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Retable from Góra, the work, its context and history

My thesis project „Retable from Góra, the work, its context and history” is a case study of the late gothic pentaptych from St. Catherine’s Church in Góra (Guhrau). The altarpiece, which dates to circa 1512, is currently located at the main altar of the Poznań Cathedral. The work most likely comes from the workshop of the Breslau woodcarver Jakob Beinhardt, whereas the paintings were created by an anonymous artist, referred to as Master of the Góra Passion. My dissertation project is concerned both with the analysis of the retable in its historical context, and with the study of its *Nachleben*.

Beinhardt’s exceptionally large workshop is regarded to be one of the most important artistic enterprises in Silesia. The Master of the Góra Passion is viewed as an important figure for the development of the local, Silesian artistic tradition. The altarpiece itself is one of the few well-preserved large gothic retables from Silesia. Despite all this, it has not been well-researched and most of the pertinent literature consists of catalogue entries and short mentions in overviews of history of art in Silesia.

In my research on the retable in its original, late medieval context I use the media studies methodology, alongside reception aesthetics. My main objectives are to reconstruct the relationship between the altarpiece and the church interior alongside its other furnishings (especially other retables), and to analyse the projected relationship between the viewer and the object. These will be complemented by an examination of the representation strategies used in the altarpiece. This, in turn, in turn requires research into the circumstance of the pentaptych’s commission, and a re-evaluation of its iconography.

Another important element of my research is the study of the retable's *Nachleben*, in its three most important periods. The first is the period of the Reformation and Lutheran dominance in the town of Góra. Then, it is necessary to consider how the retable functioned in the reality of the new Tridentine liturgy after the town was forcefully recatholicised at the end of the Thirty Years War. This part of my dissertation ties in with

recent research reception and adaptation of medieval artworks in early modern era, which has been gaining popularity in the last two decades.

The third period is the post-World War 2 era when the retable was transferred to the newly rebuilt Poznań Cathedral. This aspect of my research connects with the subject of post-war transfers of objects of cultural heritage. This matter is gaining importance to Polish art history as researchers scrutinize post-war heritage protection practices, in particular the relocation of historic church furnishings from Silesia, Pomerania and other regions previously under German jurisdiction. Yet, the situation of the Góra altarpiece was different from the majority of artworks moved from the so called Recovered Territories to Central Poland. The decision to transfer it to Poznań was a matter of church administration and relates more closely to the rebuilding of the cathedrals at Gniezno and Poznań, which have not been studied in detail.

The most important sources for the medieval period are the foundation acts for altars. The early modern *acta visitationis* also shed some light on the arrangement of the church interior in the late Middle Ages, and they can bring much information both on the functioning of the retable in the Reformation and Counterreformation periods, and the confessional situation in the town. The sources for the 20th century are more diverse and include documents in the Archive of the Poznań Archdiocese, conservation documentation, and press articles reporting on the restoration of the Cathedral.