, nella quale vennero fusi sentimenti pseudoreligiosi e culto dell'originalità. Gli anni attorno al 1840 rivelarono, infine, un nuovo Holbein, contrapposto a Dürer: non più un mistico ma piuttosto un artista secolare, con i piedi ben radicati in terra, considerato il Raffaello del Nord.