

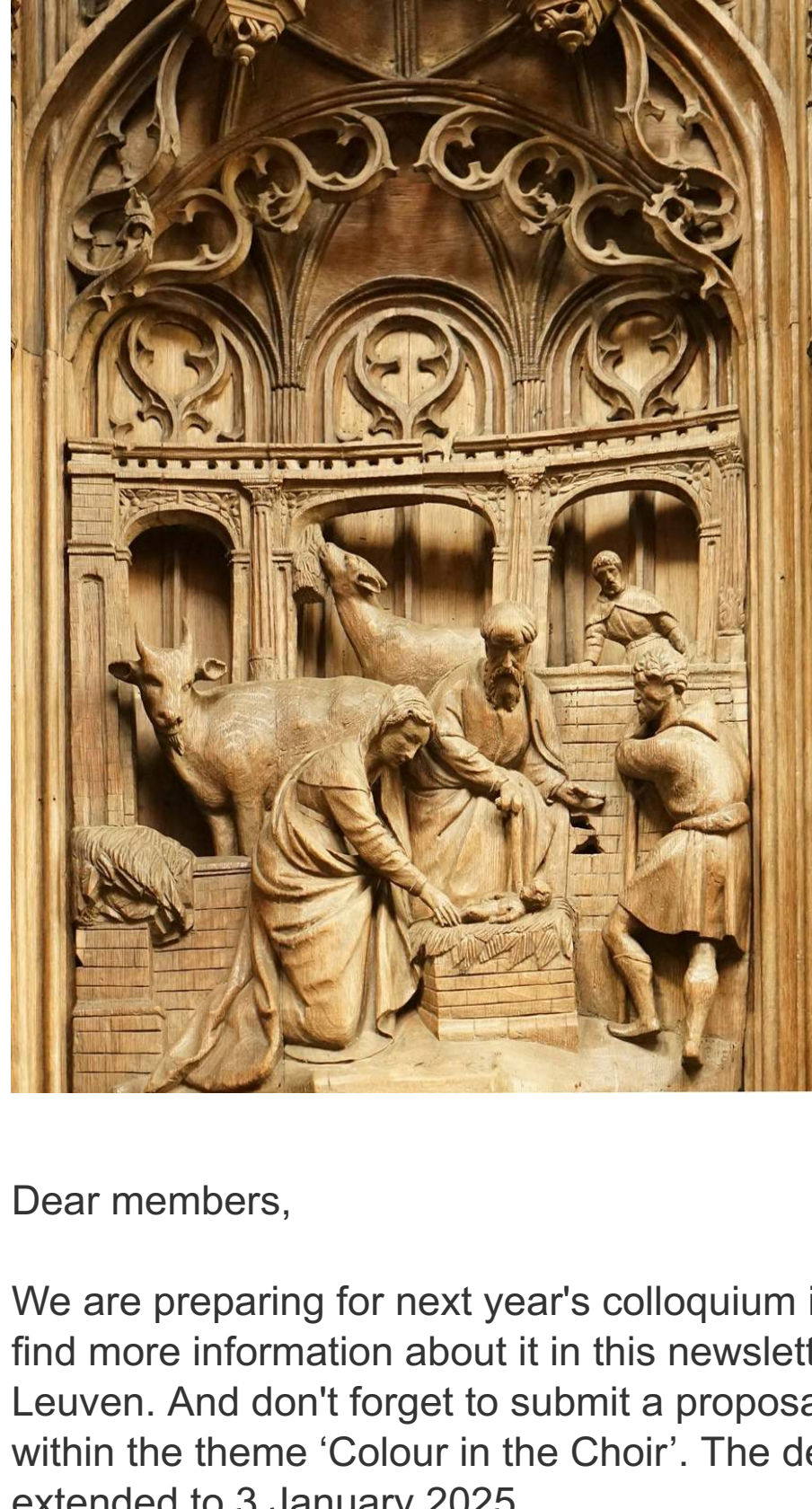


ICONostalla

Misericordia International

Newsletter nr. 34 (December 2024)

[Website ICONostalla Misericordia International](#)



Mathieu de Waeyer, *Birth of Christ*, 1540-1544, Louvain, St Geertrude's Church © Willy Piron

Dear members,

Please remember to renew your membership for 2025 using the form on the next page.

We wish you a very Merry Christmas and all the best for 2025.

Frédéric Billiet

Willy Piron

News from ICONostalla Misericordia International

XVth ICONostalla Misericordia International colloquium

COLOUR IN THE CHOIR. POLYCHROMY ON LATE-MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE CHURCH FURNITURE

16th ICONostalla Misericordia International colloquium and 12th ARds Annual Conference on Current Research in Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture Leuven (BE), M Leuven, 21-23 May 2025.

The call for papers for our upcoming conference, focusing on polychromy on late-medieval and Renaissance church furniture, is open. You can find the call for papers and submission guidelines [here](#).

For this conference Iconostalla Misericordia International and ARDS are joining forces to put the focus on choir stalls and church furniture. Choir stalls were integral components of medieval churches, often commissioned by the administration of cathedrals, monasteries, parishes or even city councils or guilds. Choir stalls were part of the fixed and permanent church furniture often adorned with intricate carvings. While the bench ends predominantly depicted religious scenes, the carvings on the misericords and knobs often feature profane themes, such as fantasy creatures, human figures, animals, proverbs, and fables. Positioned at the religious heart of the church, these carvings served as expressions of the medieval worldview and represented significant and intricate artistic endeavors.

Research on choir stalls has primarily delved into their iconographic aspects, formal and stylistic analyses, and the interplay of religious and profane themes. In recent years, there has been a greater interest in the technical and production aspects of choir stalls. For instance, the 2016 Iconostalla Misericordia International conference in Greifswald explored the workshops that produced choir stalls. In Rijeka in 2018, the relationship between patron and maker was the subject of a colloquium.

An underexplored topic regarding choir stalls is the use of colour. This is partly because evidence of polychromy is scarce and often ambiguous, with many stalls having lost their original colours due to restoration practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, there are instances of choir stalls that exhibit traces of their original polychromy. With regard to colour on choir stalls, as well as on other church furniture such as pulpits and rood screens, several questions arise. Where are examples of painted choir stalls (and/or other church furniture) known and what archival data are available? What materials and techniques were used? Who were the artist and craftsmen for applying the colours, what does recent research learn us about collaborations between craftsmen of different guilds, such as the joiners guilds, the sculptor or masons guilds and the painters guild? How did or does the complicated relationship between colour and form, manifest itself in the commissioning, production, perception and use of choir stalls? Did the colours have purely aesthetic purpose, or did the paintings have also a functional one? How should the remaining traces of colours on choir stalls be restored/preserved?

This call for papers welcomes specific case studies that touch upon one or more of the topics outlined above, as well as papers providing a broader view on the subject. Your proposal can be (art-)historical, anthropological, historiographical, archaeological, or technical in nature. Multidisciplinary approaches are encouraged.

Member's publications and activities

2023
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Aktuelle des Brandenburgischen Landesamtes für Denkmalpflege und Archäologisches Landesmuseum

Anja Seliger

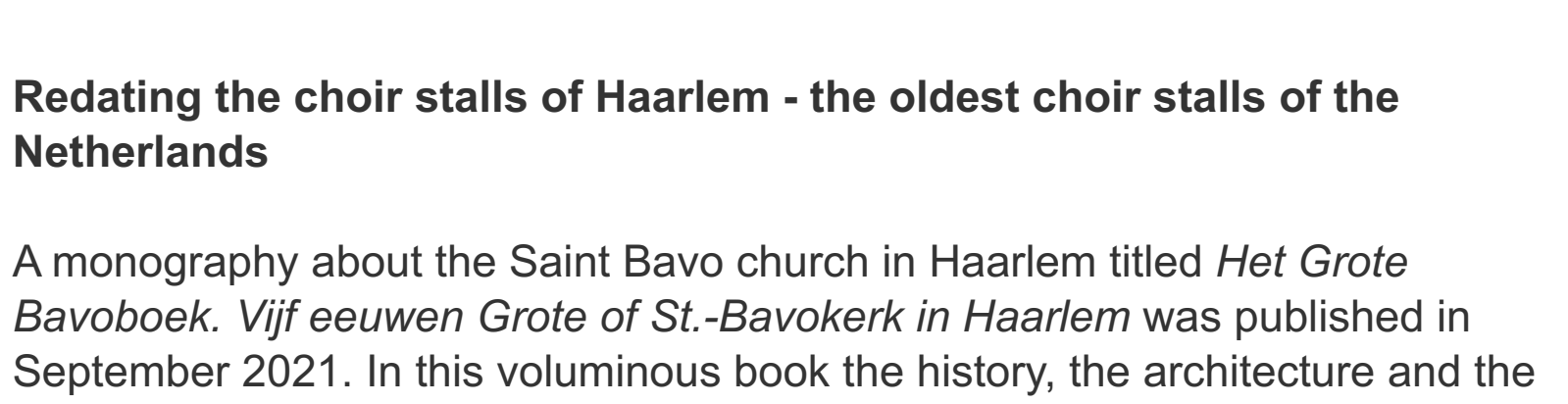
Mittelalterliches Chorgestühl in der Mark Brandenburg
Baugestalt und Bildfunktion unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Pfarrkirchen
Lukas Verlag

Anja Seliger Anja Seliger published her PhD thesis, entitled *Mittelalterliches Chorgestühl in der Mark Brandenburg. Baugestalt und Bildfunktion unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Pfarrkirchen*. We congratulate her on this final stage and on her excellent book.

You can order the book [here](#).

Anja Seliger also wrote an article on the choir stalls of the Cathedral of Havelberg in the following book: 850 Jahre *Weihe des Havelberger Domes. Geschichte – Architektur – Kunst*.

You can find more information [here](#).



Redating the choir stalls of Haarlem - the oldest choir stalls of the Netherlands

A monography about the Saint Bavo church in Haarlem titled *Het Grote Bavoboek. Vijf eeuwen Grote of St.-Bavokerk in Haarlem* was published in September 2021. In this voluminous book the history, the architecture and the interior of the church are discussed based on previous and new research. Elisabeth den Hartog, independent professor at Leiden University, and Jörg Soentgerath, independent architectural historian, have performed a stylistic and technical analysis on the choir stalls which has resulted in the article: *De oudste koorbanken van Nederland. Een herdatering van het Haarlemse gestoelte op basis van een technische en stilistische analyse*.

Since the 19th century, the choir stalls of Haarlem are dated around 1512-1513 and ascribed to Jasper Pietersz. This dating is based on accounts in the churchwardens' archives. However, a closer study of this material has shown that this concerns payment for changes made to the choir stalls. Woodcarver Jasper Pietersz. and joiner Mychel Claesz. were responsible in the early 16th century for the addition of dorsal panels and canopy, and five seats.

After this first conclusion, the authors discuss the history and use of the choir stalls, followed by a short description of the current ensemble which consists of 22 seats. This is followed by an extensive technical and stylistic analysis. The latter analysis mainly focuses on the clothing, the chaperon, which can be seen on many figures depicted on the misericords and armrests. Together with the archival source from 1439 where payment is made for elevating the choir stalls, the conclusion is made that the Haarlem choir stalls are much older than the accepted idea of the 16th century.

Based on their research, the authors convincingly state that the oldest part of the Haarlem choir stalls originated from the late 14th century. With this conclusion, the Haarlem choir stalls are suddenly the oldest ensemble in the Netherlands. After more than a century of research, a fresh look could provide a new overview of choir stalls in the Netherlands.

Christel Theunissen

Elisabeth den Hartog & Jörg Soentgerath, 'De oudste koorbanken van Nederland. Een herdatering van het Haarlemse gestoelte op basis van een technische en stilistische analyse', in: Koen Vermeij e.a. (ed.), *Het Grote Bavoboek. Vijf eeuwen Grote of St.-Bavokerk in Haarlem*, Zwolle 2021, pp. 393-415.

You can find more information [here](#).

The [Stalla-database](#) is constantly being updated with new records and images of medieval choir stalls.

Records and images of the following stalls are entered since summer 2024 until now:

- Aberdeen
- Autrèche
- Avrillé
- Charlieu
- Écuillé
- Le Liège
- Louvain, St Geertrude's Church
- Maisonnais
- Nazelles-Négron
- Précigné
- Saint-Flavier
- Swinbrook

Other

Please remember to renew your membership for 2025 using the form on the next page.

Subscription 2025

Name:

Adress :.....

Zipcode and country:

Email:

University, Institution:

Field of expertise:

Members are requested to offer their publications for our documentation center. Please send your recent publications by mail.

Please send this form by mail and by post with the payment (in euros) to:

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F - 36230 Neuvy-Saint-Sépulchre
France

Mail :
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Fee for 2025
Active members: € 20,-
Students: free
Honorary members: from € 20,-

You can make a bank transfer on the Association Misericordia International's account

Agency: Paris Bastille (BNP Paribas)

RIB: 30004 00370 00002857817 24

IBAN: FR76 3000 4003 7000 0028 5781 724

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