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***The Baptism of Christ* by Petr Jan Brandl from the Parish Church in Żabów near
Pyrzyce and its Copies According to the Interdisciplinary Analysis**

A significant discovery of an unknown masterpiece by Petr Jan Brandl depicted *The Baptism of Christ* was the starting point for the research. Ever since this extraordinary painting appeared in 1945 it has served as an altarpiece in the parish church of Saint John the Baptist, small village, located near Pyrzyce, in West Pomerania Region. Exact circumstances of the painting appearance and its early history are still mysterious and remain uncovered. Some historical notes indicate that it could have been moved from the local manor house. Nevertheless it is clear that the current location of the painting is not original. Stemming from a comparative analysis the painting may be seen as one of the most prominent and artistic mature pieces in the oeuvre of the Czech painter, which is considered the crowning achievement of baroque painting in Central Europe. Exceptional significance of the painting is strengthened by the fact that two exact copies have been preserved. One of them is located in a small church in Javorná in Klatovy District, in the south-west of the Czech Republic, while the other is held in an unknown private collection. Although only the first of those paintings is available for research, there's certainty that both copies have no link to Brandl or even his workshop.

The aim of the dissertation is to thoroughly analyze the picture and its copies using classical formal analysis as well as modern technological research methods. The results of the analysis should indicate the painting's position in Brandl's artistic legacy, including confirmation of authorship and a dating issue.

The comparative material includes known paintings by Brandl, in particular those depicting the same iconographic theme – the great altarpiece from *St John the Baptist Church* in Manětín (1717-18) and *The Baptism of Christ* painted in 1722 for St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague.

The first technological analysis of the painting from Żabów conducted in January 2014, led by prof. Jarosław Rogóż from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, using destructive

and non-destructive methods, revealed great technological value of the piece. The structure of the painting shows conscious use of technological capabilities of the oil technique, including masterful usage of underpainting, wide spectrum of pictorial effects, from daring *impasti* to delicate glazes. A highly individual creative process could be easily appreciated while examining energetic brushstrokes visible in the part of draperies.

Analysis in various wavelengths of electromagnetic radiation precisely revealed the condition of the painting and the range of previous restoration interventions, which could also be partially seen in the visible spectrum. According to the performed studies the restoration project was prepared. The end of the restoration process is planned for the second half of 2015.

Obtained results require comparison with published and unpublished conservational studies of other Brandl's paintings. Within the project, additional technological analyses are planned, also on other Brandl's pieces preserved in the territory of Poland as well as the copy from Javorná.

The collected comparative material will help define the position of the painting in the artistic legacy of P. J. Brandl and bring comprehensive overview of the artist's creative process.

The research performed in the course of the dissertation will support the restoration process and should be considered as its scientific background. The results could be presented at the great monographic exhibition of Brandl art which is planned for 2017 in the National Gallery in Prague.

The discovery of an outstanding masterpiece of Central European baroque painting in a West-Pomeranian provincial church should be considered an exceptional event. Thanks to the interdisciplinary research this long-forgotten work of art reveals its extraordinary countenance.