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Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-46015>

Book Section

Published Version

Originally published at:

Weddigen, Tristan (2010). Mary Magdalene in the desert: the Dresden picture gallery, a crypto-Catholic collection? In: Feigenbaum, Gail; Ebert-Schifferer, Sybille. Sacred possessions: collecting Italian religious art, 1500-1900. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 189-206.

TRISTAN WEDDIGEN

MARY MAGDALENE IN THE DESERT: The Dresden Picture Gallery, a Crypto-Catholic Collection?

Augustus III, Catholic Convert

Augustus III (1696–1763)—son of Augustus the Strong (1670–1733), and both elector of Protestant Saxony and king of Catholic Poland from 1733—shared his father’s love of Italy from an early age.¹ In 1712, the sixteen-year-old was sent off, incognito, on a grand tour through Italy in order to remove him from the Lutheran influence of his mother, Christiane Eberhardine von Brandenburg-Bayreuth. During his stay in Bologna, the prince secretly converted to Catholicism, in accordance with his father’s wishes and the pope’s reconsecration policy, thereby fulfilling a precondition for his later election as king of Poland.

What the prince saw in northern Italy made a lasting impression and shaped his tastes in art. He traveled to Venice two more times, where he acquired, among other works of art, fifty pastels by Rosalba Carriera; these would later form the core of his pastels cabinet.² During his reign, Augustus III strove to transform Dresden’s urban appearance and the court’s pageantry, fine arts, and music into those of an Italian city, indeed, to turn Dresden into Venice’s heir. The times were conducive to Augustus’s Italianization of Dresden: as his art agent Francesco Algarotti complained, Italy’s culture, and particularly the Serenissima’s, were in decline, and their cultural treasures, artists, and scholars were migrating to the courts and metropolises of northern Europe.³

Saxonia nova Italia

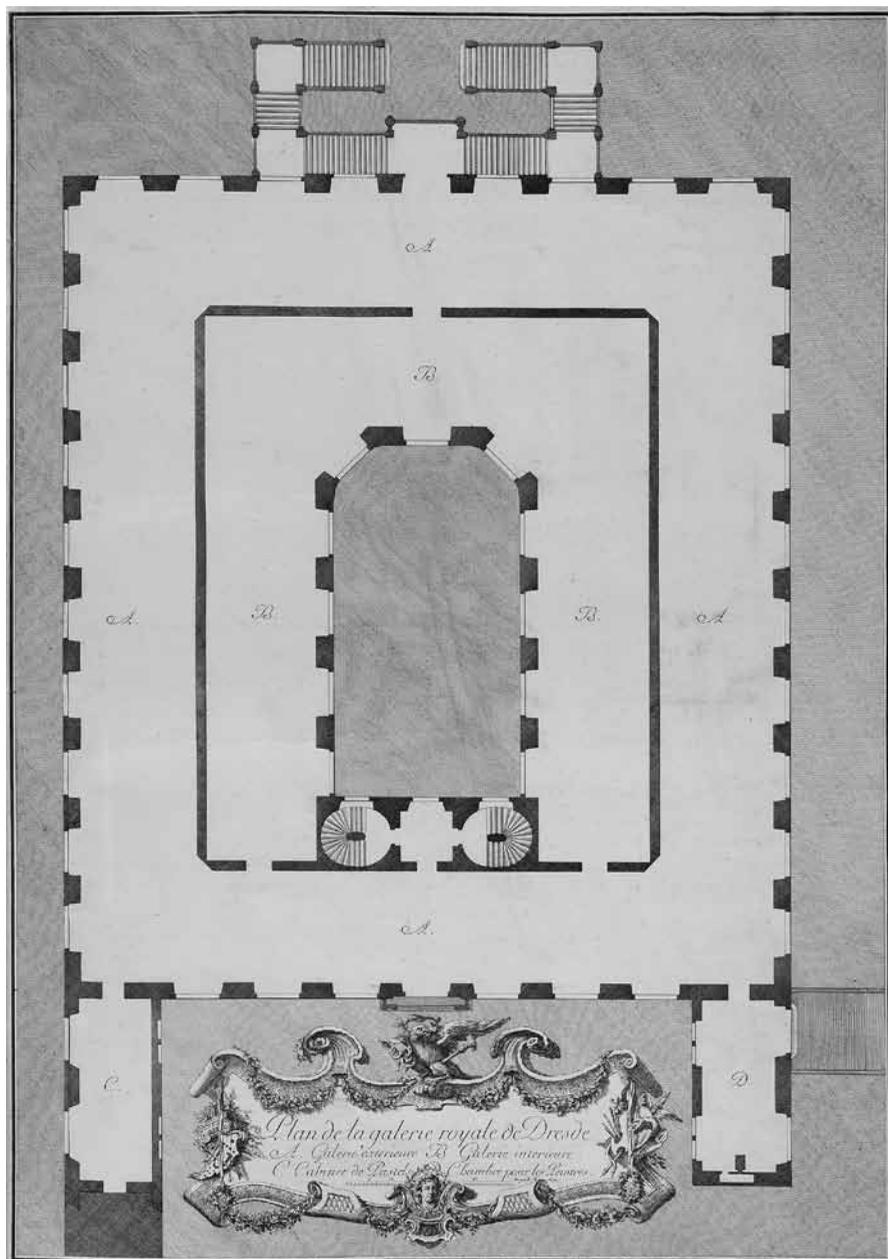
Algarotti was full of praise for the small colony of Italian intellectuals and artists that Augustus had established at the Dresden court.⁴ Among them were physician and antiquarian Giovanni Lodovico Bianconi, Jesuit priest Ignazio Guarini, poet Stefano Benedetto Pallavicini, architect Gaetano Chiaveri, sculptor Lorenzo Mattielli, set designer Giuseppe Galli Bibiena, painters Bernardo Bellotto, Giovanni Battista Casanova, Johann Baptist Grone, Gregorio Guglielmi, Lorenzo Rossi, Pietro Rotari, and Stefano Torelli, as well as singers and musicians of the opera.⁵

In turn, painters such as Christian Wilhelm Ernst Dietrich and Anton Raphael Mengs were sent off to Italy in order to familiarize themselves with ancient and Renaissance art.⁶ A tight network of diplomats and art agents was at the services of the Saxon court in Italy, especially in Venice and Bologna, thus fostering the importation of goods and ideas from the Italian peninsula to Saxony.⁷ Rather than a neo-Renaissance “Florence on the Elbe” or a “German Florence,” as Johann

Gottfried Herder later called it, Augustan Dresden was first meant to become a new baroque Venice.⁸

A Taste for Italy

But how "Italian" was the Dresden picture gallery? By 1747, Italian sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century paintings were literally at the core of Augustus III's gallery, which were exhibited in an inner gallery (fig. 1) and separated from the



other schools of painting. Moreover, the inner gallery was supervised by the north Italian inspector, dealer, and restorer Pietro Maria Guarienti.⁹ Unsystematic cisalpine art collections, however, were probably less of a model for the Dresden court than were the northern European galleries, such as the ones at Düsseldorf, Kassel, Salzdahlum, Versailles, and Vienna, which offered painting collections to rival that of the Medici.¹⁰

Because the canonicity of Italian Renaissance and baroque art was internationally established, the focal point of the Dresden collection could not be seen as sufficient evidence for claiming that Augustus III had a specifically Italian taste. The *italianità* of the royal gallery leads to a more general question involving the cultural transfer from north to south and its ideological implications. What was the relation between the collection and the Catholic faith of the king and his court? And to what extent were the Counter-Reformation characteristics of the Italian art discourse at the basis of Augustus's understanding of art? Recent art historical research has examined museums as public culture institutions and, from a critical point of view, as visual constructions of history, science, gender, and nation; however, the *religious* aspect, which does not seem to fit in with the original myth of the museum as bourgeois temple of education, has not yet been sufficiently explored.

The Dresden Hofkirche as Private Propaganda

Augustus III is considered an enlightened Jesuit Catholic who pleaded for mutual tolerance vis-à-vis the Protestant subjects of his electorate, which was a stronghold of the Reformation.¹¹ The basis of his confession policy was the decree of *Religionsversicherung*, renewed in 1734, which defined the ruler's faith as a private affair. Augustus's interest in political and religious matters might have appeared minor from the outside: as Johann Joachim Winckelmann noted in 1749, "hunting and paintings are the king's greatest passions."¹² However, Augustus's power as a Saxon landlord depended on the ruling Protestant estates, which it was important not to provoke, as the public practice of Catholic rites was forbidden and the people were hostile to Catholic attempts of conversion.

Nevertheless, one of Augustus III's few visible expressions of faith was his most ambitious urban construction project, the Hofkirche Sanctis Trinitatis (Catholic Church of the royal court of Saxony) (fig. 2), which illustrates the confession issue in all its complexity.¹³ The sacred functions of the new building on the premises of the royal castle were reserved for the king, courtiers, foreigners, and converts, and were originally kept secret: the 1738 royal construction order mentioned only "a certain building to be constructed at the royal residence of Dresden."¹⁴ However, the building and its ornaments were unmistakable. The inside of the imposing church, which was a court chapel in name only, was the site of magnificent services accompanied by music; the building's exterior clearly echoed Rome's baroque sacred architecture, for instance Gian Lorenzo Bernini's colonnade of Saint Peter's Basilica. Seventy-eight colossal statues, created under Mattielli's supervision, symbolized the *ecclesia militans* reconverting the people of Saxony with the help of Wettin, Habsburg, Polish, Saxon, and Jesuit saints as well as the royal couple's personal saintly patrons.¹⁵

Fig. 1.
Michael Keyl (1722–98) after
Johann Christoph Knöffel
(1686–1752)
*Ground Plan of the Royal Gallery
in Dresden* [circa 1747, showing
the outer gallery ("A") and inner
gallery ("B")]
From Carl Heinrich von
Heineken, *Recueil d'estampes
d'après les plus célèbres
tableaux de la galerie royale
de Dresde*, 2 vols. (Dresden:
Hagenmüller, 1753 and 1757)



Fig. 2.
Bernardo Bellotto
(Italian, 1721–80)
View of the Hofkirche, 1748,
oil on canvas, 133 x 235 cm
(52³/₈ x 91¹/₂ in.)
Dresden, Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen Dresden,
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister
gal. no. 608

Dedicating the Hofkirche to the Holy Trinity could be seen as almost ecumenical, a dogma shared by both confessions. However, the Protestant public soon perceived the purpose of the royal chapel that was being built—that is, the Catholic conversion of Saxony by the head of state and through architecture, sculpture, painting, music, liturgy, and the presentation of relics, all merging into a *theatrum sacrum* of *propaganda fide*.¹⁶ In 1741, the local anti-papist resistance against the Italian master builder Chiaveri, his imported workmen, his Roman and Borrominesque architectural style, and the Hofkirche's Catholic decoration program culminated in a pamphlet attributed to the clerk Johann Christian Simon entitled *Bedencken eines Baumeisters über den neuen Kirchenbau zu Dresden*.¹⁷ Simon's xenophobic, classicist, and Protestant polemic condemned Chiaveri's obscurantist, theatrical, and offensive design—"so foolish and gothic"—as an import of Roman Catholic sacred architecture and thus as an expression of religious propaganda.¹⁸

By 1751, animosities had subsided somewhat; nevertheless, when the Hofkirche was inaugurated that year, on the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul, the event occurred under military surveillance, as a precaution.¹⁹ In a panegyric, the publisher Johann Samuel Gerlach praised the controversial Hofkirche as a new temple of Solomon, as a "conflation of the most intelligent building maxims," and as a sacred building after Italy's model, the *patria magnificentissimorum templorum*. Because it was "a Catholic court temple on Evangelical soil" that respected "the high right to the private nature of faith," it did not offend, but actually inspired admiration.²⁰ Gerlach's paean suggests that the Hofkirche still needed to be justified.

Maria Josepha's Jesuitism

Augustus III's Catholicism not only was shaped by the Jesuit *pietas austriaca* (that is, Habsburg's Catholicism), which Augustus had experienced at the Viennese court,

but also was strongly reinforced by the faith of the queen, Maria Josepha of Austria. In Dresden, she, together with the Jesuit priest Guarini, probably determined the Hofkirche's iconographic program. In addition to the statues, it included lateral paintings by Mengs, which were dedicated to the queen's namesake saintly patrons Mary and Joseph in 1750. The altar paintings in the queen's private chapel were temporarily an Assumption by Louis de Silvestre as well as Garofalo's Raphaelesque *Mary Adoring the Child* (1517), the iconography of which includes the instruments of Christ's Passion and the sword transfixing the soul, which seem to encourage Ignatian exercises.²¹ In the same way, Polidoro da Lanciano's *Assumption* in the public Catholic chapel at the Hubertusburg made the queen's devotion for her eponymous patron manifest.²²

As her confessor, Anton Hermann, pointed out in a posthumous memorial writing issued in 1766, Maria Josepha was especially devoted to the Virgin Mary and Joseph, the archangel Michael, Saint Augustine (in honor of the king), and Saint Francis Xavier, a founder of the Jesuit order—the image of the latter is even supposed to have miraculously extinguished an accidental fire in her bedroom.²³ Whereas the king's contribution to the design and decoration of the Dresden picture gallery is mentioned, albeit indirectly and sporadically, in the written sources, there are no documents at all recording the queen's involvement. Indeed, the anecdote about Francis Xavier hints at a fundamentally different understanding of images and art. According to an inventory compiled in 1741, about 106 paintings decorated the queen's apartments. Some eighty-six of those had religious subjects, of which forty-five were representations of Mary, Joseph, other saints, or hermits, and three were pictures of Mary Magdalen.²⁴

Augustus's Interior Gallery as Aesthetic Sancta Sanctorum

In Augustus III's painting collection, there is no particular preponderance of Jesuit iconography. However, the works that were exhibited might have given rise to confessional questions of decorum similar to those relating to the Hofkirche—not so much for the Protestant citizens, who barely had access to the royal gallery, but for the court and its guests. Italian paintings were, due to the traditional functions of art, clearly focused on religious subjects. In Dresden, the installation of paintings in both the outer gallery and, until 1750, the inner gallery, mixed not only genres but also schools (fig. 3). This meant that sacred and profane subjects would inevitably collide, such as a Drunken Hercules with a Supper at Emmaus, or a dentist with a Resurrection of Christ.²⁵

Because the Dresden gallery had yet to become a scientific and educational establishment, residual functional connotations of a moral and religious nature were probably not entirely eradicated, especially considering that some of the purchased pieces, for instance Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (see Henning, fig. 1, this volume), had been taken directly from a sacred context. In 1754, most of the Italian works in the royal collection were hung in the inner gallery, whereas the northern European schools were displayed in the outer gallery. This created a kind of aesthetic, Italianate sancta sanctorum in the very heart of the gallery,



Fig. 3. Digital reconstruction showing the paintings installation as it appeared in 1750 at the royal gallery in Dresden, inner gallery, northeastern wall.

later perceived by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as a “sanctuary” or “temple,” from which the all-too-profane subjects of Dutch genre painting were barred.²⁶ The high concentration of Italian sacred paintings in the inner gallery may have fostered the neo-Catholic cult of art later in the Romantic period, especially the glorification of the *Sistine Madonna* in August Wilhelm Schlegel’s and Caroline Schlegel’s fictive gallery conversation *Die Gemählde* (The paintings), published in 1799.²⁷

The “purification” of the inner gallery in evidence by 1754, which Guarienti carried out by dividing the southern and northern schools and by removing from that gallery, as early as 1750, works of art considered to be inferior or from lower genres, may hence have been motivated not only by aesthetic and art historical considerations but also by a question of decorum.²⁸ Even so, problematic couplings—for instance, of Venus and Mary, Bacchus and Christ, or Ariadne and Mary Magdalen—could not be avoided within the panoply of Italian painting. These juxtapositions of profane and sacred iconography, resulting from the symmetrical pendant hanging, were, however, aesthetically mitigated through unified frames, formal similarities, and common citations from ancient art.

Promiscuity in the Gallery

After the Catholic reform of the arts in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (as codified, for instance, by Gabriele Paleotti, Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, and Pietro da Cortona), exhibiting erotic paintings in the German-speaking regions at the beginning of the eighteenth century was more than simply a new phenomenon; it was seen as an Italian import—both of the painting genre as well as of the moral problems it created.²⁹ In his encyclopedic treatises on ceremonial and decorum, Julius Bernhard von Rohr sees the blanket hanging of paintings in palaces as an Italian fashion and the presentation of saints’ statues as a Catholic habit.³⁰ In noble private homes, the once-popular life-size portraits of ancestors and hunting scenes were replaced, in the early 1700s, by landscapes, still lifes, and history paintings, along with “shameful, lewd, naked pictures and statues originating in lustful Italy and providing the young and the old with titillation and the kindling of evil longings and appetites.”³¹

Of course, the paintings' aesthetic value, not their former liturgical or devotional functions, was the most important factor for collectors. In fact, Augustus III did not hesitate to acquire erotic paintings. When Augustus's art dealer Algarotti had to face the question of decorum regarding a larger-than-life but reasonably modest Venus by Lorenzo Pasinelli, Algarotti's answer was pragmatic: he had no reservations about the purchase, especially because the king did not seem to want to become pope—and, in any event, the pope himself owned much more naked art in the Vatican.³² Similarly, a Calvinist like Landgrave William VIII of Hessen-Kassel, who favored Dutch paintings, would not pass up a "papist" painting, for instance one by Peter Paul Rubens, if he judged it to be of high artistic value.³³

Still, religious iconography could conflict with the artistic functions of the paintings. In 1748, Dresden art collector and writer Christian Ludwig von Hagedorn went as far as asking if it was tenable to have Catholic paintings reproduced by Protestant printmakers, as if it was a question of being able to translate the original image or the holy scriptures accurately.³⁴ In 1752, French art critic Étienne La Font de Saint-Yenne tried to explain the recent and, to his mind, regrettable success of Dutch genre paintings by pointing out not only that bourgeois collectors' apartments did not have room for large Italian formats but also that, because of their mostly religious nature, Italian paintings were, unfortunately, often not very *heureux* or *intéressants*.³⁵ Augustus III seems to have given some attention to the question of decorum in the gallery, as can be gleaned from the royal instruction of 1741, which defined the duties of the eclectic court painter Dietrich: for the sum of four hundred *Reichsthaler* he had to hand in, among other things, four paintings a year for the gallery, depicting "spiritual stories." While the choice of subject was left to Dietrich, the pictures had to be painted with "diligence and artfulness," "failing which, the indecent pieces would be returned."³⁶

Bedroom Pictures

The picture gallery was connected to the royal castle through a long corridor and was, strictly speaking, part of the royal apartments; hence, it has to be seen as the royal apartments' representative adornment.³⁷ For reasons of decorum, in early modern times decorations were normally chosen to correspond to the functions of the rooms. Therefore, in terms of the paintings selected, the same conventions probably applied to decorating the apartments as to decorating the gallery. In his *chambre de parade* (royal parade bedroom)—the ceremonial core of the apartments—Augustus III displayed only two paintings: a Mother of God by Carlo Dolci, no longer identifiable (see figure 4 for a related painting), and a copy of Correggio's Mary Magdalen, thought to be the master's original at the time and lost since 1945 (fig. 5).³⁸ A pious Virgin Mary and an erotic Magdalen would have satisfied the conventional decorum and the supposed functions of a *chambre de parade*. They also would have hinted, by their specific combination, at the virtuousness of Augustus III's known passion for art and his preference for Italian paintings with religious subjects. The two paintings hanging in the *chambre de parade* offered a stylistic and iconographic demonstration not only of the king's connoisseurship



and his appreciation of Italian art of the cinquecento and seicento but also of his Catholic piousness.

Ottonelli and Cortona argued that Correggio's genius was inclined to both indecent and pious works, as demonstrated, for example, by his Mary Magdalen; similarly, in the Dresden picture gallery one can observe a striking and perhaps problematic concentration of representations of Mary Magdalen, an Italian and Counter-Reformation subject in which both spiritual and artistic values merge.³⁹ Correggio's original Mary Magdalen probably dates from 1527 and is today considered lost. Out of the numerous copies the grand dukes of Tuscany ordered from Alessandro Allori and his pupils, one copy was given as a present to twelve-year-old Princess Leonora d'Este in 1609 when she entered the Clarissan convent of Carpi. It was a painting on copper, a "Mary Magdalen in the desert," "which comes from Correggio, by Bronzino's hand" that, thanks to the silver frame decorated with semi-precious stones, can be identified as the painting that joined the Galleria Estense, probably in the 1620s, and then, in 1746, came to Dresden with Augustus III's spectacular purchase of the collection's one hundred best paintings.⁴⁰

The *Maddalenina del Correggio* (see fig. 5), as Guarienti called her, hung in Augustus's bedroom from 1750 at the latest and was considered the king's favorite painting.⁴¹ Together with Correggio's *Nativity* (also known as *La Notte*, or *The Night*) it had already been the high point of gallery visits in Modena.⁴² Accordingly, the first volume of Carl Heinrich von Heineken's *Recueil d'estampes d'après les plus célèbres tableaux de la galerie royale de Dresde* (Collection of etchings after the most famous paintings of the royal gallery at Dresden), published in 1753, opens with a full-scale reproduction of the Magdalen, along with other works by Correggio.⁴³ As Heineken writes in the accompanying text, the Este appreciated the painting so much that they took it with them in their traveling coach whenever they left their residence. This was being reported as early as 1740 in Charles de Brosses' travel reports, which, however, contradict Heineken's assertion that the Este kept the painting "in their own room." Much more central to Heineken's argument was to prove Augustus III's sophistication, as evidenced by his appreciation of that world-famous masterpiece of the Italian Renaissance: the king, who now owned that painting, tended to it with no less care than its previous owner; it had been taken to the royal apartment, kept behind glass, and placed in a new frame that could be locked, as Heineken emphasizes.

Johann Anton Riedel's diary, which documents the consequences of the Prussian occupation of Dresden, indicates that Correggio's Mary Magdalen was accorded the most scrupulous attention. When the Prussians attacked on 29 August 1756, the first safety measure that gallery superintendent Riedel took was to hand the Mary Magdalen "hanging in His Majesty's bedroom" to the queen.⁴⁴ When the queen died on 17 November 1757, Prince Frederick Christian (1722–63) took into his custody the key to the gallery as well as Correggio's Mary Magdalen. The painting also received special conservational care: on 4 September 1758, the same day that the surrender of Dresden was signed, Riedel received the royal order to ship the gallery's paintings to the Königstein fortress. He had individual transport boxes made for both Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* and Correggio's Mary Magdalen.

Fig. 4.

School of Carlo Dolci
(Italian, 1616–86)
Virgin Mary, date unknown,
oil on canvas, 77 × 61.5 cm
(30³/₈ × 24¹/₄ in.)
Dresden, Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen Dresden,
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister,
gal. no. 511

Fig. 5.

Alessandro Allori
(Italian, 1535–1607)
after Correggio (Italian,
ca. 1489–1534)
The Penitent Magdalen, date
unknown, oil on canvas,
29 × 39 cm (11¹/₂ × 15³/₈ in.);
frame: silver with semi-
precious stones
Painting: lost since 1945;
frame: Dresden, Grünes
Gewölbe (united here in a
digital reconstruction)

That “spiritual and precious work” with its “figure wholly divine,” which shakes the soul, as Heineken writes, was staged by Augustus III as a relic from Italy’s cultural heyday.⁴⁵ Framed in a precious ostensorium, which, in turn, was behind glass and locked-off, the Palladium of Dresden epitomized the transfer both of good taste and of Catholicism from Italy to Saxony.

The Eroticism of Faith

However, Correggio’s “Catholic nymph” was not the first such depiction of the Magdalen to arrive in Dresden. The scantily clad Mary Magdalen (fig. 6) attributed to Francesco Baratta, a pupil of Bernini’s, was arguably moved from a garden into the Hofkirche, where it served as pendant figure to Francesco Mochi’s Saint John the Baptist. As an example of the eroticization of contrition, Paolo Pagani’s tender female apostle in the desert (fig. 7) resembles a bathing Venus: Pagani shows the Magdalen doing penance with a skull between her legs and embracing the cross, with Cupid sitting by her side and offering her beads.⁴⁶

After Augustus III acquired the Este collection—that is, after Correggio’s *Maddalenina* arrived in Dresden—he actively purchased depictions of Mary Magdalen. Like the two paintings in the royal bedroom, they can be divided into two stylistic categories: on the one hand, sensually cooled-down pseudo-portraits that comply with the aesthetic precepts of the Counter-Reformation, which are in the vein of Guido Reni’s Mary (see figure 4) and, on the other hand, more erotic, full-length figures in the tradition of Correggio’s original Mary Magdalen.

A bust of Mary Magdalen deep in thought by Reni’s pupil Giovan Francesco Gessi and a virginal, intellectual Mary Magdalen by the pastel painter Rosalba Carriera (fig. 8), whom Augustus III appreciated so much, belong to the first category.⁴⁷ Carriera’s Mary Magdalen was acquired for Augustus by his art agent Algarotti, who clearly recognized the taste of the court: for example, the influential prime minister and art collector Count Heinrich von Brühl owned a Mary Magdalen by Francesco Trevisani and had it reproduced as an etching in his own Heineken *Recueil* in 1754.⁴⁸ Another clue to the sensually reduced treatment of religious subjects lies in the way court artist Rotari painted a rapt Mary Magdalen (fig. 9) for Augustus III. His blushing saint slightly eroticizes Reni’s model, but at the same time she distances herself from the earthly nudes of, for example, Guido Cagnacci by placing her hand on her velvety breast and thereby sublimating her sensuality as inner feeling.⁴⁹

In addition to staged representations (such as Marc Antonio Franceschini’s self-flagellating courtesan, who renounces *vanitas*), several other important works found their way into the gallery following Correggio’s more erotic Mary Magdalen in spirit.⁵⁰ Dietrich’s copy on copper, lost since 1945, was at the Hubertusburg, Augustus III’s hunting castle in 1755 to 1756 and was integrated into the Dresden picture gallery in 1761.⁵¹ Shortly after the capitulation of Dresden in 1756, Frederick II (1712–86), king of Prussia, asked to visit the picture gallery. After several tours of the gallery, he had Dietrich make a copy of Pompeo Batoni’s Mary Magdalen (fig. 10) for his own royal collection in Potsdam—“but without the skull”—as a substitute for

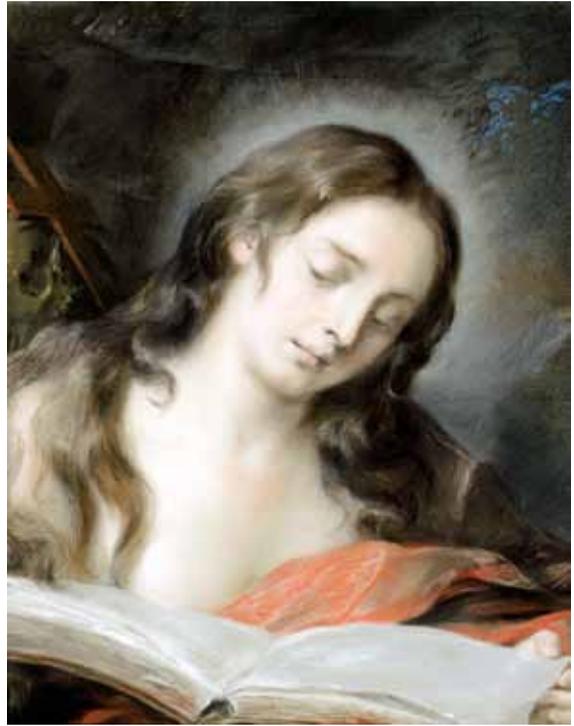
Fig. 6.

Francesco Baratta (Italian,
ca. 1600–1666)
Saint Mary Magdalen,
seventeenth century, marble
Dresden, Katholische Hofkirche

Fig. 7.

Paolo Pagani (Italian,
ca. 1661–1716)
The Penitent Magdalen,
ca. 1680, oil on canvas, 115 ×
149 cm (45³/₈ × 58³/₄ in.)
Dresden, Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen Dresden,
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister,
gal. no. 648



**Fig. 8.**

Rosalba Carriera
(Italian, 1675–1757)
Mary Magdalen with a Book,
after 1783 (?), pastel
on paper, 57 × 46.5 cm
(22½ × 18¾ in.)
Dresden, Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen Dresden,
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister,
gal. no. P61

Fig. 9.

Pietro Rotari (Italian, 1707–62)
The Penitent Magdalen,
ca. 1753–55, oil on canvas,
45.5 × 35 cm (18 × 13¾ in.)
Dresden, Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen Dresden,
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister,
gal. no. 599

**Fig. 10.**

Pompeo Batoni
(Italian, 1708–87)
The Penitent Magdalen,
before 1754, oil on canvas,
121 × 188 cm (47⅝ × 74 in.)
Lost since 1945



Correggio's *Maddalena*, which was being kept under lock and key.⁵² Clearly, even the king of Prussia seems to have had a weakness for the subject, considering that in 1786 there were six Magdalens in his gallery, including a copy after a painting in the Dresden gallery by Adriaen van der Werff.⁵³

A Catholic Mary Magdalen in a Protestant Wilderness

In 1752, the young Mengs, then holder of a royal scholarship in Rome, painted a Mary Magdalen (fig. 11) for Augustus III explicitly as a competing "companion" to Correggio's Madgalen (it was also a reception piece for the Accademia di San Luca). In doing so, he was aiming for strategic emulation: by trying to imitate and surpass that painting—which, for the Catholic art collector, embodied the official and canonized ideal—the convert Mengs fulfilled the aesthetic expectations associated with his appointment as court painter in 1751. In that position, he would achieve the transfer of good taste from Italy to Saxony and also contribute to the elector's reconsecration policy.⁵⁴ In his letters, published in 1763, Bianconi reports that Augustus III appreciated Mengs's Mary Magdalen so much that he kept it in his bedroom together with its model, although he used to say that Mengs's Magdalen did not seem to be fully and truly repentant yet.⁵⁵

In light of the extraordinary number of Magdalen paintings and the concentration of Catholic iconography in Augustus III's art collection, the question arises as to how their erotic and religious ambivalence should be read in the context of Dresden. Since the sixteenth century, the female nude had testified to the potency



Fig. 11.
Anton Raphael Mengs
(German, 1728–79)
The Penitent Magdalen, 1752,
oil on canvas, 47.5 × 63.5 cm
(18¾ × 25 in.)
Dresden, Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen,
Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister,
gal. no. 2162

of painting, and over the course of Catholic reform the eroticism of pictures could not only continue to exist under the fig leaf of female saint iconography but even be justified as a means to the end of confessionalization.⁵⁶ Correggio's Mary Magdalen thus appears not only as the pearl of the Dresden collection, but also—in the company of her sisters—as an ambivalent, "anamorphic" icon of Augustus's taste. She satisfied two diametrically opposed needs: the art collector's sensual-aesthetic ones as well as the Catholic monarch's ones for representation and decorum.

Finally, it is tempting to flip the initial question: was the Dresden Gallery "crypto-Catholic"—or was Augustus III's Catholicism "crypto-aesthetic"? Just as, according to Bianconi, Catholic court chapels were "a kind of sacred theater," the gallery resembles a panopticon of Catholic iconography.⁵⁷ The picture gallery, especially the Hofkirche, could be understood as a "private" art space within the castle complex—that is, as a semipublic space representing the personal aesthetic and religious views of the ruler, who was aiming for a reconversion of the Saxon elites to Catholicism through the enjoyment of art. Conversely, Correggio's *Maddalenina* could be seen as documenting an aesthetic, proto-Romantic Catholicism on the part of Augustus, who converted as a young man in Italy and never forgot the Italian culture of art and pageantry. In fact, throughout his life Augustus tried to transfer that *italianità* to Saxony and to replicate it in Dresden as in a second, artificial Venice. Catholic faith would hence have been communicated to him through Italian

art and, later, would somehow have found an ideal reliquary in the Dresden gallery. The picture gallery would hence emerge as a space of memory, where a "religion of art" was possible—that is, both a faith in art and an artificial faith—and Correggio's icon would appear as a Catholic Mary Magdalen in a Protestant wasteland.

Notes

The present contribution is part of a more comprehensive study on the Dresden gallery and the visual history of art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I would like to thank Giovanni Bienne for the translation of the text and all quoted material.

1. See Ulli Arnold and Werner Schmidt, *Barock in Dresden*, exh. cat. (Essen: Villa Hügel, 1986); Jacek Staszewski, *August III* (Berlin: Akademie, 1996).
2. See Stefania Parnigotto, "Venedig und das 'augusteische' Dresden" (PhD diss., Università degli studi di Venezia, 1995), 64–67, 101–4; Andreas Henning and Harald Marx, *Das Kabinett der Rosalba*, exh. cat. (Dresden: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, 2007).
3. Hans Posse, "Die Briefe des Grafen Francesco Algarotti," *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 52 (1931): 1–73, 2; Francesco Algarotti, *Opere*, ed. Francesco Aglietti, 17 vols. (Venice: Palese, 1791–94), 7:46.
4. Posse, "Briefe," 4–5; Algarotti, *Opere*, 1:7–10; Stefano Benedetto Pallavicini, *Opere*, ed. Francesco Algarotti, 4 vols. (Venice: Pasquali, 1744), 1: unpag. dedication.
5. See, for example, on Bianconi: Luigi Emery, "Gian Ludovico Bianconi in Germania," *Studi e memorie per la storia dell'Università di Bologna* 15 (1938): 115–176; Giovanni Ludovico Bianconi, *Scritti tedeschi*, ed. Giovanna Perini (Bologna: Minerva, 1998). See Barbara Marx, ed., *Elbflorenz: Italienische Präsenz in Dresden, 16.–19. Jahrhundert* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2000).
6. See Petra Michel, *Christian Wilhelm Ernst Dietrich und die Problematik des Eklektizismus* (Munich: Mäander, 1984); Steffi Roettgen, *Anton Raphael Mengs 1728–1779*, 2 vols. (Munich: Hirmer, 1991).
7. See Gregor J. M. Weber, "Italienische Kunsteinkäufer im Dienst der Dresdner Galerie," *Dresdner Hefte* 12, no. 40 (1994): 32–42; Cordula Bischoff et al., eds., *Dresden: Spiegel der Welt*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: The National Museum of Western Art & Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc., 2005), 141–47.
8. Karl-Siebert Rehberg, "Dresden als Raum des Imaginären," *Dresdner Hefte* 23, no. 84 (2005): 88–99, 90. See Günter Jäckel, *Dresden zur Goethezeit* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1990), 195–96; Klaus Bergdolt, "Dresden und Venedig," *Dresdner Hefte* 12, no. 40 (1994): 66–74.
9. See Raffaello Brenzoni, "Indagini sul veronese Pietro Guarienti," *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia di agricoltura scienze e lettere di Verona* 11 (1961): 145–55; Marina Magrini, "Pietro Maria Guarienti," *Arte-documento*, no. 7 (1993): 183–86.
10. See esp. Bénédicte Savoy, ed., *Tempel der Kunst* (Mainz: Zabern, 2006).
11. See Siegfried Seifert, *Untergang und Wiederauferstehung des Katholizismus in Sachsen* (PhD diss., Universität Leipzig, 1962); Joachim Menzhausen, "August III. und die Aufklärung," *Dresdner Hefte* 14, no. 46 (1996): 29–34.
12. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Briefe*, ed. Walther Rehm et al., 4 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1952–57), 1:91–92 (doc. no. 63).

13. See the following excellent publications: Costanza Caraffa, "Fonti su Gaetano Chiaveri e sulla Chiesa Cattolica di Dresda ed uno scritto polemico del 1741," *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 36 (2005): 211–344; Costanza Caraffa, *Gaetano Chiaveri (1689–1770): Architetto romano della Hofkirche di Dresda* (Milan: Silvana, 2006). See Siegfried Seifert and Klemens Ullmann, *Katholische Hofkirche Dresden* (Leipzig: Benno, 2000).
14. Caraffa, "Fonti," 235 (doc. no. 32); Caraffa, *Gaetano Chiaveri*, 9, 21.
15. Konstanze Rudert, "Entwurf, Modell, Ausführung," *Das Münster* 50 (1997): 194–202; Caraffa, *Gaetano Chiaveri*, 140–59.
16. Caraffa, *Gaetano Chiaveri*, 32–44, 267–75.
17. Caraffa, *Gaetano Chiaveri*, 109–15.
18. Caraffa, "Fonti," 275–79 (no. 181).
19. Caraffa, "Fonti," 315 (nos. 287–88); Caraffa, *Gaetano Chiaveri*, 98–100.
20. Caraffa, "Fonti," 308–15 (no. 286); Caraffa, *Gaetano Chiaveri*, 99–100.
21. Gal. no. 133, inscription: "tuam ipsius animam gladius pertransivit."
22. Gregor J. M. Weber, "'Lassunta della regina de' cieli': A Rediscovered Masterpiece by Polidoro da Lanciano," *Studi tizianeschi*, no. 2 (2004): 48–56, 49.
23. Anton Hermann, *Leben und Tugenden der alldurchlauchtigsten Frauen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1766), 52–62.
24. I thank Gregor J. M. Weber for sharing his unpublished conference paper with me.
25. On the display, see Tristan Weddigen, "Kennerschaft ausgestellt—die erste Hängung der Dresdner Gemäldegalerie und das verlorene Inventar von 1747," in Barbara Marx et al., eds., *Sammeln als Institution* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2007), 101–24; Tristan Weddigen, "Der visuelle Diskurs des Inventars," *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden* 31 (2007): 97–103; Tristan Weddigen, "Ein Modell für die Geschichte der Kunst," *Dresdener Kunstblätter* 52, no. 1 (2009): 44–58.
26. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke*, ed. Erich Trunz, 14 vols. (Hamburg: Wegener, 1948–60), 9:320, 19:224.
27. August Wilhelm Schlegel and Caroline Schlegel, *Die Gemählde: Ein Gespräch*, ed. Lothar Müller (Amsterdam: Verlag der Kunst, 1996).
28. Hans Posse, "Nachlass," 1913–42, vol. 18, fol. 27r, archive of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.
29. See Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane* (Bologna: Benacci, 1582); Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli and Pietro da Cortona, *Trattato della pittura e scultura: uso et abuso loro* (Florence: Bonardi, 1652).
30. Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der grossen Herren* (Berlin: Rüdiger, 1733), 82.
31. Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der Privat-Personen* (Berlin: Rüdiger, 1728), 534.
32. Algarotti, *Opere*, 11:224–25.
33. Bernhard Schnackenburg, "Landgraf Wilhelm VIII. von Hessen-Kassel," in Heide Wunder et al., eds., *Kassel im 18. Jahrhundert* (Cassel, Germany: Euregio, 2000), 71–87, 73.
34. Christian Ludwig von Hagedorn, *Briefe über die Kunst*, ed. Torkel Baden (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1797), 59.

35. Étienne La Font de Saint-Yenne, *L'ombre du grand Colbert* (Paris: Lambert, 1752), 218.
36. Posse, "Nachlass," vol. 29, no. 15, fol. 16v–17r.
37. See Gerald Heres, *Dresdener Kunstsammlungen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1991); Dirk Syndram, *Das Schloss zu Dresden* (Munich: Koehler & Amelang, 2001).
38. Although the painting was later attributed to Allori, for purposes of this discussion it will be treated as a Correggio. Until it was lost, Allori's copy of the Correggio was in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, gal. no. 154. The Carlo Dolci and the presumed Correggio appear in Pietro Maria Guarienti's inventory of 1750; see Henri de Riedmatten, Andreas Rüfenacht, and Tristan Weddigen, "Pietro Maria Guarientis Catalogo der Dresdener Gemäldegalerie von 1750," *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden* 2004 31 (2007): 105–41, 120 (inv. nos. 269–70).
39. Ottonelli and Cortona, *Trattato*, 155–56. Cf. Massimo Mussini, *Correggio tradotto* (Milan: Motta, 1995), 33–35.
40. Quoted in Gaetano Ghiraldi, "Il mito della Maddalena leggente del Correggio nella storia delle collezioni estensi," in Jadranka Bentini, ed., *Sovrane passioni*, exh. cat. (Modena: Palazzo dei Musei, 1998), 106–15, 106. See Johannes Winkler, *Der Verkauf an Dresden* (Modena: Panini, 1989).
41. See Pellegrino Antonio Orlandi, *Abecedario pittorico*, ed. Pietro Maria Guarienti (Venice: Pasquali, 1753), 65, note a. See Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, *Notizie storiche sincere intorno alla vita e le opere del celebre pittore Antonio Allegri da Correggio* (Finale: de' Rossi, 1781), 110; Karl Wilhelm Dassdorf, *Beschreibung der vorzüglichsten Merkwürdigkeiten der churfürstlichen Residenzstadt Dresden* (Dresden: Walther, 1782), 439 (no. 183).
42. See Birgit Kloppenburg and Gregor J. M. Weber, *La famosissima Notte! Correggios Gemälde "Die Heilige Nacht" und seine Wirkungsgeschichte*, exh. cat. (Dresden: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, 2000–2001).
43. Carl Heinrich von Heineken, *Recueil d'estampes d'après les plus célèbres tableaux de la galerie royale de Dresde*, 2 vols. (Dresden: Hagenmüller, 1753 and 1757), 1:IV (no. IV). Cf. Carl Heinrich von Heineken, *Neue Nachrichten von Künstlern und Kunstsachen* (Dresden: Breitkopf, 1786), 203.
44. Posse, "Nachlass," vol. 21, coll. 7, no. 7, fol. 1r–7r.
45. Heineken, *Recueil d'estampes d'après les plus célèbres tableaux*, 1:IV (no. IV).
46. Cf. Heineken, *Neue Nachrichten*, 85; Heineken, *Recueil d'estampes d'après les plus célèbres tableaux*, 2:XXVII (no. 42).
47. Cf. Dassdorf, *Beschreibung*, 461–62.
48. Carl Heinrich von Heineken, *Recueil d'estampes gravées d'après les tableaux de la galerie et du cabinet s. e. m. r le comte de Bruhl* (Dresden: Walther, 1754), no. 44.
49. Andreas Henning and Gregor J. M. Weber, *Der himmelnde Blick*, exh. cat. (Dresden: Semperbau, 1998–99), 48–49 (no. 17); Gregor J. M. Weber, ed., with Valentina Ciancio and Marlies Giebe, *Pietro Graf Rotari in Dresden: Ein italienischer Maler am Hof König Augusts III*, exh. cat. (Emsdetten/Dresden: Edition Imorde, 1999), 17–53, 73, no. I.4. See Harald Marx and Gregor J. M. Weber, *Dresden in the Ages of Splendor*

- and Enlightenment*, exh. cat. (Columbus: Columbus Museum of Art, 1999), 125–41.
50. See gal. no. 1013 (Jacob Jordaens), gal. no. 1840 (Johann Liss), gal. no. 512 (Anton Domenico Gabbiani); Friedrich Matthäi, *Verzeichniss der königlich sächsischen Gemälde-Galerie zu Dresden*, 2 vols. (Dresden: Gärtner, 1835), 2:102 (cat. no. 518 [Federico Barocci]), 2:38 (cat. no. 169 B [Forabosco/Fetti]), 2:27 (cat. no. 106 B [unknown Italian master]).
 51. Gal. no. 2149. See Joseph Friedrich von Rackwitz, *Versuche zur Beurtheilung einiger Gemählde* (Dresden: Meinhold, 1811), 1–8; Heineken, *Neue Nachrichten*, 14; Posse, “Nachlass,” vol. 22, coll. 3, fol. 5v.
 52. Posse, “Nachlass,” vol. 21, coll. 7, no. 7, fol. 3r. See Matthias Oesterreich, *Beschreibung derjenigen Sammlung* (Berlin: Birnstiel, 1761), 57 (cat. no. 48); Matthias Oesterreich, *Beschreibung der Gemählde* (Berlin: Decker, 1773), 10 (cat. no. 11).
 53. Gerd Bartoscheck and Saskia Hüneke, “Die Sammlung der Skulpturen und Gemälde in der Bildergalerie im Jahre 1786,” in Burkhardt Göres, ed., *Die Bildergalerie in Sanssouci* (Milan: Skira, 1996), 213–49, 228 (no. 85), 230 (no. 104), 231 (no. A 15), 234 (no. 142), 236 (no. 163), 240 (no. A 5).
 54. Horst Schlechte, *Das geheime politische Tagebuch des Kurprinzen Friedrich Christian* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1992), 191.
 55. Giovanni Ludovico Bianconi, *Lettere al marchese Filippo Hercolani* (Lucca: Riccomini, 1763), 227; Bianconi, “Elogio storico del cavaliere Anton Raffaele Mengs,” in idem, *Opere*, 2 vols. (Milan: Classici italiani, 1802), 2:141–239, 157; Bianconi is the only written source attesting that Augustus III kept this third painting in his bedroom.
 56. See James Clifton, “‘Being Lustful, he Would Delight in her Beauty’: Looking at Saint Agatha in Seventeenth-Century Italy,” in Pamela M. Jones, ed., *From Rome to Eternity: Catholicism and the Arts in Italy* (Leyden: Brill, 2002), 144–77; Tristan Weddigen, “Lucias Augen—zu Francesco Furinis Patronin der Kunstbetrachtung,” in Sebastian Schütze, ed., *Kunst und ihre Betrachter in der frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: Reimer, 2005), 93–143.
 57. Bianconi, “Elogio,” 166.