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Synaesthesies: The Architecture, Art and Dramaturgical Practice of the Jesuits

Abstract

The Jesuits can be considered an agent of early modern globalization. Soon after their founding in 1534 (papal confirmation followed in 1540), the order could already be found on several continents. The success of the Jesuits can be attributed on the one hand to their respect for the history, culture, and religion of their respective host country, which certainly facilitated communication. At the same time, the Jesuits made the transfer of knowledge their goal, so that their missionary work also reflected a spirit of reciprocity. Findings were collected at Jesuit headquarters, the Collegio Romano, and evaluated accordingly.

Aesthetics were also of great importance for the work of the order. These included an architecture that improved the visibility and audibility of the priest in comparison to usual standards and a painting style that suggestively transmitted the message intended: Jesuit painter Andrea Pozzo developed a global iconography. In public space, elaborate theatrical machinery was used. Finally, ideas also circulated that moved in the direction of new media. But more important than the single aesthetic method is the synaesthetic approach, the integration of the data of the single senses in a world which is understood as unity.