

Manuscript of Villard de Honnecourt



Encyclopaedic in nature, this manuscript consists of 66 unforgettable pages full of illustrations covering many categories: stonemasonry, architecture, carpentry, geometry, zoology and mechanical devices of the period related to the fascinating and mysterious art of cathedral building.

It has around 250 superb drawings on parchment, probably dating from the first quarter of the 13th century, around 1220, and such drawings would correspond to the cathedrals of places that the author visited in Switzerland, France and Hungary, such as Chartres, Lausanne and Rheims.

Considered by many to be a precursor of the great Leonardo da Vinci, very little is known about him, as there is no other surviving written work by him.

Ni siquiera hay certeza absoluta sobre su nombre, ya que aparecen las formas Villars y Vilars, pues el apellido le podría venir del topónimo de Honnecourt-sur-Escaut en Picardía –población surgida en torno a una abadía benedictina– y en sus pocos escritos se aprecia el dialecto del francés antiguo de esta zona.

There is not even absolute certainty about his name, as both the forms Villars and Vilars appear, as the surname could come from the place name of Honnecourt-sur-Escaut in Picardy –a village that grew around a Benedictine abbey– and in his few writings the Old French dialect from this area is evident.

The book begins with this delightful message:

Villard de Honnecourt greets you and recommends all those who use the instructions given in this book to pray for his soul and to remember him, for in this book will be found to be a useful aid in the magnificent art of building and in certain arts of carpentry as well as in the art of portraiture and its components as required and taught by the art of geometry.

Among his attractive devices and curious ingenuities, the famous perpetual motion machine (*perpetuum mobile*), or weight wheel, stands out.

We can categorically state that this is one of the greatest and most important documents of the 13th century.

