

# Summary

## *Iconography and performance – a mismatched or complementary couple?*

*By Søren Kaspersen*

The article discusses how iconography and performance can support each other as analytical tools and also be prerequisites of each other, related to different subject matters as historia, the Romanesque fauna and late Gothic ornament as dense foliage as well as to the other articles of the publication. Panofsky's method is compared with Aby Warburg's different and more performative approach, and a plaidoyer is made for a historical anthropology or a psyche history as a goal for the investigations, guided or framed by Norbert Elias' idea of a close connection between sociogenesis and psychogenesis. The main conclusion is that iconography/iconology is very valuable for the uncovering of narrative and symbolic meaning in the pictorial arts while the performative analysis expose the function of these meanings for the educational and civilizing processes in formation of the mental architecture or human psyche.

## *In the Hope of Eternal Life. The Baptismal Font as Performative Object*

*By Lars Berggren*

Seeing and perceiving are complicated processes that we only during the last decades are beginning to understand. All images seem to be performative in the sense that they do something with and to us whether we like it, or are at all aware of it, or not. Therefore, it's necessary to consider a number of religious objects and practices in a wider functional context. In this paper, it is argued that a Medieval baptismal font, due to the special status of Baptism, its iconography and positioning in the church, not only functioned in performative dialogue with the ritual of baptism, the various stages of Mass, and the building itself, but also served a number of important secular purposes: legal, social and political.

## *“To Us Eden was Reopened”. The cherub motif in Lutheran church art reconsidered*

*By Carsten Bach-Nielsen*

The fall of man (Gen 3) is a motif hardly ever met in Danish medieval sculpture. After the Reformation however it occurs frequently on pulpits and more sig-

nificant on altarpieces. This probably is caused by Martin Luther's and the Lutheran reformers' concept of redemption and grace – and the new stress on confession as a prerequisite for joining in the communion. A number of post-reformation altar decorations display the fall with Adam's and Eve's picking of and consumption of the forbidden fruit – together with the Christian promise of return due to Christ's victory over devil and death. Return to what, one might ask. – To Eden, to Heaven, to the inner of Solomon's temple, to grace? In the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the return to and through the gates of Heaven is staged by means of railings separating the choir from the nave of the churches. In the wooden sculpture of Eastern Jutland the railings are often turned into dramatic scenes of exclusion and inclusion by means of life size cherubs guarding the gates with their flaming swords. The railings may have been furnished with written and painted scores for an imagined conversation between the guarding angelic figures and the living users of the church. Here the confession of sin is expressed together with the formulation of Christ's promises. The cherubs are supposed to listen and answer, but they can only communicate to us by means of replies painted on the doors or railings; so there is a zone of discussion concerning grace and the gifts of grace established at the important liminal zone between the two parts of the church. This zone offers a scene for the reenactment of the narrative, the expulsion of Eden – and for the proclamation of the promise of reintroduction to the garden.

These arrangements obviously have to do with the rituals and ceremonies of confession, not least the ones related to the public confession. This rite since the 17<sup>th</sup> century was staged at the doors between the nave and the choir; here the repentant sinner was

supposed to kneel before he would be reintegrated into the congregation and was again accepted as partaker in the Holy Communion. The kneeling figures of Adam and Eve that are seen on a number of such railings may mirror the penitent Christians in the ritual of confession.

The cherubs may also be seen in the light of classical *ekfrasis*, descriptions of buildings used to recreate or copy buildings of the past. The Book of Kings contains vast descriptions of the inner and most holy of the Temple of Jerusalem. Here cherubs were part of an all-covering decoration. Constructing new rooms for the church service in the era of Lutheran orthodoxy required knowledge of the most significant building in Christian narrative, The Jerusalem Temple. The cherubs and the railings have a twofold meaning as staging a way back to innocence or grace – and as a restaging of the Jerusalem Temple with its concentrated holiness and presence of divine power.

The staged discussions between man and angel bears a resemblance to a well-known and quite popular motif in the post-reformation church, namely the *litigatio sororum*, Adam and Eve before the court of Trinity. Here the scene is set in court by a cherub who offers the fallen couple four skilled with defenders. It all has to do with the arguments permitting the sinners to make their way back to full grace. The scene is painted as a mural in the church of Tullebølle on the isle of Langeland.

Danish Grundtvigian and liberal artist Joakim Skovgaard in 1890 painted an altarpiece for the tiny church of Mandø in the North Sea. He chose his point of departure in the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus. Here Christ leads the thief, who was convicted and conversed in the last minutes of his life, into the Garden of Eden. The painting depicts a

huge wall guarded by a Florentine renaissance angel – and the thief received by angels on the fair lawns of Paradise. The entrance to Paradise is not a problem to any Christian no matter how late he may have come to faith. Somewhat different is the ideology behind the decorative programs of the churches of the Copenhagen Church Building Society. Sculptor Thomas Barentsen in 1904 chose to show Adam and the Cherub on the baptismal front facing the congregation in the nave while he depicted the baptism of Christ on the side fronting the altar of the church. So he managed to make a new distinction or demarcation line between the “high” church of true believers – and the “low” nave of more ordinary Christians.

### *A preaching scene in stone*

*Lisbet Bolander*

A very rare motif in the Western European stone sculpture can be seen at two baptismal fonts, attributed to the anonymous master Calcarius from Gotland, Sweden. The workshop is dated to the second quarter of 1200-century. Respectively on the bottom of the bowl (Skelby, Denmark) and on the shaft (Fole, Gotland) is played out a bizarre scene with a wolf dressed like a monk who is preaching for a ram.

The *Bible* warns against false prophets (“wolf in sheep’s clothing”) (Matthew 7.15), Ysengrimus, a medieval epos presents the concept of wolf-monk as the image of a hypocritical and greedy monk, and also the Bestiaries are telling about unsympathetic character traits such as greed and extortion. Once wolves are dressed into cowls and are preaching for a ram for example, it is an obvious idea that Matthew 7.15

has played a crucial role in the development of the imagery. But also different kinds of more popular literature can be the source. The wolf is both the false prophet from the Bible as well as the hypocrite and deceiver in literature and the popular traditions. But fortunately the wolf will always be cheated at the end, and the ram, the sacrificial animal in the biblical sense, is the victorious.

The article discusses whether the scene has a performative character, is a didactic allegory or symbolizes and visualizes the rite of baptism. Possible interpretations are made out from that conviction that no work of art in the medieval church is created without containing a certain form of communication to the congregation. Images can be highly variables in expressions and not always directly connected to the allegorical substance of the Bible, but generally speaking they have a relation to the power of the Almighty and to the way of salvation through God. Within this overriding theme, you can easily imagine that each image at the same time has contained several meanings and messages to the contemporaries.

A modern observer will perceive the scene as a kind of performance, because also people of today are reacting with suspiciousness, when they see a disguised wolf.

*Staging a Queen. Representations of the Coronation of Isabeau of Bavaria in the Grandes Chroniques de France, c.1400-1500*

By Ragnhild M. Bø

In the pageant that took place when Isabeau of Bavaria was crowned as Queen of France in August 1389, she was not only staged as a spectator to various *tableaux* acted out in front of her, but also put on display herself as e.g. the Virgin and St Anne. The pageant is minutely described by her contemporary Jean Froissart in book IV of his four volumes entitled *Grandes Chroniques de France*. This pageant is the only one included in a text which is mostly known for its descriptions of battles fought between the English and the French and their various allies during the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), as well as commenting upon aristocratic and chivalric behaviour. In this article, I take performance as the act of staging a person, and I discuss which of the many sensorial images created by Froissart in his account of Queen Isabeau's pageant were later deployed as iconographical motifs in illuminated copies of his text throughout the fifteenth century, also in copies made well after the Queen's death.

*To be alone with hermits*

By Martin Wangsgaard Jørgensen

The subject of this article is partly how images, in this case decorations of spaces, can be considered to be performative, and partly some views about what it is, these pictures can be said to actually do in the viewer. The question is, therefore, what it means for decora-

tion of a space as a whole to include a performative layer in the interpretation. To answer this, we start at Chateau Gaillard in Vannes, Brittany, and then continue to some Danish church interiors, and then return to the French castle again. A chronological and geographic hop that may appear drastic, but which should emphasize the principle of the considerations introduced here. Within a Christian art tradition, you can point to several types or categories of pictures that are somehow relevant to the thoughts here. However, the kind of pictures, which are to be covered in particular, are the large-scale decorations with saints such as those we for instance find I chapels.

The argument is that the performativity of these decorations lie in the context and not in the image itself. It is the context that creates the framework for the image's intervention and influence on the beholder. Or put it another way, it is the viewer's expectation or understanding of the image that creates the interaction and performative situation. The performative qualities of the image are thus quite specific and locked to specific situations. Changing the conditions or situations, changes the performative qualities. Of course, the iconography has great importance in this because it is the iconography that dictates what can be communicated, but the performative itself is not in the picture, it lies in the experience frame set for the viewer. The performativity of the decorations that have been presented here, which are to be seen as case studies or examples of the way in which you can generally understand the decorations, lies in the whole. That is, instead of turning the look specifically towards a single motif or understanding the decoration as composed of many small images, it is advisable to consider the broader lines and to look at how

images or image programs complement the viewer's perception and spur it as a catalyst. It is through the study of such situations that we can actually approach an interpretation of how the images without obvious mechanical properties can be regarded as performing and not least how this performative quality can be perceived as a concrete tool for the sender of the images in his or her attempt to affect the viewer and thereby create identification, acknowledgment and perhaps compliance.

### *Four unidentified men's legs at Skara – a fatal performance*

*By Ingalill Pegelow*

Skara Cathedral owns, among other things, four reliefs from the Romanesque period, recovered when digging in the ground outside its north portal in 1891. There seems to be no iconographic connection between the four, which are now placed inside the cathedral. One of them is fragmentary and shows only four male legs turned the same way (fig. 1). The two in front seem to "stand on tiptoe, or jump, or hang loose" as Jan Svanberg writes in his latest book, *Medieval Stone sculpture in Västergötland*. He is of the opinion that it is impossible to give a close identification of the picture – here an attempt at such an identification will nevertheless be made.

In Samuel's second book (ch 13-18) it is related how King David's son Absalom, in addition to having killed Amnon, another of David's sons, conspired against his father and tried to cast him out from power. He then had to flee and was pursued by David's general Joab. When Absalom came to a terebinth his

hair stuck in it and he was left hanging while his mule trotted away. Joab had followed Absalom's track and now killed him with three spears. This is probably the episode that is shown in the Skara relief even if only the legs of the two involved are visible. But that the foremost two legs are hanging is clearly seen.

There are similar representations in many European manuscripts (fig. 4-8) but also on a capital in the basilica at Vézelay, France (fig. 3) and in a mural painting from 1595 in the chapel of Aspnäs Manor in Uppland (fig. 8).

### *Across the border. Aspects of liminality in the mural paintings of two Scanian churches*

*By Cecilia Hildeman Sjölin*

The present text is concerned with the crossing of borders of sacred space, through doorways in an actual sense and through fictional/representational space in the vaults, as acts of seeing, which is then regarded in the context of medieval optics, which argue that sight includes touch and communication in a physical sense. The key concepts are: action, border crossing and transformation. Through the crossing of borders in an action relating to images, a transformation of the individual is intended. The examples chosen are the late medieval mural decorations of Östra Herrestad and Brunnby. The images unite with the architectural space and the worshippers and their (ritual) actions in creating and defining consecrated, sacred space.

Through the image of the Expulsion from Paradise immediately above the doorway in the western vault of the nave of Östra Herrestad church, the act

of leaving this particular architectural space is given a particular meaning; leaving the sacred space, the medieval individual participates in the staging of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden into the living conditions of mortals, according to the medieval conception of the history of salvation.

The crossing of borders of sacred space is further compared to that in Brunnby, where a series of image representations, intended for worship in reciprocity, including the Man of Sorrows, is painted in the vaults of the nave. The images create presence which opens space to a different world, and thus, through the painted images, the vaults become borders across which a different space is visible, and into which the human eye can penetrate, according to medieval optics, to actually touch and actually communicate physically with Christ and the heavenly sphere, which creates a physical change in the spectator/worshipper.

*Funerary effigies as invitations for prayers of indulgence*

*By Morten Stige*

In the early middleages most Christian funerary monuments were depicting crosses or vegetative scrolls to symbolise the Christian identity of the deceased. Corresponding with the growing importance of the concept of purgatory during the thirteenth century the effigy and the full figure grave slab became widespread in the funerary art. There came a new need to be remembered as an individual to become the object of prayers of indulgence.

During the coming centuries there was a develop-

ment of funerary monuments which became increasingly rhetorically effective in getting attention and entice the beholder to act. The performative approach is rewarding as it seems to correspond to the intentions of the patrons behind the grave monuments. Through the depictions of the deceased in the act of prayer and added texts which either ask directly for the prayer of the beholder, reminds him of a prayer as a good act or even in some cases gives a number of days in indulgence to whom prays for the diseased, the grave monument strongly encourages the act of praying.

Another group of grave slabs can be understood as performative in them selves as they depict the deceased in the act of praying to one or more of his patron saints, with a textband praying that the saint as a mediator in turn will pray for his soul. Thus an eternal prayer is constructed, similar to the Buddhist prayer wheel.

*The choir screen wall of Nidaros Cathedral. An architectural staging of the cult of st. Olav?*

*By Øystein Ekroll*

The site of the grave of St Olav (d.1030) was also the site of the high altar of Nidaros (Trondheim) Cathedral, and the shrine of the royal saint was placed above the grave and behind the high altar. The grave site became the fixed point in the cathedral's history, and its architectural development was focused around this point. As the cathedral was gradually developed and extended, the line of the choir screen wall marking the boundary between the sacred area and the rest of the cathedral stayed immobile through the

centuries. Three generations of the choir screen wall are known, ranging from the simple, wide opening of the late eleventh century via the elevated screen of c.1200 to the present magnificent screen that was constructed after the devastating fire of 1328 and probably completed before the Black Death struck Norway in 1349/50.

The present screen contains several passages, niches and galleries that must have served liturgical purposes, most probably in connection with the Feast of St Olav in late July. In addition to the multitude of small sculptures there were also at least half a dozen of life-sized statues, all of which were destroyed by later fires. This paper suggests that the niches and galleries were used by singers during the large ceremonies, so that the wall became filled with 'living statues'.