"The year 1200"
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Biblioteket och arkivet har visserligen båda dokumentationsuppgifter, men deras materiella innehåll är helt olika. Metodiken i biblioteksarbetet och i arkivarbetet är också väsensskilda. Den organisatoriska föreningen av biblioteket och arkivet är därför ur arbetssynpunkt icke motiverad och har icke heller visat sig lämplig.

När det således föreslås att arkivet får en chef (förste arkivarie) så föreslås också att det organisatoriskt skiljs från biblioteket och görs till en särskild enhet. En annan organisatorisk brist är att ingen forskarexpedition finns organiserad. En sådan skulle biträda forskarna och ha tillsyn över dem, handha in- och utlån, beställa fotokopior och även så vitt möjligt besvara skriftliga förfråningar. För denna expedition föreslås en amanuenstjänst.

För avarbetandet av de stora balanserna och för avklarandet av de väntade stora leveranserna föreslås en ökning av biträdestjänsterna med en arkivassistent. Dessutom bör arkivarbetaren på »aktarkivet« överflyttas till en tjänst som arkivassistent.

ATA:s behov av personalförstärkningar har i många sammanhang framhållits. Antikvitetsutredningen konstaterade att »för arkivets del är situationen ytterst otillfredsställande« och flera remissinstanser (vitterhetsakademien, vetenskapsakademien och Mus 65) instämde i detta och påyrkade personalförstärkningar långt utöver vad antikvitetsutredningen föreslagit.

Vetenskapsakademien skrev i detta sammanhang:

»Detta bibliotek och arkiv skall icke blott ge service åt tjänstearbetet inom det egna verket; institutionen har även nationell och internationell betydelse för förhistorisk och medeltidshistorisk forskning och för tillhörande undervisning och folkbildning. Särskilt de arkivaliska samlingarna (antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet) äro av mycket stor betydelse. Bleve avdelningen utrustad med rimlig arbetskraft, skulle den utöra ett enastående vetenskapligt och pedagogiskt instrument. Genom kontinuerlig underbemannning och bristande resurser i övrigt löpa samlingarna nu risk att snabbt minska i användbarhet och slutligen delvis förfaras. — Enligt vetenskapsakademiens mening är det ett riksintresse, att biblioteket och arkivet får en helt annan personalstandard än den av (antikvitets)utredningen nu föreslagna.«

Robert Svedlund

“The year 1200”

This is the name of the second exhibition celebrating the centennial jubilee of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, running February 12 to May 10, 1970. The title recalls one of the most brilliant manifestations in the series of exhibitions promoted by the Council of Europe in recent years, “European Art about 1400”, in Vienna in 1961. It might be argued that the enterprise of a single institution like the Metropolitan Museum should not be compared with grand
undertakings on an international basis like the exhibitions of the Council of Europe, but indeed the scope and ambition of “The Year 1200” make it natural to regard it as an art-historical event on the same high level. Evidently no cost and no effort had been spared in order to secure the full success of this show both from an aesthetic and a scientific point of view. It must be sincerely hoped that the exhibition will find full support from the public of the Metropolitan Museum, but at the same time it should be admitted that neither the theme of the exhibition nor the way in which it was exposed could truly be considered easily accessible to the general public.

The turn of centuries have an ominous effect of hypnotizing our minds, and we should beware of these factitious limits of time. The artistic situation in Europe towards the end of the 14th century and in the early years of the 15th has long since been analysed and recognised as fairly unambiguous—the international style is the accepted name for the current style pervading Europe in this period. The catalogue of the Vienna exhibition could be called a summing up, and above all it gave us the historical background of the epoch in a number of excellent articles by specialists covering the whole field of human culture.

The catalogue of “The Year 1200” has a very short general introduction, but a second volume has been promised, “The Year 1200: A background survey”, and we will look forward to this complementary text, because the theme of the exhibition, the way it was conceived and the manner of its execution, give rise to many questions and doubts. It seems difficult to isolate a period around the year 1200—here limited to c. 1180–c. 1220—from the decades or even generations before and after. The dynamic evolution of art in Western Europe in the 13th century does not know of any standstill, break or vital change, which would allow us to single out the years around 1200 as a turning point of special significance, and the flow of events cannot be said to reach a final act, a kind of dénouement, till the middle of the 15th century, when the Gothic art of Paris becomes a uniform artistic language, accepted by all countries of Europe. — In the late years of the 12th century the artistic situation is extremely complex, not only in Europe as a whole, but especially in those creative centres in the West, in Northern France, in England, and the Southern Netherlands, where the development had a greater speed and purport than anywhere else. There is nothing uniform about this development, and there is still a legion of unsolved problems awaiting the medieval scholar. The choice of theme for the Metropolitan Museum exhibition could thus be said to give proof of most adventurous courage.

Every retrospective exhibition of this ambitious kind has to face the problem of how to secure the loans of the objects most apt to illustrate its theme, and the failures in this respect should be treated with discretion. But it must be an absolute condition, that the objects acquired—with great cost, with great risk to the objects themselves during transport, and in most cases not without a sacrifice on the part of the owner—should be exhibited in a proper way, with full understanding of their unique qualities, they should be allowed to tell their tale. Certainly, in the case of technical display the New York exhibition was a great hit, and there was not a single object which could not be studied at leisure, usually from more than one side and in a very full—electric—light. One may
have felt some reluctance at the way in which these sacred vessels and ornaments were dangling and tilting like precious orchids or modern jewellery in their cases of plexiglass swinging freely in the room at the bottom of stylised, white chimneys coming down from the ceiling, but it was effective. There is a graver objection to be raised against the display, and this concerns the build up, the composition of the show as a whole, doing justice to the single objects in showing them in their proper context.

Admitted that the period is an extremely complicated one, it would certainly have been justified to give the public in general—and also the specialists in the field—an introduction to the general idea of the layout of the exhibition. There was no chronological and no territorial distribution of the material, and it could be easily understood, if a rigorous division on these lines was out of question; but there was not even a constructive thought in the handling of the material from a stylistic point of view, as far as could be discerned, and this was fatal for the general effect of the show. It lacked the inherent drama called for in the presentation of one of the most animated periods in the history of European art—the picture of this period thus seemed blurred, disordered, and vague.

At the entrance of the exhibition there was a very skilful copy of murals at Kurbinovo in Yugoslavia, and in spite of the provincial character of these paintings, they filled a place, stressing the great importance of Byzantine art in Europe both before and after the sack of Constantinople in 1204. — In the first room the ivory cross from Bury St. Edmunds from c. 1180 held the place of honour, and it seems quite understandable that the Metropolitan Museum wanted to show off this recent and glorious acquisition in connection with her centennial jubilee. In honour of this occasion it was furthermore complemented with a Christ figure from the Museum of Decorative Arts in Oslo, following the suggestion of Martin Blindheim in a recent article, and really: it seemed to fit. But how could it be explained, that next to this early crucifix some of the latest and most exquisite panels of stained glass of the exhibition were shown, the scene of Christ in the house of Simon from Bourges Cathedral datable to c. 1215? Did the management of the exhibition consider, that all the pieces within the chosen period c. 1180—c. 1220 could be freely mixed, because they all expressed the genius of one and the same age? Passing through the exhibition the idea of such a misconception could only be reinforced, and it found its ultimate confirmation at the exit. How else could one explain the disgraceful performance in this last room, where Moses and a beautiful torso from York danced a pirouette with St. Germain l'Auxerrois from Paris?

The different currents of style and the components of these style currents should have been made clear from the outset of the exhibition, and followed or confronted with each other in an intelligible way all through the material. — Next to the entrance was a treasury room, which inter alia contained goldsmith’s work from the Mosan region but hardly in a selection sufficiently outstanding to emphasize the great importance of Mosan art in the general development at the outset of these eventful years. The rear part of the room was entirely devoted to Limoges work, and the pieces assembled here formed one of the most harmonious and interesting groups of the exhibition. However, the
Limoges workshops were not creative in the same sense as the early Mosan school, their output is generally somewhat latish in style, and the juxtaposition of these two groups did not in any way help to clarify the situation in the focal point of development.

The true portal figure of the exhibition, Nicholas of Verdun was only presented in the next room, in a truly magnificent way, through three enamelled plaques from the Klosterneuburg altar and a reconstruction of the ambo of 1181 in colour transparencies on a reduced scale, and also through his last known work, the shrine of the Virgin from Tournai of 1205. Considering the short space of time encompassed by the exhibition, it did not seem quite clear, why these two works by one of the most creative artists of the period and separated by almost 25 years of evolution had to be put side by side. In the Klosterneuburg plaques the impact of Byzantine art of the comnenian classicism seems to be the overwhelming experience of the artist, and it would have been of the greatest interest to see the same Byzantine impetus in other media and other countries in contemporary art. The leaf of the Winchester Bible could have been shown in the same room, and also the miniature mosaic of Sicilian origin so aptly exposed beside it. In general one of the great assets of the exhibition was the way in which the European pieces were delicately interspersed with Byzantine manuscripts and objets d'art in order to make the omnipresent Byzantine influence felt at every stage of the development. The frescoes of Sigena and the choir screen from Santiago would have fitted in the same room, and the bronze figures of Moses and a prophet from the Ashmolean Museum, attributed to the workshop of Nicholas of Verdun, would not have put the powerful York figures to shame had they been brought into the same context.

An assembly of this kind would have given "The Year 1200" a most powerful and significant opening — a broad basis, chronologically defined and an idea of the prerequisites of the future development, had some telling pieces of Mosan goldsmith's work and the pithy heads of Mantes been included.

The next stage in the formation of the Western European figure style, the first wave of a Gothic "style antiquisant" could then be marked by the shrine of Tournai with its free and gently flowing draperies, its heads recalling classic portraiture and no longer simply explained by the influence of Byzantine pictorial art. And the immediate influence of Greek and Roman art in this early phase of Gothic art, for so long treated with an undue reticence and often even denied, could have been commented upon in a most persuasive way: the beautiful head from the Palais Synodal in Sens was there, and equally telling heads from the Musée Rodin in Paris, from the Musée Archéologique in Dijon, from the Musée Municipal in Semur-en-Auxois, and from the Art Museum in Seattle. Unfortunately the exhibition of these heads and others in a winding free standing row in the middle of a long gallery towards the end of the exhibition in no way did them justice. After all—they are no portrait heads from a Roman family gallery, they are just the fragments of decapitated figures integrated in a Gothic architectural setting, and they demand a corresponding propriety of presentation. The king's head placed in the middle of the row, belonging to the Metropolitan Museum (cat. no. 22), was certainly dated a decade or two too early—it is difficult
to see a connection either with the Master of the Kings’ Heads in Chartres or the Coronation of the Virgin portal of Notre Dame in Paris. If the head really comes from Notre Dame, it could more rightly be seen in connection with the central portal of the west façade.

At this point of the exhibition an account of the width and breadth of the classicizing movement c. 1200 and above all in the early years of the 13th century—why put a deadline at c. 1220, when some of its most refined creations fall after this year?—might have been expected, a definition of the different interpretations of the classical heritage, the free and animated style in the early ensembles in Sens and in the west façade of Notre Dame in Paris, the development of a more academic style at Chartres, the peculiar manners of style called “Muldensitl” and “Rillenstil” and their spread, the strongly individual trend at Reims with an almost archaeological purport, and so on. This wide range of individual conceptions of the classical heritage which bursts forth in Europe, and not only in the west, in the early years of the 13th century, with the strength, the freshness and variety of spring blossoming, could only be traced in a very fragmentary way in the exhibition, and not often in a manner which made clear the importance and the broad context of the single items exposed.

It would have been stimulating to see the shrine of the Virgin from Tournai in the same room as the colour transparencies of the Ingeborg Psalter, evidently a work of the same first decade of the 13th century (cp. R. Hausherr, Zeitschr. f. Kunstgeschichte 32. Band, 1969, Heft 1), and a third item of great interest in this connection would have been the effigy of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine from the Abbey of Fontevrault, relegated to a room further on, built up with stained glass in the manner of a church interior but actually more reminiscent of a luxury cabin, and this illustrious lady had been put transversely to the axis of the room—a medieval scholar used to the churches of Europe, and aware of the technical perfection of the New World, instinctively looked for the button to press to bring her back to order. The pictorial qualities of the subtle drapery carving of this statue, dated 1204–1210, makes a close comparison with the most advanced style of the miniatures of the Ingeborg Psalter extremely rewarding.

In the same room as the reproductions of the Ingeborg Psalter the magnificent torso from the Musée Carnavalet in Paris, thought to have come from the west façade of Notre Dame, was exhibited beside the noble apostle head in the Art Institute of Chicago, recently thought to belong to the same statue (E. S. Greenhill, The Art Bulletin, XLIX, 1967). If the illustrations of the article in The Art Bulletin inspired some doubts as to this association, the exhibition made it quite clear, that the two pieces could not belong together.

The headless figures from the Cathédral of Laon in the same room, the kneeling personage and an angel from the west façade, are reckoned among the highlights of the exhibition, and it would have been bliss to see the head from the Palais Synodal at Sens in the same distinguished company as these pieces from Laon and Paris. In the centre of this room the Virgin and Child from the Musée Diocésain in Liège gave a delicate touch of rustic wood-carving, monumental and statuesque in a way reflecting Cathedral art of Northern France, even more than the advanced goldsmithery of her own Mosan region. Here the exhibition
urgently called for the famous Vierge d’Orée of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and it was one of the great deceptions of “The Year 1200”, that she was not re­presented.

The Blumenthal Madonna of the Metropolitan Museum did not fit in here, probably owing to her later date and style. She could more aptly have been shown beside the so-called Queen of Sheba from Strasbourg. It was a gross mis­understanding to put the splendid female figure from Winchester Cathedral be­side the Strasbourg queen, as was arranged in a room further on. This juxta­position was probably supposed to illustrate the often expounded theory, that they both depend on inspiration from figures in the North Transept of Chartres Cathédral. This theory may be true for the Strasbourg statue, but it is in no way an obvious fact as regards the Winchester carving. The collocation of the two figures made a serious clash, and both were marred in their beauty. The exquisite statue from Winchester might well have shared a room with the sculptures from Laon, Paris and Sens, not because of her date, because she is evidently later, but because of her spirited classicism, her individual approach to the classical heri­tage.

The collection of stained glass contained many fine pieces of French and Eng­lish origin, distributed in a rather haphazard way among themselves. For technical reasons most of the stained glass was assembled in one room, and thus only in a few instances had it been possible to bring the glass in harmony with exhibits in other media from a stylistic point of view. The overpowering effect of the Holy Emperor from Strasbourg, put in a central position in the stained glass room, seemed a little out of place, because the ornamental and hieratic splendour of this window is drenched with Romanesque tradition — and the bombastic emperor was not very suitable company for the gracious Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine as seen from a stylistic point of view.

Germany and Austria had their share in the exhibition, mainly consisting of manuscripts and goldsmith’s work from American and European collections. These loans formed a homogeneous unit illustrating the predominance of Byzant­ine influence, which was to remain the great source for pictorial art in Central Europe for the major part of the 13th century.

The Mediterranean countries were sparsely represented, and the lack of relev­ant Italian material was a special cause for regret. The Scandinavian countries were hardly present — the ivory group of the Holy Magi from the National Museum in Copenhagen, which had been assigned a too modest place in the exhibition and a too late date in the catalogue, 1240–50, and the figureclasp of silver gilt from the Dune treasure in the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm.

It was a most interesting experience to see the Dune clasp and the bronze clasp of the Cloisters Collection side by side. They are probably the only two figurative clasps of their kind and date to have been preserved, and they have long since been compared to each other. But they are only related as far as species goes being clasps with plastic figure-work en miniature. They differ from each other both in the general structure of the clasp, in figure style and in decorative ornaments. The Cloisters clasp has been attributed to the workshop of
Nicholas of Verdun c. 1210, but this attribution seems lightly founded. If this clasp had been exhibited beside the magnificent so-called "Coupe de Charlemagne" from the abbey of St. Maurice in Switzerland, which by the way should not be called a chalice, it would have been fairly obvious that this cup and the clasp probably have a common origin. The cup has been dated c. 1210–1220 and claimed as English work by the late O. Homburger. Both its figure style and ornamental detail is in accordance with the Cloisters clasp.

The catalogue of the exhibition calls the Dune clasp "Mosan or English, 1210–1220" following the ascription made by Hanns Swarzenski a few years ago. In fact there is so little goldsmith's work preserved from this date and region, and the artistic connections between England and the Lower Rhine and Mosan districts were so intense in the early years of the 13th century, that it would be mere guess-work were we to try to pin down in a more definite way the origin of a piece like the Dune clasp in this milieu. We do not know how widespread was the type of clasps with plastic figure-work in this age, but it may be assumed that it was an international phenomenon on a certain social level, where the artistic crafts were available to produce such delicate articles. The gently flowing drapery style of the Dune clasp has the monotonous parallelism characteristic of the Germanic "Rillenstil", the big berries and the slightly archaic pose of the figures with the forward thrust of the heads could be a further help in siting the workshop.

The most important contribution till now to the art-historical precision of the date and origin of the Dune clasp was made by the late baron Carl R. af Ugglas in two articles in Fornvännen 1937 (cp. the catalogue L'Europe Gothique XIIe XIVe siècles, Paris 1968, Nr. 399, where there is also a more accurate description of the clasp than in the present Metropolitan Museum Catalogue). Baron af Ugglas most emphatically stressed the close connection between the goldsmith's work and the contemporary art of Gotland in wood- and stonesculpting, and most rightly so. It is an open question to what extent the flourishing art of this island in the first part of the 13th century can be considered native or the work of immigrant masters or even — in small, transportable objects — an imported art. But whether the one or the other alternative is chosen, the homogeneity of the art of the island is unmistakeable, and it is saturated with West German influence through and through, a fact supported by the historical evidence of Gotland's and especially Visby's continental connections, Visby being for a great part populated by immigrant families from Western Germany. The miracle-working Virgin from St. Mary's, the church of the Germans in Visby, is closely associated in style with the Dune clasp.

The motif represented on the clasp seems to be something more than just a chivalrous scene. The rectangular plaque shows a rider advancing towards the left and greeted by a stately woman, stretching out her left hand — in handshaking? — on the rear side of the horse's head, perhaps intended to hold out an object, which the rider receives with his right hand. Anyone acquainted with Gotlandic art immediately recalls the scene repeated over and over again on the pre-Christian stele on the island, where the deceased hero riding to Valhalla is received by an impressive lady holding out to him a horn. In this case however
the rider is followed by a man on foot, perhaps a page or a falconer, and this would grant that the scene is taking place in this world, and perhaps indeed the rider is a successful chasseur offering a tribute to his lady. — It is natural to regard the scene on the buckle itself as a consecutive one, and if so the rider seems to be kneeling on his left knee to the right, with both hands clasping an object on his right knee (maybe only part of this object has been preserved) which he is presenting or keeping in his hands making an oath to a seated personage on the left. The hairstyle and posture and dress of this last figure suggest that it is a man, resting his right hand on his knee and pulling his mantle strap on the breast with his left hand. A seated angel accompanies this scene on each side, and even if this does not necessarily mean that the event takes place in heaven, the subject-matter must be a very exalted one. Only an accurate observation of the scenes represented and perhaps a lucky find in the future could help us to solve the riddle of the goldsmith’s intentions behind his fascinating work.

The Dune treasure is extremely rich, and there are some more objects which would have been of the greatest interest to the exhibition, above all the eight-lobed drinking-bowl with a plastic group of animals in the interior and a very rich outside decoration in engraving and niello, which is so intimately related to the decorative scheme of a bowl in the Cloisters collection, that it seems possible to ascribe them to one and the same workshop. They were pictured together by Hanns Swarzenski, Monuments of Romanesque Art, Pl. 198, as English work c. 1175, and it would be most instructive to see them side by side. But of course the Dune bowl is much too brittle to be exhibited in the same daring way as the Cloisters bowl, perched on a plastic plate. — On the whole a closer collaboration with the Scandinavian countries at the outset of the exhibition work would certainly have proved rewarding — to dismiss them as “Randgebiete” is not quite fair considering the well-knit unity of cultural and religious endeavours in medieval Europe.

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