

Robert Didier & J. Toussaint (eds.): Autour de Hugo d'Oignies [Ausstellungskatalog]; Société Archéologique de Namur 2003; 416 pp. and ca 400 (mainly colour) plates; Hardback edition € 60,-

Oignies, a village along the River Sambre, halfway between Namur and Walcourt (Belgium), once housed an Augustinian priory. The treasury of this priory is celebrated as one of the seven wonders of Belgium, together with Peter Paul Rubens' 'Descent from the Cross', the Ghent altar piece by Jan Van Eyck, the baptismal font by Renier of Huy, the shrine of St Ursula by Memling, Brueghel's 'Fall of Icarus' and the treasury of Notre Dame of Tournai. This having been said, it is probably the least known of these wonders. In the late eighteenth century, at the height of the French Revolution when most of Belgium's treasuries were pillaged or confiscated, the prior of Oignies managed to hide the community's treasures in a farm at Falisolle, where they were kept safe until things quieted down. By then the priory had been demolished and so, the treasure could not be returned to the original community. In 1818 it was handed over for safe-keeping to the community of the Soeurs of Notre-Dame in Namur and it is at this convent that the treasury is kept until this day. It has seldom left its safe harbour here. Although various objects from the treasury have been on show in Europe in the last 25 years, the treasury as a whole left Namur only twice (Malines 1864, Brussels 1888). From May 29th until November 30th, 2003 an exhibition, entitled 'Autour de Hugo d'Oignies' was held in the Musée des Arts Anciens du Namurois at Namur. To accompany this exhibition a sumptuous full-colour catalogue was published, showing each object from the front and back, and in various details. In addition, there are twelve introductory essays dealing with the history of the community, with Oignies' celebrities, with various stylistic aspects and with the iconography of the objects. All in all, this is the first full-scale work on the treasury of Oignies since the publication of F. Courtroy's catalogue of 1951–1952.

According to the mid-thirteenth-century *Fundatio ecclesiae beati nicolai oygniensis*, Oignies was founded by four brothers in the late twelfth century. Alongside the priory a beguinage was set up, where the mother of the four founding brothers lived. The priory church of St Nicolas was consecrated in 1204 by the bishop of Liège, Hugh de Pierrepont. The establishment gained some renown due to the arrival of the saintly Marie de Nivelles, later known as St Marie d'Oignies. Her presence at Oignies attracted others to join the community, among them Jacques de Vitry, a brilliant student from Paris, who arrived circa 1208 and wrote her 'vita' after her decease in 1213. Already by 1211 Jacques de Vitry had become a close advisor of Bishop Hugh de Pierrepont and, after preaching the crusade in southern France, he was made bishop of St Jean of Acre in 1216, a post from which he resigned in 1227. Following his resignation he became cardinal, as well as bishop of Tusculum. In 1227 he revisited Oignies where he consecrated five altars and assisted in the translation of Marie d'Oignies' mortal remains from the beguinage to the new church.

Although his career led him far away from Oignies, Jacques de Vitry did not forget the community here and he provided it with many precious objects and relics.

On his death in 1240 he even bequeathed the furnishings of his private episcopal chapel to the community, including an interesting embroidered mitre and an even more unique parchment specimen. Also, his body was brought from Rome to Oignies, where it found its last resting place. It is mainly through his strong support that Oignies managed to build up so stunning a collection of relics. The Oignies treasury includes high-quality reliquaries, crosses, sacred vessels and other liturgical objects. Six objects are now in collections elsewhere, but the main corpus of the treasury has been preserved and adds up to a total of 36 objects, most of which date to the thirteenth century.

Another feature adding to the uniqueness of the Oignies treasury is that some of the objects have been signed by the artist who made them: brother Hugo, the youngest of the four founding brothers. Unlike his relatives, of whom the eldest, Gilles, was the first prior of the community, „Hugo celebrated Christ, not through words, but through his art“. Four objects in the treasury can be attributed to Hugo beyond any doubt. A chalice with a matching paten was probably made in 1228–1229 when Jacques de Vitry consecrated five altars at Oignies. From the text on the chalice it would seem that Hugo was not only the maker, but also the patron. The iconography of these two objects has been studied in detail by P. Skubiszewski (*L'iconographie de la patène et du calice du frère Hugo*, pp. 99–131). The book cover of the Oignies gospels has an inscription referring to brother Hugo as well as a self-portrait, and the book itself also includes a folio with a portrait of Hugo, which suggests he was an able book illuminator too. As St Francis is mentioned in the sanctorale, the book must have been made after July 1228, date of the canonisation of St Francis (X. Hermand: *L'Évangélaire d'Oignies* (Namur, Trésor des Soeurs de Notre-Dame), vers 1230, pp. 165–179). The fourth object associated with Hugo is a reliquary of St Peter that is identified as a work made by Hugo in 1238 by a parchment authentic placed in a crystal tube.

Hugo's work is highly regarded, not so much because of its figure style which is a late version of the so-called ‚Muldenfaltenstil‘, but because of the very fine niello and filigree applications. Their brilliance is very well shown by the wonderful photographs in the catalogue and for this alone the book is a good purchase. On the whole the catalogue and the accompanying articles present us with the ‚status quaestionis‘, many questions are stated, but as Robert Didier himself puts it: „peu de solutions y seront apportées“ (Didier, p. 59). Although many different issues have been addressed in the various articles, one of the central issues is not given full attention, i. e. that of the ‚Muldenfaltenstil‘ and its development from its first occurrences in the work of Nicolaus of Verdun and the so-called Ingeborg psalter, through to the late examples of the style: the works of Hugo d'Oignies and Villard de Honnecourt. Knowing more about the development and geographical distribution of this style will surely shed more light on Hugo's artistic background. In this context, attention should be given to the counts of Namur and the counts of Flanders and Hainault and their patronage of the arts. It is often forgotten that the church of St Nicholas in Ghent harbours a series of thirteenth-century sculptures featuring the ‚Muldenfaltenstil‘ that may have come from a choir-screen.

The title of the work ‚Autour de Hugo d’Oignies’ is well chosen. Although a lot is said about the priory, about Jacques de Vitry and Marie d’Oignies, about Hugo’s style in comparison with that of other goldsmiths (Robert Didier: Hugo d’Oignies. Prolégomènes, pp. 59–81), with the drawings in Villard de Honnecourt’s sketchbook (Peter Kurmann: Hugo d’Oignies et Villard de Honnecourt, pp. 83–88) and with contemporary stained glass windows (Brigitte Kurmann-Schwarz: Le vitrail des années 1200 et le style de Hugo d’Oignies, pp. 89–99), the man himself remains something of a mystery. One of the problems is that it has proved difficult to ascertain where Hugo was trained. Although the church of St Nicholas was first consecrated in 1204 and would have been furnished with all sorts of liturgical objects, all works in the treasury date from the 1220s onwards. Hugo’s dated works can be placed in a very short space of time, between 1228–29 and 1238. Although he seems to have made objects for places other than Oignies, these again seem to belong to the same period. In circa 1230, for example, he made a niello plaque for the bust reliquary of St Feuillen in the abbey of Fosses. So what was Hugo doing before this artistic outburst? On the basis of stylistic evidence, Didier suggests that Hugo may have been trained in Cambrai.

Hugo set up a workshop at Oignies that seems to have had more than local renown. He and his assistants worked not only for the priory of Oignies but seem to have exported their products to elsewhere. The influence of the Oignies workshop has been traced to as far away as Poland, to the sisters of St Claire in Cracow (J. Pietrusiński: Hugo d’Oignies et les ostensoirs des clarisses de Cracovie, pp. 181–189). The Oignies atelier and other workshops operating in the region are discussed by R. Didier (Œuvres de l’atelier d’Oignies et d’autres ateliers, pp. 319–384) and the book concludes with an article concerning a small ivory statue from the abbey of Aulne, that found its way into the Oignies treasury in the wake of the French Revolution (Robert Didier: À Propos de la Vierge en ivoire d’Aulne – Oignies, pp. 385–389).

Each article seems to have been written as a loose entity and not as part of a larger whole. This leads to repetitions (the history of the priory is recounted at least four times), deviations and even contradictions. For instance, on p. 16 (C. Doux-champs-Lefèvre: Le monde du frère Hugo, pp. 11–21) it is said that the foundation of the priory at Oignies took place circa 1190, while on p. 21 (J.-B. Lefèvre: Le cadre religieux, pp. 21–37) a date at the very end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century is suggested. Whereas Lefèvre refers to the mid-thirteenth-century *Fundatio ecclesiae beati nycolai oigniencensis* for the foundation history of Oignies, Didier uses the mid-thirteenth-century *Chronique de Walcourt*, which is known only through an eighteenth-century transcription. Whereas S. Vandecan (L’histoire du Trésor d’Oignies, pp. 47–59) sees Hugo as the last of the great Mosan goldsmiths, ‚Il clôt ainsi la série des grands artistes mosans’ (p. 48), Didier is greatly opposed to this idea and rightly asks, „Le monde de l’orfèvrerie mosaine serait-il donc arrêté vers 1240?” and he proceeds to show that indeed it did not. Where Vandecan claims that „L’influence de Villard de Honnecourt est nette” (p. 49), this is not so obvious for P. Kurmann (pp. 83–88). He suggests the stylistic similarities between the two are the result of a common source. Also, by the time we come to the article by J. Leclercq-Marx who

deals with Hugo's inscriptions (Les inscriptions dans l'oeuvre de frère Hugo, pp. 133–152), these inscriptions, and the problems concerning their translation, have already been dealt with several times by previous authors.

In addition to the present catalogue, a second publication is announced in the introduction to ‚Autour Hugo d'Oignies‘, which is envisaged to comprise the acts of a colloquium held at Namur on the 20th and 21st of October 2003. These ‚Acts du Colloque‘ can be pre-ordered at the Musée provincial des Arts anciens du Namurois.

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Ralf Vollmuth: Das anatomische Zeitalter. Die Anatomie der Renaissance von Leonardo da Vinci bis Andreas Vesal; München: Verlag Neuer Merkur 2004; 185 S., 88, teils farbige Abb.; ISBN 3-929360-70-5; € 69,-

Das Zeitalter Raffaels, Leonardos und Michelangelos war auch in der europäischen Medizin- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte eine dramatische Periode. Die führenden italienischen Künstler zeigten sich besonders von der Anatomie fasziniert, die um 1500 für etwa ein Jahrhundert zum bevorzugten ärztlichen Forschungsfeld wurde. Die Suche nach der optimalen Körperproportion, die – auf der Basis Vitruvs und herausragender antiker Kunstwerke – Maler, Bildhauer und Architekten wie Cennino Cennini, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Leon Battista Alberti, Filarete, Francesco di Giorgio bis hin zu Leonardo da Vinci und Albrecht Dürer zu unterschiedlichen Lösungsvorschlägen inspirierte¹, förderte das Interesse an Sektionen wie am theoretischen Schrifttum des Fachs, welches das Odium des Anrühigen und Schillernden, zumindest im Umfeld der Universitäten, definitiv abgelegt hatte. Die Künstler wurden dabei nicht zuletzt von den Humanisten ermuntert, die der medizinischen Wissenschaft – in der Tradition Francesco Petrarca's² und Coluccio Salutati's³ – ursprünglich durchaus reserviert begegneten, infolge eines besonders von Guarino da Verona, Giannozzo Manetti, Ermolao Barbaro und einflußreichen „Arzthumanisten“ wie Paolo Toscanelli, Giovanni Baldi, Marsilio Ficino, Antonio Benivieni, Michele Savonarola, Nicoletto Vernia oder Niccolò Leonico eingeleiteten Sichtwandels (der mit der zunehmenden Rezeption des in der Medizin wie an den Universitäten hochangesehenen, von den Humanisten des Trecento und frühen Quattrocento jedoch noch kritisch beurteilten Aristoteles zusammenhing⁴) aber zunehmend Interesse an aus der Antike überlieferten *medizi-*

1 Vgl. KLAUS BERGDOLT (Hrsg.): Der dritte Kommentar Lorenzo Ghibertis. Naturwissenschaft und Medizin in der Kunsttheorie der Frührenaissance; Weinheim: Acta Humaniora 1988, S. XC-XCV.

2 Vgl. FRANCESCO PETRARCA: *Invectivae contra medicum*. Testo Latino e Volgarizzamento di Ser Domenico Silvestri; Edizione critica a cura di Pier Giorgio Ricci, Appendice di Aggiornamento a cura di Bortolo Martinelli; Rom 1978.

3 COLUCCIO SALUTATI: *De nobilitate legum et medicinae. De verecundia*; a cura di Eugenio Garin (*Edizione Nazionale dei classici del pensiero Italiano*, 8); Florenz 1947.

4 Vgl. KLAUS BERGDOLT: Zwischen „scientia“ und „studia humanitatis“. Die Versöhnung von Medi-