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Frescoes in a Room with Corner Balconies on the Second Floor of the Lovrenc Stronghold

Key words: Cistercian abbey in Stična, Lovrenc Stronghold in the Cisterian abbey in Stična, frescoes

The conservation and restoration works on the frescoes in a room with corner balconies on the second floor of the Lovrenc stronghold (built during the period of Abbot Lovrenc Zupan in 1589 as hospicium or guest house for noble visitors) in the Cistercian Abbey in Stična were completed in 1996. The restoration works were carried out by Vesna Obid and Manica Juvan within specialist studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana and under the tutorship of Professor Franc Kokalj.¹ The conservation and restoration works restored the stability of the painting made in *secco* technique, removed the results of physical damage as well as transformations, cracks and subsequent paintings and restored its colour where possible. Since 2002 the room has served for a presentation of the history of Christianity in Slovenia in the 20th century as part of a large permanent exhibition of the chronology of Christianity in the territory of Slovenia.²

Paintings from various periods can be traced in the room with corner balconies. The earliest phase comprises Latin quotations by ecclesiastic teachers written in the fields directly beneath the ceiling, a voluted decoration beneath the window in both the corner balconies and at least one layer of the curtain preserved in fragments along the right-hand side of the western wall. A painting revealed in fragments (perhaps part of a curtain) on the left wall in the right-hand corner balcony could be traced back to the same period. The first phase painting probably originated from the beginning of the 17th century when the Abbey was led by Abbot Jakob Reinprecht (1603–1626). The depictions in both corner balconies can be placed into the second phase (i.e. the second half of the 18th century). The decoration surrounding the western and northern windows with partly preserved landscape motifs above the window and beneath it as well as the decorative late Baroque cartouches on the window surrounds are probably the latest items as regards origin. The origin of the two painted curtains with tassels on the northern side is even more difficult to define.

Due to the state of the painting, the purpose of this paper is to present a more detailed presentation of the Latin quotations of ecclesiastic teachers and of the painting in both corner balconies.

The Latin quotations of the ecclesiastic teachers

The following Latin quotations by ecclesiastic teachers are located on the northern wall from left to the right:³

1) NON LOCA VEL ORDINES CREATORI NRO
NOS PROXIMOS FACIVNT SED NOS
MERITA BONA CONIVNGVNT [NOS DEO /CVM EO?]
MALA DISIVNGVNT. S. GREGORIVS.

It is not places or orders that bring us
closer [to God], but rather our
good deeds unite us with God,
whereas the bad ones separate us from Him. St. Gregory.

2) AE ET S.
ECCLESIAM
[To a woman saint and saint?]
this church

3) VA MANDANTEM ET GRANDIA
FACIENTEM S. CHRYSOSTOMVS
Who orders ... and accomplishes great deeds. St. Chrysostom

4) S. BERNARDVS

5) TRIA RELIGIOSVM FACIUNT [SANCTVM]
DEO PA [VPERTAS, CASTITAS, OBOEDIENTIA]
ET MVLTVM ...
Three things make [a monk?]
To God. P[overty, purity, obedience]
and many ...

6) ELI VM ET DEVS MVT
RETVM S. AMBROSIVS
and God St. Ambrose.

7) LI SVS GREXINFICI
S. HIERONYMVVS
the herd is infected ... St. Hieronymus.

8) DEVOTIONIS CERTAMINE ET IN
OPERATIONE SVPERARI.
S. GREGORIVS
In the battle of piety and by
work it is conquered ... St. Gregory.

9) PRAECIPITVR QVAERIT CVR, QVA RE, QVA
OBREM S. AVGVSTINVS
... he commands. He asks what for, why, for
what purpose. St. Augustine.

Paintings on the corner balconies

The painting on the window surrounds of both corner balconies, in which sinopsis is best preserved, is in references described as a quality work of an unknown Baroque painter.⁴ It depicts the four temperaments and the unknown painter based his depictions on earlier copper engravings by two masters from Augsburg: Johann Georg Bergmüller (1688–1762) and Johann Evangelist Holzer (1709–1740).⁵ As regards iconography the painting is very close to the wall decoration in the corner “cabinet” on the first floor of the Miljana manor in Zagorje, Croatia, where the four seasons and the four temperaments are depicted.⁶ The frescoes from Miljana are attributed to the Baroque painter Anton Lerchinger (ca. 1720–after 1787) who presumably painted them after 1763.⁷ A comparison of material, though, indicates that the unknown painter in Stična followed the copper engravings even more closely than Lerchinger in Miljana. In accordance with the above mentioned copper engravings, the Sanguine temperament is depicted in

the left-hand corner balcony in Stična and the Choleric temperament in the right-hand one. A depiction of the Melancholic temperament can be seen in a poorly discernible basic drawing on the left-hand window surrounds in the right-hand corner balcony, while the right-hand wall, where the central cartouche is empty, was probably intended for the depiction of the Phlegmatic temperament.⁸

The depictions of the temperaments on the central part of the wall on all four window surrounds are beset by two caryatids, while a decorative cartouche is painted beneath the central scenes. The caryatids function as two columns supporting the architectural arches with their half-naked bodies. A curtain descends from the top of the arches, then splits open for the central scene. There are no architectural frameworks or curtain in Miljana, while the central depiction of the temperaments is beset only by a narrow Rococo frame. The architectural complement with caryatids in Stična was probably facilitated by broader window surrounds. The fields above the windows were also painted. A depiction of a bull and a woman is clearly discernible in the left-hand field of the left-hand corner balcony (perhaps an allusion to Europe with the bull as a personification of Earth), while a group of female figures, possibly angels, can be observed in the right-hand field. The painting in the right-hand corner balcony is less preserved and therefore more difficult to define as to its iconography. The ceiling in both balconies is decorated with a balustrade painted in illusionist style.⁹

The Sanguine or "balanced" temperament is associated with air, the morning, spring, childhood or early youth and the colour red.¹⁰ The sanguine temperament in Stična is presented with three persons in a landscape and additional symbols. A young man in the middle gives the impression he is dancing (i.e. dance). A lady playing the lute is seated next to him and so is a young man playing the pipe (i.e. music). An eagle is placed on a stone base (i.e. July), a crow in a cage (i.e. November) and there are scales also present in the depiction. A young man with a pitcher in his lap is seated on the left-hand side of the base, a satyr with his back to the observer is painted on the right-hand side, and both of them are raising their hands towards the top of the stone base. Between them is a cartouche depicting a love scene and beneath them bag-pipes showing close similarity with the original engraving. In Miljana the letters C. CH. are written in the cartouche, the bagpipes are omitted as well as the bird by the satyr. (Photograph 4) The bird cage is shaped differently while the cage in Stična is a copy of the cage in the engraving. Also, there is no Ganymede taken into the sky by Jupiter in the shape of an eagle, which can be seen in the upper part of the painting at Miljana. A putto with cymbals is depicted at the top of both architectural arches in Stična.

The Choleric temperament, irascible and fearless, is associated with fire, summer, youth or maturity and the colour yellow.¹¹ A soldier with a plume on his head and a landscape in the background is depicted in the central part with a blasted ball (i.e. fire) over his head. He is holding a scimitar in his left hand, while his right hand is stretched out as if after a throw. Military attributes are arranged on the stone base beneath the soldier: a barrel of gunpowder, some bullets, a match cord, mortar and two drums. A male figure is depicted in the medallion in the centre of the base (a symbol of the Planet), similar to that in the engraving, while the version in Miljana has the initials C. CH. written at the same location. A lion and two rams can be seen on the left-hand side of the base, while an archer with a bow bent is depicted on the right-hand side. The military banner and the trumpet laid next to the banner indicate that the artist in Stična followed the original engraving more consistently than Lerchinger in Miljana. The banner there is depicted in a different manner, and the trumpet is located next to the barrel with bullets at the top of the base and not by the banner. A putto bearing a torch can be spotted in the juncture of the two architectural arches in Stična. Two similar putti are depicted on the engraving, while they are omitted in Miljana.

In the right-hand corner balcony the architecture with both caryatids has best been preserved on the left-hand window surrounds. Only the draft of a human figure can be discerned in the central field. The head is visible as well as part of a slim body and part of the hands, perhaps holding a book. The barely visible figure is painted in a slightly greenish shade. In terms of iconography, this field should contain the depiction of the Melancholic temperament. The original engraving by Bergmüller and also the painting in Miljana show a full-size male figure reading from an open book. The position of the head and the indicated book are reminiscent of the depiction in Stična. The painting in Stična is thus assumed to contain the depiction of the Melancholic temperament, which could to a certain extent be confirmed by the putto with a scythe at the top of the architecture. Bergmüller's engraving and the painting in Miljana also contain the bust of the two-faced Janus-Chronos with a scythe. While Janus/Chronos is positioned above the Melancholic temperament, the putto shading his eyes with his hand (i.e. sight, morning) is

placed beneath him.¹² In Stična the artist made use only of the putto from the original engraving with a scythe added to it. Apart from the evening or twilight, autumn and old age, Melancholy is also associated with earth.¹³

The right-hand window surrounds are the parts least preserved. Only the architectural frame with both caryatids is delineated; the central field is empty. The putto at the top of the architectural arches draws attention to possible comparisons. According to the position of his arms raised above his head as if carrying something, he is reminiscent of the putto from the depiction of the Phlegmatic temperament in the engraving as well as in Miljana. In both cases the putto holds a crescent above him, namely a symbol of the night.¹⁴ The phlegmatic temperament is associated with night, water, winter, mature old age and the colour white.¹⁵

So far it has been impossible to be more precise as regards authorship of the painting of the Four Temperaments in Stična. The poor condition of the painting makes it difficult to define it. It is preserved mostly in the form of a drawing, while the coating of paint survived to the present in a much poorer condition. Stylistically, it can probably not be compared to the work of Anton Lerchinger who made use of the same original engraving for his painting in the Miljana manor as the artist in Stična. It should be known that engravings by Bergmüller were quite widely spread among artists.¹⁶

I would, however, like to draw attention to the association of Anton Lerchinger with Cistercian abbeys. In 1763 Lerchinger sent correspondence from Novo Celje where he took part in the furnishing of the manor to Abbot Marijan in the Cistercian Abbey of Rein near Graz in which "he informed him that he would undertake the assignment on which he agreed with the monastery".¹⁷ Since it is known that the Cistercian monastery in Stična was founded by the very Abbey of Rein in the 12th century, while the then Abbots of Stična Viljem Kovačič (1734–1764)¹⁸ and his successor Frančišek Ksaverij Baron Taufferer (1764–1784)¹⁹ kept vivid correspondence with Marijan Pittreich Abbot of Rein (1745–1771)²⁰ including questions of art,²¹ the information is not insignificant and should be investigated further in the future. The engraving by Holzer which was very common among artists has been dated into the 1730s (1731/32) while the frescoes in the Miljana manor presumably emerged after 1763. Lerchinger wrote to the Abbot of Rein in 1763. The Abbot of Stična at that time was Viljem Kovačič to be succeeded by Taufferer in the following year. Could the wall painting/fresco on the second floor of the Lovrenc stronghold be the result of connections between the abbots of Stična, Viljem Kovačič and Frančišek Ksaverij Tauffer, and Marijan Abbot of Rein?

Notes

1 Manica Juvan, Vesna Obid, *Konservatorski-restavratorski poseg na stenskih poslikavah stare prelature stiškega samostana*, Ljubljana 1997 (diploma work), ALU Ljubljana, mentor F. Kokalj.

2 The exhibition set up in twelve exhibition rooms on the second floor of the museum was prepared by the staff of the Religious Museum of Slovenia [Slovenski verski muzej]. The exhibition obtained the Valvasor award in 2003 and the Josip Jurčič award of the district. Cf. *Zgodovina krščanstva na Slovenskem: Vodnik po stalni razstavi, Stična 2003*.

3 Thanks are due to France Baraga for his Slovene translation of the inscriptions.

4 Marijan Zadnikar, *Samostan Stična in njegove znamenitosti*, Ljubljana 2001, p. 222.

5 Barbara Murovec, "Likovni viri za baročno stropno slikarstvo v Sloveniji", *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, n.v. XXXIX, Ljubljana 2003, p. 133. The models were invented by Johann Georg Bergmüller and published in Augsburg, while they were engraved by his apprentice Johann Evangelist Holzer. Cf. Anica Cevc, "Štirje letni časi in štirje temperamenti v rokokojskem koloritu fresk Antona Lerchingerja v Miljani", *Acta historiae artis Slovenica*, V, Ljubljana 2002, p. 98; Murovec 2003 (as Note No. 5), pp. 124–136.

6 Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5), pp. 93–106; Murovec 2003 (cf. Note No. 5), p. 133. For Miljana manor located near the border between Slovenia and Croatia see also: Silvijev Novak, Marija Mirković, *Dvorac Miljana*, Zagreb 1992 with earlier literature.

7 Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5), pp. 93–94.

8 According to restorer Vesna Obid the painting was probably severely damaged in the past.

9 The ceiling of the right-hand corner balcony is a copy of the left-hand one and the result of restoration works. Cf. Juvan, Obid 1997 (cf. Note No. 1), p. 25.

10 Since the painting in Miljana is iconographically similar, the interpretation of the figures and symbols is quoted from Cevc. Cf. Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5).

11 Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5), p. 99.

12 Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5), p. 101.

13 Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5), p. 99.

14 Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5), p. 104.

15 Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5), p. 99.

16 There are 393 known engravings by Bergmüller. They include, among others, copper engravings of the signs of the zodiac, the four seasons,

the four temperaments, saints, virtues, etc. His engravings were spread primarily among the artists in Southern Germany; they influenced both sacred art and some secular paintings in Styria (Stajersko) and especially in Smladnik in Upper Carniola (Gorenjsko). Cf. Murovec 2003 (cf. Note No. 5), pp. 124–135.

17 Cevc 2002 (cf. Note No. 5), pp. 97–98. Lerchinger made an agreement with Marijan Abbot of Rein to paint the summer organ-loft in the church of the Stična monastery. The paintings, however, were actually made by Jožef Adam von Mšlk in 1766. Cf. Stift Rein 1129–1979, Rein 1979, p. 96.

18 Abbot Viljem Kovačič was in office in the period of two abbots of Rein, Placid Mally (1710–1745) and Marijan Pittreich (1745–1771). He maintained a cordial relationship and a vivid correspondence with both of them. He summoned a renowned architect from Ljubljana, Candid Zulliani, to renovate the monastic church in Stična in the Baroque style. In the mid 18th century Zulliani transformed the long eastern wing of the monastery along the brook and erected a new monastic wing in the southern part of the large eastern court, the so-called Abbot's Chapel. The steeple of the monastic church acquired its present form during the period of Abbot Viljem (1751). Cf.: Jože Mlinarič, Stiška opatija 1136–1784, Novo mesto 1995, pp. 737, 886; Zadnikar 2001 (cf. Note No. 4), pp. 100–105, 206–215.

19 The tombstone for his predecessor Abbot Viljem Kovačič (died in 1764) was commissioned by Abbot Taufferer. In 1768 he had the tomb made beneath the choir in the central nave. The church was embellished with Baroque furnishing (the majority of pews, altars, the pulpit, the pews in the monastic choir (1770)). He had both the baptismal stone and the balustrades in the presbytery and in the chapels made of grey-red marble. He also commissioned the Stations of the Cross from Fortunat Bergant (1766), a Baroque painter from Upper Carniola (Gorenjsko). Most of the paintings for the side altars were made a decade later by Janez Mihael Liechtenreith from Gorizia. Abbot Taufferer also had the works completed in the festive hall, today known as the Abbot's Chapel. Cf. Mlinarič 1995 (cf. Note No. 18), pp. 791–792, 888; Zadnikar 2001 (cf. Note No. 4), pp. 105, 107–113, 123–130, 214.

20 Marijan Pittreich Abbot of Rein, born in Maribor, was known, among others things, for remodelling the monastery and its church in the Baroque style. In 1745 the construction of an imposing church was concluded, and home studies were introduced for the Abbot's conventuals and for the monks from the neighbouring Cistercian monasteries. He also purchased the library of Archduke Ferdinand II for his institution. The monastic church was built by Janez Jurij Stengg, an architect from Graz, and painted by Jožef Adam von Mšlk in 1766. The altar sculptures were made by Filip Jakob Straub (1740). Paintings and sculptures by the sculptor Leitner and the painter Jožef Amonte have also survived to the present. The main altar painting was painted by Martin Janez Schmidt known as Kremers Schmidt. Cf. Mlinarič 1995 (cf. Note No. 18), p. 877; Stift Rein 1979 (cf. Note No. 17), pp. 58, 77–101.

21 Abbots also exchanged portraits of themselves. In 1755 Marijan Abbot of Rein asked Viljem Abbot of Stična to send him his portrait. The portraits of both Abbots of Stična are still in Rein, i.e. those of Viljem Kovačič and Frančišek Ksaverij baron von Taufferer as well as those of the Abbots of Kostanjevica Aleksander baron von Taufferer (1737–1760) and Leopold von Buseth (1760–1772) and the portraits of the Abbots of Vetrinj, whereas the portraits of the Abbots of Rein or other monasteries have not been preserved in Stična. When requested by Abbot Marijan to send him his portrait, Viljem Abbot of Stična replied "that he would have sent it long ago if only there were a qualified painter in Carniola." He, however, promised to summon a certain cleric skilled in portrait painting from Styria after Easter to paint his face furrowed with numerous wrinkles. Abbot Viljem also sent an image of the "former famous monastery" Topusko in Croatia to Abbot Marijan. Cf. Mlinarič 1995 (cf. Note No. 18), p. 748.

Literature

Anica Cevc, "Štirje letni časi in štirje temperamenti v rokokojnem koloritu fresk Antona Lerchingerja v Miljani", *Acta historiae artis Slovenica*, V, Ljubljana 2002, pp. 93–106.

Manica Juvan, Vesna Obid, Konservatorski-restavratski poseg na stenskih poslikavah stare prelature stiškega samostana, Ljubljana 1997 (Diploma thesis, Specialist study of restoration and conservation, ALU Ljubljana, mentor F. Kokalj).

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Silvije Novak, Marija Mirković, Dvorac Miljana, Zagreb 1992.

Jürgen Rapp, "J. Holzer fecit sub Directione Domini J.G. Bergmiller", *Pantheon*, 48, 1990, pp. 81–109.

Stift Rein 1129–1979: 850 Jahre Kultur und Glaube: Festschrift zum Jubiläum, Rein 1979.

Marijan Zadnikar, Samostan Stična in njegove znamenitosti, Ljubljana 2001.

The committee didn't know which of the two to choose and asked each candidate to give a lecture. Uncle Theo didn't leave his room for three days. He wrote his lecture and memorized it. Every day she played with her ball in the garden of the palace. At the end of the garden there was a deep, dark lake. When the weather was hot, the princess liked playing near the lake. It is the third floor a new building. It is a three-room flat a kitchen, the kitchen there is a refrigerator to keep food cool hot weather and a kitchen cupboard plates & dishes. 2) Walls the library were lined bookcases, the armchairs were upholstered leather, the tables littered newspapers & magazines. 3) The door burst open & we saw a stranger the doorway. 4) How many multi-storeyed buildings are there your street? 5) Peter has got a nice cottage the country but any conveniences. 6) The windows of the bedroom looked a little garden the back the house. 7... Ex.6. Write down one good reason for living in: - a flat; - a house; - the center of a city; - a suburb; - a town; - a village; - the country. The vast majority of frescoes belonged to the second story of buildings, and their presence in buildings of all types suggests that frescoes were not restricted to a rich elite but were enjoyed by all classes of society. The interior walls were covered with a layer of smooth lime plaster and then painted, either when the plaster was fresh (fresco) or dry (secco or tempera). Some of the geometric designs, especially spirals, show signs of mechanical devices to achieve greater accuracy. The frescoes display a clear love of the sea & the natural world with seascapes, animals, fish, & plants being popular subjects. The frescoes display a clear love of the sea and the natural world with seascapes, animals, fish, and plants being popular subjects.