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The Wall Painting in the Franciscan Church of St. John the Baptist in Holszany: History and Conservation Works

History

Holszany is a town located on the territory of today's Belarus which was originally known as the estates of Lithuanian Dukes of Holszany, and since the 16th century – the Sapieha family. Initially, it belonged to Bogdan Sapieha who granted the local Catholic church to Evangelicals but when he got converted to Catholicism he took it back.

In 1618, the Great Deputy Chancellor of Lithuania Paweł Stefan Sapieha granted the foundation to the Franciscans in Holszany; he also built the Church of St. John the Baptist and a residential building for them. In 1774, the church was remodeled for the Franciscans' money. Its main facade was decorated with paintings of scenes from the life of its patron – St. John the Baptist, and new altars were added in about 1790. The preserved copies of the foundation documents and information from inventory records and inspection certificates from the end of the 18th century and the 1st half of the 19th century testify to those changes [6], [7], [9], [22–24]. After the failure of the November Uprising whose goal was to restore the Polish-Lithuanian Federation, many monasteries in former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were considered centers of rebellion by tsarist authorities and they were closed. Such a policy applied also to the Franciscan convent in Holszany. It was closed in 1832 and the residential buildings were handed over to the Russian army that demolished some of them. The church was the only building that was preserved for the parish (Fig. 1) [8], [14], [15], [18], [20].

In the 1930s, the Soviet authorities closed the church in Holszany and turned it, just like many other churches, into workshops. It was given back to the believers only in 1990, and at the very end of the 20th century, the Franciscan monks returned there too. However, they found the temple, which once was famous for its excellent pieces of sacred art, destroyed and devastated. There were no altar paintings, wooden pews, confessionals, Rococo ornaments, carved in wood figures of four Evangelists and St. John the Baptist that once decorated the pulpit, or the pulpit itself, which was earlier located by the side altar of St. Anthony. The wooden elements of its interior decoration were probably burned down by the workshop workers. The Belarusian muse-



Fig. 1. Church in Holszany (photo by B. Wójtowicz, 2007)

Il. 1. Kościół w Holszanach (ot. B. Wójtowicz, 2007)

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Fig. 2. Holszany interior of the church with side altars
(photo: J. Szczepańska, 2008)

Il. 2. Holszany widok wnętrza kościoła z perspektywą
ołtarzy bocznych (fot. J. Szczepańska, 2008)

um employees saved the marble tomb monument of the founder of the Franciscan estates in Holszany – Paweł Stefan Sapieha and his two wives (Regina and Elżbieta) from total destruction. It was moved to the Museum of Early Belarusian Culture in Minsk. What remained of



Fig. 3. Side altar of St. Anthony in the church of Friars Minor
in Budslaw (photo: G. Trimakas, 1997)

Il. 3. Boczny ołtarz św. Antoniego w kościele bernardyńskim
w Budslawiu, (fot. G. Trimakas, 1997)

the rich interior of the Church of St. John the Baptist and Evangelist was only marble side altars decorated with polychrome and monumental, two-stage composition: illusory painting taking up the whole wall of the presbytery with centrally located scene of Jesus's baptism in Jordan with the figure of St. John the Evangelist where the stages meet. It can be only assumed that this illusory composition of exceptional beauty and monument character was not recognized by the workers of local workshops as the altar decoration and that is why it was not destroyed (Fig. 2).

The Baroque, illusory paintings of retables in the architecture of the churches in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became popular in the 18th century. That fashion already in the Neo-Baroque form was still widespread in the 1st half of the 19th century, and its individual examples, usually in the form of folk paintings, were still created in the 2nd half of the 19th century or even at the beginning of the 20th century. In the Grand Duchy, painted altars were not only a version of wall paintings, though most examples that have survived until today are such paintings. The archival documents of the churches, chapels and monasteries as well as original altars and research conducted by experts in polychrome have enabled the identification of over a thousand examples of painted altars, which proves that most popular among them were painted on boards made by carpenters with outline decorations. Unfortunately, only few of them have remained in their original form until today. They were painted also on plastered walls of the buildings as well as directly on bearing walls of wooden structures and on canvas spread directly on the walls of the buildings, on wooden boards or on wooden stretchers. In the relatively small church buildings in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania which were supposed to be decorated with effective altars that would meet the requirements of post-Tridentine liturgy, which was special and full of theatricals, the retables were presented with the use of illusory, perspective paintings. They did not take much room, provided a better space order, and at the same time created a sense of splendor. Such altars fulfilled the popular Baroque ideas of an "infinite world" and "universal theater". A Baroque man was not at all embarrassed by the simple materials and poor techniques which were applied to make such painted altars, because what was in fact fascinating was primarily the possibilities provided by perspective and an art of imitation, which made it possible to complete seemingly highly ambitious designs with the use of rather limited means. In the 18th century, painted altars were equally often built in the chapels of Lithuanian magnates' palaces, in the churches founded by them, in monumental monastic complexes and in simple parish and branch churches¹.

¹ The monographs by Dalia Klajumienė provide comprehensive information on the 18th century Baroque illusory painting in the churches in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and on painted altars [11], [12].



Fig. 4. Side altar of St. Francis in the church of Friars Minor in Budslaw (photo: G. Trimakas, 1997)

Il. 4. Boczny ołtarz św. Franciszka w kościele bernardyńskim w Budslawiu (fot. G. Trimakas, 1997)

The painted altars in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were created by masters of different origin and class. Few original altars evidently show such differences. The main altar in the Church of St. John the Baptist and Evangelist in Holszany is a good example of “high art”. Since the moment of its creation that painting masterpiece has been described as exceptional. During the general inspection of the church in 1797, the main altar surprisingly drew a lot of attention and recognition². The same document describes the side altars in much less detail than the main one, however, it seems that the inspector was positively impressed by them³. Such a comprehensive and full of admira-

² Ołtarz Wielki Świętego Jana Chrzciciela y Ewangelisty obtycznie na Murze Włoską Architekturą y Ręką cale doskonałą Metrowską naywyborniej y naygustowniej malowany, Osobliwą a rzadką widzianą całemu Kościolowi Czyni ozdobe; tego Ołtarza Wzobrażeń nieopisuję wszczegulach, bo jako iest rzeczą nieporuszoną, tak chyba pozne Wielki lub jaki nadzwyczajny przypadek tą piękną Pamiątkę Kosztem niemalym Konwentu Holszanskiego, a Staraniem w Bogu Przewielebniejo Jmę Xiędza Kazimierza Chrapowickiego Gwardyana udziałana, Zawsze, Ucmić y ten naywspalniejszy zmniejszy potrafi widok [23, l. 109v].

³ Ołtarzow pobocznych przy Filarach umieszczonych Sześć, jako to: Świętey Anny, Sgo Antoniego z Sukienką na obrazie Srebrną, Sgo Jozefa z Kopertyna, Nayswiętszey Panny Niepokalanego Poczęcia, Świętego Franciszka Serafickiego, Sgo Tadeusza z mensami murovanemi. Każda z nich o iednym Gradusie. Takowe Wszystkie Ołtarze Uniformem dzialane naylepiej w Kolory falszmarmurowane, z różną w gurze Szukateryą; Caley tej Bazyliki iedyną staie się Osobliwością [23, l. 109v].



Fig. 5. Interior of the monastic orthodox church of the Basilians (currently eastern orthodox), Liady. Behind the iconostasis on the sanctuary wall, the upper section of painted altar. (photo: D. Klajumienė, 2000)

Il. 5. Wnętrze cerkwi klasztornej bazylianów (teraz prawosławnych), Liady. Za ikonostasem na ścianie prezbiterium widoczna górna część namalowanego ołtarza. (fot. D. Klajumienė, 2000)

ration description of the altar (especially the main one) is rather rare and it is not a typical account. Most of the descriptions of painted altars in the 18th century and the 1st half of the 19th century were usually short and simple; by and large they included a note that the altars were built with the use of mortar or of wood, but painted with the mention of the type of substrate, sometimes indicating colors⁴.

In respect of professional painting workmanship, the main altar in the Franciscan Church in Holszany ranks among those created at that time in late Baroque style and early neoclassical altars in such churches on the territory of today’s Belarus as the Church of Friars Minor in Budslaw (Fig. 3, 4) or former monastic Church of the Basilians in Liady (Fig. 5). The chronicle written by Friars Minor from Budslaw in the years 1769–1782 states that in the years 1778–1782 their church was decorated with a group of nine painted altars

⁴ For instance: *na murze w optykę malowany, na muru w różne kolory malowany, na scianie płótnem wybitey optycznie malowany, z tarcic wystawiony i pod optykę malowany, optycznym sposobem na płótnie malowany, pod optyką farbą szafirową malowany*. More on descriptions of painted altars see: [12, p. 53–87].

by master Kazimierz Antoszewski (b. ? – died after 1805), whose biography indicates that he made decorations in the Franciscan Church in Dziśna (1790), the Jesuit Church in Łuczaj (cir. 1783–1795)⁵, the cathedral in Minsk and in other churches near Minsk [4]⁶. The original frescos by Kazimierz Antoszewski as well as the descriptions of his works included in sources indicate that he was an excellent painter who mastered the possibilities offered by illusory painting. Most often, he used *en grisaille* technique, and the architectural structure of his illusory altars was composed with the use of Corinthian order columns with decorated, gilded capitals. In 1940, professor Marian Morelowski, who tremendously contributed to the research of forms and artistic influences in the capital city of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – Vilnius, put forth a hypothesis that the presbytery of the Franciscan Church in Holszany

⁵ At the beginning of the 20th century, the interior of the church in Łuczaj was cleaned, and at the end of the 20th century, the wall paintings inside the church were ineptly “renovated” again and that is why it is difficult to determine their original composition and colors. The elements of ornamentation and composition principles testify to the fact that they were made by Antoszewski.

⁶ The frescos in Budslaw and the question of their authorship as well as other works by Antoszewski have been on many occasions discussed in Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian scientific publications: [1]–[3], [10], [11, p. 47, 97, 206, 217, 219, 248], [12, p. 13, 46, 69, 91, 92, 188, 191, 209], [16].

was decorated by the famous artist from the 2nd half of the 18th century – Franciszek Niemirowski (1734–1795). He decorated churches and monasteries of the Marians as well as reformed and conventual Franciscans [17]. However, neither Morelowski nor other 20-century researchers could verify that hypothesis for rather objective reasons. One of the circumstances that made the determination of authorship difficult was that the church in Holszany was refurbished at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries [21]. The compositions on the interior walls were seriously overpainted, covering the original painting layer. Another renovation of the church and its bell tower was conducted in 1927 [19], however, there is no information on whether it involved the wall paintings or not.

When in 1930 the ecclesiastical buildings in the Oszmiański District were photographed, the interior of the church in Holszany was also photographed. In the picture by J. Łoziński, the main altar looks evidently “renovated” [5]. The other circumstance is the fragmentary character of the original archives of the Franciscans in Holszany. It can be only assumed that the name of the author of the main altar, praised in the inspection certificates from the end of the 18th century, must have been noted in the revenue and expense ledger from 1706–1830 which has not been found to date⁷.

⁷ That ledger is mentioned in the church and monastery inspection certificate in 1830 [23, l. 127v].

Conservation works

In 2003, a preliminary survey was conducted of the situation and the condition of the original decoration of the church in Holszany⁸. In 1992, after the period of inappropriate use of the very building of the temple during the Soviet rule, its original purpose as a place of worship was restored. The long-lasting neglect and the commercial use of the interior of the church resulted in the deterioration of its fabric⁹. That state is still visible in the adjacent monastery despite the fact that the building was only partially used (until recently there was an exhibition in a few of its rooms).

In 2003, the technical condition of the church itself was satisfactory. Its roof and the system of rainwater disposal were repaired; the gutters and downspouts were properly installed, especially taking into account the places earlier exposed to water penetration. Chipped plaster was repaired on the outside and the facade was painted. Unfortunately, not all repair works were conducted properly. The windows which were installed in the church in massive, metal frames have no horizontal pivoting system and cannot be opened that way. Furthermore, very simple stained-glass windows are

inconsistent with the interior decoration characteristic of the period. What proved more dangerous for the condition of the church, however, was the very thick, cement floor on which marble plates were placed. Raising the level of the church floor resulted not only in losing the architectural proportions of the altars which did not have any steps¹⁰ but it also brought to the church large amounts of water and soluble salts whose efflorescences are visible on the walls and altars.

The painted decoration covers the whole surface of the wall enclosing the presbytery. It shows an illusory architectural perspective. The colonnade provides a frame for the painting of the baptism of Christ in Jordan with a monochromatic figure of St. John the Evangelist above. These are not the only painted decorations of the church – right aisle is closed with a wall painting of shields with coats of arms and drapery around them. Stone altars were also painted. Their columns and other architectural elements were covered with a coat of paint imitating marble veins, and above upper cornices there are scenes difficult to interpret today as they are seriously damaged and were drastically overpainted. Probably, originally, the whole interior of the church with its architectural furnishings was covered with polychrome which must have created an amazing illusion of a uniform

⁸ The author began research commissioned by the Department of Heritage Protection at the Ministry of Culture. A few-day-long stay in the building (29 IX – 2 X 2003) enabled her to determine the condition of the painting and develop guidelines for conservation works plan

⁹ According to the accounts of the parishioners the church building was used as a warehouse, including a storage of fertilizers, which caused the salinity of the walls.

¹⁰ The archival description provides information that there was one step made of wood before the altar. At present, after the floor was raised, there are two steps.

interior with the altar scene fusing with the rows of side altars built with the use of mortar in the same tonality.

The scaffold which was set in 2003 provided access to the decoration in the section of the painting and architecture surrounding it on the north side. It was possible with its use to assess the condition of the painting in its lower section; already during the preliminary inspection it was possible to determine that it was to a large degree overpainted. The whole wall was overpainted most probably during the complete refurbishment of the church in 1927 [19]. In close inspection, however, some traces of the original painting were discovered under the overpaint. Both the forms of the figures of angels and the way the capitals were painted seriously deviated from the artistry level of the composition of the whole architectural illusion. Some differences in application of colors unjustified by *chiaroscuro* were also visible. The upper section of the decoration above the capitals of the monumental columns was clearly divided by a vertical line, poorly rendering the border between light and shadow. During the initial inspection some small fragments of overpaint were removed, which is seen in the photograph, and the preliminary findings were confirmed. Furthermore, it turned out that the original coat of paint was well preserved and its condition was very good. Overpainting resulted in losing a lot of details; the original outline was to a large extent lost, and in some places the colors of the composition were largely changed. The ornate frame was overpainted by extending the central painting sideways; the basis of the altar was built from red instead of white marble; the colors as well as the form of columns were also changed. Due to moisture and a distinct smell of mold, a few samples of paint coat were collected while making the initial inspection for laboratory tests as well as material for microbiological tests¹¹.

The information which was gathered was used to develop a plan of conservation works that was carried out in the summer seasons in 2006 and 2007.

Stage one included technical works¹². At the moment when the team of conservators came, the scaffold was already in place. Its traditional structure built with the use of wooden beams and boards was so dense that it was practically impossible to see the composition from the level of the floor or the choir. It turned out to be a serious difficulty in visual inspection of the condition of the whole painting. However, the scaffold enabled the conservators to examine all details of the monumental decoration. Before the works began, due to the results of microbiological tests, Lichenicide in alcoholic solution was sprayed in the air. The process was repeated twice in order to reduce the hazard caused by the presence of microorganisms. The agent was also sprayed in the areas close to the altar wall and in places where the traces of mold were evident. The condition of substrate seemed surprisingly good and only after



Fig. 6. Holszany; uncovered patches of the original painting in its uppermost section (photo: P. Lisowski, 2006)

Il. 6. Holszany, odkrywki wykonywane w najwyższej partii malowidła (fot. P. Lisowski, 2006)

the overpaint was removed it was possible to repair the chipped plaster. Anyway, the surface was uniform and the number of lacunae which needed puttying was really small. There were a few longer and shorter cracks in the wall but the plasters were not extensively chipped or incoherent. The main task was the removal of overpaint.

Most coats of the overpaint could be removed dry with the use of stiff brushes. Over the years, inside the interior which was exposed to a lot of moisture and differences in temperature, the binding agent of the overpaint disintegrated. The original layers of fresco remained in a very good condition and in many places, after they were uncovered and cleaned, they did not need any additional procedures. The best proof of their mechanical strength is the fact that the original painting was first uncovered during putting out fire inside. After a coat of overpaint was removed, some traces of earlier repairs of damaged fresco were uncovered. The lacunae in the upper section of the painting were significant. The middle section above the dome was almost completely whitewashed and then covered with a thin filler of a very hard fine grain mortar. The coat was white but its texture was similar to a smooth cement filler. The uppermost section of the wall, in the place where it meets the vault, some quite large patches of original painted decoration in the form of golden panels in a gray and green arch were found. It was very difficult to remove the layer of hard filler to expose the original fragments (Fig. 6). The outline of the overpaint coat did not match the original at all. In order not to lose the original outline of the composition, in case it is seriously damaged, it was uncovered by removing small strips by grinding off the hard mortar and applying the architectural composition on its surface; only after it was sure that the original was preserved to the sufficient degree guaranteeing reconstruction were the next fragments further cleaned with the use of scalpels¹³.

The nature of damage indicates that the roof of the church must have been damaged for an extended period of time in the section directly above the altar as the painted decorations, which were made in such a durable technique, were so

¹¹ The Laboratory of the National Museum in Warsaw also conducted chemical tests (Elżbieta Rosłonec) and microbiological tests (Iwona Pannenko).

¹² In that stage, the works were conducted by the following conservators: Renata and Piotr Lisowski, Barbara Wołosz, and the author of that paper, directing all works.

¹³ The method was developed by Piotr Lisowski who also uncovered this section of the painting.



Fig. 7. Holszany, original signs with a pink cloud in the background pose an interesting riddle for researchers. It is possible that it is a form of signature and date (?) (photo: P. Lisowski, 2006)

Il. 7. Holszany, znaki zachowane na tle różowej chmury stanowią interesującą zagadkę dla badaczy. Możliwe, że jest to forma sygnatury i data (?) (fot. P. Lisowski, 2006)



Fig. 8. Holszany, originally a crown was painted under the cartouche and then a pope's tiara and keys of St. Peter appeared in two successive layers (photo: P. Lisowski, 2006)

Il. 8. Holszany, ponad kartuszem namalowano pierwotnie koronę, a następnie w dwóch kolejnych warstwach pojawiła się tam tiara papieska i klucze Piotrowe (fot. P. Lisowski, 2006)

severely damaged¹⁴. There were more fillings like that. The same mortar was used to fill the cracks in the uppermost sections of original fragments of the decorations. Today, it is difficult to say to what extent the last paint coat repeated the original composition which did not survive but a rather primitive outline of angels and simple architectural forms seem to indicate that their painters had to create them anew.

Fortunately, the original division of the panels, the window with the sky, and a small fragment of an angel's arm remained, which enabled the determination of its scale. Right next to it, a sign was discovered which could be a kind of signature and some writing which could be a date – unfortunately, it was partly damaged by a crack in the wall (Fig. 7). Underneath the pope's tiara and St. Peter's keys, which were painted twice, in the last and earlier coats, there is an original cartouche for the coat of arms whose field was removed with the use of a sharp tool before overpaint was applied (Fig. 8). Unfortunately, at present the existing documents do not provide sufficient information to determine the moments when those changes were made. Maybe the earlier overpaintings were made during the complete refurbishment referred to above which was conducted at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries [21]. The last overpainting should be connected with the renovation conducted in 1927 [19].

Some overpaint had to be removed with distilled water, and in the lower sections with the use of machines. Deeper cracks in the plaster were glued with hydraulic mortar PLM, and smaller flakings with acrylic emulsion Primal AC 33. In general, the condition of the substrate of the whole painting should be considered rather stable. Deeper lacunae and cracks were filled with lime and sand putties, whereas shallow ones were filled with whitewash.

In the following summer, after the whitewashes sea-

soned, putties cured, and the wall dried, artistic works began and they included filling the lacunae in the painted coat, paint dotting and reconstruction¹⁵. After a detailed analysis of the situation, gouache technique was applied to paint dots. As original paintings are resistant to water, the fillings could be easily removed if necessary. Due to the great amount of work as well as limited time the paint dots imitate fillings without distinct optical variations.

Large lacunae were relatively easy to fill in the composition outline as it is symmetrical. In the case of larger lacunae the outline was corrected on digital photography printouts. It was, however, difficult to maintain the right balance in *chiaroscuro*. The scaffold blocking the view of large sections of the decoration prevented viewing the whole composition from a distance, which was needed to keep the chromatic balance.

The reconstruction of the upper section of the composition was based exclusively on last overpainting. The architectural divisions were maintained according to the drawings made on hard mortar which was left. The colors of architecture were slightly corrected; the secondary, bright blue sky was not retained in all clearings. The figures of angels were painted correctly anew on the basis of the original ones which survived in the uppermost section and an angel which did not survive, by left edge of the composition. Lacunae filled and the central scene with St. John the Evangelist was corrected. After many years of overpainting, the original architectural composition was restored.

The altar painting did not undergo conservation. The preliminary stratigraphic tests indicated a number of layers. Probably, the composition was originally painted in fresco

¹⁴ As mentioned earlier, the monastery's documents do not cover all periods.

¹⁵ Ewa Świącka (director of works) and Anna Stepkowska conducted paint dotting. Aleksandra and Edgar Pill made the reconstructions.

technique. Thick, oil overpainting maybe is not the first layer of paint applied on the original painting. The next overpainting, which is visible now, consists of two phases: masterly painted figures – probably in technique of lean tempera which lost some of its binding properties and only after its surface is slightly wet can the high level of tonality of the painting be fully appreciated (Fig. 9). It is difficult to say if the painter did not finish the painting or the sections of its background disintegrated, but surely the mechanically painted landscape elements and the waves of Jordan were not painted by the same hand. However, the composition of the scene is too big for the original “gilded” frame and it was extended to cover the columns. The conservation of the altar painting is a very complex problem for conservators. A lot of observations must be made in various kinds of light as well as many places must be uncovered and chemical tests must be conducted. It is unlikely that the original composition can be recovered because oil overpaint resulted in a deep penetration of the plaster layer with a greasy, blackened binder (a number of runs visible on the frame). These works will have to be performed in the future to select the best solution. It seems that the exposure

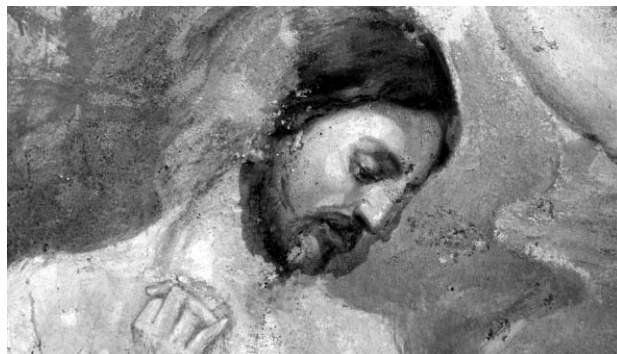


Fig. 9. Holszany, wet fragment of the painting shows the way tonality was modeled (photo: E. Świąćka, 2007)

Il. 9. Holszany, zwilżony fragment obrazu ukazuje sposób modelowania karnacji (fot. E. Świąćka, 2007)

of a rather primitive oil overpainting which has survived under the current painting next to it would benefit the illusory altar currently restored to its original form. Maybe only a delicate correction of the visible overpainting will be the best solution.

Conclusions and prospects

The whole uncovered painting as well as its individual elements point to the great master Kazimierz Antoszewski and similarities between the altar in Holszany and his other works (Fig. 10). The lower composition which is a retable of the main altar demonstrates a number of similarities to the altars at the Church of Friars Minor in Budślów, whereas the neoclassical decorative ornaments of the illusory vaulting and the dome above the presbytery – to the decorative ornaments of the Jesuit Church in Łuczaj. Furthermore, it is easy to see the letter “C” – in the top section of the composition, next to the cartouche with a crown, in the original paint coat by the sign resembling a signature [13, photo 55] – which is the first letter of the name *Kazimierz* written in Latin. It is quite probable as in the documents of the monasteries where he decorated churches, his name appears in its Latin form: “Casimiro Antoszewski” [4, I. 37].

Although these notes do not provide the final resolution of the issue of the authorship of the wall paintings in the Franciscan Church in Holszany, they are, however, encouraging for further research. Apart from that, the synthesis of research and conservation works on this building again demonstrated that it is necessary to combine scientific research with the ones applied in the name of a better understanding and maintaining the heritage.

The painting in the church in Holszany, despite being surely the nicest, is just a small part of the conservation works. The preliminary plan of restoration of the original polychrome on the marble altars was developed; conservation of a part of one of them was the subject of a master’s thesis¹⁶. It



Fig. 10. Holszany, painting after conservation (photo: E. Świąćka, 2007)

Il. 10. Holszany, malowidło po konserwacji (fot. E. Świąćka, 2007)

¹⁶ Justyna Szczepańska, M.A. is the author of the thesis which was written in the class of Professor Tytus Sawicki at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 2009.

will be necessary to clean the remains of oil painted wainscots from the interior and paint the vault as well as the walls with the right paint which not only will unite the interior elements in respect of colors but it will also demonstrate proper physical and chemical parameters. The emulsion paint which was applied earlier creates a film that comes off in sheets and furthermore, when contrasted with white lime, it is too

bluish to maintain the effect of illusion. The interior ventilation system will need to be improved too.

Another important issue, which goes beyond the scope of this text, involves improvement of the monastic building regained by the Franciscan fathers. The way in which the monastic buildings will be used will be the key to further works, maintenance and proper care for the historic church that demonstrates great artistic values.

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Malowidło ścienne w kościele franciszkanów p. w. św. Jana Chrzciciela w Holszanach: historia i prace konserwatorskie

W artykule omówiono historię i konserwację relikwów bogatego wyposażenia we wnętrzu dawnego kościoła franciszkańskiego św. Jana Chrzciciela w Holszanach. Kościół ten ufundował w 1618 r. podkanclerz wielki litewski Paweł Stefan Sapieha. Później ze środków franciszkanów dokonano w 1774 r. przebudowy kościoła. Jego fasada główna została ozdobiona malowidłami przedstawiającymi sceny z życia patrona – św. Jana Chrzciciela, a nowe ołtarze dostawiono ok. 1790 r. W latach 30-tych XX w. władze sowieckie zamknęły kościół, jak wiele innych zamieniając go na warsztaty. Dopiero w 1990 r. zwrócono go wiernym, a pod sam koniec XX w. powrócili tu także zakonnicy franciszkańscy. Dawniej słynącą bogactwem dzieł sztuki sakral-

nej świątynię bracia znaleźli zniszczoną i spustoszoną. W latach 2006–2007 na zlecenie Departamentu Ochrony Dziedzictwa Ministerstwa Kultury RP i w porozumieniu z Akademią Sztuk Pięknych w Wilnie przeprowadzono prace konserwatorskie, którym towarzyszyły prace badawcze. Pracami objęto zdobione polichromią ołtarze boczne i monumentalne, dwukondygnacyjne iluzjonistyczne malowidło. Zajmuje ono całą ścianę prezbiterium z centralnie umieszczoną sceną chrztu Jezusa w Jordanie i postacią św. Jana Ewangelisty na łączniku kondygnacji. Dzięki tym pracom ta iluzjonistyczna kompozycja, charakteryzująca się wyjątkowym pięknem i monumentalizmem, odzyskała swą świetność.

Key words: paintig, church, Holszany, consreation

Słowa kluczowe: malowidło, kościół, Holszany, konserwacja

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