



COVER OF THE THEOPHANU GOSPEL

Essen (?) between 1039 und 1058

Ivory: Cologne, second quarter of the 11th

Reverse side: 18th century

Wood, gold, filigree, pearls, gemstones, ivory

INV. 7

The magnificent cover belonged to a manuscript of the four gospels. The codex was one of the precious donations made to Essen Abbey by the Abbess Theophanu (in office from 1039 to 1058).

The ivory panel on the cover's front side depicts the birth, death and ascension of Christ. The figures within the gold relief which frames the ivory depict Christ as Judge of the World, Saints Peter and Paul, and Cosmas and Damian, patron saints of Essen Abbey,

Below these figures, the Mother of God sits enthroned between Saints Pinnosa and Walburga. A female figure kneels at her feet: the inscription indicates this to be the Abbess Theophanu.

The Abbess Franziska Christine (in office 1726–1776) had the current back cover added to the binding in the 18th century.

The original 11th century back cover had been covered with a precious silk fabric. The only parts of the fabric to survive are preserved underneath the metal medallions

The silk has a small pattern consisting of blue tendrils on a red background.

The fabric's weave suggests it is of Byzantine origin, and may have been given to Essen Abbey as a gift.

The piece was restored in 2011 with help from the Dr. Josef and Brigitte Pauli Foundation.