

ART AND LITURGY THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS ON BEURONENSE ART IN SÃO PAULO

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Abstract: We will present some thoughts and reflections on art and liturgy that will help us in understanding the new sacred artistic trends that emerged in the mid-19th century in Europe. The writings of Luigi Pareyson, Etienne Gilson and Albert Rouet were chosen for this exercise because their works contain questions about the relationship between art and aesthetics, sacred art and liturgy. We will continue with a brief study of the postulates of Peter Lenz about the Beuron aesthetics and their assimilation by other monasteries, as well as religious brotherhoods in São Paulo in the early 20th century.

Keywords: Beuron Art School, religious images, aesthetic influences, sacred art, art and Liturgy, canon

Introduction

Since 2014, we have conducted a research on the vestments and liturgical textiles of the collection of the Venerable Third Order of St. Francis of Penance of the City of São Paulo, founded in the 17th century. It is important to clarify that this church has been studied since the 1980s by researchers interested in painting, sculpture and architecture.

In addition to research on the vestments, we have developed parallels researches in the photographic, documentary and graphic collections. Some of them together Prof. Myriam Salomão that researches São Paulo's colonial painting. All of the last results are being reported in scientific articles and presented at seminars, conferences and academic meetings between the years 2014 and 2015.

From the discovery of a chasuble belonging to the Beuron style, we started the research about his founder, aesthetics, as well as on his style choice for the construction of the new Monastery of São Bento in the city of São Paulo, presented in the article “From Monte Cassino to Sao Paulo: aesthetics elements of Beuron Art School”¹. We realize that the deepening of

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the relationship between art and liturgy could be made from readings that could address issues such as making and artistic production, religious art and how art works in the liturgical context.

In this way, we intend to expand these initial discussions, bringing arguments for our thoughts and reflections on art and liturgy that will help us better understand the sacred assimilation of the new artistic trends that emerged in the mid-19th century in Europe. We will start with the writings of Luigi Pareyson on sacred art; Étienne and the beauty of Christian art; issues related to art and liturgy discussed using arguments from Albert Rouet's work. Finally, we will briefly present the work of Father Desiderius Lenz, *Il Canone* to get acquainted with some concepts which are specific to Beuron art.

Luigi Pareyson: assertions about religious art

We bring to this reflective exercise the contributions of Italian philosopher Luigi Pareyson (1918-1981) who proposed the analysis of the aesthetic problems and an aesthetic system, which he named Formativity Theory (Teoria della Formatività), which shows the artist's training path and work art. In this theory, the artist is not a creator but a artist former that has the object and the sensitivity at your disposal to arrange them, culminating in an artistic object. In this way, a work of art can be framed as religious art to satisfy some conditions outlined for him. In addition, for him, the perfection of a work of art is subject to their training process, in its unity and totality:

... La perfezione dell'opera d'arte consiste dunque nella totalità del processo che l'ha formata, nel senso che la sua unità e la sua totalità dipendono rispettivamente dall'univocità e dell'improseguibilità del processo della sua formazione. (PAREYSON, 2005, p. 107).

Therefore, when designing a work of sacred art, the artist must reflect how the object will dialogue with the other component parts of the liturgy, so that it is contained in the entire rite without creating disorders or discomfort. What is expected is that there is harmony, decisive criterion for the contemplation of beauty embodied in the figure of Christ celebrated and remembered in worship.

Etienne Gilson: beauty as the object of Christian art

The thought of Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) converges with Pareyson's which calls into question the spirituality necessary for the

development of sacred art with the principle of beauty, as part of the contemplation and elevation to the Divine, for whom the cult is celebrated.

... Pero cuando los artistas cristianos son llamados a celebrar la gloria de Dios cooperando a su modo con la obra de la creación, es imperativo que sus obras sean objetos de belleza. De otro modo, estas obras no serían verdaderamente y los artistas contribuirían con la nada. (GILSON, 2005, p. 331).

Taking into consideration that the work of the Beuron School is the core of the Catholic Church, shaped in various materials and forms of presentation - painting, sculpture, architecture, vestments, etc. - Gilson underlines the need for beauty while creating the object of a Christian artist, an element which is present in Father Desiderius Lenz's images that we will see later.

Albert Rouet: l'espressione artistica nella Chiesa

In the essay *L'espressione artistica nella Chiesa*, Albert Rouet (1936-) proposes the examination of the relationship between art and liturgy, clarifying the scope and the role of each of them, as well as the points of divergence and convergence. The author points out that the role of the liturgy is "*occuparsi del sacro*", this "*canalizzato, modificato, plasmato nella persona del Cristo*", whose purpose is "*l'uomo dalla guarire schiavitù nei confronti degli elementi del mondo (Gal, 4.3) e rivestirlo dello splendore del Figlio mediante l'azione dello Spirito*". (ROUET, 1994, p.26-27)

According to the author, "*L'arte non persegue affatto un fine simile. La sua libertà le conferisce il potere di divenire sorgente a se stessa*". (ROUET, 1994, p.27)

On the one hand, Rouet (1994, p. 28) explains that the action of the liturgy "*riconosce esplicitamente Dio come Creatore e come Salvatore*".

L'artista è padrone della sua opera e la firma. Percepisce dei diritti di autore. È un divo. La liturgia è al servizio dei sacramenti, ma non ne è proprietaria. L'autore primo della liturgia è lo Spirito Santo, e non il celebrante, il cui nome può rimanere nascosto. L'azione liturgica visibile viene compiuta da tutto un popolo di fratelli, il Popolo di Dio e non già da alcuni specialisti. L'artista è libero di innovare, non così il celebrante che riceve dalla tradizione la sorgente critica della sua azione. Quando la liturgia innova, riprende ciò che le è stato trasmesso.

In una parola, il dominio del simbolismo liturgico non appartiene ao sacerdote, ma a Cristo: la memoria della Chiesa riposa nello Spirito, la liturgia appartiene alla Chiesa. Si radica nella comunione della Chiesa con il Cristo e, attraverso di Lui, tra i fedeli. (ROUET, 1994, pp. 28-29)

On the other hand, the author proposes a "rapprochement" between art and liturgy. It states that art is "*trasformazione*" while the Liturgy is "*trasfigurazione*". He says that the liturgy "... *ha bisogno dell'arte. Non si saprebbe concepire una liturgia senza arte.*" "... *Inoltre la liturgia rende presente una trasfigurazione di questo mondo che l'arte, a modo suo, tenta di evocare. Esprimere e trasfigurare: sono questi i punti di avvicinamento dell'arte e della liturgia*". (ROUET, 1994, pp. 34-35)

As part of the tradition, the Liturgy celebrates the memory of Christ, the Incarnate Word, known as "*liturgia della incarnazione*". Thus, the art works in the world, assisting "*a percepire che lo Spirito è all'opera e che già anima negli uomini il desiderio dell'incontro.*" He concludes that "*le arti precedono la liturgia, non nella sua costituzione intrinseca, ma nelle aspirazioni che essa ha l'incarico di raccogliere per abbeverarle dello Spirito e offrirle a Dio.*" (ROUET, 1994, p. 43)

Father Desiderius Lenz: The Divine Canon

The formative trajectory of Peter Lenz begins from his first training at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, his studies in Rome and their acceptance in the Beuron Abbey.

To understand some principles of the Beuron art, we will refer to some parts of writings of Father Desiderius Lenz about their perception of the ancient art of studies in the Glyptothek of the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich.

Mi recavo spesso da solo alla Gliptoteca, a studiare gli originali d'arte greca, soprattutto del periodo arcaico: in particolare i frontoni di Egina e le opere a questi coeve, precedenti e immediatamente successive. Quest'arte esercitava su di me un fascino incredibile. (...)

Il fatto che ogni forma e ogni piega fosse così armoniosamente calcolata e distribuita, così straordinariamente al suo posto, tanto che il minimo spostamento ne avrebbe turbato proporzione e verità; il fatto che il corpo, con le sue belle proporzioni e la sua semplicità esemplare, animasse ogni pannello con tanta eleganza e integrità, con

impeccabile enfasi: tutto ciò generava un'aura meravigliosa di serena compostezza e lucido ordine². (LENZ, 2015)

By referring to the study of the Antiquity, the Biblical texts, writings of other artists and art historians (Leonardo Da Vinci, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, among others), Lenz builds a model for what he thinks it would be represented in accordance with the perfect forms, consequently divine, derived from the equilateral triangle, circle, square and the Fibonacci sequence. In addition, he supports the Pythagorean texts on Number Theory and the work of Plato. Below, we can see the canon and a design built with the application of these principles (Figs. 1 and 2).

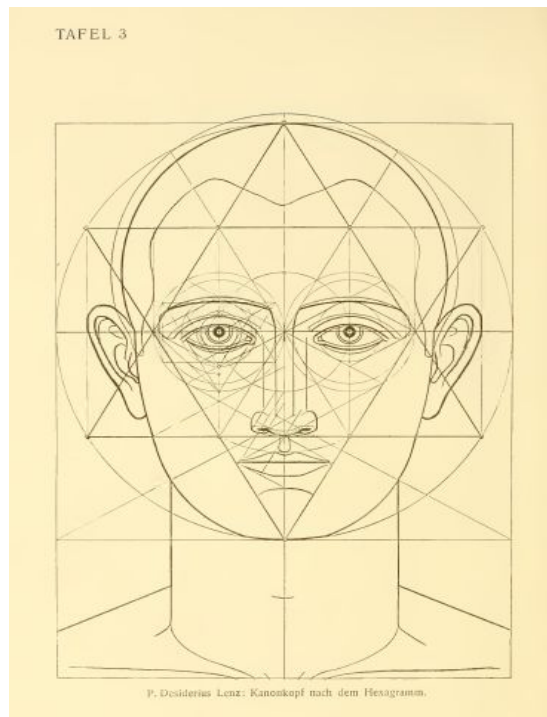


Fig.1: Head inserted in a hexagram.Tafel 3. Father Desiderius Lenz

² Desiderius Lenz. *Il Canone Divino. L'arte e la regola della Scuola di Beuron*. Traduzione dal francese di Paolo Martore e dal tedesco di Arnaldo Stern. (Roma: Lit Edizioni Srl: Castelveccchi, 2015), Edição Kindle.

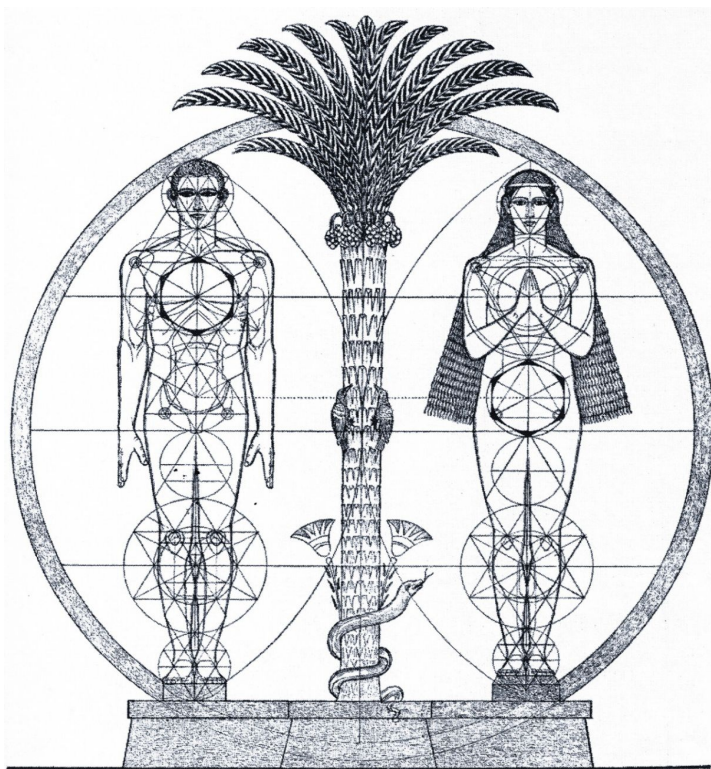


Fig.2 Adam and Eve, c. 1900. Drawing by Peter Lenz. Kindle (Nota esplicativa al canone di Hubert Krins)

Lenz thinks about the interaction between geometric shapes and divinity, justifying the intertwining of what is rational and faith:

A parte il triangolo equilatero inscritto nel cerchio (il Tre in Uno) e, viceversa, il cerchio nel triangolo (l'Uno nel Tre), quali simboli della Trinità (la Tri-Unità) - e forse anche la croce quadratica, simbolo dell'amore che è in Dio, anch'essa inserita in un cerchio (che produce l'ottava) -, ogni altra raffigurazione è o sarà di scarsa importanza, contribuendo poco agli insegnamenti della Chiesa.

La geometria, allora, non deve far altro che volgersi verso le opere di Dio in natura, giacché quelle si fondano sui numeri e le figure geometriche elementari, dimostrando d'essere chiave e modello per la loro formazione e costruzione. Solo svelando questi numeri e queste forme, arrivando a capirli, si potrà riconoscere la saggezza dell'arte divina nella natura, quindi celebrarla e forse trarne altri utilizzi che estendano l'ideali divino nella vita pratica. La saggezza si manifesterà

anche nella caratterizzazione estetica delle creature inferiori. (LENZ, 2015)

Thus, we had a brief introduction to the complex thinking of Father Desiderius Lenz, allowing us to approach the images produced by the Beuron Art School, which needs further studies, because others texts were written by him.

The legacy of the Beuron Art School: some samples

Between 1880 and 1887, Father Desiderius and Gabriel Wüger work in Emmaus Abbey in Prague, along with Lukas Steiner (1849-1906). In 1898, Father Desiderius publishes *Zur Ästhetik der Beurerer Schule*; in 1921, the essay *Der Kanon* is published in *Benediktinische Monatsschrift* magazine.

According to Thomas Davidson, in the late 19th century, there was the proposal of celebrating the 1400th anniversary of St. Benedict's birth, whose passage in his article is highlighted below:

... an American Benedictine, Abbot Wimmer of St. Vincent's, Penn., suggested the idea of celebrating with due pomp the fourteen-hundredth anniversary of St. Benedict's birth. This idea, having been favorably received by the Abbot of Monte Cassino (the Prior is an American), was communicated to the Benedictines all over the world. At a meeting of German abbots, held at Salzburg, on occasion of the election of Father Eder as head of the monastery there, the Abbot Walter of Beuron in Prussia undertook to supply artists to decorate the cells of St. Benedict at Monte Cassino, which, it was understood, were being excavated and repaired under the auspices of the abbot of that place. Indeed, as early as 1873, the monks of Monte Cassino, encouraged by Cardinal Bartolini, had begun to examine the remains of St. Benedict's monastery, with a view, chiefly, of discovering the original entrance. The excavations, however, were not begun until about the beginning of 1877.

... Six of these chambers contain altars, which, with one in a niche of the right of the tower entrance, were consecrated at the recent great festival, May 15-19, 1880. The apartments to be decorated number fifteen.

The charge of restoring and decorating these chambers (Stanze) was placed in the hands of the German Benedictine monks from Beuron, who form a sort of school of religious art, under the direction of Father Lenz, who joined the order only about three years ago. (DAVIDSON, 1881, p. 108-109)

Father Desiderius directs the renovation works of the crypt of St. Benedict of Nursia (480-587), founder of the Benedictine Order and St. Scholastica (480-587) - his twin sister, Piumarola monastery's founder, near Monte Cassino - at Monte Cassino Abbey, between 1899 and 1910 (Fig 3).

According to Davidson, Father Desiderius heads the team of artists composed by:

... Desiderius Lenz, architect and sculptor; Gabriel Wüger, painter; Lucas Steiner, painter; Leander Haller, architect and painter; Joseph Leibinger, sculptor. The last, a pupil of Lenz, is not a monk.” Ressalta ainda: “ These five were assisted by four lay brothers, so that the total number of artists was nine. (DAVIDSON, 1881, p. 109)

Regarding the topic of artistic training, Davidson points out that:

... The first four, previous to enterin upon the monastic life, had taken a full course in art at the Munich Academy, and afterwards studied ancient and early Christian art for many years in Berlin, Nürnberg, Florence and Rome, so that it was not out of dilettantism, but with full consciouness of the methods and aims of art, past and present, tah they abandoned the current realism and betook themselves to ideal art, which is, at bottom, always religious. (DAVIDSON, 1881, p. 109)

We believe that was an important moment in the consolidation and training for young artists the Dom Adalbert Gresnigt (1877-1956) and Brother Clement Maria Frischauf (1869-1944). Brother Clement arrives at Monte Cassino in 1900, where supervised by Father Desiderius Lenz and Dom Adalbert Gresnigt.

Other Abbeys received the contribution of Beuron Art School, such as the Abbey of St. Hildegard, founded in 1150, in Germany; Abbey of St. John, 1856 in Minnesota, USA, for example.

Limited to work in religious art, the works of the monks of Beuron had shown in the Secession exhibition in Vienna in 1905. Artists such as Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939), among other secessionist Viennese were influenced by the Beuron aesthetics.



Fig.3: Painters in Monte Cassino, 1878. By Andreas Praefcke, Wikimedia Commons

São Bento Monastery in Sao Paulo

Founded in July 14, 1598 by Dom Mauro Teixeira, the São Bento Monastery in Sao Paulo is a sample of the Beuron Art School's architecture located in the São Paulo City. The old monastery and the church in Baroque style were demolished in 1910; in 1911 a new architectural ensemble being built in the Beuron Art style.

The architectural design was made by Richard Berndl (1875-1955), who taught at the University of Munich. The church was inaugurated in 1912 and the decorative work was completed in 1922. The decoration was drawn up by Dom Adalbert Gresnigt, assisted by Brother Clement Frischauf. They arrive in 1914 after working at Monte Cassino.

Currently, the church goes through the restoration process of his paintings, directed by João Rossi restorer. The Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament was recently restored (Fig. 4).



Fig.4 Chapel of Blessed Sacrament, São Bento Monastery, São Paulo. Photo: ©Rosângela Ap, 2014

In another restoration phase, the altar paintings have undergone cleaning and passed through a process of consolidation of the pictorial layer. Recently, the nave paintings have passed the examination of identifying any losses of the pictorial layer, the best method of cleaning and removal of the varnish applied over the painting in the restoration carried out in the 1970s.

According to João Rossi, we can see the chromatic harmony developed by the School of Beuron and used by Dom Adalbert Gresnigt, even with disparate colours seen in isolation (Fig. 5). What we can see in the restored sites is the color vibrancy, the beauty of geometric shapes, the quality of design and the discrete volumes hidden by soot or varnish.



Fig.5: Pintor na Escola de Beuron. n.d., Erzaibeit St. Martin zu Beuron

Brief study of a chasuble in Beuron style in the Historic-Artistic Collection of the Venerable Third Order of St. Francis of Penance of the Sao Paulo City (VOTSPCSP)

The history of the Venerable Third Order of St. Francis of Penance begins in the XVII. In 1676, a short chapel dedicated to Our Lady's Immaculate Conception was constructed; in 1787, the architect and father Antonio Sant'Anna Galvão³, OFM. (1739-1822) designed a new project and completed its expansion. Throughout its existence, the church has undergone several renovations. Due to the degradation conditions of the structure, the church was closed in 2007, undergoing a major restoration ever since.

The Historical-Artistic Collection is characterized by complexity regarding the different types of materials that the objects are made from. In 2010, it was made an inventory for tipping together the heritage protection agencies. Here, we highlight the textile collection that participated in this process of study.

With the reopening of the Church of the Seraphic Father Saint Francis of Chagas in 2014, the research on the historical and artistic documentation was restarted. When the new exhibition space was opened and guided tours were offered, new demands arose as the development of long-term and temporary exhibitions, whose first information have been confirmed along with third brothers, grantees of the acquisition. The next step was the confrontation with other ecclesiastical and museological collections.

³ Frei Galvão spiritually attended the brothers of the Venerable Third Order of Saint Francis of Penance of Sao Paulo City. He is the first Brazilian saint. Santo Antonio Sant'Anna Galvão was canonized on May 11, 2007 by Pope Benedict XVI, when the Pope visited the Brazil. On architectural plans designed by him, see: **Benedito Lima de Toledo**. *Frei Galvão: Arquiteto*. Ateliê Editorial, Cotia, 1st edition, 2007.

Starting with the second half of 2014, the research on the sources and origins of textiles has been systematically made based on the publication of Fr. Adalbert Ortmann⁴ in 1951, covering the history of VOTSPCSP from the late 17th century to the early 19th century, extending to the present. This has been aided by the research on specific bibliographic materials and online databases of institutions as museums, churches, universities and researchers interested in the subject.

The textile collection on VOTSPCSP shows us the development of industrial manufacturing techniques. Silk damasks, brocades, jacquards, synthetic fabrics, among others, the complexity of finishing techniques, embroidery, crochet, metallic appliquées, contained in bodies, sebastos and gallons of pieces. In this respect, the identification of the textile ornaments styles and patterns may assist in dating, providing data on their origin. However, this work is not always easy, given the interference made during the process of “restoration” or reuse of tissue parts, ornaments or trimmings.

Our methodological foundations are based on “Research in Art and Design” proposed by Frayling⁵ (1994), together with the writings on the decorative arts of E.H. Gombrich (2012). Moreover, Palla (1999) subsidizes us to relate the painted figure and the reality of the vestment.

By formal and visual similarity, we have found some neo-Gothic and Beuron pieces, allowing us to get in contact with the researchers or grantee institutions. This is how we come to the aesthetic affiliation of the pieces of the collection a chasuble, as confrontation with images of *Paramentica*'s database.

While we studied the *Paramentica*'s database, prepared by the Prof. Dr. Marike van Roon, researcher at University of Amsterdam, we found a similar piece in the Franciscan existing acquis (Fig. 6). After we did the visual comparison, we contacted her and she informed us about the origin, the manufacturer and the aesthetic affiliation, in this case from the Beuron Art School. Secondly, Prof. Dr. Marike, the Krieg & Schwarzer Co., located in Mainz, in Germany, manufactured some set of vestments with the same orphrey published in a promotional catalogue. These pieces can be dated between the years 1900-1920.

⁴ Ortmann, Frei Adalberto O.F.M., *História da Antiga Capela da Ordem Terceira da Penitência de São Francisco em São Paulo 1676-1783*, DPHAN/ Ministério da Educação e Saúde, Rio de Janeiro, 1951.

⁵ Frayling, Christopher. *Research in Art and Design*. Royal College of Art Research Papers, Vol 1, N° 1, 1993/4. Royal College of Art, London, 1994. Retrieved from: http://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/384/3/frayling_research_in_art_and_design_1993.pdf.



Fig.6: Angel. Detail of chasuble with an orphrey cross. n.d. Historical-Artistic Collection of Venerable Third Order of Saint Francis of São Paulo City. ©Rosângela Ap, 2015

What is not known in this moment is whether the piece came being already made or it was assembled here in Brazil. Starting with the second half of the 19th century, we could see the emergence of vestments home sales in Sao Paulo City that imports and produces vestments. Another hypothesis is that some parts have been brought by religious people during their ecclesiastical trips to Rome or after the vacancies in their home countries. The presence of the German brothers and friars in VOTSFPCSP can be found by reading the lists of the parties or the profession of diplomas, opening new ways to future research.

Another issue is the popularization of the vestments stores in the region between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. The taste for neo-Gothic and the Beuron style can be noticed in the sale catalogues of finished pieces or tissue samples, covering the period of more than a century, that is the production between 1830 and 1960, according to the data collected by Prof. Dr. Marike Van Roon. We know that fabrics and accessories were imported from Netherlands, England, Germany, France, whose ads were published in the almanacs broadcasted in Brazil in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Another key information given in Davidson's article is the sale of cards with motifs painted in Monte Cassino, heliotypes made by the monks, whose circulation of these images may have influenced other religious, including the generating of new standards in graphics which required further analysis.



Fig. 7 Tabernacle Angel. Tafel 27. Relief detail applied to the Torretta at Monte Cassino. Josef Kreitmaier, SJ., 1923



Fig. 8: Tabernacle Angel. Detail from the cancels of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, St. Benedict Monastery

Conclusions

As we have seen, being inspired by the Holy Scriptures and created for worship purposes, the art of Beuron has been marked by the perfection of forms in the usage of geometry, generating the hieratic figuration of characters treated as ecclesiastical personalities, saints and angels, emphasizing the contemplative aspect.

It is probably the assimilation of new aesthetic currents with the focus on the religious image, notably the Gothic Revival and the Beuron style by the Franciscan brotherhood, that should be noticed in all pieces of the collection. From the point of view of visual training, we understand that their reception has not only affected the perception of the Benedictine monks, experts in Baroque art, as the townspeople goers of masses in which these pieces began to circulate.

We noticed that there is little literature on the subject, asking to be expanded as a result of a new research and the translation of existing books in other languages. The examination of the information from the books and from the collection of separate documents of VOTSFPCSP's newly opened research, it will help us clarify the transit, the dissemination, offering more precise information. The deepening of this research is conditioned by the receiving of external information and the contribution of other researchers and institutions.

We take this opportunity to thank VOTSFPCSP for the given support, especially to Minister Maria do Nascimento Silva and prof. Tabatha Nascimento; the Benedictine monks Abbot Dom Mathias Tolentino Braga and Dom João Baptista, the restorer João Rossi, the Prof. Dr. Marike Van Roon who kindly offered us images and bibliographic material, in addition to the analysis and confirmation of the pieces.

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