

On the Way Towards Heaven

Sculpture Exhibition at the Archabbey St. Ottilien, Germany



St. Ottilien, May, June 2014

Visitors of the Archabbey St. Ottilien, near Munich, Germany, can admire over head-high wooden sculptures these days. The retired art professor of the Rabanus-Maurus-College, Franz Hämmerle, exhibits his enormous mainly religious statues in the gardens of the abbey under the motto 'Towards Heaven'. The outdoor exhibition lasts until end of September this year.

You can't just pass by. The sculptures stop you and start talking to you. That impressive they are. They demand an answer. They want to tell you their story on the way towards heaven.

For instance there is St. Paul (left) being struck by a lightning on his horse ride to Damascus, Syria. On the statue he is just falling down his horse. And you seem to hear the voice of Jesus "Why do you persecute me?" And you kind of want to help him, and I put my hand into his and say: "Come on, Paul, get up. Think a bit!" New Testament life seems to resurrect. Unfortunately,

dear reader, you can't hear the most expressive church bells ringing, filling the abbey park, shaking your soul.

Some of the sculptures are that huge that you can step into and become a part of them. Like the one below left. It's called 'Breaking open and invocation'. Like humility and desire in prayer – massive, but still sensitive. You feel your prayers get sent directly to heaven.



Other ones are called the 'Big Embrace' and the 'Holy Family'
You can walk around and examine them intensely trying to understand their life situation.



Looking at the objects they appear to me as if they weren't really ready, as if the artist were still working on them or – as if they all were on the way towards heaven – not yet ready!

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