

# Material Transformations: Thinking about Objects and Spaces at the Wieskirche

Michael Yonan

The materiality of architecture and the materiality of things have not long been closely linked in the scholarly imagination. Architecture, that largely permanent manipulation of space and the built environment, is in everything but the most abstract speculations a material construction, a physical entity that creates and defines space. When writing about architecture, it is perhaps all too easy to slip from discussions of materiality to ones of structure, the way in which a building stands and remains viable. Structure and materiality might seem identical, but they are not. Materiality, the 'thingness' of a building, makes it an object as much as a creator of space, and one can say that a building's materiality affects its inhabitants whether or not they comprehend its structure.<sup>1</sup> It is likewise difficult to isolate buildings from their larger social and environmental settings, which usually is a positive outgrowth of their materiality, but this can sometimes draw attention away from a building's broader effects. Objects, in contrast, seem supremely isolatable, easily detached from their original contexts of production. Object analysis, particularly in the growing interdisciplinary field of material culture studies, typically seeks to elucidate portable things, entities easily controlled through human manipulation, frequently moved, and that typically enjoy a close relationship to the possessor's body.<sup>2</sup> That objects likewise have wide-ranging spatial dimensions can therefore be as difficult to conceptualise as architecture's status as a thing. This is even true in those instances where objects and buildings enjoyed a

My heartfelt thanks to Jeffrey Collins, Jennifer Ferng, Mimi Hellman, and Kristel Smentek for their comments and suggestions for this essay.

<sup>1</sup> For a recent take on architecture's objecthood, see Antoine Picon, 'The Freestanding Column in Eighteenth-Century Religious Architecture,' in *Things That Talk*, ed. Lorraine Daston, New York: Zone Books, 2004, 67–99. On the material culture of religious architecture in two radically different settings, see Jens Baumgarten, 'Staging Baroque Worship in Brazil,' in *Religion and Material Culture*, ed. David Morgan, London: Routledge, 2010, 173–192; and Gretchen T. Buggeln, 'Form, Function, and Failure in Postwar Protestant Christian Education Buildings,' in Morgan, ed., *Religion and Material Culture*, 193–213. In his classic essay on material culture studies, Jules David Prown defines material culture to include what he calls 'modifications to the landscape,' a category broad enough to encompass architecture, town planning, agriculture, and mining. Prown, 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,' *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1, Spring 1982, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Such a perspective is assumed in much recent writing on objects. See, for summaries of current approaches, Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, Los Angeles: Sage, 2007, 3–16; and Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins, eds., *The Object Reader*, London: Routledge, 2010, 1–18.

profound interrelationship, where one is the direct inspiration for the other, or where the two work in tandem to orchestrate a specific set of experiences. All of these factors present additional challenges when applied to objects and spaces from past societies. Bodily experience is not universal, nor is therefore the experience of objects, spaces, and their interrelationship. The interpreter must carefully and cautiously imagine how past peoples, whose sensibilities we can only understand imperfectly, might have experienced the objects and architecture we examine.



Figure 1 Dominikus Zimmermann, Wieskirche, 1745–1754. Exterior view.  
(Photo: Foto Marburg/Art Resource, NY)

This essay takes up these concerns by examining a particularly rich example of the object/building relationship, one in which the visual language employed for each articulated the terms of an analogy between them. This occurred at the Wieskirche or ‘Church in the Meadow,’ one of Central Europe’s most impressive religious edifices and one long recognised as a cornerstone of eighteenth-century architecture.<sup>3</sup> (Figure 1) Erected between 1745 and 1754 by the architect Dominikus Zimmermann and his

<sup>3</sup> For the Wieskirche’s place within the larger scope of eighteenth-century Central European religious architecture, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe, 1450–1800*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 371–372.

brother, the painter and stucco carver Johann Baptist Zimmermann, the Wieskirche has captivated and puzzled scholars for over a century. Its interior distorts perceptions of solidity, space, and light through complex manipulations of architectural mass and void, illusionistic painting, and decoration.<sup>4</sup> (Figure 2) Are we to understand this spatial complexity, magnified many times over by the interior's ornamental exuberance, as out of place within the devotional setting of a church? Or does decoration here serve some sort of religious function beyond simply adorning a house of God?



Figure 2 Dominikus and Johann Baptist Zimmermann, Wieskirche. Interior.  
(Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)

These have proven difficult questions to answer precisely. Within the historiographical tradition, scholars have interpreted the Wieskirche's abundant rococo as proof of a secularizing tendency in eighteenth-century culture and a suggestion that its patrons, versed in a mentality of Enlightenment critique, no longer took Catholic devotional themes entirely seriously.<sup>5</sup> The church's interior ornament can be viewed as a transplantation of secular design to a religious space, and I have argued elsewhere that

<sup>4</sup> Carl Lamb, *Die Wies*, Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1964, 84–85 and 101–106; and Hermann Bauer, 'Zur Bedeutung der Wieskirche,' in *Die Wies: Geschichte und Restaurierung*, ed. Michael Petzet, Munich: Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 1992, 73–80.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion in Michael Yonan, 'The Wieskirche: Movement, Perception, and Salvation in the Bavarian Rococo.' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 41, 2012: 18–20.

an association with palatial residential decoration does indeed leave its residues in rococo churches.<sup>6</sup> Others have described the Wieskirche as a vibrant example of theatrical architecture, its interior staging an unresolved spatial play through the visual language of ornament.<sup>7</sup> My discussion here touches on both of these issues, but my larger point is that materiality, here understood as a kind of Christian materiality, is central to why this church looks the way it does. We can isolate this concept better if we examine the church in relation to certain objects, beginning with the object that is the reason for its existence and continuing through others intended to accompany the worshipper through life after visiting here. The building relates to these objects metaphorically, and in two distinct senses. It metaphorizes spatially the value of an ordinary object in its interior, while subsequent objects condense the sensory and spatial experience of the church into a portable form. The church also spatializes the divine by confusing our perceptions of its materiality, even as objects produced to commemorate its spiritual themes recast that materiality into more human terms.

To understand how these processes worked, we should first know how this church came to be built. Like many Bavarian rococo churches, the Wieskirche is located in a rural area. It was erected to commemorate an apparent miracle that occurred near the town of Steingaden in 1738 when a local woman named Maria Lory claimed to see real tears on the face of a wooden statue of the flagellated Jesus. This statue had outlived its functional life as a processional prop and Lory, taking pity on the worn and dilapidated object, took it into her possession. Word spread quickly about her miraculous vision and over the subsequent decades Steingaden attracted huge numbers of pilgrims, so many in fact that the burgeoning crowds exceeded local authorities' abilities to monitor them.<sup>8</sup> They erected a small chapel near Lory's house to cater to the worshippers, but this quickly proved insufficient and the diocese ordered a commodious church to be constructed. By the early 1760s the Wieskirche had become a magnet for large-scale international pilgrimage; at this time, over 40,000 worshippers celebrated mass there yearly and the pilgrims drew from not only from Catholic Germany and nearby Austria, but also France, Switzerland, Italy, Bohemia, and Hungary.<sup>9</sup> One should note that this phenomenon of a newly formed pilgrimage culture, while perhaps especially vibrant at Wies, was hardly unique to it. Eighteenth-century Bavaria saw a veritable flood of new and renewed pilgrimage sites, a religious efflorescence that can be understood as part of a larger reinvigoration of the region's ecclesiastically based social structure. This resulted in the construction or renovation of

<sup>6</sup> Michael Yonan, 'Ornament's Invitation: The Rococo of Vienna's Gardekirche.' *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 50, no. 4, Winter 2009, 292–293.

<sup>7</sup> For which see the multilayered discussion by Karsten Harries, *The Bavarian Rococo Church: Between Faith and Aestheticism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, ch. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Finkenstaedt, 'Das Gnadenbild des Geißelten Heiland auf der Wies und sein Rahmen: Wallfahrt und Baugeschichte,' in Petzet, *Die Wies*, 45–46.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas and Helene Finkenstaedt, *Die Wieswallfahrt. Ursprung und Ausstrahlung der Wallfahrt zum Geißelten Heiland*, Regensburg: Verlag F. Pustet, 1981, 86–89.

numerous pilgrimage, parish, and monastic churches in south Germany, many of them decorated in a rococo manner.



Figure 3 Balthasar Augustin Albrecht and Egid Verhelst the Elder, High Altar of the Wieskirche.  
(Photo: Foto Marburg/Art Resource, NY)

The Wieskirche's design met the needs of its pilgrims in manifold ways too complex to enumerate here. I'd like to highlight several relevant aspects of its interior decoration, the most important of which is the devotional sculpture itself, the mannequin of the flagellated Jesus that now rests in a niche above the high altar. (Figure 3) Maria Lory's experience with this object, her vision of it crying, fits into a long tradition of miraculous occurrences celebrated by believers and, typically after proper diocesan investigation, exploited by the Catholic Church. Crying statues, however, constitute a special kind of miracle, one that should be distinguished from those that occur more frequently in Catholic mysticism, including immaterial visions, *Dauerwunder* (objects that do not decay), or the hearing of divine voices. The Wieskirche's miracle was a material one in which matter behaved in a way that it should not, and more generally the miracle straddles the divide between art and reality. The tears were miraculous because they made a work of art come alive, and in this regard it confused the divide between image and matter, between representation and humanity, and between death and life.

Caroline Walker Bynum has related such miracles to the idea of 'Christian materiality,' an understanding of the material world's interaction with the divine that viewed earthly matter as inherently unstable not due to natural laws, but to the presence

of God.<sup>10</sup> Church authorities, Bynum notes, regarded matter with uncertainty and scepticism, since it was difficult to explain how and why matter changed and when such changes resulted from divine transformation and not simply natural processes. Early Christian thinkers, Augustine principal among them, had sought to distinguish between matter as a product of God's creation and therefore worthy of reverence, and human investment in material things as simple demonic idolatry.<sup>11</sup> This tension, whose legacy fired theological debates for over a millennium, troubled church authorities through the eighteenth century and was the direct concern of the ecclesiastical commission that investigated the Wies miracle in September 1745. They concluded, somewhat cynically, that Maria Lory's experience was likely not a true miracle, but was good enough since it focused the crowds' devotion on an image of the Christian saviour.<sup>12</sup> In the eighteenth century such concerns gained new urgency largely due to the broader theorisation of natural laws in other philosophical contexts. If natural laws came under greater scrutiny through Enlightenment empiricism, then religion required new justifications for the miraculous and for deciding the boundaries between the divine and the natural.

The Wieskirche miracle sat exactly in the centre of such debates, since it involved the animation of dead matter. Its interior sets up a relationship between art and nature that it simultaneously clarifies and confuses. Such material ambivalence is inherent to the statue itself. It crossed the art/life divide when it cried, but not completely; it remained art even as it assumed characteristics associated with life. The statue therefore evoked the divine nature of matter through its unpredictable materiality. This tension between art and nature, ever present in European art theory, was a central preoccupation of rococo aesthetics, which influenced the content of ornamented interiors that likewise confused distinctions between what one knows is real and what looks real but cannot be so. The Wieskirche itself takes up these tensions in its interior, which contains plentiful amounts of wood and stucco, but painted to emulate marble, porcelain, and gold. The actual material substance of these elements is therefore not what they appear and on this level alone the worshipper's perception is complicated. One might add that since it was Maria Lory's love of Jesus that brought the sculpture to life, her relationship to it assumes Pygmalion-like overtones. The Pygmalion myth has emerged in recent writing about eighteenth-century sculpture as a foundational myth for characterizing the lifelikeness of sculpted art.<sup>13</sup> In the Wieskirche miracle, Lory acts

<sup>10</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*, New York: Zone Books, 2011, ch. 4. Although Bynum's discussion treats an earlier historical moment, she engages exactly the concerns that persisted in popular devotional practices like those at the Wieskirche. See also R. M. Burns, *The Great Debate on Miracles: From Joseph Glanville to David Hume*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981).

<sup>11</sup> For which see William Pietz, 'The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish.' *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13, Spring 1987, 27–31.

<sup>12</sup> Finkenstaedt, *Wieswallfahrt*, 52.

<sup>13</sup> A theme treated recently in Mary D. Sheriff, *Moved by Love: Inspired Artists and Deviant Women in Eighteenth-Century France*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, ch. 5; and Christiane Hertel, *Pygmalion in Bavaria: The Sculptor Ignaz Günther and Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Art Theory*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011, ch. 2.

as a kind of Pygmalion who enlivens the object of her devotion through religious passion. Intriguingly, the gender roles are here reversed. She animated the statue through her love, in doing so brought it to life, originally for her alone, but later for those who shared her belief.

The distinction between death and life, between artifice and nature, and how that distinction manifested itself in a specific object: these issues lay at the origin of the Wieskirche's existence. Not surprisingly, the dynamics of that relationship are picked up in the building's material substance and thematized repeatedly in its interior. We know little of the design process that the Zimmermann brothers used when constructing this building, but we can assume that as devout Catholics themselves, they understood the tension between knowing and believing that Maria Lory's passionate vision embodied. And wittingly or otherwise, their design for the Wieskirche's interior conveyed this tension architecturally. As in many pilgrimage churches, its architecture choreographs the visitor's experience carefully. The church's solids and voids reveal themselves in intricate and surprising ways as worshippers pass through the building, most famously in the hanging open-air cartouches that line the apse and partially frame pictures located near them. The Wieskirche's spatial complexity emerges from the Zimmermann brothers' manipulation of light effects, a process that they understood to a supreme degree and exploited to give the interior a diaphanous, spiritualised glow. Commented upon less frequently is that this experience is designed to both confirm and challenge one's perception of the divine through apprehending and sometimes misunderstanding the building's materiality. Divine presence reveals itself here repeatedly, but revelation is never complete or total. It undoes itself and coheres again through transformations both actual and illusionistic, resulting for the worshipper in a continuous process of seeing and confirming alternating with dissolving and doubting. Karsten Harries, in his famous assessment of Bavarian rococo architecture, linked this quality to sacred theatricality, a simultaneous confidence in the divine and a theatrical play with it.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere I have associated it with Enlightened Catholic conceptions of salvation that ask the believer to interrogate their belief, fostering an inner spiritual dialogue.<sup>15</sup> Semantic and spatial play occurs in the Wieskirche, but it is a questioning play designed to stimulate the worshipper to confirm belief on his terms.

Here I would like focus more precisely on how rococo forms stimulate this will to believe. The Wieskirche employs ornament to challenge the building's solidity; the church's matter constantly permits views across spaces and cause light to fill voids in a way that draws attention to the building's permeability. The cartouches mentioned earlier demonstrate this particularly well, and in being purely ornamental rococo forms, they link the perception of space to the ornamental and position the rocaille shell at the point of transition between perception and sensation. In other words, ornament does more here than simply adorn a thoroughly perceivable and understandable architectural interior. It challenges perception and sensation in manifold ways through actual and

<sup>14</sup> Harries, *Bavarian Rococo Church*, 149–150 and 154.

<sup>15</sup> Yonan, 'The Wieskirche', 18–20.



Figure 4 Dominikus and Johann Baptist Zimmermann, Wieskirche. Interior, detail of column structure in nave.  
(Photo: Foto Marburg /Art Resource, NY)

pictorialized transformations.<sup>16</sup> This is best seen in a detail of one of the double column constructions that encircle the nave. (Figure 4) Atop this particular column we find a complex multi-levelled entablature, one freely modified from the Classical language of architecture, and in the transitional level above it leading to the ceiling fresco are a cartouche framing a grisaille image of a cherub with a lamb. This is, of course, a reference to Jesus as *Agnus Dei*, a theme that resonates with christological imagery found everywhere in the church. Framing the image is a complex rococo cartouche. In this instance it frames a picture, but elsewhere, such just behind this area, we find another rococo cartouche that frames a physical opening through which the posterior wall is visible. Above this second cartouche is yet a third one, in this instance smaller and framing a crisscrossed decorative pattern in reflective gold. Other cartouches nearby encircle windows that let in natural light. None of these rococo frames assume exactly

<sup>16</sup> On transformations in rococo forms, see Mary D. Sheriff, 'Seeing Metamorphosis in Sculpture and the Decorative Arts,' in *Taking Shape: Finding Sculpture in the Decorative Arts*, ed. Martina Droth, Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2009, 163–165.

the same shape and all frame different things. We have rococo frames that encircle pictures, that distinguish different kinds of ornamental decoration, that delimit and open up views of architectural space, and that frame refracted light. Exactly what is art and what is reality, what we perceive as illusion versus real, and where we the worshipper stand in relation to all of these perceptions – these become the subject of metaphorised elaboration through architectural ornamentation.

Rococo forms are instrumental in articulating these material and perceptual complexities. One sees this in the way that forms blend into forms within the linear trajectory of a given rococo shape. A leaf becomes water, a shell morphs into lichen as the naturalistic forms evoke multiple references while never actually fully becoming any single one. These transformations occur laterally, within the illusionistic line of the ornament itself, but transformations also occur between ornament and its surroundings. Spatial and perspectival transformations between partial rococo forms occur between the ornament and its ground, the wall surface upon which it rests. Perceptual shifts cause realignments of ground against illusionistic form and against the building's real interior to destabilise the perception of both picture and space.<sup>17</sup> Of course, this being the rococo, there is a notable lack of resolution, but that isn't presented negatively. In this setting, it serves to remind the worshipping viewer that the divine manifests itself through partial and imperfect human understanding. The rococo metaphorizes that partial understanding by undermining clear perception of what it represents and what seeks to decorate.

We perhaps see these transformations' spiritual dimensions less clearly today than an eighteenth-century pilgrim might have, but to someone accustomed to humble architecture that enclosed and defined spaces simply, the Wieskirche's spatially ambivalent ornamentation would have been simultaneously dazzling and unsettling. Here nature appears as familiar and otherworldly, recognisable and transformed, and on a basic level such complexity illustrated divine powers. That the church commemorates an apparent miracle, one that likewise confused distinctions between what is commonplace and what is unlikely, what can be understood easily versus what cannot be explained, in short between the natural and the miraculous, only makes these plays of real and represented matter especially appropriate. And in a pilgrimage church, this visualisation of transformation through rococo forms parallels the process of change actuated in the pilgrim during site-based devotional practices. If one can imagine a sick eighteenth-century person traveling to the Wieskirche to seek divine balsam for their ills, one can understand the value of transformation as a concept to be expressed pictorially, ornamentally, and architecturally.

Leaving the divine in a state of partial actualisation—in other words, showing the divine as a process, as creation occurring within the church's ornamental fluidity, places the onus on the worshipper to imagine the role of the divine in human sensation. The pilgrim therefore becomes the agent by which transformation occurs and,

<sup>17</sup> My analysis here is inspired by Katie Scott, 'Figure and Ornament: Notes on the Late Baroque Art Industry,' in Droth, *Taking Shape*, 166–175.

presumably, is eventually resolved. That off-site resolution is an important component of this experience, since without it, the pilgrimage could become too unsettling. The church's semantic ambivalence requires other devotional mechanisms to present an at least temporary conclusion to its divine puzzle. Here we should recall that most worshippers experienced the Wieskirche's decoration quite differently than they would were it a parish church, one visited regularly by a resident local community, and entirely differently from how such forms would signify in a secular setting. The majority of this church's worshipping community experienced the Wieskirche for only a few weeks out of a longer spiritual life, as pilgrims to a site far from where they usually lived. Recognizing this, the small community of artisans that lived near the church produced objects to stimulate memories of it for pilgrims, mnemonic triggers that recalled the church's salient themes and temporarily resolved its indeterminacies.



Figure 5 Unknown artist(s), painted wooden apple and pear with flagellated Jesus. Private collection. (Photo: Thomas Finkenstaedt, used with permission)

Many of these objects take conventional devotional forms: small likenesses of the flagellated Christ made of wood or cast metal, little crucifixes, and portable devotional altars.<sup>18</sup> A few, however, are more unusual. A particularly interesting pair of objects is a small wooden apple and pear, now in a private collection, that open to reveal painted carvings of the Wieskirche Jesus.<sup>19</sup> (Figure 5) Unlike the building itself and works of high art associated with it, the provenance of devotional mementos such as these is more obscure and their history much harder to trace. They tend not to be housed in prominent public collections, but instead in smaller regional county and diocesan museums. Many are still in private hands, passed down across generations from their

<sup>18</sup> Finkenstaedt, *Wieswallfahrt*, 107–112.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas and Helene Finkenstaedt, *Der Wies Heiland: Seine Devotional-Kopien und verwandte Andachtsbilder des Christus an der Geiselsäule*, Würzburg: Bayerische Blätter zur Volkskunde, 1981, 153.

original owners. The precise circumstances behind their production are likewise unknown. Neither the name of the artist/craftsman, nor the exact date of their making can be determined with certainty, although that they are of eighteenth-century pedigree is beyond doubt. Their exterior surfaces are made entirely of painted carved wood; the interior figures of Christ are a combination of wood and tinted wax. These objects have played little role in the historical literature on the church. Given how much they can tell us about the pilgrim's experience, and how memories of that experience were shaped through souvenir art, one can only wonder why the art-historical literature cannot find more to say about them.

Aside from their novelty and demonstration of artisanal skill, our apple and pear work with the memory of the church's interior to recast its devotional experience anew. Whereas in the building itself decoration is an external presence, one played out through sight and the perception of space, the carved fruit realigns those perceptions into sensations both optical and tactile. What was presented to the worshipper spatially now becomes something whose space and context they control and largely define. These objects recall earlier religious practices that relied on small-scale carvings as stimuli for prayer. Both Europe and Asia had long traditions of carving fruit pits with intricate figural scenes, for example. The Wieskirche objects recall those, but are somewhat different in their purpose.

Imagine that you are a pilgrim returning home from your month-long pilgrimage to the Wieskirche. You stop and rest by the side of the road. The day is hot and you're tired. To pass the time, you pull out the souvenir you purchased, a wooden object that in its exterior painting and modelling looks remarkably like a delicious fruit. It is even speckled with brown flecks that suggest it is fully ripened and ready to eat. Unlike the dazzling natural/artificial complexity you experienced in the church, this object seems relatively simple and its meaning, if any, entirely familiar. Yet as you contemplate it, its weight and texture indicate a tactile misalignment with your sight. You realise that despite its careful verism, it neither feels nor smells quite like a fruit should. Your senses do not align, they fail to correlate, and this may recall in your mind some of the feelings you experienced when worshipping at Wies. In opening the fruit to reveal the likeness of Jesus, a miniature replica of the miraculous sculpture you just saw, you comprehend that the complexities of the church have been rearticulated anew. This is not what one finds in a typical apple or pear, but then nothing about your pilgrimage to the Wieskirche has so far been typical either.

This is again a transformation, but via a different process than the church's rococo interior. There, distinctions between natural and artful forms metaphorized the partially knowable divine through semantic and spatial complexity. The fruit, in contrast, initially resolves those complexities; it makes them simple again, only to then reveal them once more as a layered manipulation of natural and divine form. It is as if a piece of the larger material and spiritual puzzle that the church presented has become yours, and its surprising dichotomy is your own little miracle that echoes the original's veracity. The devotional souvenir therefore is a little rococo object, not because it

employs shell-inspired ornamental language—it doesn't—but because it unsettles an apparently clear distinction between natural and artificial, doing so in a way that opens a closed set of associations to something seemingly impossible. Maria Lory's perceived miracle also was based upon inanimate matter acting in unexpected ways, just as is the case with your fruit. The materialised power she experienced is captured for the believer through them, and by enabling him to relive it through his own senses and under his own control, it empowers him to believe even after the pilgrimage is over. Indeed, the objects enable serial devotional contemplation by recasting the Wies miracle and its rococo materiality into portable form. And that they do so as fruit—so fraught in the Christian tradition due to its association with original sin and the lost paradise of Eden—adds further resonance. This is not fruit to be eaten, but contemplated; in the image of salvation it provides, the original sin of Adam and Eve is temporarily corrected through Jesus' suffering, and moreover that correction is placed in the hands of the worshipper to touch, examine, and ponder.

Our objects' existence are interesting to consider in light of the now famous general mandate of Elector Max III Joseph, issued in 1770, calling for the reduction of ornament in Bavarian churches.<sup>20</sup> Decreeing against exaggeration and against excessive spending on religious edifices, the elector's decree ordered uniformity in religious architecture and the elimination of all superfluous stucco work in interior outfitting. He further called for church sculptures to display 'noble simplicity', a concept clearly derived from the ideas of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, since this would better foster silent veneration. Of course veneration as understood by Max Joseph is not the same thing as perceptual contemplation spurred by the experience of looking at rococo ornament in a devotional setting. Indeed the two are quite different. With that proviso, we can still position our fruits in relation to the elector's edict. They preserve an element of the miraculous for the worshipping believer at the same time that church decoration adopted more restrained visual forms. By lacking overt rococo ornamentation, the kind that could easily appear on a portable altar or religious print, the wooden fruits avoid the taint of excessive decoration. But they do retain the tensions that the Wieskirche's interior rococo thematised architecturally.

In conclusion, I would like to isolate three issues emergent in the relationship between the Wieskirche's decoration and devotional objects like our apple and pear. The first is what they can tell us about the so-called 'pictorialization of the rococo', a historiographical theme in discussions of ornament in eighteenth-century art and architecture.<sup>21</sup> Buildings such as the Wieskirche demonstrate that this pictorialisation was also frequently a materialisation and spatialisation of rococo forms. German architects and artisans were particularly interested in these capacities of rococo decoration, and our apple and pear demonstrate how place and space could be

<sup>20</sup> Discussed in Harries, *Bavarian Rococo Church*, 196–203.

<sup>21</sup> Harries, *Bavarian Rococo Church*, 19–28. Harries draws his discussion from an important predecessor: Hermann Bauer, *Rocaille: Zur Herkunft und zum Wesen eines Ornament-Motivs*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1962, 47.

manipulated not just in site-specific ways, but through portable objects that induce processes of contemplation and memory through handling. Addressing Christian materiality, in Bynum's terminology, pushes our analysis of this church away from a purely art-historical knowledge and toward a material culture perspective. Second, we might remark here that the art/nature divide, which in the French rococo is often concerned with issues of sociability, becomes in the German religious context a divine play concerned with knowledge of God. Maybe, both the church and the objects tell us, there is something divine that lies beyond sensation, and yet sensation is always involved in our comprehension of it. Finally, the Wieskirche and its devotional objects highlight how much is to be gained by thinking about objects and buildings together and thinking further about relationships with things that exist beyond the proscribed domains that limit so much art-historical thinking. Not all of the objects in my discussion are art in quite the same sense as a painting by Van Gogh, but all are statements of religious passion in manipulated material form. Finding a way to see those connections between humble object and grand building, and accounting for their mutual imbrications, is perhaps the historiographical challenge that lies in our discipline's future.

**Michael Yonan** is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Missouri. He is the author of *Empress Maria Theresa and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art* (Penn State Press, 2011) and edits the series 'The Histories of Material Culture and Collecting, 1700–1950,' for Ashgate Publishing. He has published extensively on the arts of eighteenth-century Central Europe, including on collecting practices, rococo interior decoration, and monarchical imagery.

yonanm@missouri.edu