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Hans Süß von Kulmbach and the Milieu of the Jagiellonian Court in Krakow

The project seeks to investigate interactions between the painter Hans Süß von Kulmbach and elites of Krakow, the favourite residential city of King Sigismund I Jagiellon. Kulmbach, referred to as the most accomplished interpreter of Albrecht Dürer and/or of the itinerant celebrity Jacopo de' Barbari, was the leading provider of elaborate altarpieces and stained glass cartoons in Nuremberg in the second decade of the 16th century. His work on commission from the Krakow-based patrons marked the apogee of his artistic development, bringing forth at least three grand winged retables (now defragmented), and may also have involved inter-site collaboration with artisans representing a wide range of crafts: woodcarving, silver- and goldsmithing, cast bronze sculpture and stained-glass painting. This research uses the given collection of art pieces as a prism to view site- and time-specific modalities of patronage, art production and mobility that were at play to make these objects find their way to the selected locations in the three paramount church interiors in Krakow – crucial scenes of royal, episcopal or municipal display.

Taken for granted is 'agency' of non-human portions of reality, i.e. intrinsically complex units like paintings, composite church furnishings, artistic media or actions, inasmuch as they are perceived as significant constituents of a state of affair. This optic refers to some variations of semiotics and the Actor Network Theory alike, which leave room for the actor's own languages and self-characterisations. In the same time, my compliance with the postulate that adherence to historic evidence must be understood in accordance with the legacy of post-modern critique alludes to the principles of new historicism.

To delineate the output and input conditions of transfer practices between Nuremberg (or Franconia) and Krakow means to inquire the interplay between court and municipal milieus within both geographical areas. Here comes in handy the 'constellation' research model, which continues to yield intriguing results in recent Albrecht Dürer studies. What requires special attention is the mediating role played by groups of hybrid identity, such as Krakow's German-speaking patriciate, which penetrated court agencies and diplomatic units. Particularly baffling is the sometimes voiced conjecture that the character of Kulmbach's engagement reveals the inclination of Sigismund I and his entourage to adopt a burgher cultural model. On the other hand, there were dynastic bonds between the Jagiellons and the

Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg-Ansbach, who apparently valued Kulmbach's services. Among other intermediaries to be accounted for are networked artisan ateliers, interconnected art markets as well as interweaved humanist circles of the Reich and Poland.

An emphasis on specific needs and representation policies of the patrons in Krakow reinforces in turn the importance of *Standortstudien*. This method imposes itself once it is acknowledged that the donations in question complied with late-medieval patterns of accumulating objects in sacral spaces. Only traced back to their original standing places may the Kulmbach's works, resp. their material/iconographic characteristics, unveil at least some aspects of their historical meaning, which they gained in the practices bound to a given 'cult zone' (*Verehrungszone*). These investigations lean largely upon written sources: church inventories, *acta visitationis*, municipal documentation, royal account books, and correspondence etc.

Still, a privileged role is here ascribed to technical and technological analysis of the art objects themselves. It is to be underlined that one essential aspect of this research is an ongoing transdisciplinary exchange with Polish and German conservators who have the experience of treating pieces by Hans von Kulmbach.