

## PREFACE

# ARTWORK AS REFLECTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND NETWORKING

This current thematic issue of the *Acta historiae artis Slovenica* (AHAS) journal represents one of the scientific results of the basic research project titled *Artwork as a Reflection of Knowledge and Networking. The Role of Education and Social Connectedness of Artists and Patrons in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Times* (J6-9439), carried out between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2022 at the France Stele Institute of Art History and the Milko Kos Historical Institute of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, as well as at the Department of History of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. The project's initial research question – what was the role of education and wider social integration of artists and art patrons during the Middle Ages and in the Early Modern Period in Slovenia – provided an opportunity for a broad range of research leading to a variety of answers and resulting in many original scientific findings. Several sample studies, covering all the aspects considered crucial for addressing the project's research question, have been carried out in the framework of the project in order to gain as comprehensive an insight into the topic as possible. The roles of dynastic, marital, educational, political, ecclesiastical, and other social connections of both artists and patrons have been analysed. Both art historians and historiographers have participated in the project research, allowing for much broader analyses and research interactions. Particular attention has been paid to the role that the contacts between artists and patrons who were members of religious confraternities, guilds, Modern Period academies, and other similar intellectual or spiritual associations played in art patronage. The influence of study trips taken by the selected artists and art patrons has also been explored.

The extensive articles included in this thematic issue of the AHAS journal provide insight into some of the research carried out in the context of the project, which has resulted in new discoveries with broader relevance. The first article, focusing on the Middle Ages, is based on a meticulous examination of archival sources. It presents several previously overlooked facts about the Great Confraternity of Our Beloved Lady of the *Dravsko polje* Plain and the Marian Confraternity in the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows in Celje. Based on solid arguments, the article reveals that the Counts of Cilli were members of the *Dravsko polje* Confraternity; that the prestigious chapel erected by the Counts of Cilli in Celje was a Confraternity chapel; and that the process of transferring the Konjice Confraternity to Celje in fact resulted in a merger between the two confraternities. The second article, exploring the times of the transition between the Middle Ages and the Modern Period, focuses on Valentin Fabri, one of the most prominent priests of the last fifth of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Slovenia. The discussion uncovers Fabri's previously completely overlooked social connections and brings a wealth of new information crucial for the art-historical analysis of his art commissions. The research involved gathering information about the Archdeacon's education and ecclesiastical career as well as his social connections. The third article examines the art commissions of religious confraternities from a viewpoint that has not yet

been addressed in the relevant literature either: it focuses on the motifs of dying and purgatory in the art of the Baroque confraternities in Slovenia. Alongside standard depictions, it also underlines those that are more interesting iconographically as well as those created by the more prominent artists. Moreover, it reveals the diverse interrelationships between artists and patrons. From 1688 to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Academia unitorum* or the Noble Society of St Dismas brought together primarily aristocrats but also academically educated intellectuals, ecclesiastical notables, and high-ranking officials in Carniola, especially Ljubljana, in preparation for a happy death and in prayer and celebration of masses for its deceased members. The final contribution therefore represents the first insight into the previously overlooked or under-recognised members of the *Academia unitorum* admitted between 1719 and 1771. Using primary archival sources, it analyses their life stories, filling a major gap in the knowledge about the Carniolan social elite and thus the 18<sup>th</sup>-century art patrons.

The new findings complement and upgrade the previous knowledge about the role of education and social connectedness of both the patrons and the artists, as well as reveal the complex circumstances in which artworks were created. They contribute crucially to the comprehensive understanding of artworks, shedding light on the social, spiritual, and intellectual background of the creation and impact of artworks, circulation of artists, place and time of the creation of these artworks, and their broader (and not merely devotional) social functions. The inclusion of so many hitherto disregarded archival sources and the establishment of original connections between the contexts in which the individual artworks were created contribute to the extraordinary importance of these discoveries for further art-historical and historical studies. As some of the finest art monuments in the Slovenian territory have been analysed as well, the findings are all the more significant. Given the profound social influence of the nobility and the clergy, the research also contributes significantly to a more complete overview of the late medieval and early modern society in Slovenia – especially the groups closely associated with art.

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