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BOOK REVIEW: Glyn Davies and Eleanor Townsend, eds., A Reservoir of Ideas: Essays in Honour of Paul Williamson (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2017)

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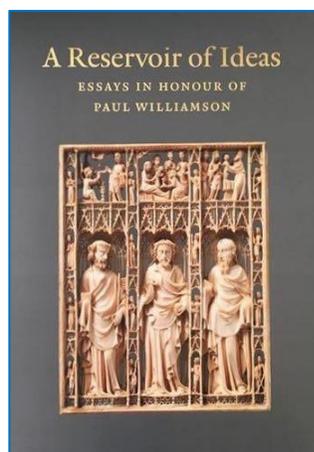
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Book Review: Glyn Davies and Eleanor Townsend, eds., *A Reservoir of Ideas: Essays in Honour of Paul Williamson* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2017), 292 pages, 200 color and 40 b&w illustrations, \$65 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-1911300168.

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A Reservoir of Ideas: Essays in Honour of Paul Williamson is at once an ode to the work of Williamson, former Keeper of Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics, & Glass at the Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as an engaging compilation of current research within the field of medieval visual culture. The volume consists of twenty-one short essays on a wide variety of topics. The diverse collection of essays is written by friends and colleagues of Williamson, who are also experts within their fields. Considering his scholarly expertise and involvement in the substantial catalogue *Medieval Ivory Carvings 1200-1550* (2014), the majority of essays deal with issues pertaining to various forms of medieval sculpture, especially ivories.

A Reservoir of Ideas' overarching theme is the cross- and multi-media nature of current medieval art research. Other themes include issues of imagery and iconography, as well as the reuse and reconfiguration of objects of visual culture throughout the course of the Middle Ages. For example, Sarah Guérin's article, "Synergy Across Media: Gothic Sculptors in Wood and Ivory," discusses carvings not only in ivory, but also in wood and bone. Meanwhile, "Relics, Quotations, *Spolia*: Revisiting Art in Egbert's Trier" by Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen focuses on the influence of manuscript illumination and the

repurposing of treasury objects on two reliquaries commissioned by Egbert, Archbishop of Trier.



Figure 1 Gawain on the Bed of Marvels, panel from a casket, France, c. 1300-20. Elephant ivory. Photo: Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Among the eleven articles to focus on medieval ivory sculpture, key issues in contemporary ivory studies are raised. This includes the radiocarbon dating of ivory, and the hypothetical involvement of multiple craftsmen to produce a multi-sided, three-dimensional object, such as the composite caskets discussed in “The Return of Gawain: Thoughts on Composite Caskets in the Light of Some Recent Acquisitions,” by Élisabeth Antoine-König (**fig. 1**). Each article is accompanied by excellent color reproductions that serve to highlight key points within each essay. Such images are especially helpful within the essays dealing with medieval ivories, making what is often viewed as a difficult and niche area of study more engaging and accessible for scholars of all levels.



Figure 2 Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata, detail of a reliquary, France, c. 1250-70. Champlévé enamel. Photo: Musée National du Moyen Âge, Paris.

A Reservoir of Ideas is ideal for the scholar with some background in medieval sculpture who is curious to learn more about the various directions taken by current scholarly studies of the subject. The specificity of each article, paired with the broad scope of topics covered in the volume overall, ranging from an ivory statuette of Saint Francis (“Saint for All Seasons: A Gothic Ivory Statuette of Francis of Assisi” by Charles T. Little) (fig. 2), to English choir stall carvings (“The Blythburg Choirstall Carvings” by Richard Marks) provide both a general overview of recent medieval sculpture studies, as well as more in-

depth information on each individual topic, thereby suggesting various paths for future work.

A few essays seem to fit less-well within the book as a whole, apart from the authors’ link to Paul Williamson. For example, an article on the Arezzo scapular and another on the embroiderers of Charles VI and Isabeau of Bavaria are a departure from the overarching theme of medieval sculpture, and ostensibly weaken the cohesiveness of the volume. Regardless, *A Reservoir of Ideas* is a welcome and much needed addition to the body of literature on medieval ivories and sculpture in particular, and medieval visual culture in general. 🐰