

Conservation practice at selected tin sarcophagi
located within the Royal Tombs in Wawel Cathedral,
Promnitz's family mausoleum in Pszczyna
and Hochberg's mausoleum in Świebodzice.
Technique, technology and systematic approach.

supervisor of the thesis: prof. Marta Lempart-Geratowska

auxiliary promoter: dr Elżbieta Maria Nosek

Abstract

The dissertation is based on practical experiences and conclusions drawn from the conservation work the author has carried out on the metal sarcophagi, including the tin ones, from the Royal Tombs at the Wawel Castle, the Promnice family burial vault in the All Saints Church in Pszczyna and the Hochberg family mausoleum in St. Nicholas church in Świebodzice, since 2007.

In this doctoral dissertation, an attempt has been made at gathering the knowledge and experience of many Polish conservators, gained during the works carried out on about 130 tin sarcophagi from various tin casting workshops and gathered in several collections in our country. The author's many years' conservation activity has allowed for the comparison and analysis of conservation methods and assumptions over the course of about twenty years. Not only the methodology of works included in the analysed conservation documentation is compared there, but also the state of preservation of monuments which had undergone restoration many years before and the impact of the selected methods and materials on the current condition of the objects. Based on the conclusions drawn from these experiences, as well as the author's own observations, a new procedure has been proposed for the currently restored tin sarcophagi.

In practice, an attempt was also made to radically clean the tin surface from the corrosion products of this metal after removing the painterly layer (using the strappo method) and re-depositing it on the cleaned surface. The entire process has been described in the paper.

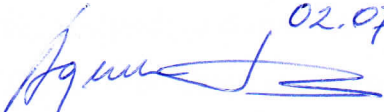
The dissertation also includes an extensive chapter devoted to the design and construction of internal structures strengthening large-size works of art such as sarcophagi. The necessity to use such reinforcements made of austenitic stainless steel is justified and most of the structures used in tin coffins restored in the author's studio are discussed. The dissertation describes the phenomenon of tin creep, making the use of stiffeners indispensable.

The necessity of using internal framework indirectly resulted in the exploration of four coffins from the Royal Tombs, belonging to King Sigismund III, his wife, Queen Constance, the son of Prince Alexander Charles and King Augustus II the Strong. The opening of the Vasa and Saxon family coffins broadened the knowledge about royal burials. It also enriched the collection of the Diocesan Museum in Krakow with funeral crowns, sceptres and a royal apple, all found during the exploration. The examination of the interior of the princely coffins, which, for obvious reasons, had to be carried out in order to transfer the remains enabling the sarcophagi restoration, provided a lot of new information about the funeral habits of the elites of the time. Knowledge of these topics has been collected in three chapters of the work.

Moreover, the paper explains the issues of tin corrosion, indicating the phenomena which occur in large-size objects "stored" in the unfavourably aggressive conditions of tomb vaults. Also, the problem of the so-called tin pest, frequently confused with catastrophic corrosion is tackled. Thus, the importance of carrying out metallurgical tests prior to the conservation of metal objects is emphasised.

The literature on topics related to the conservation of tin monuments, iconography, art history, history of noble families and artistic craftsmanship is discussed in detail.

The dissertation contains two graphic tables which lists all the known metal sarcophagi in Poland in chronological order. In the second table, the sarcophagi are grouped into collections and presented on a timeline.

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