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Imag(in)ing Medieval Stones: Arthur Kingsley Porter, Photography, and the Study of Romanesque Sculpture after World War I

Kathryn Brush, University of Western Ontario

This paper examines Arthur Kingsley Porter's legendary early twentieth-century project to capture the visual culture of the Middle Ages through the camera's lens. Porter, who taught at Yale (1915-1919) and Harvard (1920-1933), vaulted to international fame with the appearance of *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads* (10 vols., 1923). This widely circulated publication, which featured nine portfolio volumes of photographs, had a profound impact on the study of Romanesque sculpture in both Europe and the United States for much of the twentieth century.

The 1,527 images in this publication, however, formed only a small part of the photographic archive assembled by Porter during the years of his professional activity (ca. 1908-1933). This personal archive, given to Harvard's Fogg Art Museum in 1949, and now in the Special Collections of Harvard's Fine Arts Library, consists of approximately 35,000 images of medieval architecture and sculpture acquired by Porter from a variety of sources and 11,000 photographs made by Porter and his wife Lucy in the course of their European travels. The Arthur Kingsley Porter Collection of photographs helped to shape the vision of several generations of students and scholars educated at Harvard.

This paper will outline the history and formation of the Porter Collection. It will focus in particular on the photographic production of Porter and his wife in the years immediately after the First World War when *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads* was in preparation. Drawing on archival sources in addition to the images themselves, this paper moves within and beyond the photographic frame to explore the specific contexts in which the Porters engaged with the imaging of eleventh- and twelfth-century sculpture. This paper aims not only to suggest some of the ways in which Porter's photographic practice mobilized his scholarly imagination as he formulated his novel theories, but also to position his photocentric interpretation of the past in relation to the work of his contemporaries.

Biographical Note

Kathryn Brush (PhD Brown) is Professor of Art History in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Western Ontario, where she is Graham and Gail Wright Distinguished Scholar in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (2010-11). Her research focuses on medieval art; art theory and historiography; and the history of museums, archives, and collecting. Her books include *Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art* (1996); *Vastly More Than Brick and Mortar: Reinventing the Fogg Art Museum in the 1920s* (2003); and *Mapping Medievalism at the Canadian Frontier* (2010; the latter in conjunction with an exhibition). She is currently preparing a book on Arthur Kingsley Porter, North America's pioneering scholar of medieval art and visual culture.