

Introduction

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Dany Sandron's overview of Anne Prache's career, delivered in May of 2010 and included as the Preface to this volume, gives a sense of the breadth of Prache's research interests and of her intellectual legacy, which inspired this volume. Sandron notes that early in her career, Prache's work on Saint-Remi at Reims broadened the scope of an architectural monograph by contextualizing the building as a whole, giving the same weight to liturgical and civic history as to archeological evidence. A theme that stands out in the monograph, as Sandron observes, is Prache's highlighting of the all-encompassing role of the sponsor of the construction project, Peter of Celle, in what Sandron called the "project management" over the two decades of his abbacy. Prache's prodigious body of scholarship demonstrates her activity across media and across methodologies. Always a meticulous observer of the nuts and bolts of construction history, Prache embraced as well broad questions of meaning and message, as her study of Chartres Cathedral as an image of the Heavenly Jerusalem so eloquently attests. Prache was also open to applying new tools to medieval art history, notably dendrochronology, the use of which she pioneered for the study of Gothic buildings.

Apart from her own research interests, Prache was a bridge-builder, constructing links between the academic community in France and the United States. Professor Prache's relationship with the US began when she was a Focillon Fellow at Yale University in 1950; she taught at the University of Pennsylvania in 1982, and she was active as an advisor to the International Center of Medieval Art. The most important bridges she built were those of friendship, as she welcomed American scholars to France and facilitated their access to monuments, resources, and professional opportunities. The Franco-American collaboration that *Arts of the Medieval Cathedrals* represents is testament to Prache's generosity of spirit as much as to her academic brilliance.¹

The dozen or so chapters that comprise the present AVISTA volume, *Arts of the Medieval Cathedrals*, provide a map of the key avenues of study of medieval monuments in the early twenty-first century: from technology-based and geometry-centered studies of architecture, to the interweaving of stained glass and building chronology, to speculations about the message of portal sculpture, to the homecomings of missing elements from sculptural and stained glass ensembles. The contributors include senior scholars and museum professionals

1 A similar international spirit is evident in the earlier collection of essays in Prache's honor: *Pierre, lumière, couleur. Études d'histoire de l'art du Moyen Âge en l'honneur d'Anne Prache*, ed. Fabienne Joubert and Dany Sandron (Paris: PUPS, 1999).

in France and America who were Prache's contemporaries as well as midcareer and younger scholars who were her students in France, or American researchers whom she befriended.

Several of the chapters in Part I, "Architecture," dovetail with Prache's interests and are close to AVISTA's core mission. Appropriately, the collection begins with Reims itself, in Walter Berry's study of the thirteenth-century foundations of the Rémois cathedral. Berry is as committed as Prache to the meticulous reading of complex archeological findings. His observations challenge, as Prache's often did, earlier understandings of the chronology of a monument, and have broad implications for the entire building history of the cathedral.

Ellen Shortell's chapter likewise ties directly to Reims, as her study of Saint-Quentin evaluates the relationship of that monument to Prache's Saint-Remi. Like Prache, Shortell merges architectural analysis with an apprehension of aesthetic qualities. The core of Shortell's project is the medieval use of practical geometry in generating the design matrix for the building, a preoccupation for a group of architectural historians today who scrutinize buildings with Prache-like intensity.

Another representative of this important direction is Nancy Wu. Wu has done extensive work on Reims, especially on the cathedral, but her contribution to the current volume has a different locus, centering on two examples of architectural sculpture now in the United States. Wu examines two sixteenth-century French portals in the Cloisters collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to uncover the geometry of their overall design and many interlocking elements. Wu links the geometrical matrices of these two portals to two fifteenth-century German instructional texts by Mathes Roriczer of Regensburg and Hanns Schmuttermayer of Nuremberg for the design of pinnacles and gables. Wu, in a manner that recalls Prache's work, uses concrete architectural features to test broad principles of architectural design.²

Michael Davis, focusing Paris, also uses a written text as his source, but in this case not a didactic booklet, but rather a fifteenth-century description of the city by Guillebert de Mets. Davis infers meaning from the choice of monuments described or ignored by Guillebert, and posits a hierarchy of significance from the degree of elaboration of the description of structures. Davis argues that the description, far from simply recording visual experience, constructs an idealized vision of the past glory of Paris and a promise of a brighter future.

The chapters that form Part II, "Stained Glass," discuss three touchstones of Gothic glazing: Saint-Denis, Reims Cathedral, and Chartres Cathedral, all of

2 Prache, although she did not work directly with generative geometries, acknowledged its value, as several of her later publications that reference Wu's research on the cathedral demonstrate: "New Dendrochronological and Archaeological Evidence for the Building Chronology of Reims Cathedral," in *Archaeology in Architecture: Studies in Honor of Cecil L. Striker*, ed. Judson Emerick and Deborah Deliyannis (Mainz: von Zabern, 2005), 167–72; "Le début de la construction de la cathédrale de Reims au XIII^e siècle," *Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France* (2002): 334–46; and "Le début de la construction de la cathédrale de Reims au XIII^e siècle. L'apport de l'archéologie et de la dendrochronologie," in *Nouveaux regards sur la cathédrale de Reims*, ed. Bruno Decrock and Patrick Demouy (Langres: Guéniot, 2008): 41–52.

which were studied by Prache. Sylvie Balcon-Berry links her project on Reims glass to Prache's insistence on reading the cathedral's medieval windows as an essential part of the building's history. Balcon-Berry's study brings to light new sources of evidence for an old problem (echoing this method in Prache and other of her students), calling attention to collections of Autochromes, a form of early twentieth-century color photographs, and newly digitalized early watercolor drawings that together allow her to reconstruct lost or badly deteriorated portions of the glazing program. Balcon-Berry's careful reading of this newly accessible evidence has, like Walter Berry's archeological findings, important implications for the chronology of the cathedral.

Claudine Lautier's subject is the west rose of the cathedral of Chartres, the monument that ranks second only to Reims in Prache's scholarly oeuvre. Like Balcon-Berry, Lautier brings something new to our attention: the results of the restoration efforts to the west façade, both to the stained glass and the interior wall surfaces. Lautier notes that restoration has revealed much of the original character of the west rose, allowing her to situate the glass iconographically and stylistically within the program of the cathedral. Remarkably, cleaning has revealed traces of mural painting on the side walls of the two western bays of the nave, which, as Lautier observes, extends the themes of the rose window in fictive glass.

Michael Cothren is an example of the collaboration between American and French scholars encouraged by Prache, since he works closely with French glass specialists. His contribution to this volume revisits his earlier efforts to reconstruct the original character of the ambulatory windows of Saint-Denis, a process begun by Louis Grodecki, Prache's own teacher. Cothren brings stylistic knowledge and technical expertise to bear in investigating a hitherto unknown panel of the Dream of Joseph. The panel exhibits intriguing formal similarities with the glass associated with the Infancy of Christ in and from Saint-Denis, but Cothren observes that its provenance is a complicated matter.

Philippe Lorentz, in turn, examines stained glass that lies beyond the usual chronological scope of Prache's research, but in which she took a direct interest. Lorentz discusses the fifteenth-century *Annunciation* window in the cathedral of Bourges. He considers its famous patron, Jacques Coeur, its artistic inventiveness, and its reception by the contemporary clerics of the cathedral.

The chapters in the final section of *Arts of the Medieval Cathedrals*, "Sculpture," relate to Prache's interests in multiple ways. Three of the contributions concern monuments where Prache did important work. William Clark links his study to Prache's key contributions to the chronology of Reims Cathedral. He revisits the subject of an earlier article: the sculptures of Christ and 11 angels on the exterior of the radiating chapels of the cathedral choir. Clark calls attention to scholarship that has appeared since his first work on the subject to expand his reading of the processional liturgy of Reims Cathedral and its ties to the figures of the radiating chapels.

Charles Little turns his attention to Chartres, which he calls "Anne's cathedral." Little's project concerns a sculptural fragment, a small male head, now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Little argues that the head belongs

to one of the great sculptural ensembles of Chartres, the dismantled thirteenth-century choir screen. Based on style, relative size, and ultimately the use of a plaster cast, Little concludes that the fragment is the missing head of Joseph from the Nativity in an otherwise well-preserved panel of the *jubé*.

The chapter by Kathleen Nolan and Susan Ward was directly inspired by Prache's early work on another sculpture divorced from its original context, an isolated female column figure that Prache determined had come from Notre-Dame-en-Vaux, in Châlons-en-Champagne, and from its then only partially known cloister. Nolan and Ward continue the discussion, begun by Prache, of the symbolic role of female column figures with the cloister. They compare the program of the reconstructed cloister to that of the badly damaged south portal of Notre-Dame-en-Vaux and explore the messages that these two sculptural ensembles relay about the identity and affiliations of the resident canonical community.

Nicolas Reveyron also analyzes sculpture that is exceedingly battered, the west façade of the cathedral of Lyons. Reveyron scrutinizes the traces of remaining sculpture in a process he terms *l'archéologie de l'image*. The results allow him to reconstruct the iconographic sculpture and draw conclusions about the date of this all-but-lost ensemble.

Fabienne Joubert also engages in a very close reading of façade sculpture, the well-preserved central portal of Bourges Cathedral. Joubert's interest lies with the question of the design process for the portal sculpture. She sorts through subtle stylistic variants in sculptural style and compositional motifs, and argues that the variants imply the use of two-dimensional sketches in the carving of the archivolts.

The range of themes and methodologies covered by the chapters in *Arts of the Medieval Cathedrals* speaks to the wide range of Prache's interests. The contributions also reflect the *longue durée* of her engagement with the life of the mind, for they draw inspiration from every stage of her career: from her first writings on Reims Cathedral in the 1950s, to her articles in the 1960s on Notre-Dame-en-Vaux at Châlons-en-Champagne; through her magisterial 1978 monograph on Saint-Remi at Reims, to her work from the 1990s on Saint-Denis, Chartres, and Soissons. In his Preface, Dany Sandron drew analogies between the career of Anne Prache and that of Peter of Celle at Saint-Remi. And indeed Prache's stature in the study of Gothic monumental art is akin to that of Peter de Celle, because of the breadth of her vision and the comprehensiveness of her scholarship.