

Varaždin, Franciscan Monastery, Church of St. John the Baptist / Conservation of the High altar of St. John the Baptist

Monastery and church of St. John the Baptist is the most complete Baroque complex in Varaždin, and it developed gradually from the beginning of the 13th century. The present church was built in the middle of the 17th century, according to a contract with master Petar Rab. The church, with its modest exterior and a luxurious, mature Baroque interior, managed to remain a typical hall church with a deep choir over the main entrance, nave, the same width as the sanctuary, with built-in side chapels and a slightly shorter sanctuary. When the high altar burned down in the 1665 fire, Franciscans raised money from the surrounding area and commissioned a new altar from Maribor carpenters Herman Sultz and Matija Simon, based on the design of Father Kristofor Zettl, a Franciscan from Bavaria serving in Varaždin.

Along with the pulpit, the altar of St. John the Baptist is the oldest preserved part of the inventory from the Franciscan church. The altar was built between 1699 and 1702, and its parts were transported along the Drava River to Varaždin on three occasions. Large sculptures of saints (Anne, Joachim, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Peter and Paul) are attributed to Franjo Krištof Reiss, a sculptor from Maribor, who produced masterpieces of his later work with this cycle. The original altarpiece, commissioned in Vienna from Bernard Weiteren, has not been preserved. The present altarpiece was painted in 1857 by Johan Beyer from Graz. Scenes from the lives of St. Bonaventure and St. John of Capistrano, in the central zone of the retable, were painted in 1701 by Ioannes Georgius L. Zirky. The author of two oval paintings in the altar attic that portray the *Annunciation* is currently unknown. The original wax polish on the walnut veneer with black varnish, combined with gilded applications and statue draperies, was added in 1715 by Joakim Shidt, a painter from Zagreb. The altar was repolychromed and completely restored in 1908 in the workshop of Josip Zoratti, a gilder from Maribor. The tabernacle was also added at that time.

Because of the extremely high humidity that penetrated from the crypt under the sanctuary, and insects feeding on wood, extensive damage was caused to the lower part

of the altar. The right side of the altar sagged 14 cm, damaging the statics. Due to the urgent need to stop further decay of the altar, Conservation Department in Varaždin requested Croatian Conservation Institute to make a survey with a proposal for the complete conservation and restoration project. Conservation and restoration research of the altar was carried out in 2008. Conservation began the following year, based on technical documentation and the accepted proposal for the work, and the project was entrusted to the Ludbreg Department for Conservation.

Strengthening the statics of altar architecture involved raising the right side of the altar and mounting a new load-bearing wooden structure. The weight needed to be temporarily removed from the load-bearing elements so the altar was partially disassembled. Previous research had found that the original polychromy and gilding on the architecture of the altar, sculptures of saints and angels were well preserved, so the removal of layers of subsequently added repolychromy began. Afterwards, all the missing parts of the carvings were reconstructed and the damage was visually incorporated into the original layer of polychromy. Darkened varnish and surface impurities were removed from the altar paintings, and damage to the support and painted layer were repaired. Because of large dimensions of the altar, work on the altar architecture was carried out in collaboration with Orguljarska radionica Mihaljević company from Mala Subotica and DOK-ART trade from Zagreb.

The exceptional value of the altar is reflected in its monumentality, high quality of production and a unique decoration that blends the iconography of Jesus, Mary and the Franciscans, as well as the fact that Varaždin Franciscans brought Francis Krištof Reiss, master of the leading Maribor sculpture workshop, to Northern Croatia to make the sculptures. With his arrival at the beginning of the 18th century, the tradition of Styrian artists coming to Varaždin, that began in the middle of the 17th century, continued. These masters contributed to the spread of influences from Graz, an extremely important art centre for Baroque in Continental Croatia.



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Samostan i crkva sv. Ivana Krstitelja najcjelovitiji su barokni sklop u Varaždinu; razvijao postupno, ali skladno od početka 13. stoljeća. Današnja crkva izgrađena je sredinom 17. stoljeća prema ugovoru s gradačkim majstorem Petrom Rabom. Skromnog eksterijera, no raskošnog, zrelo baroknog interijera, zadržala je model tipične propovjedničke dvoranske crkve s dubokim pjevalištem nad glavnim ulazom, brodom svedenim na širinu svetišta s ugrađenim pobočnim kapelama i svetištem, tek nešto kraćim od broda. U požaru 1665. godine izgorio je glavni oltar pa su franjevci prikupili dobrovoljne priloge iz cijele okolice i naručili novi oltar kod mariborskih stolara Hermana Sultza i Matije Simona, prema nacrtima bavarskog franjevca sa službom u Varaždinu, oca Kristofora Zettla.

Oltar sv. Ivana Krstitelja je uz propovjedaonicu najstariji očuvani dio inventara te franjevačke crkve. Podignut je između 1699. i 1702. godine, a njegovi su dijelovi u tri navrata prevezeni Dravom do Varaždina. Kiparski radovi na velikim skulpturama svetaca (Ana, Joakim, Elizabeta, Zaharija, Petar i Pavao) pripisuju se mariborskom kiparu Franji Krištofu Reissu, koji je tim ciklusom ostvario remek-djela svojega kasnijeg stvaralaštva. Izvorna oltarna pala, naručena u Beču od Bernarda Weiterena, nije sačuvana, a današnju je 1857. godine naslikao Johan Beyer iz Graza. Slike iz života sv. Bonaventure i sv. Ivana Kapistrana, sa središnje zone retable, naslikao je 1701. godine Ioannes Georgius L. Zirky. Autor dviju ovalnih slika s prikazom Navještenja naatici za sada nije poznat. Izvornu voštanu polituru na crno bajcanom furniru od orahovine, kombiniranu s pozlaćenim aplikacijama i draperijama kipova, oltar je dobio tek 1715. godine, a izradio ju je zagrebački slikar Joakim Shidt. Oltar je repolikromirala i cjelovito obnovila radionica mariborskog pozlatara Josipa Zorattija 1908. godine, a iz te obnove potječe i današnji tabernakul.

Zbog izrazito visoke vlage, koja je prodirala iz kripe ispod svetišta, te djelovanja insekata koji se hrane drvom, nastala su velika oštećenja donjih dijelova

oltara, pri čemu se desni bočni dio oltara spustio za 14 cm, što je narušilo njegovu statiku.

Zbog potrebe hitnog zaustavljanja daljnjeg propadanja oltara, Konzervatorski odjel u Varaždinu od Hrvatskog restauratorskog zavoda zatražio je izradu elaborata s prijedlogom cjelovitih konzervatorsko-restauratorskih radova. Konzervatorsko-restauratorska istraživanja na oltaru provedena su 2008. godine i na temelju tehničke dokumentacije i prihvaćenog prijedloga radova već su iduće godine počeli radovi na njegovoj sanaciji, a povjereni su djelatnicima Restauratorskog odjela u Ludbregu.

Statičkom sanacijom oltarne arhitekture obuhvaćeno je podizanje desne strane oltara i ugradnja nove nosive drvene konstrukcije. Zbog potrebe privremenog rasterećenja nosivih elemenata, oltar je djelomično demontiran. S obzirom na to da je prethodnim istraživanjima utvrđeno da su izvorna polikromija i pozlata na arhitekturi oltara te kipovima svetaca i anđela vrlo dobro očuvane, pristupilo se uklanjanju slojeva naknadne repolikromije, nakon čega su izrađene rekonstrukcije svih nedostajućih dijelova rezbarija i vizualno uklapanje oštećenja u izvorni polikromirani sloj. S oltarnih slika uklonjeni su potamnjeni lak i površinska nečistoća te su sanirana oštećenja nosioca i slikanog sloja. Zbog velikih dimenzija oltara, radovi na oltarnoj arhitekturi obavljani su u suradnji s Orguljarskom radionicom Mihaljević d.o.o. iz Male Subotice i obrtom DOK-ART iz Zagreba.

Posebna vrijednost oltara ogleda se i u njegovoj monumentalnosti, visokoj kvaliteti izrade i jedinstvenom spoju kristološke, marijanske i franjevačke ikonografije, ali i u činjenici da su tom narudžbom varaždinski franjevci u sjevernu Hrvatsku doveli Franju Krištofa Reissa, majstora vodeće kiparske radionice iz Maribora. Njegovim dolaskom početkom 18. stoljeća kontinuirano se prisutnost štajerskih umjetnika u Varaždinu još od polovice 17. stoljeća. Ti su majstori pridonijeli širenju utjecaja iz Graza, umjetničkog središta vrlo važnog za hrvatski kontinentalni barok.



Izdavač: Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, www.h-r-z.hr / Za izdavača: dr. sc. Tajana Pleše / Stručni tim: Venija Bobnjarić-Vučković, Tomislav Sikinger; Vesnica Abramović, Ivan Bošnjak, Dana Buljan Cypryn, Jasmina Budoš, Zlatko Kapusta, Stanko Kirić, Vladimir Lukenda, Sabina Matišić, Karolina Mihajlović, Petar Nevžala, Igor Oros, Dražen Pavetić, Sandra Planko Kos, Dunja Rapaić, Vjekoslav Schmidt, Daša Suhić; Ivan Bošnjak, Josip Cepanec, Ida Gnjatović, Mihael Kirić, Božo Martinčević, Sabina Matišić, Dunja Vedriš Lončar / Fotografije: Jovan Kliska, Nikolina Oštarijaš, Goran Tomljenović, Natalija Vasić / Autori teksta: Venija Bobnjarić-Vučković, Tomislav Sikinger / Lektura: Rosanda Tometić / Prijevod: Nataša Đurđević / Grafičko oblikovanje i priprema za tisak: Ljubo Gamulin / Tisak: Novi val d.o.o. / Naklada: 500 / Zagreb, prosinac 2018.

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