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STONE AND PLASTER WORKS OF ART OF THE 19TH CENTURY
ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE STEHLIK FAMILY SCULPTOR'S WORKSHOP –
TECHNIQUES, TECHNOLOGY AND CONSERVATION ISSUES
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ALTARS OF THE BASILICA
OF THE FRANCISCANS IN KRAKOW

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ABSTRACT

The doctoral dissertation concerns the Stehliks' sculpture workshop particularly active after the great fire of Krakow in the middle of the 19th century, which destroyed many works of art and historical buildings. The stone-carving workshop was founded by Edward Stehlik whose brother Zygmunt Stehlik was admitted to the workshop in the year 1851. He was learning the profession at the workshop, gained experience and worked there. For some time, the brothers ran a workshop together to carry out numerous sculptural, stone works as well as conservation and restoration orders. Although the Stehliks certainly also worked in plaster, not many of their works in this material have survived in the context of stone works. The dissertation discusses techniques and technology applied by the Stehliks, who were not only

stonemasons but also talented sculptors; as indicated above, the characteristics of the works they carried out made it possible for them to be described from today's point of view as conservators and restorers of works of art and monuments.

Moreover, attention was paid to the state of preservation and conservation issues of the Stehliks' works, and it should be emphasized that, as the topic of the dissertation indicates, a large part of the work was devoted to altars from the Franciscan Basilica in Krakow, especially the main altar. On the example of these altars, the above issues were extensively presented.

The altars, especially the main one, have never been examined in detail, neither from the point of view of the technique and technology of their execution nor of their state of preservation. The concept of this dissertation was erected from initially alarming signals concerning the state of preservation of the main altar. At that time, the author of the study, also on account of her long-term cooperation and work carried out in the Basilica and the Franciscan Monastery, carried out preliminary research, which she continued in order to be able to present it in the dissertation. The study included research on the main altar of the Franciscan Basilica. First, structural and constructional research was carried out, followed by a number of other necessary studies undertaken in order to find out the techniques, technology and the current state of the object. Necessary conservation procedures, as it is mentioned in the work, were also the aim of the research. The author of the doctoral dissertation was in charge of the project; she both managed the conservation and restoration works and together with her team carried out the above-mentioned works on the main and side altars, which allowed her to better recognise them.

In addition, the author highlighted other selected works of the Stehliks' sculpture and stonework workshop in order to recognise the main techniques and technology used by them and also discussed the state of preservation and causes of damage to their sculptural legacy. It should be noted that the work also deals with the life and education of the Stehliks at the Technical Institute and their sculptural and stonemasonry activities. Further, provided is some interesting information on the history of the main altar of the Franciscan Basilica and on the concepts, designs and projects of the altar made by Edward Stehlik.

The dissertation contains an introduction, three chapters comprising eighteen sub-chapters and fourteen paragraphs. It concludes with a summary, bibliography and indexes. It should be noted that a separate volume with an appendixes is attached to the dissertation.

Introduction sets out the purpose of the thesis, the rationale for the undertaken topic with its characteristics, as well as the context in which the topic of the thesis arose.

Chapter I: *The Stehliks – life, education, activities with emphasis on conservation, restoration and reconstructional works* presents information on the Stehlik family with particular emphasis on the biography of Edward and Zygmunt Stehlik and their education at the Cracow Institute of Technology, a presentation of the courses they attended together with archives from the institute's diary. Presented are recognised persons connected with the art of sculpture, the profiles of Professors E. and Z. Stehlik, as well as other distinguished figures in the field of sculpture and stonemasonry associated with their workshop (subchapter 1.1). The chapter pays particular attention to the Stehliks' activities, which can be characterised as conservation and restoration, renovation or reconstruction activities, including their approach to (as Edward Stehlik termed it) “monuments of the past” (subsections 1.2, 1.3).

Chapter II: *Historical issues and characteristics of the main altar and side altars of the Franciscan Basilica in Cracow* contains, inter alia, interesting archival materials, e.g. illustrations showing the plaster lining which was spread on the walls of the presbytery and in the close vicinity of the main altar and which was removed – unfortunately, most probably it has not been preserved to our times. Equally interesting is that, during an archival search, in one of the dossiers – the *Report from the conservation work on the polychrome by St. Wyspiański in the transept and the first bay of the nave in the Basilica of the Franciscan Fathers in Krakow*, the document from the year 1990 – a scroll was found with names of the contractors of polychrome and gilding designed by Stanisław Wyspiański, with the year 1985, partially identified in the back part of the main altar as engraved inscriptions (subchapter 2.1). Information on the side altars of the Franciscan Basilica is provided in subsection 2.2.

Chapter III: *The Stehliks' workshop techniques, technology and conservatory problems on the example of the main and side altars of the franciscans' basilique in krakow and of other works* is the chapter on the Stehliks' workshop in the strict sense, including techniques, technology and conservation issues used by their workshop. It discusses detailed technical and technological issues concerning making of the main and side altars of the Franciscan Basilica in Cracow, on the example of which, in particular, the discussed sculptor-stone workshop is presented. The concepts and designs of the main altar are presented (subsection 3.1), as well as its research (subsection 3.2). Subsection 3.3 presents an examination of the technique and technology used to make the main altarpiece, while subsection 3.4 presents recognition of the technique and technology used to make the side altars.

The state of preservation and conservation issues of the main and side altars were recognised (subsections 3.5, 3.6). The dissertation also presents the treatments performed at the main altar and side altars as well, in which the dissertation's author participated and managed

(subsection 3.7). The next subsection (3.8) presents photographic documentation of the main and side altars after the conservation and restoration treatments.

The following subsections deal with issues relating to the Stehliks' workshop based on recognition of the Franciscan altars and on their other works which were analysed by the author of the dissertation. In the subsection *Some remarks on the Stehliks' sculptor-stone workshop* (subsection 3.9) the characteristics of the Stehliks' workshop are presented. The next subsection (subsection 3.10) deals with formal and stylistic issues. The following subsections (3.11, 3.12) characterise the sculptural techniques and technology of the Stehliks' workshop as well as the state of preservation and causes of damage to their sculptural legacy. Subsequently (subsection 3.13), photographs taken personally by the author of the dissertation are included, showing other selected sculptural works of the Stehliks' workshop, presenting both altar sculpture, decorative sculpture, sepulchral sculpture, tombstones, gravestone monuments, tombstones in the form of chapels, monumental sculpture, wayside shrines, epitaphs, etc. Presented are, among others, altar sculpture from churches in Kraków, Słaboszów, Sulisławice, Bobrek, where the Stehliks made, among others, some gypsum altar figures most probably according to Jan Matejko's design. Tombstone sculpture pieces are presented, among others, from the Rakowicki Cemetery in Kraków and from cemeteries in Marcyporęba, Gdów, Szczawnica. The Stehliks' signature is preserved on many of these works.

The next part of the thesis contains a summary of the dissertation.

Further parts include a bibliography, an index with a list of photographs, illustrations, drawings and lists.

As mentioned, there are an appendixes in a separate volume with selected examinations and the 3D laser scans with drawing inventarisation of the main altar and side altars from the Franciscan Basilica in Krakow.



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