

GOTHIC MURAL PAINTINGS IN SLOVENIA AND THEIR POTENTIAL IN TOURISM

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***Abstract:** In my paper I'm showing you how the geographical and political situation has influenced art on the example of mural paintings in Slovenia. The geographical position of the country and the trade routes of that time were important not only for goods, but also for artist. At that time, they were still seen as tradesmen. Their knowledge and style dependent on their origins and of the education they have received. And all this is seen in the art pieces they have produced. Another aspect to consider are the landowners, that were at the same time their clients. The style that appealed to them was the one we can admire today. The trade routes haven't change, Slovenia still lays between Roman- and Germanic culture, it still borders to Hungary and gets influenced by the Balkans.*

***Keywords:** art, gothic, mural, painting, Slovenia*

INTRODUCTION

The middle ages were a very turbulent period in whole Europe and also in Slovenia. Due to its strategic position, between the Adriatic, the Alps, Pannonia and the Balkan, the territory was interesting for many different conquerors. The division of the territory between the two dioceses, with the border on the river Drava, Aquila and Salzburg, the emergence of the dioceses in Ljubljana in the mid-16th century, the fight for Slovene land and finally the fear of the Turks all got to influence the life of the period and with it also the art.

The vicinity to Venice was also very important, especially for the coastal part. Due to the fact, that Slovenia lies on crossroads to all of the above lists parts of Europe, the different influences from all over the known world can be found in the architecture and art of Slovene medieval cultural monuments. These monuments are today visited by tourists from all over the world. Not all of them are jet on the tourist map, but with this paper I would like to show, that if represented as a part of something bigger, with the right programmes, we can make this art and this part of history ore interesting for everybody.

HISTORY

The two strongest dynasties on Slovenian soil at the beginning of the 13th century was the Babenberger and the Spanheimer. In Styria, the Duchy of Bamberg begins to establish its power more and more after the year 1192. In the second half of the thirteenth century, there was a dispute on Slovenian territory, when the two predominant dynasties became extinct. The area is occupied by the Czech king Premysl Ottokar II. But as early as 1273, the elected king of the Holy Roman Empire, the Habsburg Rudolf II, takes it on the grounds, that the area is to be seen as the legitimate successor of the elected Roman (German) king. Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Krain, Istria and Furlanie are all a part of this area. In the war of 1278, Ottokar loses all the rights to the above-mentioned countries. The countries are passed on to Rudolf II. In 1335 the Carinthia and Krain come under the Habsburgs, who recognize Carniola as a duchy. Until the 15th century, the Habsburgs remained the sole masters of Slovenian soil. Only with the upcoming of the counts of Celje they finally get a worthy opponent.

The Counts of Celje had their seat in the Savinjska Valley at the Castle Sanegg (Žovnek) in the years 1130-1341. In 1333 they came into the possession of the estate and castle of Celje and at the same time transferred their headquarters to the newly acquired castle. In 1341 they were elevated to counts by the Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria. Under the leadership of Count Herman II, in the 14th century, they have become stronger and stronger. Herman II is well known in the nobility, especially important is his friendship with the Emperor Sigismund, whose life he saved twice. Herman's daughter, Barbara, becomes Sigismund's second wife. In 1418, the Counts of Celje, inherit the Ortenburgs estate. The Habsburgs had to surrender the feudal power over the counts in the year 1423 and were since then under the direct rule of the Roman emperor and were thereby elevated to princes. The new independence of the counts is for the Habsburgs a real blow. They have to assert themselves and it comes to war between the two families. In 1443, a document is signed stating that, if one dynasty should not have a male successor, the other family will inherit its belongings. Because of internal disputes in the mid-15th century, the Habsburgs take a step back and Ulrich II of Celje goes on a crusade against the Turks to Belgrade, where he is killed in 1456. With the line of the Counts of Celje disappears and their possession comes into the hands of the Habsburgs and remains there until the beginning of the First World War.

The 15th and 16th centuries are very turbulent, but also very important for the history and development of the Slovenian nationality. It is the time of the Reformation and humanism, but also the time of the defense

against the Turks and the peasant uprisings. The Ottomans entered Slovenian soil for the first time in 1408, and just eight years later they manage to reach the defense walls of Ljubljana (Roman: Emona). Until 1532, numerous well-organized and coordinated raids by regiments of the Ottoman army followed. Carniola was last attacked by the Turks in 1592, southern Styria in 1683, almost 100 years later. However, the fear of the Turks remained and so did the defense architecture up until the First World War. The towns and castles were well protected by the defensive walls and moats. Only the farmers remained outside and were left alone and could only hope for the mercy of the attackers. They sought shelter in the woods and mountains or hid in caves.

A small mission army was formed, which was reformulated to a professional army in 1527. To protect themselves against the Turks, they set up a warning system: wooden piles were fired on the hills, guns fired, etc. The defense was costly and new taxes were required. All this was too much for the frightened and impoverished farmers. Already in 1478, they demanded supervision of their taxes and expected that the sovereign would help them fight the attacker off. But they forbade any kind of gathering and gave the order to end it by any force if necessary. At the beginning of the year 1515, the farmers from Krain, southern Styria and also Karst, united and formed a delegation, which was sent to Augsburg to Emperor Maximilian, with the promotion of the abandonment of the new taxes and the re-introduction of the old regime ("stara pravda"). The farmers came home empty-handed and discontent reached its peak. With the help of leaflets, with the first Slovenian printed words¹, more than 80,000 farmers participated in the "Punt" (peasant uprising). They attacked castles and the nobles fled to the cities. They were not able to defend themselves alone, so they asked the Emperor for his help. He sent his army, led by Juri Herberstein, who ended the peasants' uprisings with a massacre. The peasant uprising of 1515 was the biggest on Slovenian soil, but not the last one. In 1573, when the Croatian and Slovenian peasants joined forces to oppose the feudal lords, the "Punt" also ended in a massacre². Until the end of feudalism, several minor uprisings followed, but no major changes were achieved.

Trade flourished in the second half of the 15th and at the beginning of the 16th century, and the humanist ideas also found their way to Slovenia. The students studied either in Vienna or in Italy. With the new ideas, the reformation came. At the beginning of the 16th century, we find records of

1 "leukup, leukup, leukup uboga gmaina"

2 Prunk, Janko, 1998, *Kratka zgodovina Slovenije*, Ljubljana: Založba Grad, pp. 37-39.

smaller communities dealing with the morals Martin Luther. One of the most important representatives of this movement on Slovenian soil, was the theologian Primož Trubar. He was particularly committed to ensuring that every believer should hear and read the Bible in his own language. Because of his ideas, he had to leave Ljubljana in 1547 and acted since then from abroad. In the year of 1550 the first book in Slovenian language was published: The Catechism. Because of the general illiteracy, Trubar also wrote a book that served as the teaching book of the Slovenian language³. Later, he authored and translated more than twenty books and was able to put Slovene on the European language list.

MURAL PAINTINGS

From this period most of the extant paintings are murals. These were taken up by the research simultaneously with the architecture. Although, in the course of time, many frescoes were discovered under layers of the plaster, so far none from the Romanesque period have been found. For the period until the first half of the 14th century, the city Ptuj is very significant. Ptuj was in the possession of the bishops of Salzburg and was the center of the border area with Hungary and so strategically important for the whole region. In Prekmurje, the murals can be traced back to the Hungarian medieval tradition, such as the paintings of the Rotunda of St. Nicholas in Selo, dated at the first third of the 14th century, in which the reference to the late Romanesque tradition from the end of the 13th Century comprehended is⁴. In the area of today's Koroška, the painters remained both stylistically and ichnographically faithful to the mural paintings from the second quarter of the 14th century on the Austrian side. In the first quarter of the 14th century a school was established, by an unknown master, in Gorenjska region. The Mary cycle in the pilgrim church in Crngrob, near Škofja Loka, which dates back to the beginning of the 14th century, is attributed to him. The paintings in the triumphal arch of the Annunciation Church are only partially preserved. The Mary cycle, typical for the early 14th century, is limited to five basic episodes: Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation of Kings (not preserved), Death of Mary, and Assumption. This monument can be seen as the coloristic and stylistic model of this workshop. We can find the typical coloration, green, ocher and brown shades, the face type and also the body shape in different body positions, in many wall paintings of the region. Only the dynamics and the plasticity of

3 Sandi Stritar, *Sto pričevanj o slovenski zgodovini*, Hsg. Prešernova družba, Ljubljana, 1999, pp. 124-125.

4 1995, *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana: Narodna Galerija Ljubljana, pp. 222.

the figures are replaced by floating figures in the indefinable space. An example can be found in Bohinj in the church of St. John the Baptist, built and painted between 1320 and 1320⁵. The frescoes on the north wall of the church date in this period and have the characteristics of the early Gothic. The figures are drawn graphically, without attempting to create plasticity, in a space without tangible depth against a smooth background. These and other murals following this example have a sporadic effect, reduced to the most basic elements, but nevertheless clearly structured and monumental in the composition, which the artist achieved with the help of ornamentation⁶. This is one of the few churches, described in my paper, that actually is seen and recognized by the tourist agencies. Due to the fact that it lays directly on the shore of the Bohinj lake and is seen on every postcard of that area, it is often a part of the offered Program for visitors of Bohinj. It's under the care of the local parish and open for public during the summer time.

In the Dolenjska region one can only find a few works dating back in this period. One of those is the mural painting in the Cistercian monastery in Stična. It was painted between 1330 and 1340 in the caps of the 24 ribbed vaults and contains a unified, extensive and iconographically rich program, which can be traced back to book illumination⁷. This monastery is not far from Ljubljana and is there by easy to reach. It's becoming more and more popular with tourist agencies to offer a visit to the monastery. But sadly more because of the spice garden, than the history and art.

However, not only the local schools but also the traveling painters who worked throughout the Holy Roman Empire, had great influence on the art in Slovenia. This is how new revolutionary styles were quickly disseminated in the cities. As settlements, such as Ljubljana, Maribor, Ptuj and later also Celje, get the city rights, these new tendencies also come to the Slovenian territory. They come from the north, as well as from the east, but the direct connection to Italy in the west, did not open until the middle of the 14th century. The influences from there came to Slovenia through the southern German countries. This influence continued until the end of the 2. world war and is still to be seen in the cities mentioned above, especially in the architecture. A florin visitor might not see it, but one still gets the flair of the cities by walking through the architecture build in that time. Only with a good guide you are able to get the complex history of the towns and Slovenia in general.

5 1995, *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana: Narodna Galerija Ljubljana, 1995, pp. 229.

6 Marjan Zadnikar, *Spomeniki cerkvene arhitekture in umetnosti*, Bd. 1, Hsg. v. Mohorjeva družba, Celje, 1973, pp. 64.

7 *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Hsg. Narodna Galerija Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 1995, pp. 222.

In the 14th century the territory of today's Prekmurje was divided into two areas under various secular and ecclesiastical ownership. The peak of the art production in both parts lies in the second half of the 14th century, and even in the 15th century. During this time many churches were built or renewed; these are known as "Prekmurska skupina" (Prekmurje group)⁸.¹⁴ This group distinguishes itself from the rest of the buildings by various components, suggesting that a local construction workshop was responsible for their creation, although the role models are in Central European space, especially in the Czech Republic. Even today Prekmurje seem far away from everything going on in Slovenia. The dialect, the food and the customs are still here to show us a history that is completely different to the rest of Slovenia. Still the spa tourism is here more important than anything else, but from year to year tourism workers see the potential that cultural heritage has to offer.

In this context, we must mention John of Aquila. He was a painter and constructor and he has credited the most important monuments of the Prekmurje group. It is believed that he completed the training in a Czech monastery, in one of the book illumination workshops or even in a painter's workshop. One of the great works of the Aquila workshop, is the parish church of St. Martin in Martjanci. Only a small part of the paintings was completed by the master himself. One of his apprentices comes in the foreground, the one who later became known as the master of Martjanci Apostolos⁹. The painting was completed after the building was finished (1392) and stretched over the choir and the nave. The program was directed by the commissioner, Pastor Erazem, and reflects the Celestial Jerusalem¹⁰. The walls are divided into three registers, with the lower one, due to conservatory interventions, in poor condition. In the middle register, three scenes from the life of the patron saint, St. Martin, can be seen on the north and south walls. This includes the scene with St. Martin in fashionable armor sitting on a horse, that is about to share his coat with a poor. These and also the full-body representations of the saints, accompanied by the depiction of the suffering Christ (Imagio pietatis) on the triumphal arch, are painted in the International Gothic style and are therefore attributable to the young master. Interesting is also the self-portrait of John Aquila, which is located on the upper side of the choir windows (south wall). He has painted himself kneeling in contemporary, middle-class clothing. At his feet we find

8 Stale, France, 1935, *Umetnost v Slovenski krajini, Slovenska krajina, Beltinci*, pp. 24.

9 Balažič, Janez, 1993/94, *Janez Aquila in poslikava v Martjancih*, Murska Sobota: Zbornik soboškega muzeja 3, pp. 7790.

10 1995, *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana: Narodna Galerija Ljubljana, pp. 232-233.

an artist's coat of arms with three shields. The figure is accompanied by an inscription in which the artist refers to himself as author. This self-portrait is one of the oldest examples of monumental painting in Europe. In the 14th century, the influence of Italian art is noticeable on the Slovenian territory as well as in the rest of Central Europe. The Italian wandering painters helped spread the characteristics of the Trecento, whose beginnings are to be found in Giotto's art. With Giotto and his successors, the relationship between the figure and the space is particularly altered, the coloring is softened¹¹. This replaces the austere motives of the Middle Ages, in which the figures are usually placed in front of a golden or blue background.

The town of Gorica was the home of the founder of the Trecento tradition in Slovenia, the master of the facade of Crngrob. This master has learned his craftsmanship at Vitale da Bologna until 1360 and later opened his own workshop in Gorica. He is considered the founder of the so-called Friuli painting school, his work had great influence on the further development of mural painting in Slovenia. His workshop practiced until 1420 and the art can be found all over Slovenia. The wandering painters came to us on the trade route from Friuli. According to France Stele, the characteristics of his paintings are almond-shaped eyes, light strands in the hair and the typical "sweet" lips that serve as a distinguishing feature of Friuli art¹². These characteristics can be traced back to Vitale da Bologna. On behalf of the patriarch Bertrand, in the mid-14th century, he completed the paintings in the Cathedral of Udine and these have served as a template for many of his successors. But Friuli was not the only region from that influenced Slovene painters. Gorica (now half of the city lays in Slovenia and the other half in Italy) is also seen as one of the centres of Italian art. This is proven by a signed fresco in the parish church of the Assumption in Lesce. In the baroque church, parts of the gothic church from the time of Ortenburgs, have survived. The representation of the enthroned Madonna and Child is dated around 1398 and is signed in the lower right part with the inscription: NICHOLAVIS ET STEFANVIS DE GORICIA PINSIT (painted by Nicholas and Stefan from Gorica). In the records, two painters from Gorica mentioned with the same name. While the identification of Nikolai is not questionable, the one of Stefan is quite unlikely, due to the temporal discrepancy between them. Stylistically, according to F. Stele, the fresco follows the Friuli tradition, but is not necessarily to be seen as the successor of the master of the Crngrob facade. Striking is the arrangement

11 1995, *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana: Narodna Galerija Ljubljana, pp. 237.

12 Stele, France, 1924, *Gotsko stensko slikarstvo na Kranjskem*, Zagreb: Buličev zbornik, pp. 213-216.

of the two figures: Christ is not sitting, as usual, in the lap of Mary, but next to her on the throne, which is covered with Marie's coat. The faces of the two figures are expressionless and seem because of that timeless. In the late phase of the Friuli painting, around 1410-1420, one can recognize stylistic elements of the International Gothic, which originated in the Czech Republic. It is typical of these works that artists no longer try to grasp space in three dimensions but use abstract elements, that serve as the backdrops of the plot. Also typical for this style is the use of Crusader ornaments.

One of the examples is the church St. Lenart in Breg near Preddvor. In the church the medieval core (from around 1400) is still present. This was later supplemented with a porch, sacristy and a bell tower. The ship is laid flat with wood and decorated with paintings from the late 15th century attributed to the master of Senično. The presbytery has a 5/8 choir end, which is covered with a six-part ribbed vault. The decoration of the triumphal arch and the presbytery is considered one of the most beautiful preserved medieval mural paintings in Slovenia. In the history of art, it is known as a model for the so-called "kranjski prezbitarij" ("Krain Presbyteium). The iconographic program served as a template for countless churches that were painted in later centuries. The program is divided between the triumphal arch and the walls of the presbytery. At the top of the triumphal arch, Christ is depicted in a mandorla, surrounded by the evangelist symbols and the church fathers. The second part of the program is divided into two registers of the choir and consists of scenes of the Passion, which are accompanied by various saints and prophets. Between the windows and in the window framing in the end of the choir various apostles are shown. The west side of the triumphal arch is also decorated with mural paintings. On the left side, in the upper register, St. George is shown fighting with the dragon, below him a still life with figs. On the right side, facing St. George, is St. Lenart, freeing prisoners, and below him St. Nicholas bringing gifts to the poor brides. In the middle, above the top of the triumphal arch, we find the brothers Cain and Abel. The bow is framed with acanthus ornament and a jagged strip. The frescoes are attributed to two different masters, but since both were active after 1400, elements of the International Gothic and the Weichen style can already be found in both of them. The complexity of influences can best be understood in the resurrection of Christ. Christ is painted seated, on the edge of the empty sarcophagus, wrapped in a white cloth. Christ raises his right hand in a blessing gesture, his left is holding a cross. This type of representation of the resurrection is untypical for the Trecento painting. The origins of these scene can be found in Museo Civico in Trieste. It is a scene of a triptych

from the Clariss Monastery in Trst, dated around 1330 and attributed to Paolo Veneziano and his workshop¹³. Later this type can be found in all over Central Europe.

The connections to Italy were very important for Slovenia throughout the history, but the gothic period is the time when everything started. Sure, the Romans were here a thousand years earlier, but the heavy migrations of the early middle ages did wipe out that part of history for a long time, until it was rediscovered in the late 18th and 19th century. The Slovenian coast was under the influence of the Venetians and so was Istria and part of the Soča valley. This is still seen in the streets of Piran and Koper. The venetian architecture could be preserved, but not the mural art. The problem is the moisture that comes from the sea. The salty water are the worst thing that can happen to frescos, so the only ones that could be preserved are not there where the clients would spend the most money on art, in the towns, but in small villages in central Istria, monasteries on Karst high plateau and are not easy to reach for most of the visitors. The most famous one o the churches is in Hrastovlje, a small village in central Istria and is open for public.

Around 1415, a workshop was created in Klagenfurt under the guidance of Master Frederick, whose works can also be found in Slovenia. In the works of the master Fredericks, the "soft style" and the International Gothic have matured. His immediate successor in Slovenia is his son Janez (John) of Ljubljana, who was mainly active in Dolenjska region, but also other anonymous artists who have worked in the tradition of Master Frederick in other parts of Slovenia. A fresco, attributed to a student of Frederick in the church of St. Kancian in Selo near Žirovnica, dates to around 1430. This fresco is located on the south wall of the triumphal arch and represents St. George on horseback. It depicts the moment in which St. George stabs the dragon, which is under the feet of his horse, with a lance. The fresco is preserved only in fragments, the heads of the dragon and the horse are no longer preserved.

St. George has the same features as the riders of the workshop of master Frederick. He has a cloth wrapped around his head and wears a cloak, both seem to flutter in the wind. Even the exaggerated facial features of the saint are typical of master Frederick. The style from Carinthia is not only taken over, but also developed further. The master from Srednja vas near Šenčur develops his own "soft style", which his successors take over as well as the master from Žirovnica. The last one has been proven to work in

13 Walcher-Casotti, Maria, 1961, *Il Trittico di Santa Chiara di Trieste e l'orientamento paleologo nell'atre di Paolo Veneziano*, Trieste.

Gorenjska in the middle of the 15th century in three more churches: Rateče, Mošnje and Žirovnica. In the church of St. Martin in Žirovnica he completed painting the presbytery on the principle of the Krainer presbytery. The program of the Krainer presbytery includes the Maestas Domini on the bow, the Last Judgment on the inside and the proclamation on the outside of the triumphal arch. Freestanding apostles are usually depicted on the walls, but here they are depicted as martyrs.

These depictions probably originated in the long-lost woodcuts that probably originated around 1445 in Basel. These and the representations of the Martyrdom of the Apostles, which we find in Mošnje, Rateče and Dobrna,¹⁴ are the first known examples of the imitation of the Basel template in Slovenia. This was later used repeatedly in Central Europe, as in the case of the twelve-altar from Wiener Neustadt (around 1480).¹⁵ The individual representations of the martyrs are provided with inscriptions from the creed of the individual apostles. The individual scenes follow the medieval tradition, including the martyrdom of St. Peter, who was crucified with his head down. The figure of Peter is accompanied by several, in our case four, servants who, caricatured, raise the cross with great difficulty. Generally, it can be said that the artist is based on the Carinthian tradition, but in detail the closeness to the master from Srednja vas is visible, which can be understood especially in the drawing itself. In connection with Master Friderik we have to dig deeper into another artist: Janez (John) from Ljubljana. On the basis of the inscriptions in Visoko under Kurešček and in Muljava it could be proven¹⁶ that it is the son of Klagenfurt painter Meister Friderik. He was born in the early 15th century and was schooled in his father's workshop. Between 1435 and 1440 the son became self-employed and soon after, moved to Ljubljana. Already, in 1443 he is known as a citizen of Ljubljana ("concivis in Laybaco"). In order to get the civil rights so fast, his client had to intervene. Janez from Ljubljana had much of his work done for the Cistercian monastery in Stična and for the lords of Turjak. His last works date back around the year 1460. Stylistically, he stands near the style of the workshop of his father, a late version of the International Gothic and the soft style. Nevertheless, Janez has managed to develop his own style, which focuses on the beauty and lyrics of the character. We know for a fact that the altar fresco in Troščine near Višnja gora, which dates back

14 1995, *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana: Narodna Galerija Ljubljana, pp. 252.

15 Höfler, Janez, 1976, *Zum ehemaligen Zwölfbotenaltar aus Wiener Neustadt*, Wien: ÖZKD XXX, pp. 163-172.

16 Stele, France, 1960, *Der Maler "Johannes concivis in Laybaco". 900 Jahre Villach*, Villach, pp. 81-113.

to around 1444, and depicts St. John the Baptist with a saint, are the works of Janez Ljubljanski. He completed a few smaller assignments until the mid-fifties, when Janez, shortly after, gets three major assignments: The St. Mary's Church in Muljava near Stična, the Church of St. Peter at Kamni vrh over Ambrus and the church of St. Ahac on Mali Ločnik over Turjak. The St. Mary's Church in Muljava was built in the middle of the 15th century, the frescoes were executed in 1456. The commission for the painting of the church was given to Janez from Ljubljana by the abbot Ulrik of Stična. But he was probably payed by the lords of Turjak, due to the fact that their coat of arms can be found in the paintings. As a result of renovations in the 17th and 19th centuries, parts of the painting were destroyed. Nevertheless, the program in the presbytery and in the nave is one of the most beautiful examples of unified work on the principles of the Middle Ages in Slovenia: Christ in the Mandola on the triumphal arch, standing apostles, Passion scenes and the Vita Mariae on the walls of the choir, the offering of the kings the north wall and the Vita Petri on the south wall. The form of the Marian Vita in Muljava originated in the Czech Republic from the motif of Last Worship in the second half of the 14th century and has later spread throughout Europe. The death of Mary is placed in a barely comprehensible space. In the middle is a bed diagonally to the foreground. In front of this bed Mary is shown kneeling, accompanied by John. She seems to be at the end of her powers, as reflected in her exhausted countenance. Around the bed are the apostles, who are immersed in prayer. Two of the apostles form a group at the foot of the bed serve as a compositional contrast. An apostle sits in front of Mary on the ground and holds the book so that he acts as Mary's prayer table. The frescoes are dated twice with an inscription in the presbytery and one in the border of the triumphal arch.

The border area between Carinthia and Styria has undergone many political changes in the 15th century. The Habsburgs play an important role in this event. In 1456, most of the land, after the extinction of the line of the counts of Celje, comes into their possession. With the help of mural paintings, one can understand that, from the middle of the 14th to the middle of the 15th century, the workshops from the center of the country (especially Carinthia) were active on the periphery. One of the early examples of this connection is the painting of the Church of St. Neža in Brdinje near Kotlje, which was built around 1370. These paintings have a stylistic proximity to the frescoes of the parish church in Gmünd. But there are also connections with the "Gorica group" and the master of the Bohinj presbytery, who also worked on the other side of the Karavanke, e.g. in the parish church of St. Jerome in Rebrca (Rechtberg). Today, only fragments of the works of the

Carinthian workshops can be found, from the 15th century, which are located inside the small churches in the Mežica Valley, the Drau Valley and the Mislinja Valley.

As "Gesamtkunstwerk" only two churches have survived: the church of St. Barbara in Zagrad near Prevalje from the year 1466 and in the church of St. John the Baptist in Šentjanž above Dravče. The last dates back to the time of the master Friderik from Klagenfurt but is attributed to the Velikovški painter and dated around the year 1445. On the south wall there is a votive picture of an unknown client and on the north wall the portrait of an unknown bishop. The identity of those depicted could explain the unusually qualitative execution of the frescoes. Particularly important is the presentation of the offering and worship of the Hl. Three kings, which is painted in the Carinthia manor, with simplified details and schematized background. The artist pays his full attention to the main characters, especially the group of figures, Mary and Child in the worship scene, which is considered as one of the most beautiful of this kind in Slovenia. The figures are shown in short, bell-shaped robes and with a headgear from which long ribbons protrude and they seem to flutter in the wind. This style of clothing is typical of the International Gothic and the "soft style".

Geographically speaking, the group of artists who worked in the border region also includes master Andreas from Otting (probably Otting in Bavaria, today Altötting), but his style does not origin in the East as the rest of the group. His works, which were created in the years between 1450 and 1460, show a tendency towards a realistic representation of the figures. This is especially visible in the Passion cycle of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Slovenj Gradec. The base for the Passion can be traced back to Hans Multscher and the Wurzacher Altar (1437, Gemäldegalerie der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin). Master Andreas has copied the four scenes of the Passion. The drastic facial expressions of the figures, which serve the general dramatization of the representation, are to be traced back to Multscher and his circle. The figures are elongated, narrow, with long limbs and kinked at the waist, which does not correspond to the ideal of international Gothic but have its origins in Bavaria. The hospital church in Slovenj Gradec was commissioned by the son of the founder of the hospital, Johannes from Škofja Loka. On the wall of the triumphal arch is a votive image depicting a kneeling couple. The contemporary-dressed couple is probably the donor couple Johannes from Škofja Loka and his wife, or his son, who is mentioned in a document of 1454. Among the figures, in Gothic script, there is a fragmentary lettering with the name of the artist. Until 1428 a small chapel was built, in the middle of the 15th century a presbytery was added.

At the end of the 15th century, the old chapel was demolished and the church got a vaulted nave. The Passion Cycle with 27 scenes is located on the north wall of the presbytery. The scenes follow each other horizontally and are divided into square fields with ornamental framing. The figures are shown in the tradition of the International Gothic: narrow, with long extremities and the typical drapery. The faces and the background deviate from the norm of the ideal image of the "beautiful style" and move in the direction of "peasant realism".

The so-called Gorica workshop was important for the education of many artists who influenced Slovene Gothic art. The workshop worked on several structures between 1410 and 1420. One of the artists who worked in this tradition is named after his most famous work: the master of the presbytery in Bohinj. The connection lets us infer the design of the figures, the abstract architectural structure and the use of similar patterns in the garments. The proximity to the "soft style" lets us suspect that he was exposed to additional influences from Carinthia. Although he was active in much of Slovenia in the mid-fifteenth century, his extensive and significant work is the painting of the presbytery and the chapel in the defensive wall of the church of St. John the Baptist in Bohinj. The church stands prominently at the foot of Bohinj Lake and is the landmark of the area. The foundations were built around 1300, the oldest frescoes date back to the time and in the church. This was provided with a wooden ceiling and ended in an apse in the east. In traits of the extensions in the 15th century, the apse was demolished and replaced with a one-legged presbytery, with a 3/8 degree. In 1520 the ribbed vault in the nave was added.

Although we find various frescoes from different eras in the church, the most interesting one is for us the wall paintings of the presbytery from around 1440. The vault caps depict the four Evangelist symbols and angels with text tapes and various musical instruments. The vault finishes in the keystone, representing the head of Christ (created by a different, older dated master, probably from around Gorica). In the vaulted walls we find, on the south side the Madonna with protective coat and on the opposite side scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist. The walls are divided into four registers and show full-body representations of various saints standing in front of abstract architecture. The framing and the architecture, in which the figures are placed, reveals the knowledge of the "soft style" which the master of the Bohinj presbytery had to acquire and that has found his way across the Karavanke from Carinthia. This apostle type is typical of the Suha Bodešče Prileisce workshop (suško-bodeška-prileška skupina), which was active in the second half of the 15th century and whose influence continued into the

16th century. The workshop of the master of the Bohinj Presbytery, which was probably located in Gorica, produced many artists who have adopted his style, especially the patterns in the robes. The two best known are: the master of Suha near Škofja Loka and the master of Bodešče near Bled. Both are named after their best-known works. There is another less qualitative artists that belong to this group who worked in the area around Radovljica. The mural paintings on the façade of the Church in Spodnji Otok are attributed to him and the that of the side altar in the parish church of St. Andrew in Mošnje. After the year 1465 these painters disappear from their original field of work, probably because of the increasing competition with painters of the master Bolfgang group in the Soča valley. This group has not contributed much to the art of mural painting, stylistically, the painters of this group are representatives of the "soft style".

Master Bolfgang's background and the workshop in which he learned his knowledge, are unknown. His name comes from his first known work in Slovenia, the 1453 painted fresco in the north chapel of the pilgrim church in Crngrob. Next to the painted patron saint, St. Bolfgang, the date of the painting is to be found. The analysis of his work suggests that he traveled to southwestern Germany, where he made himself acquainted with the works of Konrad Witz or the copper engravings of the Master of the playing cards. Later the influence of the well-known engraver, Master E.S. noticeable in the work of Master Bolfgang. Due to the influence of the master E.S., the compact plastic style is characterized by the modeling of the fabric in late gothic style, by the use of different shades of color. All the names mentioned above do mean something to the German speaking public and with building the connection between them and the cultural heritage of Slovenia we can bring this part of history closer to the German speaking visitors.

Several smaller works are known from his period, his probably last and most important work is the painting of the parish church of John the Baptist in Mirna in Dolenjska from the year 1465. The church is a single nave church with a subsequent presbytery, which was completed at the end of the century. The church was originally completely painted, but today only the frescoes in the vault and the window frames in the presbytery are preserved. The program of vault painting follows the tradition of the Krainer presbytery but extends it and is one of the most beautiful examples of gothic mural paintings of the 15th century in Slovenia. In the center of the eastern part of the vault, Christ is depicted in Mandorla, surrounded by evangelist symbols and the Church Fathers. The second center of the vault is the Madonna and Child in Mandorla, surrounded by four full-body depictions

of St. Dorothea, St. Barbara, St. Catherine and St. Margaretha. This is followed by three vaulted caps with Angels. Other full-body representations of the angels, here with musical instruments, are located in the vaulted walls next to the windows. This belongs to the type of shrine presbytery, which sees the angels with instruments as part of the angelic choirs and further intensifies the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem. The quality and style of his painting is best seen in the individual portrayals of the saints, the elegant swinging, the round face typical of Master Bolfgang, the late-Gothic drapery, the use of red and violet tones and the fine drapery of the robes. These stylistic features have been copied by his students and they spread it well in to the 16th century. Also typical is the use of scenes of masterpieces, especially copper engravings of the master E.S., but also the woodcuts of the Dutch Bible *Biblie pauperum*¹⁷.

Here we should mention one of his students, which is responsible for the painting of the 1465 built presbytery of St. Mary's Church on the island in Lake Bled. The Gothic presbytery, consecrated in 1465, has still to be seen in today's Baroque church. The frescoes in the choir are fragmentary and date back in the time of 15th century and are attributed to the Master of Bled master. It depicts the Life of Mary, beginning with the story of Joachim and Anna to the Nativity and finally to the Coronation of the Virgin Mary. On the north wall, the Eucharistic Christ between two angels with instruments of suffering, of which one has almost disappeared, is depicted in elaborate Gothic architecture. The upper body of Christ's figure is preserved and follows the ideal of the master E. S., best seen in the compressed waist and the oval face.

The second generation of students of Master Bolfgang, belongs to Master Leonard, who worked in the years between 1490 and 1510. He has left us two extensive cycles: in the branch church in Krtina and in the church of St. Andrew in Krašcah. He retains the main features of his predecessor, Master Bolfgang: the typical figure arrangement, the color gamut and the use of Master E.S. as base. Other influences can be felt in the church of St. Andrew. The late Gothic realism, which became known in Slovenia around 1500 with the help of artists from southern Germany. In the church of St. Andrew there is the fresco of the Hortus Conclusus (Closed Garden), which extends over two fields of the north wall of the presbytery. It is believed that the donors of the church, two brothers, come from the nearby Limberk Castle: Georg and Andreas. The patron saint of the brothers and their coats

17 Höfler, Janez, 1985, Meister Bolfgangus und die Rolle der deutschen Druckgraphik in der Wandmalerei der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts in Slowenien, Wien: XXV. Internationaler Kongress für Kunstgeschichte CIHA 9, pp. 91-93.

of arms are to be found on the church walls. The gothic star vaults in the presbytery are preserved to this day, with the nave from a later period. Below the fresco of the Hortus conclusus we find a fragmentary strip with the year (1504) and the author of the picture (Leonardus perfecit millesimo D iiii)¹⁸. Hortus Conclusus is the allegorical representation of the Marian proclamation or the incarnation of Christ in the form of hunting for a unicorn supplemented with symbols of Mary (Salomon, High Song).

It could be assumed that the art of the Primorska region was largely based on Italian art. However, the works show that influences from the central Slovenia and Istria also played a significant role. In the 15th century many churches were commissioned to be painted in this region, in many different styles. In the parish church Maria Assumption in Vremski Britof, which was built between 1440 and 1445, a master from Salzburg area even worked on. In his art one can see the modern gothic style with the typical drapery, but also the influence of the Klagenfurt workshops, which makes us assume he had to be stationed there too. In 1953 the painting of the Gothic presbytery in Vremski Britof was rediscovered. The middle fields of the vault are painted with the Pantokrator and the sun. The symbols of the evangelists and angels choir are lined up around Christ. On the walls one can find scenes from the Christ life, which are preserved only in fragments. The master deviates from the scheme of the Kranjski presbytery in which he depicts the apostles in their martyr scenes, of which only three have survived the repairs. The martyrdom of St. John the Evangelist is portrayed in one of the scenes with a priest poisoning him by Artemis. The figures of John and the priest are heavy and both are portrayed in rich robes. Especially the cloak of John is draped with triangular folds, which is a novelty for Slovenia. The iconographic peculiarities of the Vremski Britof Presbyterium make us to the conclusion, that the master must have come from the Salzburg area and worked in the circle of the master of the Hallendörfer Altar.

In Primorska region, however, we find workshops that are have their origins in Italian art. Three different painters are believed to have been trained in the workshop of Leonardo Thanner, located in Friuli. We can base that on the art of the textile ornaments. Leonardo Thanner came from Bavaria in the middle of the 15th century and also worked as a sculptor. But there are also works whose creators are from Italy, such as in the church in Dolenja vas near Senožeče, which was decorated around 1500 to 1509. Particularly striking are the Renaissance representations of the apostles. The Italian master

18 Höfler, Janez, 1991, *Leonard – mojster fresk pri Sv. Andreju pri Krašcah*, Ljubljana: ZUZ, p.p. 51-63.

probably employed local painters who helped him with the execution. The single-nave church stands behind a defensive wall. The painting is located in the Gothic presbytery and was discovered only in the sixties of the 20th century. On the outside of the triumphal arch is the Annunciation and Cain and Abel's offering ritual. It is a typical presbytery with Christ in the vault, surrounded by evangelist symbols, church fathers, two angels and floral ornamentation¹⁹. In the upper register we find scenes from the life of Mary and Christ. On the north wall is the scene of Mary's death. Mary is portrayed dyeing in bed, surrounded by the apostles. Although the fresco is in poor condition, the individual traits of the apostles' figures are clearly visible. The figures are paired and the volume of their bodies makes out the volume of the room. Above this scene Mary is pictured as a girl, as she is welcomed by the Christ in heaven. When painting the presbytery in Dolenja vas near Senožeče, two masters were probably at work, as the quality of the paintings in the vault and the figures of the apostles are very different to the rest. On the basis of the frames and their ornamentation we can understand, however, that they were all painted at the same time.

In the period around the turn of the century (1500) and in the first third of the 16th century, the transition from Gothic to Renaissance took place in Slovenia. During this time, artists from southern Germany are active on Slovenian soil, their style is widely known. Examples of this, dated around 1480, can be found in the old parish church of St. Oswald in Zgornje Jezersko. These mural paintings are in the stylistic tradition of the Munich artist circle of Jan Polack and can be traced back to the work of the Bamberger master LC²⁰. In the single-nave church of St. Oswald in Zgornje Jezersko, with a small Gothic choir from the first half of the 14th century, we still find the original paintings. In the presbytery and the triumphal arch, we find the murals of a South German master, that are dated at around 1490. The vault is based on the scheme of the Krainer presbytery, other scenes are taken from the Passion, the same as the Annunciation scene and Cain and Abel's offering in the triumphal arch.

The frescoes are partially damaged but are characterized by expressiveness and dynamics in the composition. The local painters adopt the sophisticated style of the Renaissance with the help of the current graphic templates and the coherence with Carinthia and Venice. During this time, the iconographic scheme of the painting loosens up. Thus, e.g. the Last Judgment scenes abolished and new saints introduced. In addition, the fresco becomes an autonomous entity, which ascribes realistic proportions

19 1995, *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana: Narodna Galerija Ljubljana, pp. 287.

20 1995, *Gotika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana: Narodna Galerija Ljubljana, pp. 292.

to an illusionistic space and uses floral ornamentation for embellishment. In the time of the reformation, many churches were damaged, so the number of monuments is limited. The popular mural paintings, e.g. Works by the Jernej from Loka, give us an insight into the lives of people before and from the time of the reformation.

CONCLUSION

We have a lot to offer, even though the churches are small, the mural paintings are not preserved as well we would hope to, but the variety and the mixture of all the styles that were modern at that time in Europe, do somehow come together in one small country and give us the opportunity to explain the complex history of our county in the late middle ages on examples. Even though one would have thought that simple programs created for an average person at that time, don't have the same value as high art produces in the art capitals of the period, it gives us a very specific intake on the normal life on normal people, how they lived, what they fear and what they believed in. We just need to embrace that knowledge and bring it into context with the historical development of the whole region and specially that of Slovenia. We have to make sure people working in tourism are well educated and know their history, know their art in order to make sure all of the monuments get preserved and acknowledge in the future. But we should not forget, all the monuments of cultural heritage mentioned above are owned by the church which is always in struggle weather to show the insides or not. This is on us, people who work in tourism, people who work as educators, to make sure nothing happens to the art, that visitors do not destroy it and many of following generations can admire what so many before us did.

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