

The Gothic Screen

At the heart of Gothic cathedrals, the threshold between nave and sanctuary was marked by the choir screen, a partitioning structure of special complexity, grandeur, and beauty. At once a canopy for altars, a stage for performance, a pedestal for crucifixes and reliquaries, and a ground for spectacular arrays of narrative and iconic sculptures, the choir screen profoundly shaped the spaces of liturgy and social interaction for the diverse communities, both clerical and lay, who shared the church interior. For the first time, this book draws together the most important examples – some fully extant, others known through fragments and graphic sources – from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century France and Germany. Through analyses of both their architectural and sculptural components, Jacqueline E. Jung reveals how these furnishings, far from being barricades or hindrances, were vital vehicles of communication and shapers of a community centered on Christian rituals and stories.

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JACQUELINE E. JUNG
Yale University



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For my parents, Joan and Philip Jung

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Acknowledgments

Readers who look carefully at the pictures in this book will notice many signs of human presence. Champagne bottles, flowers, and ribbons bear witness to festive ceremonies recently concluded. Unknown visitors – congregants or tourists – mill about the spaces. Obliging friends demonstrate specific ways choir screens were put into action.

The people who wend their way through the text may not always be visible, but they are no less present there. This book may not have materialized at all if not for the sustained advocacy of Beatrice Rehl at Cambridge University Press, who expressed interest in my project when it was still in dissertation form and championed the present book’s appearance some ten years later. Still, it was not an easy sell. Three spirited reviewers pulled no punches in making sure I saw the flaws and infelicities of the manuscript I had presented, and offered myriad suggestions for making it better. To them I owe many new gray hairs – but a significantly stronger book. Even though I stand by some of the arguments that proved to be controversial, I hope those first readers will take the many changes I have made as a testimony of my appreciation of their fine critical eyes, and my thanks for the time and energy they gave to the manuscript.

The truism voiced by so many medieval authors about the supremacy of images over words in imparting knowledge, imprinting materials in the memory, and swaying hearts still holds strong; many of the points made in the following pages would not have been effective without visual documentation. I am deeply indebted to the College Art Association, which awarded me a Millard Meiss Grant; the International

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The conception of the present book arose only in 2006, but its origins lie much farther back. Stephen Murray, my *Doktorvater* at Columbia University, first put me on the track of choir screens during my last semester of coursework in Spring 1997, as I was formulating a research topic for his seminar on Notre-Dame in Paris. The resulting paper, which I presented at the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the following Spring, was warmly received by the audience that session attracted – enthusiastic comments and suggestions from Dorothy Glass, William Mahrt, the late Michael Camille, and my

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former teachers at the University of Michigan (and continued inspirations both), Ilene Forsyth and Elizabeth Sears, stand out in my memory – and, with the encouragement of John Paoletti, the outgoing editor of the *Art Bulletin*, I undertook the task of expanding it for publication. The result was the article “Beyond the Barrier: The Unifying Role of the Choir Screen in Gothic Churches,” which appeared in those pages in December 2000. Readers familiar with that article will recognize how it has metamorphosed, as portions have been picked apart and redistributed throughout the chapters of the present book. Although much of my evidence and many of my conclusions remain intact, there are some points that the intervening years of looking, reading, and thinking have led me to modify or nuance.

My dissertation on the west choir screen of Naumburg Cathedral, completed in 2002, gave rise to two other articles that have made their way into the present book: “Peasant’s Meal or Lord’s Feast? The Social Iconography of the Naumburg Last Supper,” which appeared in *Gesta*, vol. 42 in 2003, is woven (in heavily abbreviated form) into Chapter 6; and “The Passion, the Jews, and the Crisis of the Individual on the Naumburg West Choir Screen,” which was included in an anthology edited by Mitchell B. Merback, *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, published by Brill in 2008, comprises the core of Chapter 5. Portions of Chapter 3 appeared in a separate essay called “Seeing through Screens: The Gothic Choir Enclosure as Frame,” in the volume *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, edited by Sharon Gerstel (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006). I am obliged to the various editors and editorial readers who helped those works take shape.

My dissertation readers from Columbia’s Department of Art History and Archaeology – Stephen Murray, David Freedberg, and Keith Moxey – offered guidance and support along the way that matched their towering stature in the field. Caroline Walker Bynum in the Department of History and Jeffrey Hamburger at Harvard served as far more than “outside readers.” The tome of comments and suggestions, bibliographic and substantive, that Professor Hamburger submitted upon my completion is a document that has accompa-

nied me throughout this latest iteration of the project, and there is not a day that goes by in my scholarly life that I do not thank my lucky stars to have enjoyed the teaching and mentorship of Professor Bynum. Thomas Dale was a welcome guide in thinking about medieval installation art during my early years at Columbia, and, as my time there drew to a close, Clemente Marconi brightened many days with his encouragement and impassioned reading suggestions. Charles Little, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, wowed me with his knowledge of German sculpture and surprised me with his generosity of spirit in equal measure.

A traveling fellowship from Columbia University in 1998–99 and a Whiting Foundation grant in 2000–01 allowed me to spend needed time in Germany as I completed the dissertation; subsequent travel grants from the University of California, Berkeley, a *Griswold Research Grant*, and a generous Morse Junior Faculty Fellowship from Yale University enabled me to continue my travels and research there as the book took shape, and to write in relative leisure. Although much of my time as a Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin in Spring 2006 was spent developing a new project, numerous journeys and conversations that took place there contributed significantly to this book’s formation. I was fortunate to reside at that institution again in Spring 2009, as the partner of a Fellow, during which time the writing began in earnest. Over the years, numerous German scholars have taken time to help this project along. I still hold dear a letter from Willibald Sauerländer that balanced encouragement about my *Art Bulletin* article with gentle skepticism and warnings against pitfalls I had not noticed. In Naumburg, Susanne Kröner shared with me previously overlooked sources in the Stadtsarchiv and, in 2006, joined Henry Sapparth in inviting me to present my work at the Naumburg-Haus – a special honor not to be forgotten. Frau and Herr Hentschel, with their cozy *pension* behind the cathedral, and Steffen and Gerlinde Hoyme, with their gift shop on the *Steinweg*, have over many years provided the warm hospitality that has made Naumburg a second home to me. Prof. Dr. Ernst Schubert, whose work dominated the field of Naumburg studies for more than three decades, would undoubtedly bristle at any suggestion that he helped the present study see the light of day – but I must acknowledge my gratitude for his willingness to

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speak with me on several occasions before his retirement and to accommodate my work on a building so central to his career.

In 2011 I had the opportunity to join a film crew, led by Gary Glassman of Providence Pictures, in the cathedrals of Amiens and Chartres, and to speak about choir screens and sculpture programs for a documentary about Gothic architecture. While photographing at Chartres I chanced to run into a young colleague from Australia, Jethro Lyme, who was lecturing on the Royal Portal to a tour group assembled by his mentor, John James. Knowing my interest in the Chartres choir screen reliefs, Professor James convinced the cathedral's guardians to open the way to the tower where they are kept and invited me to join his group in examining them. The large role the Chartres sculptures ultimately came to play in this book is due to that memorable visit. I am additionally grateful to Monsieur Eric Vivien for so graciously showing us the works and to Jill Geoffrion for further conversations about them.

Over the years I have presented portions of what would become this book at the College Art Association and Kalamazoo conferences; at symposia held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Dumbarton Oaks Research Institute, the Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe, the University of Lleida (Lérida), Meissen Cathedral (at an event hosted by the Technische Universität in Dresden), the University of Michigan, and Tel Aviv University; and in stand-alone lectures at University of California, Berkeley, the American Academy in Berlin, Columbia University, the Martin-Luther-Universität in Halle-Wittenberg, Harvard University, Middlebury College, the Naumburg-Haus, Northwestern University, Stanford University, the Sarum Seminar at Stanford, the University of Toronto, and the University of Vienna – events that brought me into contact with wonderfully engaged audiences and generous hosts. Interventions from many voices at those events helped me to refine my work, but I appreciate in particular stimulating conversations with James Addiss, Hans Beltz, Christoph Brachmann, Heiko Brandl, Joan Branham, Eduardo Carrera, Madeline Caviness, William A. Christian, Jr., Paul Crossley, Michael Davis, Heinrich Dilly, Jaroslav Folda, Shirin Fozi, Sharon Gerstel, Marc Gottlieb, Ethan Matt Kavalier, Richard Kieckhefer,

Bruno Klein, Kristin Marek, Charles Molesworth and Carol Molesworth, Alexander Nagel, Barbara Newman, Bernd Nicolai, Norbert Nussbaum, Assaf Pinkus, Michael Viktor Schwarz and Birgit Schwarz, Philip Sohm, Robert Suckale, Nancy Van Deusen, Andreas Waschbüsch, Gerhard Weilandt, Otto Karl Werckmeister, and Bryan Wolf – conversations that, in many cases, are still ongoing.

Toward the end of this book's journey, two occasions let me see my project within a larger international context. One was the monumental exhibition dedicated to the *Naumburger Meister: Bildhauer und Architekt im Europa der Kathedralen*, organized by Harmut Krohm and Holger Kunde and held at various locations in Naumburg in the summer and fall of 2011. I am indebted to Professor Krohm and Dr. Kunde for involving me in an early, marathon discussion of the project on site, and for the thrilling visit to the cathedral that evening to look at the freshly discovered architectural drawings on the west choir's walls. Decades after the demise of nationalist discourses in Germany, Naumburg Studies are still a highly contentious field and, even in the face of some opposition, the organizers remained committed to having me contribute an essay to the exhibition catalog and moderate a session at the international conference that took place in October 2011. For their acceptance of this outsider's voice into the chorus of Naumburg scholarship, I am deeply indebted – and am no less grateful for the opportunity the conference afforded me of learning the latest thinking on the building's history and conversing with people such as Martin Büchsel, whose work I have long admired. The two-volume exhibition catalog, coordinated by Guido Siebert, appeared in time for me to integrate the most important contributions into my notes and text where they were applicable – but there is much more to be learned from those tomes than I have been able to convey.

The second event directly connected to this work was an international symposium on *The Art and Science of Medieval Church Screens* held at Cambridge University in April 2012, sponsored by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities and organized by the Cambridge University Medieval Panel Painting Research Centre and the Hamilton Kerr Institute under the brilliant leadership of Paul

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Binski. Along with the energetic researchers at these centers who, in a series of new and forthcoming publications, are revealing the tremendous riches English churches have to offer in their preservation of screens, a veritable pantheon of fellow choir screen aficionados was on hand to shed new light on these furnishings. The scholarship of Professor Binski, Donal Cooper, Eamon Duffy, Justin Kroesen, Alexei Lidov, and Richard Marks has been enormously important to me over the years; to share the podium (and the ample banqueting table in Gonville and Caius College) with them and other luminaries was a special thrill. The force of the message that these combined voices conveyed – that screens and other furnishings were indeed *central* elements of Gothic churches – raised the hope that continued international collaborations might not just generate excitement about these materials but also lead to renewed efforts to preserve the many examples that have survived.

It has been a boon, throughout my career, to have worked in academic departments with colleagues whose scholarship and teaching intersect with my own in striking and often unexpected ways, and with brilliant, motivated graduate students. At Berkeley, Gregory Levine and Andrew Stewart helped me understand the role of sculpture in sacred space in very different cultural traditions, and Whitney Davis and Niklaus Largier taught me to think more deeply about vision and perspective. My student Christopher Lakey helped me think afresh about the materiality of sculpture, and the late, dearly missed Philip Guilbeau offered many wise insights into the communicative capacities of art. At Yale, I have had the welcome chance to experience how one’s individual voice can become strengthened precisely by being part of a community. Robert Nelson and Christopher Wood have been the most lively and stimulating colleagues one could hope for as part of a Medieval-Renaissance cohort. Milette Gaifman, Kishwar Rizvi, and Tamara Sears are not only especially cherished fellow travelers on the tenure track but also marvelous companions in promoting the integrated study of sculpture, architecture, and ritual in pre-modern religious traditions. Three successive Chairs – Ned Cooke, David Joselit, and Alexander Nemerov – gave me the encouragement, time, and financial support I needed to move this project off my desktop and into

the world. Margot Fassler left the Institute of Sacred Music before we had a chance to teach a graduate seminar on art and liturgy together, but my first few years at Yale were certainly enhanced by her luminous presence and intellectual generosity. Many members of our department’s graduate cohort of Medievalists and Early Modernists have listened to me hash out ideas over the years and contributed, in ways large and small, to the development of ideas expounded in this book. I thank in particular Shira Brisman, Gregory Bryda, Lyle Dechant, Margaret Hadley, James Rodriguez, Sara Ryu, Trevor Verrot, and, from the Medieval Studies program, Colleen Farrell.

A collection of stalwart friends on Facebook have accompanied me throughout the process of writing and publishing this book – cheering me on, answering solicitations for advice, and urging me to get back to work. I am so grateful for their good humor and real, not just virtual, camaraderie over the past few years. My brothers Matt and Joe have been a source of wonder and inspiration for even longer. As I wrote my dissertation and embarked on my career, Christopher Ranney supported me in every way and ensured there was no shortage of laughter and music. Alison Langmead and Maggie Williams kept me sane, if not always sober. Kate Rudy supplied me with some great books and even greater dinners. Nancy Wu let me find my voice lecturing at The Cloisters. Bruce Holsinger helped me find a title well before this book was written. Nina Rowe shared indispensable advice on the publishing process. In 2005, I enjoyed an unforgettable road trip through the Rhineland, Bavaria, and the Tirol with Robert Bork and Achim Timmermann, during which pointy architecture was admired, Dammwildhack was consumed, and many ideas were exchanged – none of them *aus Holz*. Since my days as a graduate student, when very few others in North America were working on things German Gothic, Kathryn Brush has been a guiding light, helping me navigate the often tough terrain of German academia and providing inspiration through her own excellent scholarship and generous spirit. I am happy to count her as not only a colleague and mentor but also a friend. In Gerhard Lutz, whose 2002 dissertation on thirteenth-century German crucifixes ran parallel with mine, I feel fortunate to have found another dear friend – as well as a fine critical reader (and

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proofreader of my inelegant German), a gracious host, a conference-session-organizer extraordinaire, and a welcome voice of support for sometimes controversial ideas.

Over the last seven years, my life has been transformed and enriched by the presence of Mitchell Merback, who moved from being a distantly admired colleague to a cherished life partner. Together we have enjoyed adventures on the road, marveled at weird pictures and wonderful buildings, bought books in superabundance, and pored over each other’s words. Together we have compiled indexes and corrected page proofs for our respective books. And together, despite the distance of our regular abodes, we share the honor of raising our beautiful little son, Klaus Joseph, who came into the world in early 2010. Words cannot describe the extra joy they have both brought to my already happy life, or convey the depth of my gratitude for it.

Through the many changes that have accompanied this project, both personal and professional, there has been one constant presence: that of my parents, Joan and Philip Jung. Their support has given me the courage to thrive in my work at every step, from the first glimmer of my wish to pursue graduate study to the present midsummer moment, as I sit, typing away, on the porch of their little lakeside cottage. Today they have taken their grandson to a nearby sculpture garden, where they are assuredly modeling the kind of engaged viewership and general *Lebensfreude* that so profoundly shaped me. As I reflect, it seems to me that my parents are themselves very much like the choir screens I’ve written about in the pages that follow – strong, stable, and solid; able both to protect and to uplift; flexible enough to accommodate a multitude of diverse and sometimes unexpected activities; and graced at their core, with the most open of hearts. To them I dedicate this book, in love, gratitude, and awe.

Cowan Lake, Michigan
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