

Danish Wall-paintings – an Introduction

Axel Bolvig

Compared to other European countries Denmark possesses, relatively, both the most and the best preserved medieval wall-paintings.

After the Reformation, in Denmark we never experienced any form of iconoclasm worth talking about. Gradually the old paintings were whitewashed, not because of a hostile attitude towards Catholic imagery but simply caused by their gradual turning old-fashioned and dirty.

During the last 150 years a great effort has been made by getting the pictures to light again. Consequently, much research into the wall-paintings has been done. This research has almost exclusively concentrated on singular motifs and decorations, on iconographic problems, on the religious contents and programmes, on foreign influence and on the use of models.¹

As a result of this traditional research a refined iconographic description of the painted motifs has been developed which forms the basis of the first attempt to make a register.²

During the last couple of years I have directed a database containing pictures of our wall-paintings. The base has been established in cooperation with some students. Through their work on the imagebase and the teaching connected to it, a fertile setting for a renewed research into the Danish wall-paintings has developed inspired by the access to quantitative use of images, the new theories on visual methodology and the recent research results from different scholars and departments, among others the *Institut für Realienkunde* at Krems (Austria).

The articles in this volume represent some of the new Danish research into the images. The contributors are:

¹ As the literature which I refer to is enormous, I refer to the bibliography on our web-site: www.kalkmalerier.dk

² Part of this register has been published: *A Catalogue of Wall-Paintings in the Churches of Medieval Denmark 1100-1600*. Scania Halland Blekinge Vol I-IV (ed. Knud Banning), 1976.

Martin Bo Nørregård. A student whose main project is a review of the traditional dating and ascribing of Danish medieval art. He also functions as one of the webmasters on our web-site. E-mail: martinbo@dorit.ihl.ki.dk

Annedorte Vad. A student whose main project is a quantitative analysis of the depictions of the devils in our wall-paintings. She is responsible of the scanning of the photos of the wall-paintings. She has developed hyperdocuments with the presentation of some Danish churches on the Internet. E-mail: vadv@dorit.ihl.ku.dk

Steen Schjødt Christensen. A student whose main project is the great variety of alternative figures (grotesques) in the wall-paintings. He is responsible of the imagebase itself. He also has developed a hyperdocument with the presentation of some Danish churches. E-mail: steen@adr.dk

Jesper Jerne Borrild graduated 1997 with a dissertation on quantitative analysis of images of saints in Danish wall-paintings.³ He has developed the complete iconographic register and is working on an analysis of the difference between the wall-paintings in eastern and western Denmark. E-mail: borrild@vip.cybercity.dk

My name is Axel Bolvig. I am research professor at the Department of History, University of Copenhagen. Since the 1970s I have researched into the subject "History and Images". I have written many books and articles on this topic covering subjects from modern press photos and commercials to medieval altarpieces and wall-paintings. E-mail: bolvig@coco.ihl.ku.dk

³ The statistic material is presented on the web-site: www.kalk.malerier.dk/statistics

MEDIUM AEVUM
QUOTIDIANUM

39

KREMS 1998

HERAUSGEGEBEN
VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

Titelgraphik: Stephan J. Tramèr

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, A-3500 Krems, Österreich. Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist. – Druck: KOPITU Ges. m. b. H., Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10, A-1050 Wien.

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Vorwort

Medium Aevum Quotidianum legt mit Heft 39 einen Band vor, welcher sich schwerpunktartig mit der Analyse von Bildquellen, vor allem Wandmalerei, auseinandersetzt. Die Autoren der Beiträge stammen aus zwei Institutionen, in denen Bilddokumentation und Analyse konzentriert betrieben werden: dem Department of History an der Universität Kopenhagen und dem Department of Medieval Studies an der Central European University, Budapest. Das erstgenannte Institut ist besonders durch seine Digitalisierung des Gesamtbestandes dänischer Wandmalerei bekannt geworden, der über das Internet allgemein zugänglich geworden ist und als Basis für umfassende qualitative und quantitative Bilduntersuchungen herangezogen werden kann. Das Department of Medieval Studies der CEU konzentriert sich in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften auf die Sammlung, Katalogisierung, Dokumentation und Analyse zentraleuropäischen Bildmaterials. Die Verfügbarkeit des aufgearbeiteten Bestandes via Internet ist in Vorbereitung.

Medium Aevum Quotidianum ist nun auch mittels Internet erreichbar (<http://www.imareal.oeaw.ac.at/maq/>). Im Augenblick bieten wir das Inhaltsverzeichnis aller seit unserer Gründung im Jahre 1982 erschienenen Bände. Aktuelle Informationen, Links zu anderen, uns wichtig erscheinenden Websites sowie Berichte werden in Zukunft das Service-Angebot erweitern.

Gerhard Jaritz, Herausgeber