

bodies, his catalogue essay “Black in the Art of Rembrandt’s Time” reorients the discourse somewhat, albeit by identifying the tragically anonymizing epoch of African enslavement, with a single, named, white European artist.

Although progress remains to be made, it would take the Rijksmuseum’s monumental 2021 exhibition, the frankly titled *Slavery*, co-curated by Stephanie Archangel with Eveline Sint Nicolaas, Valika Smeulders, and Maria Holtrop, to vividly and violently evoke what Black probably looked like to the vast majority of white people in seventeenth-century Europe—regardless of whether the few “autonomous” people of color in their neighborhoods did not wear chokers or could not be observed being lashed, raped, or otherwise victimized and demeaned; regardless of whether they were attractively represented in classical garb or contemporary fashion. As Saidiya Hartman, Marisa Fuentes, and other scholars working in slavery’s records maintain, that “there must have nevertheless been cruel exploitation, as well, even though the traces of it have not yet been found in the archives” (37) is precisely the point.

J. Vanessa Lyon, *Bennington College*  
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*Contamination and Purity in Early Modern Art and Architecture*. Lauren Jacobi and Daniel M. Zolli, eds.

Visual and Material Culture, 1300–1700. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. 366 pp. €129.

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The editors explain that the book is about the early modern distinctions between the pure and the impure. They point to preserving religious purity by expelling, isolating, or converting the other, as well as Christianizing/de-Christianizing religious sites and liturgical objects. They also speak of maintaining bodily and spiritual health by isolating the contaminated via the establishment of *lazzaretti* and ghettos. These two forms of eradication of contamination make a great deal of sense. However, then the editors go on to speak about purging Latin of the barbarism of the Goths and Vandals, evangelists of linguistic purity sanitizing speech to contribute to civic order, and pure materials and locally sourced pigments used by artists as connotations of “physical hygiene, flawless genealogy, or spiritual piety” (25). The editors even frame the *paragone* between sculpture and painting as issues of purity versus contamination, citing Leonardo’s statement about carving as a task that causes sweat, dust, and fatigue. Frankly, some of these attempts are rather forced.

There are also issues with forcing some of the essays into the purity/contamination trope. Carolina Mangone only addresses the theme in one paragraph and, while this is a strong essay, it has little to do with purity and contamination. Instead it deals with Michelangelo’s *non-finito* sculptures displayed as part of conjured archaeologies, then

a novel way of exhibiting works—as in the grotto in the Boboli Gardens, where intentionally rough sculptures accompany Michelangelo's slaves.

In Grace Harpster's essay, the purity/contamination theme is about the color of the Black Madonnas connoting material corruption but left unrestored. Their blackness was attributed to the smoke from candles, the "black but beautiful" bride in the Song of Songs often associated with the Virgin, or the fact that she was from Palestine and therefore dark-skinned.

Christopher Nygren discusses rupestrian paintings. Some of the stones used, such as the *pietra d'Arno*, were petrified mud, which artists "purified" by rendering art on their surface. Ferdinand I established the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (1588) in Florence, where the *commesso* technique was developed in which precious and semiprecious stones were carved and interlocked to form pictorial compositions. This provided an ennobled alternative to the painted stones.

Allison Stielau writes about papal treasures being melted down to produce the coins for Clement VII's ransom when he was captured after the Sack of Rome. Goldsmithing was highly regulated to guarantee purity. Benvenuto Cellini melted church treasures to produce the coins in a brick furnace in his home, leaving no records of the objects destroyed and causing a breakdown of the rigorous monitoring system.

Sylvia Houghteling writes about a tapestry series commissioned by Charles V (1546) to celebrate his conquest of Tunis. The conquest was a Christian purification of Ottoman rule, yet the tapestries were contaminated by silk from Granada, produced by Muslims and Jews, and the dyes and silver threads came from the New World and the Pacific Coast. Amy Knight Powell deals with how atomism is manifested in Pieter Bruegel the Elder's works. Since antiquity, atoms were associated with contagion and theologians condemned atomism. Many in fact asserted that the microscope used by atomists reveals putrefaction. Lisa Pon's essay deals with the ghettos of Venice that purified the city from harmful Jewish influences and the *lazzaretti* used to isolate the infirm. Originally *ghetto* was the word for *foundry* and these isolation areas for Jews were established on locations that had once functioned as such and were contaminated by waste.

Lauren Jacobi addresses Sixtus V and Mussolini's draining of the Pontine Marshes to curtail malaria and transform the area into agricultural lands—a purification of nature. Sixtus, who ironically died of malaria, was able to drain about fifteen miles of land. Mussolini built towns on the drained land, including Littoria and Saubadia. Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn deal with the massacres the Pueblo peoples inflicted upon each other to purify themselves from Catholic practice and the Spaniards' efforts to purify native rituals by conversion and the appropriation of sacred objects and structures. Caroline Jones and Joseph Koerner's essay is a rather disjointed discussion on Altdorfer's print of the *Virgin Seeking Christ in the Temple* and Picabia's Dadaist inkblot representing the

Virgin. Altdorfer's work reflects the purification of Regensburg by expelling the Jews and destroying their synagogue. Picabia's image contaminates the Virgin's immaculacy by showing her as a blotch.

Although some of the discussions struggle to fit into the purification/contamination trope, the book is well worth reading.

Lilian H. Zirpolo, *Independent Scholar*

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*In the Beginning Was the Image: Art and the Reformation Bible.* David H. Price. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. xxii + 412 pp. \$99.

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The intellectual and spiritual culture of the early Reformation centered on the authority of scripture, an authority made possible by humanist attempts to bring present-day texts close to their ancient originals. David Price's latest book, full of insightful readings of text and image, describes the art that surrounded and supported this biblicist culture. Sensitively interlocking different periods of biblicist art by Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach the Elder, and Hans Holbein the Younger, Price connects a plurality of contexts and approaches to biblicist visuality.

The introduction sets up the pervasiveness of biblicism, or humanist approaches to the Bible, on the eve of the Reformation. It also establishes Price's good art historical habits: these include acknowledging artists' agency as they "advanced the concept of biblicism" (8); attending to Hebraicist humanism; providing the original language of quotations in the footnotes; and emphasizing collaboration in both scholarship and artmaking.

The second chapter treats Dürer as a biblical humanist prior to the Reformation. While Price is anything but pseudopoetic or precious about language, this chapter includes an incredible ekphrastic treatment of the *Jerome Meisterstich*, capturing the "saint's almost feverish" engagement with his biblicist work (29). Price stretches the definition of *bible* by referring to Dürer's 1498 *Apocalypse* as one, but his overall point is well taken: that this printed object changed the history of biblical art and, alongside Dürer's 1504 *Fall of Humanity*, set the standard for the visuality of biblical humanism.

The third chapter provides context for Cranach's development of Lutheran visual propaganda up to the illustrations for Martin Luther's 1522 *Septembertestament* and their afterlife. Price's precision with classical meter equals his huntsmanship for adaptations of woodcuts across Bible editions. Worth mentioning is Price's extended treatment of the 1521 *Passional Antichristi*. Pages 106–34 should become the standard source in English for analysis of this crucial document.

The fourth chapter presents "Dürer's Reformation" with commendable clarity. Like Erasmus, Dürer hoped for "universal reform," based on biblicism, rather than focusing