

L'ABBAZIA DI MARIENBERG

The abbey church, which dates from the late 12th century, is entered via a stone-framed Romanesque round-arch portal, an outstanding example of the advanced stone-working techniques of the time.

The tympanum features the "Beautiful Madonna" from the beginning of the 15th century, an excellent example of the "soft style" of Gothic architecture. Our Lady is giving the Infant Jesus an apple. The church received its current Baroque appearance between 1643 and 1648 under the Abbot Jakob Grafinger. The transept was separated off and converted into a sacristy, a choir, and a chapel for the prelates. The side aisles were also partitioned to create side chapels, while the narrow Romanesque arched windows were enlarged for better light. The stucco works in Renaissance style were realized by Florian Nuth from Innsbruck and Brother Paul Bock SJ.

The word crypt means hidden room, tomb, a half-underground room where relics were kept, and the founders of churches and monasteries were buried. The crypt of Marienberg was dedicated in 1160 by His Holiness Adalgott, Bishop of Chur, and the monks first assembled here for their canonical hours and to celebrate the holy mass.

In 1643 the crypt was restructured and used as a burial place for the monks. In 1980 the tombs were removed and the frescoes, hidden for centuries, were revealed in all their glory.

They are among the most important testimonies of Romanesque art in the Alps, not only for the quality of the art, but also for the uniqueness of their spiritual expression.

On 11 August 1992 Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, visited the Benedictine Abbey of Marienberg and celebrated mass in the crypt.