

DANIEL PARELLO
Corpus Vitrearum Germany, Freiburg im Breisgau

‘FROM THE PERIOD OF THE DEEPEST DECLINE OF GERMAN ECCLESIASTICAL ART’ – SHOULD ARTISTIC QUALITY BECOME A CRITERION FOR AN INVENTORY OF STAINED GLASS?

When we deal with nineteenth-century stained glass as specialists, we are often filled with missionary zeal to sensitize society to an art genre that has long been neglected by art historians. But if one takes a closer look – for example – at the recently published volumes of the *Prestel Art History*, one might be inclined to throw in the towel.¹ The stained-glass windows from the Age of Romanticism and Historicism still find no admission into many survey works of art history. Are we, in the end, only social workers of art history who are trying to advocate the artistic merit of a species threatened with extinction, to put it somewhat hysterically? Do we want to ensure the survival of products that would otherwise have long been lost in the ecosystem of artistic evolution? What if modern art historiography is right, and not everything that was produced at that time is worth preserving, because it has neither artistic, nor creative, nor unique qualities?

It is not that I doubt the fundamental purpose of an inventory, but it seems that qualitative criteria have taken a back seat in the judging of these works. The *Königlich Bayerische Hofglasmalerei Franz Xaver Zettler* made a total of 12,532 windows in the years between 1870 and 1910² [Figs 1, 2]. Considering that at that time there were hundreds of workshops operating in the German Empire alone, one can imagine the enormous number of works that literally flooded sacred buildings. Here we have to speak of mass production, which undoubtedly requires a rationalized production process. Would it be sacrilege

to compare these products with the articles of the countless picture factories that emerged especially in the second half of the nineteenth century and contributed to an enormous popularization of the religious image?³

On the market for ecclesiastical mass production, glass paintings were traded in the same way as plaster figures, oil prints and devotional pictures, as well as goldsmith's and carpenter's work [Fig. 3]. The ecclesiastical stained glass developed a standardized style and a simple, recognizable pictorial language. From an artistic point of view these catalog products were fundamentally different from the workshops' considerable achievements at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Certainly there were still smaller studios with their technically and artistically more individual products, but they could not serve the mass market.⁴ For a better understanding of the situation, let me trace the development from the stained-glass artwork to the mass product in five main steps.

³ W. BRÜCKNER, CH. PIESKE, *Die Bilderfabrik*, exh. cat., Historisches Museum Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurt am Main, 1973; review by S. METKEN, "Trivialkunst aus der Chromopresse. Zur Wanderausstellung "Die Bilderfabrik"", *Kunstchronik*, 27, 1974, pp. 145–151.

⁴ Even contemporaries commented critically on this development. The mass production of ecclesiastical art not only ruins the artistic talent of the employees, but also kills small handicraft enterprises, since the independent artists cannot compete with the cheaper-producing industry. The factory-based production of the Mayer'sche Kgl. Hofkunstanstalt in Munich is the target of an unnamed author in the *Organ für christliche Kunst*, 20, 1871, pp. 226s. Thanks to Elgin Vaassen for providing me with this reference.

¹ *Geschichte der bildenden Kunst in Deutschland*, vol. 6: *Klassik und Romantik*, ed. by A. Beyer, Munich, 2006 and *ibidem*, vol. 7: *Vom Biedermeier zum Impressionismus*, ed. by H. Kohle, Munich, 2008.

² J.L. FISCHER, *40 Jahre Glasmalkunst, Festschrift der königlich-bayerischen Hofglasmalerei F. X. Zettler*, Munich, 1910, p. 103.





1. Mayersche Hofkunstanstalt, *Christus am Ölberg*, Munich, 1888, Landsberg am Lech, Church of the Assumption of Mary. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Reinhardhauke

STEP 1: THE REVIVAL OF CHRISTIAN ART AND THE SPIRIT OF IMITATION

One reason for this development was the art policy of the Catholic Church. Its ideological prerequisites are based on religious renewal after the fall of the Holy Roman Empire. The artistic collaborators, the Nazarenes, saw art as a means for moral education of man and society in the bosom of Christian faith. The Middle Ages were regarded as exemplary, as society was conceived to have been harmoniously united in faith at that time. In such a milieu, the artist, as inspired by faith, was able to create masterpieces in which – figuratively speaking – God himself guided the brush. Thus, Overbeck writes to Passavant ‘Art must be spiritual, as the Christian himself should be a spiritual man and not a carnal, art must be chaste, holy, far from all lust, not profane and arrogant’.⁵

In her dissertation on the *The Nazarene Movement in the Context of the Catholic Restoration*, from 1992, Gudrun Jansen examined the political climate in Munich during

the reign of King Ludwig I.⁶ As an opponent of liberalism, Ludwig strengthened Catholicism and appointed Joseph Görres to the newly founded university. Jansen found that the social policy of Görres, characterized by Catholic-restorative spirit, played a decisive role for the close interplay between ideological and artistic goals [Fig. 4]. He held that as an ‘organ of religion’, art should contribute to the promotion of living piety in Christian society. Public opinion was influenced in this direction by the periodicals ‘Eos’ and the ‘Historisch-politische Blätter’.

Heinrich Maria von Hess, who had joined the Nazarenes in Rome in 1821, eventually became the first director of an art institute in Munich, founded by King Ludwig I in 1827, to revive the art of making stained glass.⁷ Here, the Nazarenes Friedrich Overbeck, Moritz von Schwind, and Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld created designs for countless windows in stained glass in the following years, some of which still can be admired today in Regensburg and Cologne cathedrals. As the most important center of stained glass production, the Munich School was to set

⁵ Overbeck to Passavant, letter from 12th May 1827; quotes after the exhibition catalogue *Johann Friedrich Overbeck. 1789–1989. Zur zweihundertsten Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages*, Museum für Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der Hansestadt Lübeck, Behnhaus, Lübeck, 1989, p. 31.

⁶ G. JANSEN, *Die Nazarenerbewegung in Kontext der katholischen Restauration. Die Beziehung Clemens Brentano – Edward von Steinle als Grundlage einer religionspädagogischen Kunstkonzeption*, Essen, 1992 (Kunstwissenschaft in der Blauen Eule, 8).

⁷ E. VAASSEN, *Die kgl. Glasmalereianstalt in München 1827–1874. Geschichte – Werke – Künstler*, Munich and Berlin, 2013.

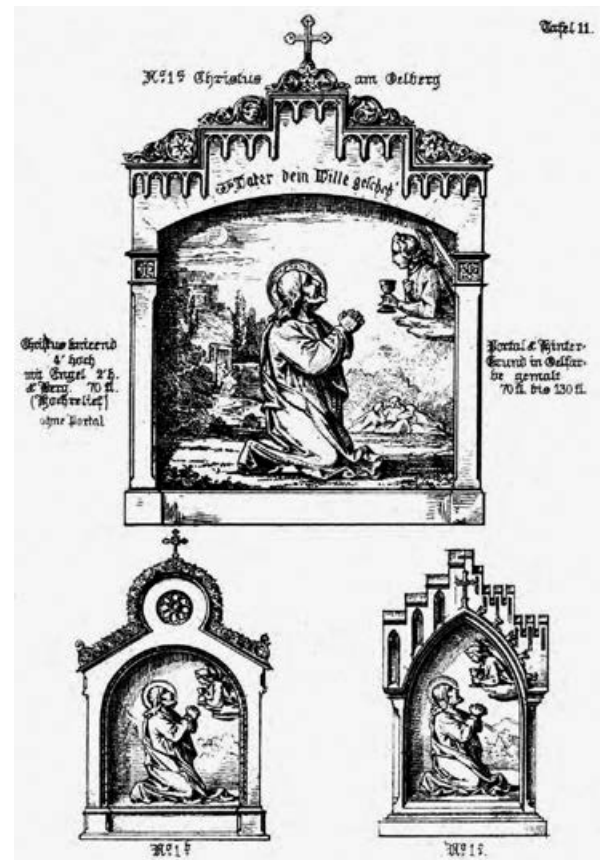


2. Mayersche Hofkunstanstalt, *Christus am Ölberg*, Munich, c. 1887, Landshut, St Judoc's Church. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, G. Freihalter

the direction for decades. From Munich the studios delivered their products throughout Germany and beyond, thereby spreading the Nazarene style of the 'Königliche Glasmalereianstalt'.

It would certainly be wrong to attribute the revival of glass painting in Germany solely to the reactionary aims of the Catholic Church. German enthusiasm for their own cultural heritage first arose from a national movement which was a result of the Napoleonic wars of liberation and extended across broad layers of society. However, stained glass was of particular importance for the ecclesiastical movement because, more than any other genre, it was deeply rooted in the medieval religious context. Furthermore, it was exclusively associated with sacred art, and the images served to glorify the faith. After all, the contemplative effect of luminous colors almost perfectly corresponded to the romantic attitude. As rediscoverers of colour, the Romantics were diametrically opposed to the classicists. The Nazarenes resorted to bright color effects; they even designed their pictures more often like stained glass with intentionally glowing colors. So it is easy to understand why glass painting played such an enormous role in the Catholic movement.

In cooperation with the social and political aims of the Church, the Nazarenes promoted their childlike works as means to spread the 'only true Catholic doctrine' and even declared religious functionalization to be the actual goal. The result was an ideologically more and more overloaded 'Programmkunst' [Fig. 5]. They deliberately renounced the sensual qualities of appearance in favor of a pious effect. The painting should not seduce, but preach. This already refers to those qualities for which their products



3. *Mount of Olives* in different sizes from 70 to 130 fl. in *Katalog für Statuen aus Steinmassa. Mayer'sche kgl. privileg. Kunstanstalt plastischer Arbeiten am Stiegelmeierplatz No. 1 in München*, Munich, c. 1870, plate 11. Photo: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Bav. 5195 h



4. Kgl. Glasmalereianstalt Munich, Görres memorial window, 1856, Cologne cathedral. Detail showing Joseph Görres (1776–1848) in adoration of St. Mary. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, WDWensky

were criticized by contemporaries, starting with Goethe and Brentano, and which today are commonly associated with the term ‘Nazarene’: the works are deemed to be bloodless, sentimental and hypocritical.

STEP 2: POPULARIZATION OF THE RELIGIOUS IMAGE AS A MEANS OF CHRISTIAN PROPAGANDA

It was entirely within the missionary intentions of the Nazarenes and their affiliated church to reach the broad masses of the people with their art. Joanna Lubos-Kozielec, in her contribution on the development of the market for church mass production in the nineteenth century, which was published in 2007, pointed out that the mass production of ecclesiastical works of art was a direct result of the program of Christian art developed by the Nazarenes.⁸

This concept of popularization was all the more gratifying to the Church when, after the loss of its Papal States, the Pope sought ways of regaining influence in the Catholic world [Fig. 6]: Pius IX, who continued to regard himself as the head of Christendom, opposed those in his eyes condemnable democratic and liberal developments of the modern states and practiced a strongly restorative policy. Recatholization now began on a broad scale and was reflected among other things in the active support of popular piety (‘Volksfrömmigkeit’), for example through the promotion of pilgrimages [Fig. 7] through indulgences, through the founding of Christian associations, through support of an ecclesiastical publishing industry, and not least through the creation of rich decoration in churches.⁹ By these means the Church succeeded in winning the masses for its anti-modernist attitude. It is well known that these conflicts culminated in the ‘Kulturkampf’.

Printmaking, with its new technical possibilities, became the main instrument of effective influence, in order to reach the lower classes especially.¹⁰ Numerous lithographic institutions were established, specializing in the serial production of pictures with an iconography that was easy to understand.¹¹ A central institution was the ‘Verein zur Verbreitung religiöser Bilder’ (Association for the dissemination of religious images) in Düsseldorf, which had been founded in 1841 under the patronage of the later bishop of Cologne, Johannes Geissel [Fig. 8]. His main task was to ‘spread religious images of established older and newer artists through the steel engraving in all

⁸ J. LUBOS-KOZIELEC, “[...] zu den billigsten Preisen unter Garantie solider edler Ausführung”. Die Entwicklung des Marktes für kirchliche künstlerische Massenproduktion im 19. Jahrhundert, in *Kanonisierung, Regelverstoß und Pluralität in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by E. Kepetzis, S. Lieb, S. Grohé, Frankfurt am Main, 2005, pp. 183–193. Thanks to Elgin Vaassen for providing me with this reference.

⁹ V. SEIFERT, *Pius IX. – der Immaculata-Papst: Von der Marienverehrung Giovanni Maria Mastai Ferretti zur Definierung des Immaculata-Dogmas*, Göttingen, 2013.

¹⁰ W. FAULSTICH, *Medienwandel im Industrie- und Massenzeitalter, 1830–1900*, Göttingen, 2004.

¹¹ S. METKEN, ‘Nazarener und “nazarenisch”. Popularisierung und Trivialisierung eines Kunstideals’, in *Die Nazarener*, exh. cat., Frankfurt, Städel, Frankfurt am Main, 1977, pp. 365–388.



5. Johann Friedrich Overbeck, *The Triumph of the Religion (The Magnificat of Art)*, 1829–1840. Photo: Städel Museum, U. Edelmann – ARTOTHEK

classes of the audience'. Even Pope Pius IX wrote admiringly to the association:

We have seen with joy, how years ago several Catholic men made the very pious decision to engrave sacred images created by famous painters and disseminate them at extremely cheap prices, and thereby to encourage the Christian population to piety, fear of God and virtue.¹²

¹² R. GIERSE, 'Das kleine Andachtsbild und der Verein zur Verbreitung religiöser Bilder in Düsseldorf', in *Religiöse Graphik aus der Zeit des Kölner Dombaues 1842–1880*, ed. by Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum Cologne, Cologne, 1980, pp. 21–28, here p. 26

In the first 25 years of its existence, the association sold seven million pictures. In the propagandistic purpose of religious images, one will have to see the decisive step towards the popularization and trivialization of Nazarene art, the consequences of which we still feel today [Fig. 9]. The flood of religious images also had to have consequences for the production of stained glass, because the studios, which sprouted like mushrooms from the middle of the century, were eagerly looking for templates [Figs 10, 11].¹³

¹³ On this also see V. CHIEFFO RAGUIN, *The History of Stained Glass. The Art of Light Medieval to Contemporary*, London, 2003, pp. 26–30.



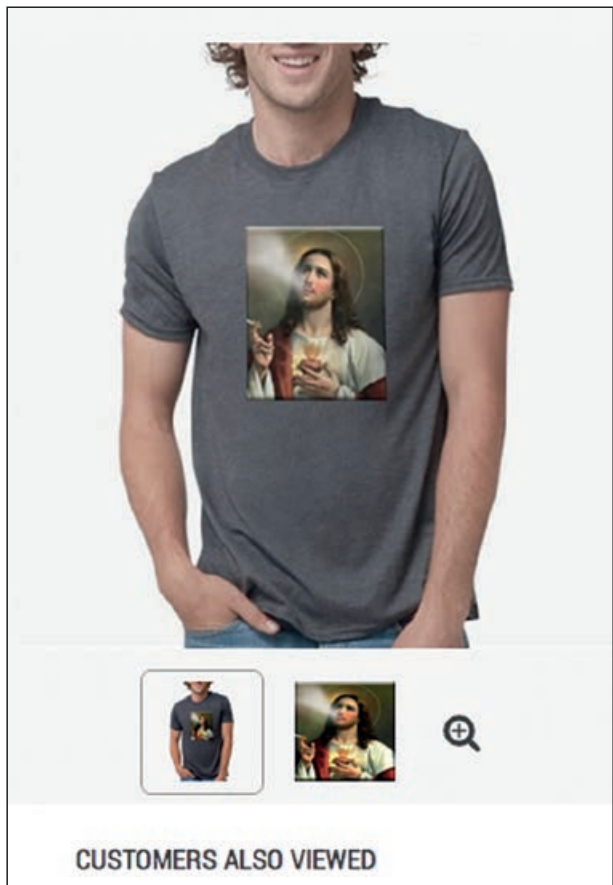
6. 'Sanct Peter Schlemihl. Das Patrimonium Petri gehört zu dem Papstthum wie der Schatten zum Körper', *Kladderadatsch*, 26, 1873, p. 180. Political caricature on the loss of the Papal States. Photo: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Per. 13-24



7. 's gibt kein schöner Leben als das Pilgerleben', *Kladderadatsch*, 24, 1871, p. 184. Political caricature on the boom in pilgrimages. Photo: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek



8. *Sacred Heart*, oleography with gold applications in a die-cut paper frame, late 19th century, still available. Photo: www.sanctum-rosarium.de



9. Online shop advertisement for a Sacred Heart t-shirt. Photo: https://www.cafepress.com/mf/29421191/holy-smokes_tshirt?productId=376215468

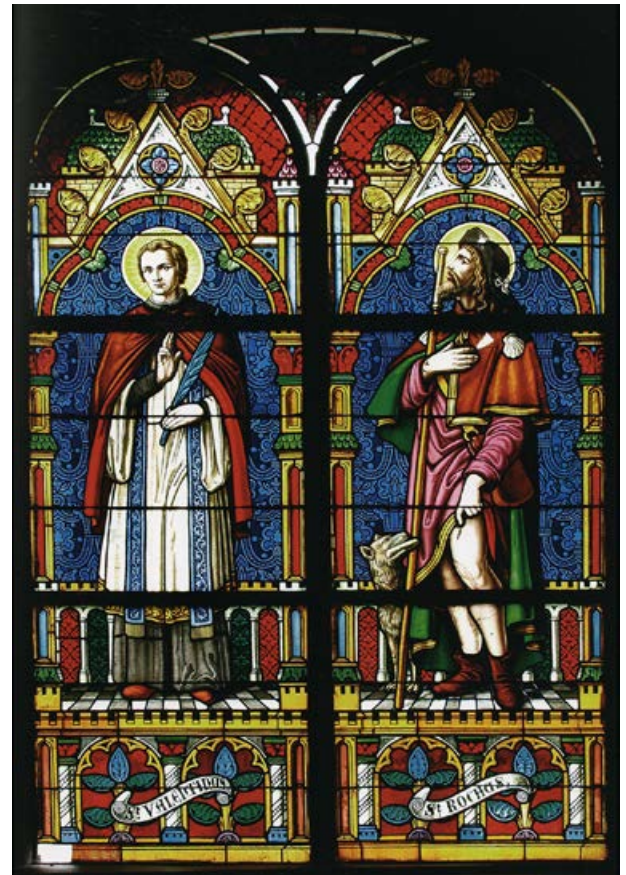


10. *Saint Rochus*, 1849, no. 61 steel engraving from the Verein zur Verbreitung religiöser Bilder Düsseldorf. Photo: <https://nazarenerstiche.de/> (Prof. Dr. M. Becker-Huberti)

STEP 3: WHERE HAS THE SOUL GONE? ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO INCREASE QUALITY BY MEANS OF EVEN GREATER IMITATION

The guardians of religious art had recognized the impending conflict: on the one hand, art should not degenerate into a luxury, because then it ceases to fulfill its great missionary profession. Therefore, it was legitimate to take advantage of the opportunities and challenges of new reproduction techniques. The absence of subtleties and the simplicity of the presentation (such as woodcuts) seemed to create an adequate visual language for the people. On the other hand, the artistic ideal of the religious art movement was nevertheless maintained, according to which the divine origin of the work manifests itself in the finished product.

To save art from soulless commodification the so-called neo-gothicists, an international movement, supported by the Catholic Church, issued clear guidelines



11. Heinrich Oidtmann, *Saints Valentine and Roch*, Linnich, c. 1870/1880, Jesionowo, Poland, parish church of Saints Matthew, Roch and Valentine. Photo after: *Die Tätigkeit der Glasmalereiwerkstatt Dr. H. Oidtmann in Ost- und Westpreussen in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, exh. cat., Linnich, Deutsches Glasmalereimuseum, ed. by M. Wierschowski, Linnich, 2007

for the production of ecclesiastical art.¹⁴ The Cologne artist Friedrich Baudri criticized in his 'Kampfblatt', the *Organ für Christliche Kunst* which was published starting in 1851, 'the shallow direction in art, which had sunk into an empty, mindless play of form, as it arose from an anti-Christian period', and once again announced a renewal of the arts on the fertile soil of Christian religion.¹⁵ But this time a holistic approach was sought. The exemplary character of the medieval artwork should not be confined to

¹⁴ M.J. LEWIS, *The Politics of German Gothic Revival. August Reichensperger (1808–1895)*, New York, 1993; G. GERMANN, *Neugotik. Geschichte ihrer Architekturtheorie*, Stuttgart, 1974, pp. 93–152 (chapter III: *Neugotik als Reformbewegung*).

¹⁵ F. BAUDRI, 'Redaktionelles Vorwort', in *Organ für christliche Kunst*, 1, 1851, p. 1. On the foundation of the society and the aims of the neogothic movement in Cologne see S. FRAQUELLI, *Im Schatten des Domes. Architektur der Neugotik in Köln*, Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2008 (Bonner Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, 5), pp. 160–166.



12. Heinrich Oidtmann, *Christ carrying the Cross*, c. 1880, ornamental window with figurative Roundel in lithographic overprint, Chapel of Bestwig-Velemde/North Rhine-Westphalia. Photo: Dr. Dirk Strohmann, LWL-Denkmalpflege, Landschafts- und Baukultur in Westfalen Restaurierung und Dokumentation

the mere adoption of the style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but should also include the practice of the old techniques. For glass painting, this meant primarily the application of the mosaic-like technique, whereby the color should be determined largely by the colored glasses leaded together; only grisaille and silver stain were allowed because other colors had not been known at that time. Carpet-like and two-dimensional compositions as well as architectural canopy forms adapted to the building were also required, because glass painting, as a servant of architecture, was always committed to the architectural context in which it was installed. There is no question that this critique was targeted on the windows of the 'Königliche Glasmalereianstalt' in Cologne Cathedral, which had been donated by King Ludwig I (compare Fig. 4).¹⁶

The Neogothicists had a strong impact on Church circles and convinced customers of the need for material-appropriate production ('Materialgerechtigkeit'). Baudri himself founded his own studio in 1851, where he produced more or less in accordance with the strict Neogothicist principles to improve the quality of stained glass.

Despite their intention, the model-books emerging at that time boosted a contrary development. Works such as Georg Dengler's *Kirchenschmuck*, which was published beginning in 1854, were actually intended as a contribution to improve the quality of art production in the sense

¹⁶ S. DAHMEN, *Die Bayernfenster des Kölner Domes 1844–1848. Kirchengenausstattung zwischen Kunst, Theologie und Politik*, Cologne, 2009 (Kölner Schriften zu Geschichte und Kultur, 29).

of the neogothic movement.¹⁷ But as a result of technical progress in the field of book printing the model-books became widespread and thus unintentionally contributed to further standardization.

STEP 4: TECHNICAL PROGRESS AND ECONOMY

The demand for simplicity confronted the workshops in a much more contemporary aspect: the economy. Considering the ideological overtones of this topic, Elgin Vaassen is certainly right when she points out the hypocrisy, at the beginning of the industrial age, of stained-glass workshops that made rich financial profit from the simplification of technical means, because they could produce much more cheaply that way.¹⁸

An example of this is the Merzweiler Company. Founded 1875 in Freiburg, Merzweiler supplied thousands of windows to the diocese and beyond over the course of several decades.¹⁹ The company was certainly also protected by the archbishop's administration because of its commitment to a strictly historical, that is, medieval, method of production, but the favorable prices must have played a no less important role in the awarding of the contracts. This market advantage was achieved by, among other things, a rationalized manufacturing process. For example, in the production of new designs, more often a modular method was used, by recombining already-existing drawings of individual figures, in which the different sizes presumably were adjusted using a mechanical or optical pantograph. In addition, the workshop often resorted to cheaper cathedral glass instead of the more expensive antique glass. To increase the demand for stained glass, the workshops did not hesitate to equip even baroque churches with stained glass by adapting their products stylistically to the given architecture; often, such adjustments were limited to the ornamentation of the frames.

In fact, it was hardly to be expected that the stained-glass windows would become artistically more valuable due to the dogmatic demand for soulful and inspired production methods. On the contrary, this claim was opposed by the explosion of demand for colored glazing, especially since every little church wanted to acquire colorful window decorations after the middle of the nineteenth century. One of those who could help out here was

¹⁷ Available online <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/kirchenschmuck> (published from 1857 to 1895) [retrieved 19 October 2019].

¹⁸ E. VAASSEN, 'Bemerkungen zu den schwäbischen Glasmalern des 19. Jahrhunderts, besonders zu Ludwig Mittermaier (1827–1864) aus Lauingen', in *Nazarener in Schwaben. Sehnsucht nach Seligkeit*, exh. cat., Augsburg, 1990, pp. 220–240, here p. 231.

¹⁹ D. PARELLO, *Von Helmle bis Geiges. Ein Jahrhundert historistischer Glasmalerei*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2000 (Veröffentlichungen aus dem Archiv der Stadt Freiburg im Breisgau, 31), pp. 124–134.

Allgemeine Preis-Liste
für
gemalte Fenster
per □ Meter in B. österr. Währung R. S.

1 Meter □ Fass = $\frac{1}{2}$ □ Meter.

	in Cathedral- u. Kaiser-Kirchen
Einfache Gitterfenster (Fenster ganz in Glas) mit Tropfen-Blumenmustern	15 — 17 1/2
Gitterfenster mit ornamentalen Bildwerken	17 1/2 — 20
Gitterfenster in Treppeln und Balkonen mit Farbe schwarz	20 — 25
Treppeln und Balkone, kunst (schwarz)	25 — 30
Ein Brustbild oder ganze Figur auf Treppeln Metalle Metallmalerei oder ganze Figuren in Treppeln schwarz oder davor gelben Körnern	30 — 40 50 — 70
Flügelte Fenster mit eisener Architektur in Treppeln Gitterfenster in sehr reicher Architektur	100 — 120 130 — 150

Cathedral- u. Kaiser-Kirchen je nach Größe, Anlage und Fehlbild der Ausführung, wofür besondere illustrirte Profile ersuchen. Eisenbleche zu Fenstern werden bezahlt.

Die Preise verstehen sich loco Innsbruck, 2 Monate nach Ablieferung der Arbeit zahlbar. —

Vorbildende Ansätze können nur allgemeine Geltung haben; die Art und Größe der Arbeiten, die Massverhältnisse veränderten, derselben nicht unwesentlich. Es können auch, abseits in denselben Kirchen, Gattungen und untergeordneten Zeichnungen nicht unbedeutend sein, dass dabei noch eingetretene werden. — Alles, was genau, nach Umfang und Inhalt der Arbeit, den Umfang von Materialkosten für Treppeln/Anlagen und einzelne Leistungen für Figurenmalerei, einzelne Elemente von Malern, die in einer Zeit und Aufgabe entsprechen. Wahl aus den vorliegenden Massen des Arbeit geboten werden, werden am besten über Art und Preis der Ausführung. Jede einschlägige Anfrage beantwortet die Direction in Innsbruck oder die Geschäftsführung in Wien auf's Besonderen, unentgeltlich, ob es sich um eine Vorfrage oder Einreichung einer Bestellung handelt.

Besondere Bemerkungen beim Massnehmen:

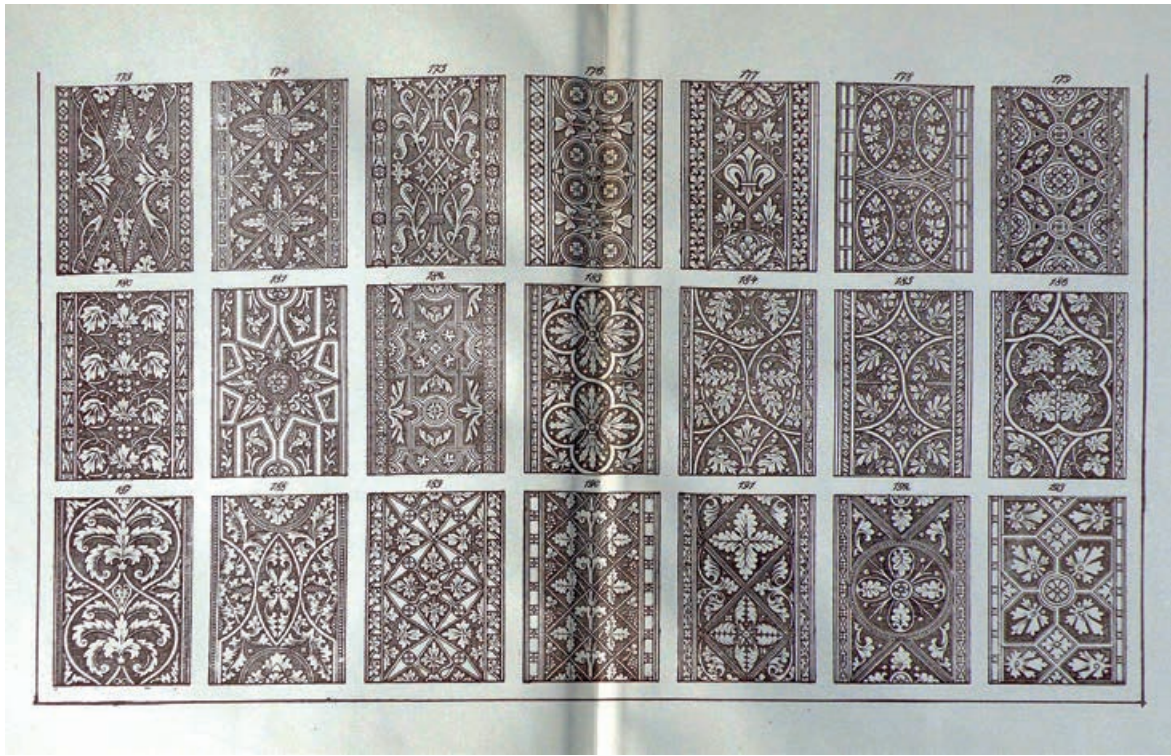
Die meisten Kirchen und andere Fenster sind entweder durch Steinplatten oder starke Eisenplatten, oder durch kleinere, in kleinere Felder getheilt. Es muss daher beim Massnehmen des Fensters aufpassen, und der Masse der Länge und Breite eines jeden Theiles genau eingeschrieben werden, sowohl in Längs, als in die seitliche Richtung, als im Fall, d. h. jener Theil, welcher in den Stein oder in die Eisenplatte zur Befestigung notwendig, dieser ist separat anzugeben.

Für unregelmäßig gefasste Fensterstücke, z. B. bei gold-schwarzen Massenwerk etc., mit deren Form genau in starken Figuren nachzuzeichnen und eingetragene werden, wobei ebenfalls die Maße für die Füll genau anzugeben ist.

Es muss auch die Breite der Steinplatten und Eisenplatten, die speziell bei Figurenmalerei zu berücksichtigen sind, bestimmt für den Charakter der Eisenarbeit und die Höhe und Durchmesserverhältnisse der Kirchen, ihre geringere oder größere Höhe, die Anforderungen, in welchen die Fenster stehen, ob sie häufig von der Sonne beschienen werden und andere locale Verhältnisse.

Preis-Courants für Cathedral- und Kaiser-Kirchen besonders ausgegeben.

13. Advertisement of the Tiroler Glasmalerei- und Mosaikanstalt in Innsbruck from *Kirchenschmuck* N.F. 3, 1881, pl. 10. Photo: https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/kirchenschmuck_nf3/0014



14. Heinrich Oidtmann, 'Musterbuch': *Kunst-Anstalt für Glasmalerei und Kunstglaserei für Kirchen und Profanbau* von Dr. H. Oidtmann & Cie. in Linnich, c. 1880/1880, Linnich, Archiv der Firma Oidtmann. Photo: Archiv der Firma Oidtmann



15. Heinrich Oidtmann, Ornamental window, Linnich, c. 1880, Kolno, Poland, parish church of the Holy Kings. Photo after: *Die Tätigkeit der Glasmalereiwerkstatt Dr. H. Oidtmann in Ost- und Westpreussen in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, exh. cat., Linnich, Deutsches Glasmalereimuseum, ed. by M. Wierschowski, Linnich, 2007

Heinrich Oidtmann of Linnich.²⁰ Oidtmann approached production in a much more pragmatic manner. As a typical representative of industrialization, this trained medical doctor thoroughly roiled the market by offering mass-produced goods. In his opinion, the glass painter must take advantage of modern technological reproduction methods such as photographic processes and printing techniques, because they guaranteed uniform quality and allowed for cheaper production. In an advertising leaflet of the company distributed around 1862 Oidtmann states:

The true monumental art of decorative stained glass has been given a means of duplication which will undoubtedly give it a broader scope by overcoming the hitherto cumbersome techniques. Every church, no matter how little, and every small congregation, as well as devout benefactors, are given the opportunity to procure the most beautiful church ornaments for little money and to donate a monumental work of art set in glass for many centuries (...).²¹

To demonstrate how far the artistic mission had departed from the historical ideals, it should be explicitly pointed out that the lifespan of the Oidtmann windows was guaranteed for only twelve years! Figure 15 shows an example of a presumably lithographic overprinted window in the Kreuzwegkapelle in Bestwig-Velmede [Fig. 15]. The models for the roundels come from the extremely successful *Bilderbibel* of Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, which was published between 1851 and 1861 with a total of 240 pictures and cost one penny per sheet. In the transfer process on stained glass, a paper print is first produced by means of lithographic printing.²² In the second step the motif is then transferred onto the glass by rolling over the wet print, and subsequently reinforced by scattering powdered enamel on the design. Oidtmann obviously could also produce monumental stained-glass windows using this method.

²⁰ D. PARELLO, 'Zur Firmengeschichte der Oidtmannschen Werkstatt', in *Hauset. Seine neogotische St. Rochus- und Genoveva-Kirche und die alte St. Rochuskapelle*, ed. by E.I. de Wilde et al., Antwerp, 1995, pp. 150–156.

²¹ From an advertising brochure of the company (around 1862), published in D. PARELLO, 'Anspruch und Wirklichkeit in der religiösen Kunstindustrie am Beispiel der rheinischen Glasmalereiwerkstätten Baudri und Oidtmann', in *Renaissance der Gotik. Widerstand gegen die Staatsgewalt? Tagungsband zur Kunst der Neugotik im Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Goch* 26.–28. 4. 2002, ed. by U. Schubert, S. Mann, Kleve, 2003, pp. 171–185, esp. p. 183f.

²² On this technique H. OIDTMANN, 'Verbesserungen in der Glasmalerei-Technik. Der Glasdruck', in *Die Glasmalerei in ihrer Anwendung auf den Profanbau*, Berlin, 1873, S. 110–131; reprinted in *Die Tätigkeit der Glasmalereiwerkstatt Dr. H. Oidtmann in Ost- und Westpreussen in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, exh. cat., Deutsches Glasmalereimuseum Linnich, ed. by M. Wierschowski, Linnich, 2007.

Another example from Oidtmann's workshop has been preserved in the church at Bodman on the shore of Lake Constance. While the background in a checked pattern may have been designed by using printing methods, the faces of the aristocratic donors were transferred to the glass via pyrophotography.²³ First the glass is coated with an adhesive layer, which has been made photosensitive with chromium salt. Then the glass is placed under a slide or any graphic model, which has previously been made transparent with oil. The light-hit areas harden while the darkened areas remain tacky. Then the powdered grisaille is dusted on it. Before the firing, the glass is rinsed in water to remove the chrome. Such photorealistic reproductions of donors were extremely popular at that time.

The Oidtmann Company relied on the modern standards of rationalization and division of labor and was thus diametrically opposed to the basic values of the neogothic ideologues. In the age of the building boom of churches, Oidtmann & Compagnie had great success with their products. In fact, many smaller churches, which had only limited budgets, appreciated the moderate price of these works. Despite their questionable artistic quality, products like these were tremendously fashionable. The colorful, atmospheric windows served their purpose and were an effective means of promoting piety and worship in the churches.

The strong criticism of Oidtmann's industrial products proved ineffective, insofar as other workshops also adapted their image production to economic requirements by standardization and multiple use of models. Moreover, Oidtmann's achievement of transferring old models to glass by means of printing is essentially just the consequence of the compulsion to imitate medieval works of art that the Romantics had already paved the way for. And as is well known, behind 'originality' doctrinaires scent heresy.

STEP 5: ORDERING STAINED GLASS FROM CATALOGUES

With the change to mass-produced goods, the distribution channel for stained glass also changed. The typical market participants were no longer individual artists, but

²³ H. OIDTMANN, 'Verbesserungen' (as in note 22); Th. PRÜMM, 'Ueber Pyrophotographie. Referat nach Oidtmann's Abhandlung', *Photographische Mitteilungen, Zeitschrift des Vereins zur Förderung der Photographie*, 6, 1870, pp. 88–94, and H.W. VOGEL, *Die chemischen Wirkungen des Lichts und die Photographie in ihrer Anwendung in Kunst, Wissenschaft und Industrie*, Leipzig, 1874, S. 247–250. Examples for stained glass windows produced with lithography and heliography techniques can be found in the exhibition catalogue *Glasmalerei des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, Angermuseum Erfurt, ed. by M. Böning et al., Leipzig, 1993, pp. 212–215, as well as *Die Tätigkeit der Glasmalereiwerkstatt* (as in note 22).



16. Advertising brochure of Benziger Brothers, factory for church ornaments in Brooklyn, 1896. Photo after: H. NAUER, *Fromme Industrie. Der Benziger Verlag Einsiedeln 1750–1970*, Baden/Switzerland, 2017

companies. The contacts with the customers became increasingly institutionalized. By mail, the companies sent out free advertising leaflets and catalogues to the bishopric administrations and parishes. Commercial agents visited the parishes, where the customer could select from various motifs in an illustrated catalogue [Figs 13–15].²⁴

For international trade, the newly emerging world exhibitions became more and more important. Participation in them not only promoted the firms' public reputation, but also helped them to build up business and artistic networks.²⁵

²⁴ The catalogue is owned by the Oidtmann Company, Linnich, and was kindly provided to me by Claudia Schumacher, Cologne.

²⁵ J.-F. LUNEAU, 'Les peintres verriers dans les expositions universelles: histoire d'un désamour', in *Les expositions universelles en France au XIXe siècle. Techniques. Publics. Patrimoines*, ed. by A.-L. Carré, M. S. Corcy, C. Demeulenaere-Douyère, L. Hilaire-Pérez, Paris, 2012, pp. 244–257; J. ALLEN, *Windows for the World. Nineteenth-century Stained Glass and the International Exhibitions, 1851–1900*, Manchester, 2018.

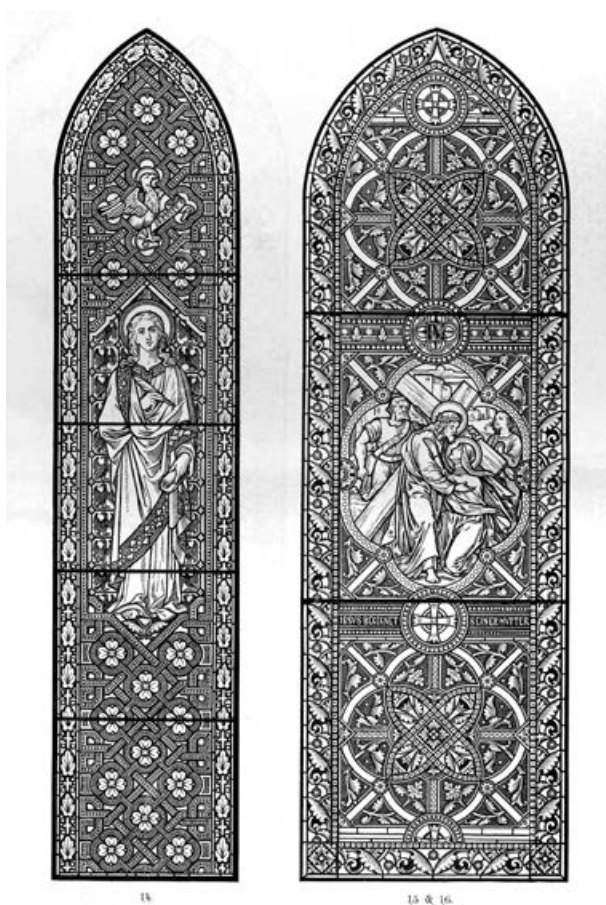


17. Cover from the stained glass catalogue *Programm der Königlich Bayerischen Hofglasmalerei-Anstalt F. X. Zettler in München*, Munich, 1878. Photo: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

In his article *The Religious Art of Benziger Brothers* Saul Zalesch examined the catalogues of the Benziger Company between 1873 and 1888 [Fig. 16].²⁶ The first American branch of Benziger, which was established around 1792 as a Swiss publishing house, opened 1853 in New York. They sold more statues and paintings in the United States than perhaps any other purveyor of art. The company also offered prints, banners, rosaries, holy water fonts and countless other articles that became part of the visual environment in which many of America's Roman Catholics developed their aesthetic preferences.²⁷ Starting

²⁶ S. ZALESCH, 'The Religious Art of Benziger Brothers', *American Art*, 13, 1999, pp. 58–79; R. BEAN, 'The Art and Advertising of Benziger Brothers' Church Goods Manufacture, New York, 1879–1937', *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 11/2, 2004, pp. 78–109; most recently on this topic H. NAUER, *Fromme Industrie. Der Benziger Verlag Einsiedeln 1750–1970*, Baden/Switzerland, 2017; cf. also K. BENZIGER, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des katholischen Andachtsbildes', *Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde*, 1, 1913, S. 65–74.

²⁷ V. CHIEFFO RAGUIN, *History*, pp. 205–210 (as in note 13).



18. Two stained glass windows. The Nos. 14, 15 & 16 refer to the enclosed pricelist (no 14 and 15: 200–300 Reichsmark, no 16: 250–400 Reichsmark per square meter). Stained glass catalogue *Programm der Königlich Bayerischen Hofglasmalerei-Anstalt F. X. Zettler in München*, Munich, 1878, pl. 8. Photo: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

in 1887 the catalogues included photographic reproductions of Benziger's latest product, stained glass windows designed by the Mayer'sche Kgl. Hofkunstanstalt, which then was under the direction of Franz Borgias Mayer.²⁸ The Hofkunstanstalt, which also produced sculptures etc., became highly successful in foreign business and employed up to 500 people [Figs 17, 18].

Pope Leo XIII nominated the Hofkunstanstalt 'Institute of the Holy Apostolic See', as he had earlier awarded Benziger title of 'Pontifical Institute of Church Art'. The highly organized overseas trade was dominated by firms like Benziger with official links to the papacy.

The manufacturing of stained glass gradually turned into serial production around the middle of the nineteenth century. In order to satisfy the enormous increase in demand for colored windows, new types of reproduction techniques were implemented. These increasingly

²⁸ E. VAASSEN, *Bilder auf Glas. Glasgemälde zwischen 1780 und 1870*, Munich and Berlin, 1997, pp. 259–266.

eliminated the creative role of the artist from production process. While the artistic means of expression were already severely curtailed by ecclesiastical directives, now less than ever did originality, uniqueness or peculiarity characterize the glass paintings, which became more defined by terms like reproducibility and standardization. The stained glass thus became a popularization medium with a primarily piety-promoting function, which in its artistic values can be compared to other pictorial mass products of techniques such as oil-pressure and gypsum-casting.

Under these conditions, glass painting ought not only be evaluated from a purely artistic point of view. According to Henning Pahl, who wrote a contribution to the image as a medium of popularization in the service of religion, the aesthetic quality of the nineteenth century mass image recedes behind the functional image value.²⁹ Popular art does not work only by its aesthetic quality, but by the quantity of the comprehensible elements contained in it. This applies especially to the religious image. Qualitative and stylistic criteria play a role insofar as the used sign system must not exceed the viewer's repertoire of signs in order to be understood. Only a simple – and I would like to add recognizable – system of imagery can ensure the success of the communication.

If, however, the artistic individuality of the majority of stained-glass windows was increasingly restricted to craftsmanship, in order to design the pictorial compositions according to the numerous circulating templates, or to fit the picture into a given frame shape and provide it with a framing appropriate to the style of the building, then the question arises whether these works will be overrated in their artistic quality, if we handle them according to the same strict CVMA standards that apply to medieval stained glass. Perhaps the scientific value of a very detailed cataloging would be rather low and cannot easily be justified. In light of this, more appropriate criteria must be developed to manage this phenomenon of mass art.

²⁹ H. PAHL, "Der Holzschnitt redet die Sprache des Volkes" – Das Bild als Popularisierungsmedium im Dienste der Religion, in *Wissenspopularisierung. Konzepte der Wissensverbreitung im Wandel (Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel. Sonderforschungsbereich/Forschungskolleg 435 der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft „Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel“, 4)*, ed. by C. Kretschmann, Berlin, 2003, pp. 257–279.

SUMMARY

Daniel Parello

'FROM THE PERIOD OF THE DEEPEST DECLINE OF GERMAN ECCLESIASTICAL ART' – SHOULD ARTISTIC QUALITY BECOME A CRITERION FOR AN INVENTORY OF STAINED GLASS?

Keywords: 19th-century stained glass, catholic restoration, art politics, industrialization, mass production

After the middle of the nineteenth century, the production of glass paintings took on enormous dimensions. The many newly founded workshops became increasingly subject to rational production methods. These products can be compared with the articles produced by countless picture factories which contributed to an enormous popularization of the religious image. On the market for ecclesiastical mass production, glass paintings were traded in the same way as plaster figures, oil prints and devotional pictures, as well as goldsmith's and carpenter's work. Ecclesiastical stained glass developed a standardized style and a simple, recognizable pictorial language. From an artistic point of view these catalogue products were fundamentally different from the workshops' considerable achievements at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The article traces the development from stained-glass artwork to the mass product and casts doubt on the sense of a stained-glass inventory in accordance with the standards of the *Corpus Vitrearum*. Rather, it is necessary to develop appropriate evaluation criteria that take into account the specific quality of these mass produced articles.