Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

Bitterli, Dieter, project dir. emblemata.ch: An Inventory of Applied Emblems in Switzerland. Other

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Although core research on emblematics is still focused on printed books, the last 20 years have seen a growing interest in the use of emblems in material culture, known as applied emblematics (*angewandte Emblematik*). Such emblems were present on the walls of churches and secular buildings, furniture, and textiles, and they comprised important elements of various types of festivals. These material emblematic realizations still await further study. Most freely accessible online projects are associated with libraries and give access to select emblem books from that particular library's collection. Against this backdrop, projects that aim to inventory and provide photographic identification of non-book emblematic compositions are particularly appreciated.

Dieter Bitterli's project, entitled emblemata.ch: An Inventory of Applied Emblems in Switzerland, aims to list objects with applied emblems located in Switzerland and created between 1600 and 1780. During the nine years of the project (2012–21), 28 objects were inventoried and described. The author emphasizes that the project constitutes a "scholarly website" rather than a database. Despite not meeting database standards for several reasons, it nevertheless represents a useful collection of architectural objects constructed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that were decorated with emblems. Objects in the inventory include painted emblems on church altars and panelled ceilings, decorated façades and walls, stucco emblems as a part of a scheme of interior ornamentation, emblems on stained glass windows, and so on. It is worth noting that the author also prepared the associated website for the Pilgrimage Church in Hergiswald, the building mostly richly decorated with emblems in Switzerland (bilderhimmel-hergiswald.ch). In conjunction with this research, he also published the monograph *Der Bilderhimmel von Hergiswald* in 2017.

The website contains six main subsections: "Home," "The Project," "Objects & Emblems," "References," "Indices," and "More." Browsing begins on the "Objects & Emblems" page with a list of locations, arranged in alphabetical order, where applied emblems are found. Each location is accompanied by

a representative photo of the building. The name of the location links to a subpage that provides individual documentation of that object (Fig. 1). Each description is divided into three sections: location, objects; emblems; and literature. The first section includes the object's name, a brief history (e.g., time of construction, reconstruction), and its geographical location (place and Swiss canton). The second section is divided into four parts: "Context," "Authorship & Date," "Significance," and "Source." In "Context," users learn the positioning of emblems in the building and their basic division into cycles. Then the author summarizes the information about the authorship and time of creation, if known ("Authorship, Date"); the aims and significance of the emblematic cycle, such as praise of nature, the glorification of a saint, and political emblems ("Signification"); the models identified in printed emblem books ("Source"); and associated bibliography. To the right of the description, a Google Maps plugin shows the location of the building. Beneath the map, users can find a floor plan of the building, which is helpful for envisioning the arrangement of individual emblem compositions. This is followed by the inventory with thumbnail photographs: each time, the list opens with a general photo of the building's exterior and interior, making it easier to understand the overall composition. Users can then select the photographs of the building (exterior and interior) as well as images of individual emblems from the thumbnail bar.

The description of the individual emblems is limited to a transcription of the motto and an indication of the general motif (e.g., oak tree, fortified city). Latin and multilingual mottoes have not been translated. At present, a search engine is only available for the list of themes and mottos on the "Indices" page; adding a general search engine to the site (even a simple Google Search plugin) would enable more productive browsing. Instead of Iconclass, the standard and most frequently used classification system for emblem databases, separate hyperlinks connect to the motifs, mottoes, artists, and sources listed in the "Indices" section. While these features enhance the functionality of this particular website, it must be acknowledged that the project does not employ a standard vocabulary or classification system.

Home   The Project   **Objects & Emblems**   References   Indices   More

Lain (GR)

LOCATION, OBJECT
Hamlet of Lain, community of Vaz/Obervaz, Canton of Grisons. Roman-Catholic church of St Lucius (Filialkirche Son Leza), built 1678-81 as part of the Capuchin mission of Rhaetia, consecrated 1685; restored 1961-62 and 1993-95 (exterior). Richly painStted stuccoed nave and choir, including scenes of saints' lives and emblems.

EMBLEMS (25)
Context
I.1-18: Nave walls with eighteen frescoed emblems: nos. I.1-8 below the moulding in elaborately painted frames including names of donors; nos. I.9-18 in the wall arches above the moulding, flanking the windows. Clockwise from entrance.
II.1-5: Transverse arch between nave and choir with five emblems in stucco frames with Latin mottoes.
III.1-2: High altar of St Lucius: two emblems at the base of the altar columns, signed and dated 1690.
Authorship, Date
Artist unknown, *c.* 1680; except nos. III.1-2, signed and dated Hilarius Sigron, 1690. Possibly designed by Bernardo da Morone OFMCap, who served as priest in the parish of Obervaz from 1672-1708.
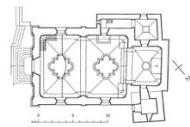**Significance**
Glorification of St Lucius, St Florinus and St Catherine, the martyrs and patron saints of the church.
Source
All taken from Picinelli 1669.

LITERATURE
Kdm GR 2: 300-308; KF 2: 105-06; Graf 1974: 155, 164; Sonder 1998: 44-47; Batz 2004: 131-33; Oberli 2021: 193-94.

Layout plan (click to enlarge)

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Lain I.2
A palm tree.
NEQUE FLECTITUR AURO.

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Fig. 1. Sample page view of a subsection with the Roman Catholic Church of St. Lucius (Filialkirche Son Leza) in Lain (Grisons Canton).

While the "Indices" section is helpful for comparative studies because of its division into four parts—"Motifs," "Mottoes" (in Latin, German, French, Italian, and Spanish), "Artists," and "Sources"—in the future, this section could be better adapted for users through some changes in the links. For example, if users are interested in the motif of the sun, they currently encounter the categories "sun (reflected)," "sun (rising)," "sun (shot)," and "sun and clouds." Each of these different motifs has been assigned to the name of an architectural object, together with a number. Unfortunately, however, they link to the general subpage of the architectural object rather than a specific emblem. Users must therefore remember the number of the emblem indicated in the index in order to look for it in the subsection of the given object. This could be avoided by linking to the relevant subpage with the specific emblem, though this would require a major, time-consuming reconfiguration of the site. Additionally, the method and order that the author has chosen enabled him to update the project page quickly.

Despite the items noted here for possible improvement, the project allows users to browse freely through dozens of applied emblems in buildings in Switzerland. The website is consistent with the name of the project—it is an inventory that can be used for future research. One would hope that other similar projects will be created, as even basic collections of data (e.g., place of execution, motto, motif) are an invaluable source for researchers concerned with the reception and migration of emblems.

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