

4-2018

Anja Selinger and Willy Piron (eds.), *Choir Stalls and Their Workshops: Proceedings of the Misericordia International Colloquium 2016* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017)

Betsy Chunko-Dominguez
Savannah College of Art and Design

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal>



Part of the [Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture Commons](#)

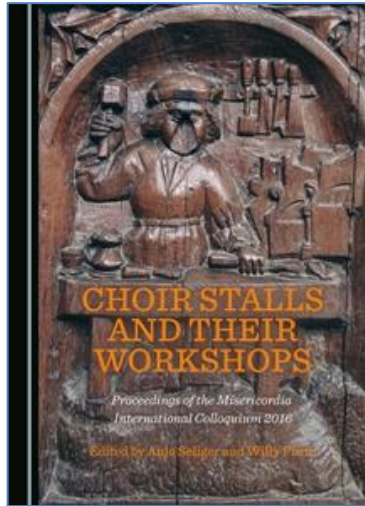
Recommended Citation

Chunko-Dominguez, Betsy. "Anja Selinger and Willy Piron (eds.), *Choir Stalls and Their Workshops: Proceedings of the Misericordia International Colloquium 2016* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017)." *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 6, 3 (2018): 145-148. <http://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol6/iss3/9>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* by an authorized editor of Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact noltj@kenyon.edu.

PEREGRINATIONS

JOURNAL OF MEDIEVAL ART AND ARCHITECTURE
VOLUME VI, NUMBER 3 (SPRING 2018)



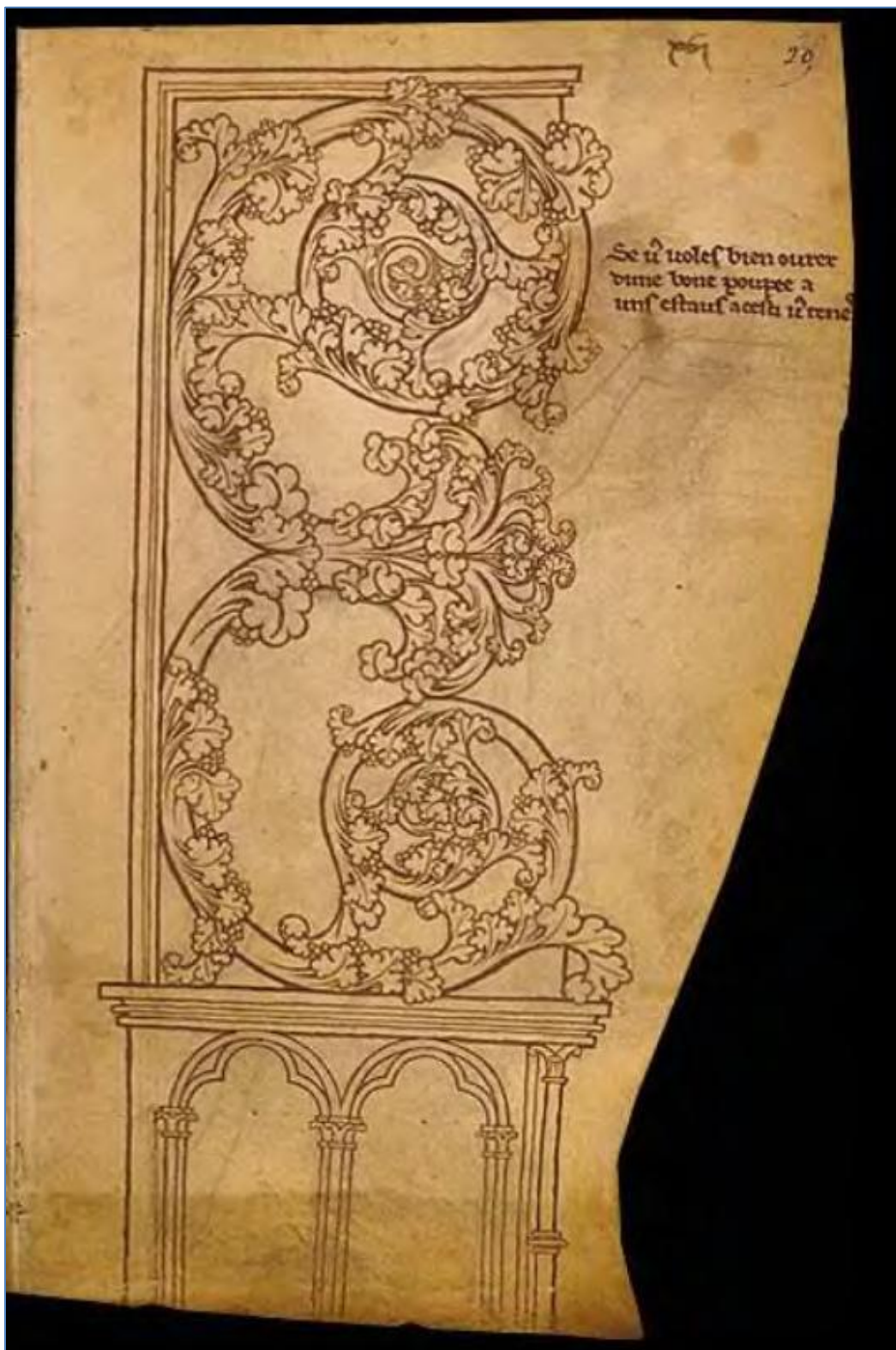
Book Review: Anja Selinger and Willy Piron (eds.), *Choir Stalls and Their Workshops: Proceedings of the Misericordia International Colloquium 2016* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 329 pages.

BETSY CHUNKO-DOMINGUEZ
Savannah College of Art and Design

In the past, studies of choir stalls have emphasized issues of iconography, at times obscuring the fact that these are physical things. A strength of this volume—and the conference from which it originated—is its focus on broader issues of patronage and production.

Misericordia International was founded by Elaine C. Block as an association dedicated to the study of medieval choir stalls. From its beginnings, the organization has promoted the exchange of research among its scholars via a bi-annual conference. The meeting that informs the present volume, held from 23 to 26 June 2016 at the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-University in Greifswald, Germany, examined the workshop context of medieval choir stalls in its broadest sense.

A few general comments may be offered. By design, the volume includes essays on a variety of issues related to stall-work, as well as more specific forays into bench ends and misericords. Many of the scholars embark on fruitful endeavors to relate stall-work to other parts of the church. Most of the essays are well-illustrated. Further, this volume



Villard de Honnecourt. Folio 29r. (After Carl F. Jr. Barnes, *The Portfolio of Villard de Honnecourt* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Fr 19093): *A New Critical Edition and Color Facsimile* (2007), plate 60).

introduces English-language students to an array of Continental studies on choir stalls via the excellent bibliographies of many of the essays.

The volume is divided into five sections, each of which contains essays of, broadly speaking, similar themes. The first section is among the most valuable in the volume, I would argue. Its three essays examine the fraught issue of workshop context, an area of inquiry that has traditionally suffered from a dearth of surviving documentary evidence. The first essay, by Anja Seliger, explores a small selection of surviving drawings to examine their role in the process of manufacturing choir stalls. The following essay, by Angela D. Glover, complements the preceding one by exploring surviving modules, which functioned at times as models in both the design and construction process. As she shows, modular constructions could be more useful than a maquette and were additionally valuable given that they could be incorporated into the final set of stalls if they were approved. The third and final essay in the section, by Kristiane Lemé-Hébuterne, considers the dimensions of certain stalls created in France from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. While the data she provides on the eighty-three remaining sets of stalls in France that allow for usable measurements may yield interesting conclusions with further study, the framing essay and its questions as provided here appear too preliminary in nature to augment the study of French stalls at the present time.

The second part of the volume investigates some sixteenth-century choir stalls. Of especial note is the essay by Ralf Buchholz, *et. al.*, examining a set of stalls designed for a group of Transylvanian Saxons which originate from the Reychmut workshop. The third section of the volume is comprised of three well-considered essays on medieval stalls made of stone.

The fourth section examines an important, if under-considered, set of questions regarding the role of traveling craftsmen. As is the case with the first section of the volume, this portion of the volume pursues as yet under-explored issues. The third essay

in this section, by Christel Theunissen, which treats Jan Borchman, is particularly notable. Finally, the fifth section of the volume explores a more amorphous set of questions related to discrete groups of works. These essays are, in general, related to one another only because they are specific case studies. The fourth and final essay in this section, by Willy Piron is particularly interesting. A valuable formalist study, it treats the “bilobate” ledge-shape of misericords in the Lower Rhine area.

A few limitations of the volume may be cited. The introductory remarks by the editors are cursory in nature and do not provide a summary of the papers or an overview of themes that emerge across sections. Some additional framing of the volume might have made it more accessible to non-specialists. In addition, the introduction alludes to the swift turn-around between the conference and this subsequent publication. Such haste shows in certain of the essays, which were insufficiently line-edited. Moreover, certain of the five section titles might have been reconsidered, most notably those of the second and final sections, as they are either slightly misleading or too generic to allow a would-be reader to garner their thematic value.

Such issues aside, the volume is, in general, extremely useful and makes a solid, necessary contribution to the study of various aspects of European medieval stall-work.

