

Ancient remedies for the new ideas. Possible sources of the Cistercian stained glass technique and style – Poster

One of the most important problems concerning the medieval Cistercian stained glass is a question of their origin. The most typical form of the early (2nd half of the 12th century – 13th century) Cistercian stained glass is simple blank glazing with non-figurative decoration formed only with lead comes. Such an ascetic type of glazing was affected by the restrictive charters of the Cistercian general chapter. The chapter unambiguously banned Cistercians from filling the windows with colourful glass as well as containing any figural representations. A type of compromise has been worked between aesthetic asceticism and a need to fill and decorate church windows. In former research two possible artistic sources of the Cistercian stained glass were taken into consideration: eastern inspirations (Byzantine or Islamic, especially by E. Frodl-Kraft, C. Brisac) or exploiting the patterns characteristic for French Romanesque architectural sculpture (H. Zakin). However, another possibility should be considered: abstract and monochrome glazing of the Cistercians could be inspired by the ornamentation and technique of earlier European stained glass. Although the glazing before 11th/12th century is known only fragmentary, our knowledge is continuously expanded by archaeological excavations. In my poster I would like to propose the answers to the following questions: Was the Cistercian stained glass a continuation of the tradition or a revival of somewhat forgotten forms? Did the Cistercians deliberately chose to recall an ‘ancient’ types of glazing, and if so, for what purpose?

Comparing the early medieval pieces of stained glass to the 12th- and 13th-century Cistercian glazing I am going to show the similarities within the technical and stylistic aspects. I would like to compare the early medieval and Cistercian stained glass created with similar artistic means – one of the most striking examples is a panel from Séry-les-Mézières (not preserved, known from the coloured illustration), depicting a simple cross pattern, created only with blank or bright-coloured glass or non-painted, geometric glass from Rezé, Sous-le-Scex and many other sites. Medieval Cistercian glazing is an outcome of the ideological guidelines as well as the formal inspirations flowing from the earlier pieces of art. Stained glass illustrates the peculiar tension between the reference to tradition and the creation of new solutions, being

a kind of alternative for the main trend, which is very specific for early Cistercian art and spirituality.