BRUSSELS : THE SABLON CHURCH

The Our-Lady-of-the-Sablon church, or shorter Sablon Church, dominates the Sablon Square in the center of Brussels. The Sablon area is nowadays the exclusive antiques shop area of Brussels with its many shops, art galleries, busy cafés and restaurants.

Until the end of the 13th century the Sablon was a scarcely populated area just outside the 12th century city walls. In 1304, however, the Brussels guild of Archers, had a little chapel built here in honor of the Holy Virgin.

The little chapel very soon turned into a major pilgrimage site. In 1348 a pious woman called Beatrijs Soetkins received a vision from the Holy Mother. She asked Beatrijs to steal a statue of the Madonna from a church in Antwerp and to bring it over to the Sablon chapel in Brussels. It was soon believed that the statue was miraculous, which, of course, started to attract flocks of pilgrims to the Sablon.

By order of the Guild of Archers the chapel was then transformed into a major gothic church from 1436 until the beginning of the 16th century. A tower was planned but never constructed.

Even today, the Sablon church is one of the most beautiful and intimate gothic churches in Brussels and a true example of brabantine gothic style.

The Sablon church used to be surrounded by houses, as was the case with most churches in medieval Europe. In the second half of the 19th century the houses around the church were demolished during the urbanization projects of King Leopold II, which entirely transformed the Sablon Area.

Inside the church beautiful windows can be admired, as well as the private chapel of the Family Von Thurn und Taxis, who elaborated the European postal services in Europe during the Habsburg empire.

The Brabantine gothic style.

Whereas the flamboyant French gothic style used acrobatic architectural solutions, the Brabantine gothic style remained faithful to the simpler elements of the 13th century. This style was used to construct numerous churches in the former Dukedom of Brabant and examples of it can be seen in cities like Brussels, Antwerp, Mechelen, Leuven, Lier, and s'Hertogenbosch (now in The Netherlands). Typical for the Brabantine style is the lack of exaggerated accentuation of verticalism and a stronger focus on a certain tangible
The Sablon Church in Brussels.

materialism. In Brabantine churches the interior will almost always be dominated by pillars crowned with cabbage leaf decoration. The pillars also carry the onset of the bow arches and harmonize with the numerous lavishly decorated stained-glass windows.

Location
Grote Zavel / Place du Grand Sablon