

UNKNOWN SILESIAN SOURCE FOR THE STATUE OF

ST. LUITGARD ON

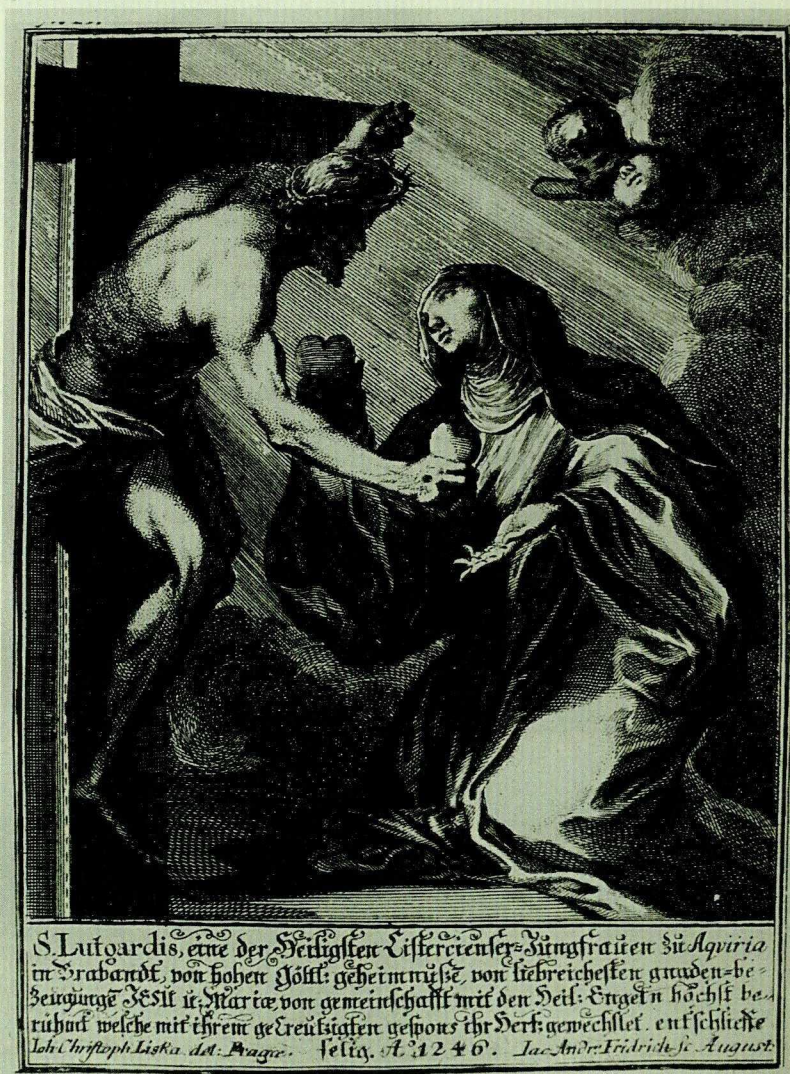
CHARLES' BRIDGE IN PRAGUE

The stone statue of St. Luitgard is undoubtedly one of the most impressive baroque sculptures in Central Europe. This work, made in 1710 by Matthias Bernard Braun after a drawing by Peter Brandl, stands out not only for its mastery of picturesque sculptural form, but also by the extraordinarily expressive, innovative composition of the scene. The figures of the beatified nun and crucified Christ are shown embracing with faces and eyes turned towards each other, as if they were related by a mystical union transgressing the border between man and God.

The genesis of this unusual composition, which is without precedent in Bohemian baroque art, has been a subject of scientific discussion for many years. Since the publication of the article by Emanuel Poche in 1949, it has commonly been accepted that the engraving *Vision of St. Luitgard* [1], designed by Johann Christoph Liška as an illustration for Augustin Sartorius' *Verteutsches Cistercium bis tertium* (1708), served as the inspiration for Peter Brandl during his work on the project of the sculpture.¹ The Silesian iconographic prototype for this sculptural scene has been recently questioned by Jaromír Neumann.² He points out an important difference between the graphic and sculptural images of St. Luitgard, which depict two different moments in the visionary meeting between Jesus and the Cistercian saint. Whereas the graphic scene illustrates an exchange of the hearts between St. Luitgard and Christ, the sculpture represents the moment of their mutual embrace. According to Sartorius' text, this embrace directly precedes St. Luitgard's kiss of the bleeding wound in Christ's right side. Neumann considered the conception of this unusual iconographic choice as a feature original to Brandl's visionary art and thus independent of Silesian sources. Visionary scenes in paintings by Brandl such as *The Vision of St. Teresa* from 1697 (the figure of St. Teresa) and *Holy Trinity with Mary, St. Augustine, St. Thomas of Villanova and St. Susan* from 1707 (the left side of the picture) supposedly attested to this long process of iconographic development.

Indeed, the engraving *Vision of St. Luitgard*, made after Liška's project, surely was not the source of inspiration for Brandl. But most probably neither was the innovative concept for the statue on Charles bridge an original idea of Brandl himself, as Neumann suggested. In my opinion, the Bohemian artist used as a model for this expressive composition another Silesian prototype, namely the engraving *Vision of St. Luitgard*, thus far unknown [2], which was made most probably by Johann Jacob von Sandrart after a work by Michael Willmann.³ The print and the sculpture illustrate exactly the same event in St. Luitgard's legend: the mystically charged embrace of the Cistercian saint and the crucified Christ. The similarities concern not only the iconography of this scene but also the compositional disposition of the figures: the arrangement of the body of St. Luitgard, rising from kneeling position, and the turning figure of Christ, as He bends towards the saint. Furthermore, the graphic image may be regarded as a source for the profound emotional dimension of this personal contact – in this respect the sculptural representation even lessens the exaltation of its graphic prototype.

The engraving *Vision of St. Luitgard* belonged to a set of several dozen prints featuring representations of the saints and blessed of the Cistercian order, which were designed by Michael Willmann for Bernard Rosa, the abbot of Cistercian monastery in Krzeszów (Grüssau), in 1686–88.⁴ Willmann's preparatory drawings (only three of which remain extant) were engraved by Augsburg and Nürnberg artists: Philipp Kilian, Bartholomaeus II Kilian, Georg Wolfgang the Younger and Johann Jacob von Sandrart. This set of engravings, published and distributed by the monastery in Krzeszów (Grüssau), was very popular among Cistercians not only from Silesia, but also from Bohemia. In a letter dated 2 February 1706, the abbot of the Cistercian monastery in Sedlec, Heinrich Snopek, asked his colleague in Krzeszów (Grüssau) to send him images of "Sanctorum et Sanctarum ordinis nostri, quam alias diversas elegantissimas incunculas a famoso illo pictore Willmanno delineatas".⁵ It seems highly likely that these popular prints were known also to the founder of the statue of St. Luitgard on Charles' bridge in Prague – the abbot of the Cistercian monastery in Plasy (Plass), Eugen Tytl. It may have been he, who acquainted Brandl, then



1/Johann Friedrich after Johann

Christoph Liška

Vision of St. Luitgard

before 1708

Photo: University Library, Warsaw

employed in Plasy (Plass), with the Silesian prototype.

The use of Willmann's graphic model by Brandl while designing the sculpture of St. Luitgard is not the only case when the art of the Silesian master gave inspiration to this Bohemian artist. Although the subject of artistic relations between Brandl and Willmann and his circle, is still awaiting broad research, we may safely assume that the art of the "Silesian Apelles" constituted a paradigm for Brandl.⁶ Sketch paintings by Willmann served the Bohemian artist not only as masterly models in the use of loose painterly brushwork, but also as ready-to-use compositional patterns. References to Willmann's works may be traced in several of Brandl's paintings: Adoration of the Shepherds (1713) from the Cistercian monastery in Zbraslav, modelled after Willmann's painting on the same subject from the Premonstratensian monastery in Strahov, Prague; St. Joseph with the Infant

Jesus (private collection), and Symeon with the Infant Jesus (National Gallery, Prague), both based on St. Joseph with the Infant Jesus by Willmann (National Gallery, Prague);⁷ and Adoration of the Magi (1727) from the castle chapel in Smiřice, modelled after a painting by the Silesian artist on the same subject from the Cistercian monastery in Henryków (Heinrichau).⁸

The graphic series on the saints and the blessed of the Cistercian order, designed by Willmann, together with the set of graphic illustrations for *Grüssauer Passionsbuch*, were the most frequently used graphic prototypes in all of Silesian visual culture through the end of the 18th century. Willmann's "inventions" served as models not only for his pupils and workshop collaborators, such as Liška, Georg W. Neunhertz and Johann J. Eybelwieser, but also for minor Silesian artists not related to the Lubiąż (Leubus) workshop as for instance Johann H. Kynast.⁹



2/Johann Jacob von Sandrart after

Michael Willmann

Vision of St. Luitgard

1686–1688

Photo: University Library, Warsaw

Peter Brandl's use of Willmann's graphic model indicates that this phenomenon most probably was not limited to the territory of Silesia. The extent to which visionary engravings designed by "famoso pictore Willmanno" influenced the baroque visual culture of Bohemia more generally can be determined only by further detailed research.

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Notes

1. Emanuel Poche, Braun či Brandl?, in: *Cestami umění. Sborník prací k počtě šedesátých narozenin Antonína Matějčka*. Praha 1949, pp. 183–187. – Jaromír Neumann, Jan Kryštof Liška. *Umění XV*, 1967, p. 288. – Pavel Preiss, Jan Krzysztof Liška. *Przyczynki do studium nad twórczością. Roczniki Sztuki Śląskiej VII*, 1970, p. 118. – Pavel Preiss, Malerei, in: Oldřich J. Blažíček – Pavel Preiss – Dagmar Hejdová, *Kunst des Barocks in Böhmen. Skulptur, Malerei, Kunsthandwerk, Bühnenbild*. Recklinghausen 1977, pp. 189–90, Nos. 104, 105. – Pavel Preiss, *Barockzeichnung. Meisterwerke des böhmischen Barocks*. Prag – Hanau 1979, p. 84.

2. Jaromír Neumann, Matyáš Bernard Braun a Petr Brandl. Sousoší sv. Luitgardy a jeho geneze. *Umění XXXVI*, 1998, No. 1/2, pp. 115–119. See also Ivo Kořán, Braunovo bozzetto sv. Luitgardy. *Umění XXXVI*, 1998, No. 3, pp. 219–223.

3. 140x97 mm, Warsaw, University Library (Inv. No. T. 1086/III/591); Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina (Inv. No. Bd. XLVIII A/157) – see: Andrzej Kozieł, Rysunki Michaela Willmanna (1630–1706), Ph. D. dissertation, Wrocław 1998, vol. 2, Cat.: Grafiki, No. A. 68.

4. See: G. K. Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon oder Nachrichten von dem Leben und Werken der Maler, Bildhauer, Baumeister, Kupferstecher, Lithographen, Formschneider, Zeichner, Medailleure, Elfenbeinarbeiter etc.*, vol. 24. Leipzig 1852, p. 410. – Augustin Knoblich, *Leben und Werke des Malers Michael Lucas Leopold Willmann, 1629–1706*. Breslau 1868, p. 27, No. 11. – Andrzej Kozieł (op. cit. in note 3), vol. 2, Cat. Nos.: Grafiki, A. 46–80. So far 37 engravings from this set have been found.

5. Otakar Hejnic, Příčinky k dějinám stavby chrámu Panny Marie v Sedlci u Kutné Hory. *Památky archeologické a místopisné XXIII*, 1908–1909, col. 427.

6. Jaromír Neumann, Expresivní tendence v české barokní malbě I. *Galéria III*, 1975, pp. 165, 169.

7. Ibidem.

8. See: Hubertus Lossow, *Michael Willmann (1630–1706) – Meister der Barockmalerei*. Würzburg 1994, Ca. No. A. 18.

9. See: Andrzej Kozieł (op. cit. in note 3), vol. 1, pp. 131–133.