

Uwe Bathe: Der romanische Kapitelsaal in Brauweiler. Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme seiner Architektur, Bauskulptur und Malerei (*Mediaevalis. Beiträge zur Kunst des Mittelalters*, 3); Köln: SH-Verlag 2003; 488 pages including 325 plates (20 in colour); ISBN 3-89498-100-8; € 49,80

It must have been some ten years ago that a group of scholars came together in Brauweiler to discuss the dates of, and the relationship between, the architecture, capital sculpture and wall paintings in the chapter house of the Benedictine abbey of Brauweiler: Uwe Bathe, Clemens Kosch, Brigitte Kaelble, Dorothee Kemper, Heidrun Stein-Kecks, Klaus Gereon Beuckers, Stefanie Lieb, myself, and many others. There were several questions to address. For one, there was no consensus concerning the date of the chapterhouse and its decoration. Documentary evidence supplied two possible dates, the first being 1149, in which year abbot Amilius (1135–1148) was buried in the chapterhouse, and 1174, in which year Amilius' successor Geldolf (1149–1177) had the chapel of St Medard that is situated next to the chapterhouse rededicated to St Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine order. He was buried in the chapel and his epitaph mentioned that he was a ‚claustru renouator‘.

Could the sculpture in the chapterhouse be as early as the middle of the 12th century? Could the paintings along the walls and on the ceiling of the chapterhouse also date to the middle of the 12th century, or had they been added later? Could the entire chapterhouse be attributed to abbot Amilius, who was buried in the chapterhouse? But if so, how comes the sculpture in the chapel of St Benedict is so alike to that in the chapterhouse? Could the capital sculpture in chapterhouse and chapel really be dated more than twenty years apart? The discussion lasted all day and continued well into the evening. It is interesting to see how Uwe Bathe, in the published version of his dissertation, has addressed all these questions in great detail and how he has managed to find, by his meticulous close-reading of the building fabric, conclusive answers to many of the problems that were still hotly debated ten years ago.

Of all the buildings in the monastic complex the chapter house held the most central position. In monasteries the chapter house was used daily after Prime (and sometimes after Terce), and again for the evening Collation or reading before Complin. During the morning session the abbot and his monks came into the chapterhouse to read from the rule of St Benedict (in compliance with the Rule, chapter 66: „But we desire that this Rule be read quite often in the community, that none of the brethren may excuse himself of ignorance“), for readings of the Martyrology and the Necrology, to discuss the affairs and business of the community and to confess their sins and receive absolution. Those who were still found to be with fault after this procedure were punished. It was in the chapterhouse that new monks were professed and that a new abbot was chosen, that important visitors were received, and that abbots, benefactors and others were buried. The first chapterhouses appeared in the late tenth century and from that period on, it became one of the standard buildings of the monastic complex. In due course, its importance was reflected in the richness of its decoration.

With its extensive cycle of 24 wall paintings covering the vaults and four more scenes on the side walls the chapterhouse of the former Benedictine abbey of SS Nicolas and Medardus in Brauweiler is undoubtedly the best preserved example of a chapterhouse in the Rhineland. No expense was shunned. The walls were built of regular ashlar courses with alternate layers of differently-coloured stone: light Drachenfels trachyt and the dark andesit. In addition, it was given a rich sculptural decoration by the sculptors of the cloister arcades, who must have been very popular in their time as similar sculpture has been found in many of the major churches of Cologne. The wall paintings too have parallels in various other sites in the Rhineland, and beyond. All in all, the Brauweiler chapterhouse is not only the best preserved example of this type of building in the Rhineland, it is also a key monument for understanding the development of and dating Romanesque art of this region. Surprisingly, therefore, Uwe Bathe's book is the first monograph devoted to the Brauweiler chapterhouse.

The book is divided into four parts. The first three sections deal with the architecture, sculpture and wall paintings respectively. Much attention is given to the restorations and to finding out which parts of the building are original and which parts were added during later rebuildings and restorations. Part four provides a catalogue of the sculptures and wall paintings as well as various appendices.

Uwe Bathe's investigations have convincingly settled the controversy over the date of the Brauweiler chapterhouse and the adjoining chapel of St Benedict that was originally a separate building but which was joined to the chapterhouse in 1843.

The building of the east tract of the cloisters and the adjoining chapterhouse and chapel started circa 1140, at which time the westwork of the abbey church was nearing completion. The mortar used for the eastern cloister, the chapterhouse walls and vaults as well as that of the walls of the chapel of St Benedict was the same, while that of the chapel vaults differed. It seems that the chapel was built with a wooden ceiling and that this ceiling was replaced by stone vaults during the rule of abbot Geldolf.

The consistency of the mortar in the chapterhouse was not so very different from the 'arriccio' used to cover the vaults and from the subsequent layer of 'intonaco'. According to Bathe this implies that the paintings on the ceiling vaults must have been executed shortly after the completion of the chapterhouse itself. This early date for the paintings can be substantiated by comparing them to the paintings in the lower chapel of the double church in Schwarzhemdorf, which was consecrated in 1151. Having established that the chapter house and its wall paintings originate from the middle of the 12th century, it follows that the two capitals there must also date to this period.

Interestingly, the two free-standing capitals of the chapterhouse interior differ in style. The first shows four crouching figures on its angles, who cover their nakedness by leaves and whose heads are being pecked by birds. The second capital is by no means figurative but shows rather stylized palmettes with zigzag decoration. Bathe relates the first to a sculptor with an Italo-French background; while he relates the

second to the group of sculptors who were employed in Schwarzhof and the Wartburg and curiously enough, also to St Servatius in Maastricht. Although I do think there are strong parallels with some of the sculptures in the Wartburg palace, I see very little resemblance with anything in Maastricht. The carving here is on the whole crisper than, and not as smooth, as that of the Brauweiler capital.

The two freestanding capitals (nrs. 8 and 9) in the chapel of St Benedict are very similar to capital 1 in the chapter house, but a close analysis of these three capitals shows that the first must indeed be earlier in date than the latter two. Bathe even suggested that „dieselben Bildhauer, die Jahre zuvor noch ein wenig unbeholfen die Akanthushocker am Nordkapitell des Kapitelsaals schufen, einige Jahre später ihr eigenes Frühwerk korrigierten“. The form of the capitals is indeed more evolved and the style seems to have matured and gained in plasticity, strength and expression. Capital 8 has four figures on the corners with bent knees standing tiptoe. Their nudity is covered by a leaf. Their heads are placed under the corners of the abacus. With their arms they embrace the necks of the two dragons standing on either side, whose tails are knotted together at the centre of the capital face. Capital 9 has four figures standing behind tree. Unlike the figures on the previous capital they have their feet firmly on the ground; their heads take the place of the central block of the abacus. The figures are flanked by birds that face each other on the corner of the capital. Because of these differences I wondered whether, in this particular case, there could be some iconographic significance. Bathe, as Broscheit before him, interprets the figures of capital 9 as ‚Drachenbändiger‘, even though there is no sign of a struggle. One could in fact argue the very opposite: the figures are about to be carried away by the dragons. If this is so, they could be symbolic of those that succumb to sin. Their counterparts are the figures on capital 8 who stand firmly and who have doves for companions; obviously they stand for those who stand firm. Such an interpretation could also explain why the heads of the figures of capital 9 are pressed down by the abacus, while the heads of the figures of capital 8, that are placed centrally on the abacus, bear the weight with comparative ease.

The eastern tract of the Brauweiler cloisters has suffered many rebuildings and restorations that have, on the whole, done more damage than good. The wall paintings for instance have, with the best of intentions, been irreparably damaged and are therefore very difficult to read today. First of all, when in the 1820s it was decided to uncover the paintings, most of the ‚al secco‘ layers were removed, as they had bonded with the plaster that had been used to cover them. Uncovering the paintings was thus synonymous with partly destroying them. This of course has given a rather distorted view of the style of the Brauweiler paintings, for, from the moment of their uncovering, the finishing touches were lost. However, worse was still to come. In conformity with 19th-century restoration practices, the wall paintings were repainted by Christian Hohe after 1861. Missing parts were added, the colours were enhanced. By the 1950s this sort of restoration was no longer appreciated and in order to retrieve the original wall paintings, Hohe's work was removed during a restoration of 1957–1959 by Wolfhart Glaise. Glaise seems to have little idea of the build-up of medieval wall

paintings and thus Hohe's additions were only partly removed, and, what is worse, probably also some of the layers covering the original, 'arriccio'. The result is a curious mixture of the original under painting with remnants of the 19th century re-paintings, which has even distorted the original iconography. Moreover, the material used to fixate and protect the paintings did the very opposite. The paintings started to crumble and bulge and all brilliancy of colour was lost. Fortunately, when first discovered, the paintings were considered important enough to have them recorded and so Johann Anton Ramboux was asked to make copies of the paintings and record the state in which they had been found. Although Ramboux copies, made on a 1:1 scale have been lost, one of his collaborators, C. Ruben made small-scale water-colours of the Ramboux copies and these are today considered as more reliable than the present-day, 'originals'. It is therefore with good reason that they have all been reproduced in colour.

The iconography of the wall paintings has long been established, even though not all of the depicted scenes could be interpreted or were interpreted wrongly. On the walls were scenes from the Book of Daniël that told the story of King Nebuchadnezzar and of the monk Theophilus. On the vaults there are depictions of Old and New Testament characters as well as various martyrs, according to chapter 11, verses 33–39 of St Paul's letter to the Hebrews: „Who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle, put to flight the armies of foreigners. Women received their dead raised to life again. But others were racked, not accepting deliverance, that they might find a better resurrection. And others had trial of mockeries and stripes: moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: Of whom the world was not worthy: wandering in deserts, in mountains and in dens and in caves of the earth. And all these, being approved by the testimony of faith, received not the promise: God providing some better thing for us, that they should not be perfected without us.“ Such a cycle underlined the function of the chapterhouse, where a reading from the Martyrology took place every day. The example of the martyrs was intended as an exhortation for the monks to persevere, to be humble, obedient and to think only of God. The cycle opens and closes with a figure with a banderol, who according to Bathe, could well be St Paul, the writer of the epistle. In the east, over the site of the abbot's throne, is the figure of Christ the judge, with St John the Baptist and St Mary, as well as the wise and foolish virgins. Bathe has shown that the cycle set out as typological one, as Old Testament figures were set opposite New Testament figures or saints. These scenes were also provided with inscriptions. In later scenes the inscriptions disappear, as does the typological juxtaposition. One of the earliest scenes of this second phase includes the martyrdom of St Aemilianus of Trevi. It has been suggested that this obscure saint, who is not depicted anywhere else in the 12th century, was the patron saint of abbot Amilius and that this is the reason why he was depicted here. The change of plan is

thus likely to have occurred around 1148, when abbot Amilius was excommunicated by the pope, or in 1149 when he died and was buried in the chapterhouse. The excommunication and/or death of the abbot may well have lead to a temporary hold in construction. When in 1149 abbot Geldolf succeeded Amilius he changed the iconography of the cycle and included the unusual scene of St Aemilianus as a tribute to his predecessor.

To conclude, Uwe Bathe's investigations have provided us with two well-dated ensembles of the middle and third quarter of the twelfth century that were erected by a workshop that was employed throughout the Rhineland in the intervening period. The evidence is presented in a clear and systematic manner, with many illustrations, sections, drawings and plans; the ideas presented are well-argued, and each topic is placed in a wider context so that the book also has a much wider scope.

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Maximilian Benker: Ulm in Nürnberg. Simon Lainberger und die Bildschnitzer für Michael Wolgemut; Weimar: VDG Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften 2004; 248 S. und 209 Abb.; ISBN 3-89739-3654; € 63,-

Die Untersuchung ging aus einer Berliner Magisterarbeit von 1992 hervor, die vor allem den Skulpturen des „Peringsdörfer Altars“ in der Friedenskirche in Nürnberg (1486) galt. Der Altar ist ein Hauptwerk aus dem großen Atelier von Michael Wolgemut und gehört zu den großen Leistungen der Nürnberger Altarbaukunst vor Dürer. Die Analyse der Schreinarchitektur und der Figuren ist sorgfältig und breit angelegt und vermittelt ein anschauliches Bild einer charakteristischen und beachtlichen Werkstatt, die für den führenden Maler Nürnbergs tätig war.

Derselben Bildhauerwerkstatt ordnet der Verf. den berühmten Wolgemut-Hochaltar der Marienkirche in Zwickau zu, dessen bereits schon früher erkannten Zusammenhang mit der Ulmer Schule er ebenfalls betont. In einem größeren Kapitel wird der Hochaltar der Straubinger St. Jakobskirche aus der Wolgemut-Werkstatt in den gleichen stilistischen Zusammenhang gebracht. Dem fiktiven Oeuvre des neuen Bildhauerbetriebes werden noch einige kleinere Altäre in Nürnberg (Kaiser-Heinrich-Altar der oberen Burgkapelle, Rochusaltar in St. Lorenz, Rosenkranzaltar des GNM) und Schwabach (Kreuzaltar der Stadtkirche), sowie einige Einzelwerke wie die Beweiung in St. Jakob in Nürnberg und die Madonna der Schwanenritterkapelle in der Gumbertuskirche in Ansbach einverleibt.

Versucht der Verf. in der Argumentation seiner stilistischen Analysen eigenes Urteil noch möglichst mit bisherigen Meinungen und Beobachtungen in Einklang zu bringen, so folgt er in den Kapiteln über Handwerk und Künstler in Nürnberg und zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Nürnberger Skulptur im 15. Jahrhundert zusam-